

## **CEDARCREEK GROUPS: CHILDCARE IDEAS RESOURCE**

Managing the tension of engaging in Group life and maintaining excellent care for your child(ren) can be incredibly difficult! As you can probably guess, there is no “perfect” solution. You may need to try a few of the options below before you end up with a solution that allows you, as parents, to participate in a Group!

1. **Hire a Babysitter** – While this can get pricey, by hiring your own babysitter, you’re able to leave your children with someone who can focus their attention on them while you focus your attention on connecting with your Group. If you’re struggling to find babysitter options, consider serving with either CedarCreek Kids or CedarCreek Students. Those are great places to network with families who may have babysitting leads or even to get to know other DreamTeam members who could become babysitter options for you!
2. **Drop-In Childcare** – Utilize a drop-in childcare facility, i.e. KidzWatch, while the Group meets at a nearby coffee shop.
3. **Rotate Childcare Between Members** – Group members can rotate caregiving from week to week, meaning that a different person or couple would be on babysitting duty each week. The pros of this are that it is free and it allows Group members to get to know one another’s children - not a bad thing! If appropriate, the rotating member can use the Jesus Storybook Bible or have something prepared that is an age-appropriate curriculum so that Group members are serving one another while learning to disciple each other’s children. The cons are that some Group members might be reluctant to watch children - this is especially the case in married couples Groups, where some of the Group members might have no children at all. In addition, a con is that the entire Group is never together - every week someone who is on babysitting duty will miss out on the conversation.
4. **Alternate Men’s and Women’s Meetings** – When couples are involved, one week the men meet while the women take care of the children, then switch. If you do this onsite, all members still have the opportunity to connect. Alternatively, men could meet at one time during the week, and the women at another, leaving the children at home with the parent who is not at Group.
5. **YMCA Membership** – Does everyone have a Y membership? Meet during a time when the KidZone is open and have the children checked-in.

6. **Have the Kids Join In** – Some Groups are content to embrace the chaos and allow kids of all ages to be present at the Group! The pro of this option is that families have more “hang out” time together and become familiar with one another quickly. There are also a number of resources that families can use for Group time together with kids or for incorporating them into Group meetings. Check out Right Now Media for ideas! The con to this option is that the chaos which ensues makes it difficult to have deep conversations and take relationships to the next level in the context of the Group meeting itself. We would highly recommend that you schedule a parent get-away for an extended Group meeting time.
7. **Share Babysitting Costs** – Probably the most frequent option that Groups use is to share the cost of a babysitter at each meeting. The pro of this option is that it is easy to transfer responsibility to a separate caregiver, allowing every member of the Group to fully focus. The con is that it can become expensive over time and you can find yourself in a bind if the babysitter cannot make it on a particular week. It can also be difficult to find a babysitter at all.
8. **Divide Time Into Sections** – This is a hybrid of some of the options already discussed. As an example, plan to have your time divided into 3 sections: (1) Catching Up, (2) Bible Study, and (3) Marriage/Personal Check-In. The children are with the Group for parts 1 and 3, but are separated for part 2 and the Group members rotate caring for them. For example, the Group starts with breakfast and then has a time of singing, reading a Bible story and praying - this is all with the kids there. Then they break up and have a sitter watch the kids while the adults study. Another example, the Group has a sitter first while the adults have their study, then they all share a meal together. And often the sitter is invited to the meal, which gives them a chance to not just be with the kids, but also get to know the families. The pros of this solution are also many: families get to know each other since they are together for part of the time; all adults can focus during the part of the meeting in which concentration is most important; there is a good variety of experience during each meeting; and little to no money is spent. A few cons are that each meeting feels rigidly scheduled and certain Group members may not enjoy the obligation of caring for kids.
9. **Have Older Kids Care for Younger Kids** – Obviously, this only works if you have children old enough to care for the younger ones. If appropriate, have children play together in another part of the house and commit to 1 hour of meeting time.