

7 Tips to Small Group Leadership

Prepare Yourself. Know the basics of your group (gender breakdown, talkers vs. non-talkers, who you will be leading with, etc.) There are additional aspects that you will come to learn the more you spend time with your group. Learn the names of the youth in your group and make an effort to learn their passions and interests. As you learn more about your group, it will help you in preparing your discussion each week.

Create a Welcoming Environment. Each group is fluid and ever-changing. Recognize the fact that you may have some visitors on any given week and work to make them feel connected as part of the group. Avoid put-downs and sarcasm during your discussion. Never alienate a visitor.

Pray. Constantly pray for the people of your group each week (on a daily basis). You are charged with being a spiritual guide for these youth; ask God to help you understand each youth and show you the way to lead them. Additionally, pray with your group. Not only are you displaying a great discipline, but you may be teaching someone how to pray.

Begin with the End in Mind. Every discussion should have a central key point. Determine what you are trying to get the youth to understand and build your discussion around that point. Sometimes, you may surprise yourself at how you reach the main point of a discussion.

Establish Boundaries. It is important to set up boundaries on participant behavior, time allowance, and the general discussion. There may be some topics that are very personal; you may feel the need to state the importance of respecting other's situation. You may need to establish time boundaries if you have a talkative group. Or you may need to establish boundaries if you have an excessively playful group.

Ask Good Questions. Avoid "yes" and "no" questions. When you are preparing for your discussion, prepare questions that promote discussion. Use questions that begin with "How" and "Why". Also, make sure your questions cannot be answered with one word. One good question can lead to 30 minutes of discussion.

Less is More. Don't feel that you have to fill in the quiet. Remember that you are there to point the youth to a relationship with Christ. There may be times where you don't know what to say or you may have to say "I don't know." It's better to leave the youth thinking and have them discover on their own than to provide all the answers for them. Additionally, make sure that you are not talking more than the youth. You may feel the need to talk more, but remember that you are taking away discussion time the more you talk. Don't be afraid to sit in silence.