

Building Relationships With fcYouth

Guiding & Listening As A Small Group Leader

When it comes to leading a small group in the discussion regarding a message...sometimes it can be scary. You may be anxious to lead because of any pre-thoughts such as, "Am I talking too much?" or "What if there is a question asked that I have no idea the answer to?". These are understandable concerns because leading a group of students in their spiritual faith can give us a lot of pressure on our shoulders.

Let me tell you something...you are here, willing and committed to loving students. That's all we ask for! We don't ask you to know every question that can possibly be asked but we just ask you to lead the best you can and be willing!

Guiding A Discussion:

You are the leader of the group! You can take control of the discussion and lead it down the right path. This may be easier to say than do. You are probably thinking...have you ever lead a small group of distracted teens? Yes...yes it's challenging and getting them to open up or stay on track is hard. But consistency is key.

Small Group Questions

You will lead the small group. But we really need you to facilitate. We will start with the first question and work our way down the small group questions. Start off each small group session telling students to give a buffer time in between answers or others talking, it's ok to reiterate respectfulness to listen. You need to facilitate if you should stay on the same question or move on. Give time for them to discuss it. Please take your time and don't get done super early.

Co-Lead

If you co-lead, use that opportunity to share the responsibilities. Have one of you facilitate and the other respond if needed or ask prompting questions. Please don't argue in front of our students. Make sure you are on the same page before going into small group. If you need understanding on something, please ask Kiah Jackson. If you are flying solo, then you have a little more weight on your shoulders...but we believe in you and know that you can do it! You wouldn't be here if we didn't know you could do it!

20/80

This is a pretty good percentage when it comes to how much leaders should talk. Sometimes we forget it's about the students. Don't worry...we've all been guilty of that. Sometimes we make it about our life and feel the need to tell everything that we have gone through. Do everything you can to hold back on that and allow the students to share their thoughts, feelings and

answers. Talk about 20% of the duration of the small group time (asking questions, asking students to get more specific, responding) and the students talking about 80%.

Get Deep

Sometimes fear can hold us back from allowing students to get deep about their life, home life, issues, their feelings, their doubts, concerns and hearts. Every youth trip, at some point during the week, there's a time when the whole youth group gets real with each other. If students are leaning that way, allow it and embrace it. Sometimes confessions come from that and when we confess...we heal. What better place to allow students to get real than with their friends and a trusted space and trusted leader.

Pull 'Em Back

Sometimes it's easy to get off track. One second you are talking about the twelve disciples and the next you are talking about how fast a jet ski can go...it's truly incredible! Pull everyone back. When it happens, use phrases like, "Alright guys, we could talk about that all day but let's get back to discussion" or "Okay, okay, even though that's awesome lets bring it back!". When certain students can't stop talking...don't scold them but instead prompt them into the discussion and ask them a question specifically. It's important to let them know others are also important. Such as "Thanks for sharing all that Kiah, lets see if anyone else has anything to add." You should have confidence in re-gaining control of the direction of the small group.

Speak Life

Don't be afraid to speak into these students lives when you think you need too. Students are going through a difficult season of life trying to find themselves and their identity. When a trusted leader who has active faith speaks into their life, they will listen to that more than anything else. And if they don't, they will remember the impact and influence you had on them later down in life. Speak hope, love and life! Sometimes our roles are to plant the seed, or water the seed or grow the seed. What does this mean? Well sometimes we are introducing them to faith, sometimes we are expanding on the faith they already have and other times we are helping them stay on the right track.

Have Fun

Laugh, crack some jokes and just have fun! This is the group of students that you will get to know for the year. The more you have fun, the more they will and want to bring their friends! But still stay on track! If you engage with them, they will engage with you!

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YOU WILL NOT BE SUPER CLOSE WITH EVERYONE! Sometimes we just want every student to love us and want to hang out with every student. Well you have your small group that consist of some students but you can't invest everything you have and hangout with every single one every week. We commonly invest in a few from that small group. But then there's always one that you want to invest the most in because you may see leadership in them or just a connection. You may be thinking that this is favoritism. It's more: Which students do you connect with more and that want to connect with you?

