

# studentGROUPS

## THE 5 ESSENTIALS OF A SMALL GROUP LEADER

### Fill-Up First

This is perhaps the most vital of our five essentials. Prioritize your own personal relationship with Jesus over anything and everything. If you aren't growing in your faith relationship, it isn't likely you'll be proficient or equipped to lead others in this way. Effective small group leading means you do so out of an overflow of your own love, faith and discipline.

*Do you pray for your students regularly?  
Is your heart right for ministry?  
Are you putting in the time to be fully prepared each week?*

### Create a Safe Place

We want our groups to be a safe place for students to be themselves, share their lives and grow together. Creating a safe environment that values acceptance, honesty and confidentiality starts with you. Being honest and real can be difficult in any environment and student ministry is no different. It's going to be intimidating at times, but simply being who you are is vital to your group's success. Saying "I don't know" is not a sign of failure, but of honesty and vulnerability. When your students see you being open in this way, they're more likely to do the same.

*Does your group take time to bring needs and concerns to the Lord?  
Are struggles and sins being shared and hard questions being answered by the group?  
Have you provided a comfortable, safe atmosphere?*

### Partner with Parents

Connect with the adults in your students' lives and keep them involved and informed. Regardless of what we may think of someone's parents, they are the Biblical authority in their student's life. As a Small Group Leader, it is your job to encourage this relationship by whatever means possible. Just as you are not parentally responsible for a student, you are also not responsible for the student's spiritual development. That's a job for Mom or Dad. However, while the weight of their faith is not on your shoulders, God has chosen you as someone who can encourage, guide and model His love for students and parents alike.

*Have you connected with the parents regularly?  
Are you asking the parents how you can pray for their child?  
Are you asking them to pray for your group?*

### Be Present and Active

Being present and active means showing up, not just on Wednesday nights, but in the life of your students. Show up consistently, even if your student doesn't, be intentional about reaching out to them during the week. Meet students where their life is happening, their basketball game, their piano recital, their favorite mall or movie theater. Invite them into your life, have them help you out around the house, or introduce them to your favorite hobby. Actions speak louder than words. It makes sense that simply showing up speaks volumes to your students of your commitment to do life with them. Doing so creates trust, accelerates community and builds common ground between you and them.

*Have you connected with your students through email, text or social media?  
Are you making plans to attend a game, performance or get coffee with your students?  
Are you connecting with all of the students on your roster, not just the ones who attended group?*

### Celebrate the Wins

As a leader, it's vital to view your role in the lives of your students as a marathon, not a sprint. Our mission is to see students take "large or small steps toward Christlikeness" and we want to celebrate those wins together. Are you seeing what God is doing in the lives of your students, big or small? You may not see large steps, like a student saved every week, but look for those small steps, a student inviting a friend or praying for the first time and celebrate how God is at work in your group.

*Are the students applying the Word of God in their life?  
What steps are being taken to encourage students to live out the truths being taught?  
How have you celebrated life change in your group in the last two weeks?*