

Bridging the Gap: Small Group Training

What are Small Groups:

Small groups are groups that bridge the gap between crowd type of events and a more intimate setting where discipleship can truly take place. Every program plays a role in the discipleship process, but small groups are where the life on life part takes place.

How do we “Bridge” the gap?

Biblical Teaching

Teaching is an important part of discipleship. Wisdom cannot exist without knowledge. If we are going to impact students we must teach the truth found in God’s word!! It is important not to forsake teaching for relationship. Relationship is important, but it is not more important than truth.

Reach the Lost

Before Jesus ascended to heaven He left the church (us) one task, that task is to make disciples of all nations. Reaching the lost is not something thrown in to sound good or to make the acronym work. It is what we do as Christians and as the body of Christ.

Impact the World

Jesus said “whoever is first will be last, and whoever is last will be first.” Christians are to serve the world. Some would call this servant evangelism. Be last by serving the world. It is important for small groups to meet the needs of the world as they are able.

Demonstrate God’s love

Small groups must be a place where people are accepted, loved, and encouraged. People, especially students want to belong to something. Demonstrating God’s love helps them to belong.

Get Real

Teenagers are kind of like Super Man. They can see through the cleverest disguise. If you are not real with them you will quickly lose their respect and their ear. You will not be able to minister to them. They need to see you face struggles too. However it is important to show good judgment in what you reveal about your own struggles.

Edify the body of Christ

This is the group which needs to feed each other. They need to challenge each other to live out the truths found in God’s word. That means getting involved in ministry, working out their salvation, becoming holy and sanctified, and becoming broken before God.

Developing CANS in your small group

Community

Hang Time (Fellowship and Ice Breakers)

Adoration

Talking to God (prayer), Worship (can be music, but doesn't have to be)

Nurture

God Speaking (God's word)

Serve

Group Ministry (Service projects, ministry involvement, peer care)

What does not happen in Small Groups

- Put Downs – This is sometimes difficult. It seems like the American culture lends itself to put downs as a way of communicating and being humorous. We need to go the extra mile to make sure students feel comfortable being authentic in the group.
- Counseling – We are not a counseling service, and we are not trained as professional counselors. Some counseling will naturally take place as we enter into relationships with students. That said, when issues come up that require significant counseling we need to get a professional involved. What we can do is listen, comfort, and encourage. We can also point people to the word of God as a guide.
- Domination – It is vitally important to keep the group from being dominated by one or two people. This gets harder as the group gets bigger.

What does happen in Small Groups

- Love and acceptance – If we cannot love and accept each other we can not minister to each other. (1 John 3:11ff)
- Honest communication – In order to meet each others needs we must communicate openly and honestly.
- Numerical Growth – It's not about numbers!! It is about the people those numbers represent. We want to enlarge the kingdom of God. There will be specific opportunities for outreach and evangelism.
- Multiplication – More groups means more people, as well as more opportunity for student leadership.
- Peer Care – Jesus said, “whatever you have done to the least of these you have done to me”
- Follow up – People need to know we care for them, and want to minister to them. This is one of the most important ways we can begin doing that.

Leadership in Small Groups

Small Groups is one of the best places to begin developing leadership. The question is how do we do this?

- Identify students who have the potential to lead.
 - We are not looking for a student whose character is flawless or even who is already spiritual mature. We are looking for students who fit the following description:
 - Available: They need to be available to be at small groups and to be disciplined.
 - Faithful: They need to be reliable. That doesn't mean they will never need encouragements or reminders.
 - Teachable: If they already know it all, they will be of little use. Most students are teachable if they are approached in the right way. Some are not.
 - Responsive: Students need to be willing to be corrected and have the ability to respond well to the correction.
- Begin discipling the student.
 - Start with getting to know the student better.
 - There are a variety of discipleship materials available, that can be used to help them grow.
- Give the student small leadership responsibilities
 - They can lead the prayer time
 - Call everyone about a specific event
 - Etc...
- Give the student larger responsibilities
 - Allow them to lead a portion of the study
 - Allow them to lead the whole study
 - Let them plan a small group get together