

# Student Ministries

## Small Group Leader Handbook



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# Small Group Leader Expectations

1. Pray daily for you small group students.
  - Keep the extra attendance sheet with you.
2. Continue to grow in your faith and **look to your small group coach for support and encouragement.**
  - Ask for accountability with your small group coach.
3. Make 1 contact a month either an e-mail, phone call, letter etc. to your students.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> phone call make sure you talk to their **parents** to let them who you are. Make a connection with their parents first so you can work together. Example – “Hi, I am (your name here!). I am Joe’s small group leader from Parkview Christian Church and I wanted to introduce myself and let you know I will be his leader for this year. Do you have any questions about small groups? Ok, if there is anything I can help with here is my phone #. Thanks, it was nice to meet you and please stop by the church so I can meet you if you get the chance.”
  - Encourage them parent and student.
  - Ask them how it is going? Is there anything you can help them with?
  - Keep them accountable.
4. Try to get together with your group outside of church at least once a semester.
  - Make sure you get parent permission and let your small group coach know where you are going.
5. Be with your kids ***during Worship and Teaching Time.***
6. Be Real and show them you struggle too.
7. Recruit + Train = Disciple.
8. If you cannot make a night, call your coach.
9. When you are in doubt of what to do remember **“NO ONE STANDS ALONE.”**
  - No one in worship stands alone.
  - No one in small group stands alone.
  - No adult or student stands alone.
  - No one who comes to student ministries for the 1<sup>st</sup> time or 8<sup>th</sup> time stands alone.

## Small Group Coaching Expectations

1. Pray for small group leaders and continue to grow in your faith.
2. Make 1 contact every month either e-mail, phone, one-on-one, letter in the mail.
  - Encourage and get feedback from them.
  - See how many students they have. Do you need to find another leader to split the group? Our target small group is 4-10 students with 2 leaders (at least 1 adult that is 18).
  - Keep them accountable in contacting students.
  - Be prepared with lessons so you can answer any questions.
3. Encourage small group leaders on Tues/Wed. night and be available .
4. Encourage, support and give constructive advice/criticism/ideas to Pastor.
  - Ideas and solutions to improve .
  - Give ideas on material we should cover.
  - Pray for Jr. High and High School pastors.
  - Cast Vision for next year or being proactive in our growth spiritually and numerically.
5. Make at least one contact with the Jr. High pastor about groups.
6. Recruit + Train = Disciple.
7. When you are in doubt of what to do remember “NO ONE STANDS ALONE.”
  - No one in worship stands alone.
  - No one in small group stands alone.
  - No adult or student stands alone .
  - No one who comes to student ministries for the 1<sup>st</sup> time or 8<sup>th</sup> time stands alone.

# How to Prepare for Your Small Group

- Pray for God's guidance and for each of your students.
- Read through the study, jot down notes, and then study the scriptures in detail.
- Apply the study to your group.
- Create ways to be interactive with your group: act out the scriptures, have them read out loud, have a quiz, split them in groups so they have to teach their peers, write it on a dry eraser board, shoot baskets, etc.
- Get the study in your head well enough it speaks through your heart.

## Small Group Helps

- If you are in a great discussion or if someone needs to talk in your group, it is ok to skip game time. Just let the pastor know where you will be.
- Never be alone with a student.
- If someone from the opposite sex wants to talk to you direct them to the same gender leader so they can talk.
- If there is a life threatening issue in a small group – YOU MUST TELL THE PASTOR IMMEDIATELY!
- Confidentiality is a must but if they are in danger or a danger to themselves you need to contact their parents, let your coach know and pastor.
- Attend the extra-curricular activities.
- Take your group out for a night.
- Send postcards or letters.
- Keep up with them on Myspace and Facebook.
- Help the kids be a servant in Christ by organizing or attending a service project event during the semester.

## Top 10 Secrets of Being a Group Leader

1. **It's all about the relationship.** You should never be concerned about the amount of knowledge you do or do not have. Kids appreciate it more that you are investing your time in them.
2. **God loves tangents.** It does not matter if you finish the lesson or even stay on track. Some of your most in-depth discussions will occur when you allow your group to get off track. Don't be afraid to cut it off though if the discussion turns into something totally irrelevant. Just simply say, "OK, now back to the lesson..."
3. **Prepare!** If you are prepared, you can prompt the students when they are having trouble answering the questions, which in turn will lead to a better discussion.
4. **As sure as the seasons change...** so will the dynamics of your group from week to week. If one week your group is as bleak as a January day in Chicago, don't worry; it will most likely be different the following week.
5. **Where did you go to seminary?** Oh yeah, none of us did, so we shouldn't expect to know all the answers. There is nothing wrong with saying "I don't know, but I'll get back to you on that." Kids actually would rather have the honesty than a leader pretending to know everything. It can also help kids new to Bible study feel less intimidated when they realize that they don't have to know all the answers either.
6. **Play along.** In the event that there is an icebreaker or game being played, join in with the fun. It takes the edge off for the kids who don't want to appear "un-cool" and you may find it enjoyable to act like a kid again.
7. **Sushi anyone?** Reach beyond one weekday night if you can. If this makes you nervous, start small. Aim for once a semester that you try to contact your students at home, attend one of their extra-curricular events, or have a group outing. Second semester, try it twice. You will find that it really deepens the relationships within the group. By the way, Mo's Kitchen is right across the street from Parkview and much cheaper than sushi.
8. **Be prepared to grow.** These students have a lot to teach us as well. Don't talk down to them because of their age or assume that your role is to be the giver of knowledge. Be open to learning something new and growing deeper yourself.
9. **Remember your ABCs.** A = Attention. B = Belonging. C = Care. They really do want adult attention. Second, remember some kids want to "belong" before they are willing to "believe." We want this to be the place where they belong. Third, care about them as an individual person regardless of where they are coming from.
10. **Pray!** God has as much of an agenda as Parkview does, but His is a little more important. So pray for guidance before each meeting so that He can guide you.