Nuggets of Truth

Although we don't want you to do the majority of the speaking in each small group session, we do want you to be able to share pieces of truth with the students. What has God done in your life, what have you learned in certain circumstances, what does a certain verse mean, etc. You are a leader, so don't feel afraid to help guide and lead these students and walk life with them.

Listening In Discussion:

Sometimes we don't know how to respond to a statement, story or the response that a student gave to a certain question.

Listen

Half the time, students just want someone to talk to and want someone to listen to them. Be that leader for them. Maybe they don't get it at home, school or anywhere else. When they need to talk, we ask that you are there for them. In discussion, listen to them and don't be trying to figure a response as they are talking. Again...we are all a little guilty of that! Fully listen and then if there needs to be a response, respond the best you can.

Hard Questions

If you don't know the answer, please don't create one because you think you have to have one.. Just be honest with students and tell them that you don't know. Ask Kiah to come in and talk and see if he knows or ask Kiah to follow up with you or the group the following week. But remember, he doesn't know everything in the Bible or of the realm of Christianity. Tell a student that you are willing to try and find out if you are up to that. If you may not know it but have a good response to how to go about it, we trust you and know that you can be transparent about the situation/question.

Advise

Give advice if a student needs it. Sometimes you can clearly tell that a student needs it, but sometimes students just want to let out what they need too. This calls for some discernment. Discerning and judging whether or not you need to share some advice with them. Some phrases to stay clear of:

-One good way...

-Why don't you...

-You should...

-You ought to...

-Don't you think...

-You need to...

Some phrases you can use are:

-I have been in this situation (tell them what happened) -I understand where you are coming from
-I've never been in this situation before but I would maybe...

Paraphrase If Need Be

If the response a student gives is long and its deep, just show them that you are actively listening and care by paraphrasing what they are saying and ask if what you said is correct. This way you can understand what they are saying.

Respond With A Question

Again, if you don't know how to respond to a question, feel free to ask another question to get a more specific clearer statement.

YOU HAVE INFLUENCE:

Remember that you have influence in these students lives to reflect and teach who Christ is. You are the reason students come back each week! Thank you!

They Follow Your Lead

Students will follow the leader. If you are on your phone....guess what they will be on their phone. If you seem uninterested, they will seem uninterested.

Respect the church property. Don't go in areas you shouldn't and take care of the building. This is a safe space and should feel safe. You set the tone for how this place is treated. We need you to lead in a positive way.

PHONES! I admit it, we all struggle with cell phones. Especially during videos or in general. But we are asking that cell phone usage is at a minimum. You can use your phones for the small group discussion guides. But we need you to lead by example during the teaching videos and live speaking. If you are on your cell phone during the speaker or videos it communicates to the students this portion is not important for your time. They in turn will also feel that it is not important for them. Gather big and group small are opportunities for you to grow as an individual and leader. Use this opportunity to develop discipline.

Attendance matters. You are here for a purpose, but also you are here on an opportunity. You have the choice to grow in this opportunity or not. You are responsible for being here. Things come up, schedules change, and people get sick we know this. Sometimes you have to leave early and that is ok too. But create a habit of being consistently here. Or provide communication in case we need to move leaders around for that week.

Bullying is not allowed, but you know this. But sometimes we forget it. It's easy to get annoyed with students and want to "put them in their place." But remember this is a place for grace and opportunity. Instead of telling students they are lame, dumb, or things of that nature. Ask to pull them aside and have a corrective conversation. Especially if they are bullying others. Bullying from you as leaders will not be tolerated and kindness needs to be displayed.

Engagement matters. You are here to be a leader and lead the fcYouth. This is an opportunity. Please use the limited time we have with students to give your full attention. Engage in conversations, games, and activities with all the students. Especially those in your small group.