



THE BASICS OF SMALL GROUPS

Why Small Groups?

They work!

Jesus spent stacks of time speaking to big crowds. These were the times he evangelised. But he spent a lot more time focusing on 12 men (and 3 of them even more closely!). It was during this time that he spoke about what it meant to know and follow Him. Jesus knew that a small group was an effective way to impact people's lives and build into their faith. They work! Just have a look at those who were in Jesus' smaller group ... and how they ended up living for Him!

Community

Small groups help create a relaxed atmosphere where campers (and yourself!) feel like they can be themselves. They provide a chance for campers to open up and help leaders and youth grow closer. They learn that there are people that they can trust and rely on. They also allow leaders to very intentionally direct the discussion and encourage campers to pursue God more.

Before your group meets

Pray

Take time out to pray for your group during the lead up to camp. Ask that God would show you where He wants the group to go. Pray that your small group would be enthusiastic about the time and that God would open their hearts to His spirit. Once you're on camp get together with your co-leader to pray through the names of your campers (even if you haven't met them yet!)

Prepare

Make sure you know what the speaker's sessions are on make yourself familiar with the passages that are being spoken on. Ensure that you have thought through the questions provided. Try and predict some of the questions that kids might come up with and be prepared to answer them. Meet with your co-leader to talk about how your group will work.

Be Practical

Find a place for your small group where campers will be comfortable and with few distractions. Being in shade and near a drink fountain is a good plan for when it heats up. Bring some treats because eating together helps people to relax and full stomachs reduce distractions. (Ice blocks go down a treat on a hot day!)

Leading Your Small Group

Create an atmosphere of acceptance

Use name games on Day 1, and maybe repeat them on the following days to make sure campers know each other's names. Begin with an icebreaker or some easy leading questions and affirm responses. This will give campers confidence to answer harder questions, which they might otherwise avoid for fear of getting wrong.

You're not an authority

Don't be afraid to admit that you don't know the answer to all their questions. It is fantastic for them to see that you are still learning yourself. Offer to find out the answer and tell them the following week.

Be aware of hijackers

Some youth are prone to hijacking small group discussion time. Be aware of them and work on tactics to disarm them. These might include sitting opposite them so that you can keep an eye on them better or encouraging them to chase you up about other topics that interest them during supper.

When your group first meets

Let them know your expectations (some examples are below)

- What is said in this group stays within this group
- No paying each other out
- There is no such thing as a dumb question
- You don't have to say anything if you don't want to
- Only one person talks at a time
- Your opinion counts

Set the standard

Be aware that your behaviour impacts on the youth. For example, if you are talking over others, how can you ask someone not to do the same? You're being watched, perhaps even more than if it were a larger activity.

Support and back up your co-leader

If you have a co-leader make sure you're clear on each other's expectations for the small group, and that you back each other up on decisions and managing behaviour.

Questions

Give your group the opportunity to write down any questions they have. This will help show where they are at and help guide future discussion.

Closure

Sit in a circle. Give each person a sheet of paper and ask them to write their name on the top of the paper. Place all of the papers in the middle of the circle and have each person take a sheet from the centre (not their own) and write one positive word, or sentence, about that person at the bottom of the sheet. Fold the paper up to cover up the word. Return the sheet back in the middle and repeat until the name is the only thing showing on the paper and then give back to the owners.

Pair up with someone. Each person explains something that they have learnt they are good at (or a part of their personality that has developed in a positive way), and then they do the same for their partner.

Pray for each camper individually.

Consider taking each of your campers to the book store to buy them something of their choice. (Be sure to set a limit!)