

Small Group Leader Guide

A practical guide for creating safe conversations, building trust, and leading students toward meaningful spiritual growth.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

01

Read together

Let your leaders read the guide before the conversation.

02

Talk honestly

Use the prompts to name where the ministry is today.

03

Choose one move

Leave with a next step your team can actually take.

START THE CONVERSATION

What would help our students feel more known in their small group?

SECTION 01

Why small groups matter

Large gatherings can create moments. Small groups make room for students to be known, ask questions, build relationships, study Scripture, pray honestly, and put faith into practice together.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- + Prioritize presence over performance.
- + Create space for questions and honest conversation.
- + Build relationships intentionally over time.

SECTION 02

Create a safe community

Students open up when leaders protect their dignity and make the room feel welcoming. Safety is built through consistent, ordinary choices.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- + Learn names, stories, interests, and prayer requests.
- + Never embarrass a student publicly.
- + Invite quieter students to contribute without pressure.

SECTION 03

Understand the group

Groups often move through stages: orientation, exploration, power and control, trust, and change. Pay attention to energy, body language, participation, conflict, communication patterns, and student engagement.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- + Build comfort during orientation.
- + Encourage connection as students begin opening up.
- + Protect unity when personalities or conflict emerge.

SECTION 04

Guide the discussion

Prepare beforehand, listen carefully, ask follow-up questions, allow silence, encourage quieter students, and keep the conversation on track. You are guiding discussion, not preaching another sermon.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- + Ask open questions and listen for what is underneath the first answer.
- + Redirect dominant or distracting voices with patience.
- + Follow up when a student shares something meaningful.

MAKE THE NEXT STEP CLEAR

Choose one change your team can make this week. A simple, shared practice is more useful than a perfect plan that never begins.

CHOOSE A NEXT MOVE

Team decision: _____

Who will carry it forward: _____

When we will return to it: _____