

Small Groups

Why small groups? I Thess. 5:12-28

1. Care- small groups make a large crowd feel small- each teen gets attention. They are known and loved as individuals. Real change can happen here that wouldn't happen in a large group.
2. Growth- growth really happens in the small groups as it is an integral part of discipleship.
3. Wisdom- when an adult intersects with a young person- WISDOM.
4. Accountability- positive peer pressure and reinforcement.
5. Communication- in a small group dialogue happens, not just lecture.

Roles of the small group leader

1. Spiritual leader- walk with God, pray, be sensitive to the Spirit's leading
2. Shepherd- Galatians 6:1-3
3. Part of the youth ministry team
4. Teacher
5. Relational guide- the teens bring all sorts of emotional baggage (dejection, rejection, insecurity) or they could be high on life (ready to learn, following God). It can be hard to mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with those who rejoice AT THE SAME TIME lol.
 - Listen, and not just provide fast answers.

Spiritual leader practices, Psalm 145:17-18

1. Pray for the teens in your small group
2. Let God's Spirit guide you during your group time
 - When a teen has a crisis let the group minister to each other.
 - When a teen has a question about Christian living answer it instead of pushing the lesson that week.
3. Seek out the one who really needs you this week
4. Direct students towards the next step
5. Follow up with students who missed your group.

Smart small group practices- as much as we'd like to, we can't pour into everyone, Romans 12:8-10

1. Care for all- be available for each person in your small group to trust and seek advice from. You know their names and connect with them once a week in small groups. Our group size will be between 3-6 teens.
2. Pour into a few- each group will have "regulars" and some who only come have the time. The "regulars" will be the ones you pour yourself into on a weekly basis and who have the best potential to grow. Yes, we need to reach out to the ones who don't come, but you can only do that so much. Invest in the ones who come.

3. Duplicate yourself in one- Pray for God's guidance to show you the one who you are going to challenge. Challenge them to holiness and even to lead the group when you're gone. Help them grow. If you can, spend extra time on them outside of church to help them grow.

Why it's good from the teenager's point of view

- Community
- Fellowship
- Bible study
- Mentor

First night of small groups

- Students may be intimidated- they don't know you, it might be awkward at first.
- Students are hurting- hiding is easier for them than exposing the truth so from the start they will test to see if they can trust you, they will see if you will truly love them .
- Students need you- even if they act like they don't, they do. Some more than others, but they all need biblical instruction.

Elements to include

- Life stories
- Accountability- James 1:22-5
- Teaching
- Challenge- change will never happen unless students are challenged.
- Prayer

Teaching tips

- Be authentic
- Use object lessons
- Use humor
- Call them to action

Counseling tips, Hebrews 6:1-3

- Never promise to keep a secret, you may have to break confidence if there is harm, addiction, or abuse going on.
- Don't quick-fix.
- Get them in the Bible.
- Share from your own experience.
- Follow up if necessary.
- A lot of counseling is just active listening- if something big turns up refer it to the youth pastor.

How to encourage teens to take it to the next level spiritually

- Think about the individual- mull over in your head conversations you've had with them, their strengths and weaknesses, and how you think you could best communicate a challenge.
- Personalize a resource- think of a book or something that would be good for them to be exposed to and then offer to read it with them.
- Encourage big and little steps- a baby step is still a step, they may not think they are capable of something but if they feel you believe in them they will move forward.
- Serve together in a ministry.
- Follow up with them about the resource.

Above and beyond- RELATIONAL MINISTRY, I Peter 4:8-9

- Relational ministry happens when you take any step, as a leader, towards building a friendship with a member of your small group.
- The strategy here is to build strong relationships and create a reference point for students to look back on when life gets difficult. Those they've bonded with will be the ones they go to for help.
- **3 benefits of relational ministry:**
 1. Students who have a stronger relationship with a caring adult tend to stay and grow in the faith.
 2. It allows leaders to get a more holistic view of the students life.
 3. It opens doors for deeper discussions- access into REAL lives of teenagers.
- **3 messages of relational ministry**
 1. I care.
 2. You matter to me.
 3. I'm proud of you.