

Leading a Small Group 101

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Preparation

The most important things you can do to prepare:

- Pray over the materials as you prepare, pray for yourself and your small group
- Know your materials: Review ahead of time and know the questions you will ask so that you are not glued to them during the session.

Starting out

Get to know your small group. Give them a survey to take, what do you want to know about them as the year is starting out? What do they think you should know about them?

Set Ground rules

- In your first session, invite your group to help you set the ground rules for the year.
- *Write down what your group wants the small group to be like, and any rules that may go along with that (which might need some prompting from you to get them from ideals to "rules" needed to ensure those ideals).*
- If they don't come up with it on their own, have a phones down/phones set aside expectation for every small group time. We want to take time away from the stresses and distractions of life for this hour and a half to be fully present to each other and God.

Meet them where they are at & get to know them

- Accompaniment is Key- knowing them personally and meeting them where they are at in their faith.
- Spend time getting your group to share how they are doing, what is going on in their lives, and how they are responding/feeling about what is happening in the world.

Some questions to consider asking:

- Share Roses & Thorns of the week (high & low)
- Have some follow up questions from last small groups' shares ready
- If you made any resolutions from last small group, follow up to see how those went for everyone

During Discussion

Give affirmation to people's responses:

- "thanks for sharing" "that's interesting"
- Perhaps follow up with a question specific to what they shared

Keep group on track

- **manage tangents** but also be OK if the Holy Spirit is guiding the conversation. Is the discussion life giving to the group or taking away?

Be okay with silence

- Give people a chance to think about their response before you jump in
- Have them journal first, then respond
- Go around the circle Okay to call on individuals, but don't force participation
- If someone answers with a one word answer, a good follow up is, "tell me more about that." This helps the teens dig deeper into why they feel that way and may open up areas that may inspire further discussion. One of the best ways teens learn is from each other.

Prayer

Pray with your small group. Model it. Give them the tools to pray together. Come up with weekly prayer challenges, either individually or as a group and follow up. Make it fun. Be intentional with spending time in prayer.

A few more thoughts

- If students are being asked to bring Bibles or other materials with them- **USE THEM.** Be intentional about spending time in prayer. Teach them to read and pray with Scripture
- Stick to the topic but make it our own. If you have other activities that you think would fit with a specific lesson, share those ideas with your DRE/YM.
- The best answer to a question you don't know is always: "I'm not sure how to answer that, but I will look it up and let you know next week" (of course, you must then remember to follow up with this.)
- If you have a Catholic School teen who is "bored" from the repetition of classes, challenge her/him to think on the level of how s/he would share this part of their faith with others who don't know, OR how they integrate this teaching into their lives for real.

Notes:

Getting-to-know-you prompts :

- Two truths and a lie (share 2 truths and a lie about yourself; everyone else has to guess which one is the lie)
- Where did you grow up?
- What's the most ridiculous dream you've ever had?
- What's the strangest food combination you enjoy?
- What did you do as a kid that makes you cringe now?
- Who is one of your role models, and why?
- A genie grants you the ability to have an infinite amount of one item. What is it?
- If you could be known for one thing, what would it be - and why?
- What is your biggest goal in life? Why?

Other Discussion Starters

- Share your Rose and Thorn of the week
- How's your relationship with God right now?
- What has your prayer life looked like lately?
- What are good things that are going on in your life right now?
- What are the struggles you are dealing with right now?
- What would you like to get out of being in a small group this year?
- What is school like for you right now? What do you do during your lunch hour?
- What is one of your earliest memories?
- What is an early (or significant) memory you have when it comes to your faith?
- What is the biggest social media trend right now? What do you think about it?
- Of all the things you are learning right now, what do you think will be most valuable when you are an adult?
- Is it easy for you to ask for help? Why or why not?
- Do you think it is important to admit when you're wrong? Why or why not? How does admitting fault affect relationships?
- What is something that you really love & appreciate about your family?
- What do you feel are the most important things to living a great life?
- How do you cope with stress?

Questions You Can Use Most Anytime

- What point do you think the author is trying to make?
- What is the most difficult part of this for you?
- If you had to pick out your favorite part of this, what would it be and why?
- What part helped you understand God or how to relate to him, and how?
- What part helped you understand how God wants you to relate to others, and how?

Lectio Divina

A way to read through and meditate on Scripture

1. **Lectio:** Before beginning, ask the Holy Spirit to guide your heart and mind. Read through this passage slowly. Spend a few minutes thinking about the passage. Listen carefully for what God may be speaking to you.
2. **Meditatio:** Read through this passage again slowly. Place yourself in the scene – imagine the sounds and smells; perhaps you are a particular person in the scene. What word or phrase stood out to you?
3. **Oratio:** You move from your head to your heart. Turn over everything that stuck out to you in meditation to God in prayer. You can read the passage one more time, and with your word/phrase in mind, discuss it with God. What is He trying to say to you with this word/phrase? How does it relate to your life? What is He calling you to do? To change?
4. **Contemplatio:** Simply rest in the presence of God. To change? To give up?

Suggested Scripture to use [in no specific order]

- Look up the Sunday's readings and pray with the Psalm or Gospel
- Psalm 139: 1- 20 [God's Knowledge of Man]
- Matthew 6: 25 - 34 [Dependence on God]
- Matthew 14: 22-33 [Walking on Water]
- Mark 4: 1 - 20 [Parable of the Sower]
- John 17: 20 - 26 [Prayer of Jesus]
- Luke 15:11-32 [Prodigal Son]
- Matthew 7: 24-29
- Mark 8: 34 -38
- John 10:11-18 [the Good Shepherd]
- Pray with whatever scripture is related to the day's discussion