# 12 Ways to Lead Teenagers into Lively and Purposeful Discussions

By Laurie Polich

## Starting Discussions and Keeping Them Going

1. Encourage your students to verbalize their views and feelings, however weird they may be.
2. Be grateful for every answer – **positive feedback**.
3. It is okay to push their thoughts and make them think – **don't be satisfied with the first response to your questions**.
4. Keep the discussion **moving**.
5. **Don't be afraid of silence**. Long pauses only add pressure for someone to speak, and they eventually will. Once one person speaks up, usually the rest of the group will follow suit.
6. Turn difficult questions back to the group – let them figure it out together – **we do not have to give them the answers**.
7. **Stay flexible** and sensitive to the group's needs.

## Common Mistakes of a Small Group Leader

1. Do not be **TOO TALKATIVE** and monopolize the discussion.
2. Do not be **INSECURE** – the students need stability and confidence in their leaders in order to trust and rely on them.
3. Do not be **UNPREPARED** – All of us know we are more confident when we know what we are talking about. Teenagers pick up on this really quickly.
4. Do not be **INFLEXIBLE** – Sometimes your group is going to need to blow off steam and is not ready for the lesson yet. Try to make the most out of your time and pick your spots to hit hard issues that need to be discussed.
5. Do not be their **FRIEND!** They have plenty of those. Be somebody they respect and be stable so when they really need someone, they will come to you.

## How You Will Get Results for Your Night

1. Pray.
2. Read the lesson before hand and try to attend the training session.
3. Take notes – add your own questions and thoughts.
4. Pray some more.

# **DISCIPLINE**

Students need and want to be disciplined. Some students don't receive it at home so this can be a challenge sometimes! Having the students come up with a small group covenant is a great way to establish what the students want from each other, from themselves, and from you. They are going to look to you to so if you don't follow through on what you are saying, you will lose credibility. **Remember to focus on the behavior and not the student.**

*Psalm 94: 12-13a says, "Blessed is the man you discipline, O Lord, the man you teach from your law; you grant him relief from days of trouble..."(NIV)*

Parkview Small Groups use a "three-strike" rule:

**The first strike** is given by the small group leader (e.g. multiple group disruptions, texting, talking to neighbor, interrupting leader or other students etc).

**The second strike** is given by the small group leader and the Energy/Relevant Coach will talk to the student as well. The small group leader will call the parents and if necessary the Coach will too after multiple warnings (e.g. multiple group disruptions, texting, talking to neighbor, interrupting leader or other students etc).

**If the third strike** is given the parents, student, small group leader, coach and youth pastor will meet to discuss a "Behavior Agreement."

The three-strike rule applies to one small group session, meaning that the strikes do not carry over from week to week. There are limited situations when the three strike rule will not apply.

- If there is a threat of harm to self or to others.
- Serious conduct disorder (stealing, verbal abuse, disregard of directives) ~ Repeated strike two situations with same student ~ leader/Coach discretion (after talking with Staff).

It is important that you develop a relationship with student parents and involve them in any issues regarding their child. **Parents are more likely to be supportive if they are aware of the issue up front rather than receiving a phone call after the student has received the third strike.**

## **POTENTIAL DANGER ZONE: *Boundaries***

The small group time is not about you and you should not use this as a personal mentoring time. This is not to say that you cannot share things that are going on in your life that you would like prayer for but remember you are dealing with students and not adults. There are things that they do not need to know and should not know.

Examples of going over the boundaries would be:

- Daily and extensive phone calls.
- E-mails every night.
- Graphic details of your past.

It is also your responsibility as a leader to let your leader know if you hear of another leader doing this.

## When a Student Has Been Abused

When teaching or leading a small group, it is almost inevitable that students will share their life's struggles with you. They will view you as a person they trust and can open up to. Within these heart-to-heart conversations, there may be a student who shares some things that are hard to hear. These may include but are not limited to: physical abuse (by adults in their life or boyfriends/girlfriends), sexual abuse, harming themselves (cutting, bulimia/anorexia, or alcohol/drug abuse), or harming others.

Below is a brief guide to deal with such a situation. The key is to know that you don't have to be a counselor, a lot of times students just need someone to listen. So listen, and listen intently, but make sure that the students knows that you are required by law to tell Sean or Jason.

- Listen. Don't make assumptions.
- Let them know you are there for them.
- Tell them you have to report this to Sean, Adam or Jason.
- You, by law, must report any alleged abuse or a student that has talked about harming themselves or anyone else.
- Do not handle this on your own. Please contact Sean or Jason immediately.

## Icebreaker Questions and Activities

**Here are a few questions you could open up each session with:**

When I was little, I wanted to be...

The best thing in my life right now is...

I absolutely will not...

If I have a rough day at school, when I come home, I...

If I only had one more day to live, I would...

When I'm 30, I'd like to be doing...

The stupidest thing I've ever done was...

I usually pray to God about...

One bad habit I have is...

My first pet was...

If I were a contestant on "Survivor", my one luxury item would be...

When it comes to doing chores, I absolutely hate to...

What I remember most from my family's first big vacation is...

If I could ask my parents anything, it would be...

The animal that best describes my personality is...

Imagine your house is on fire. You only have 5 minutes to collect the most important possessions in your house and your family and pets are already safe. Jot down what you would save and then share with your group.

Imagine your dream date. Who would it be? Where would you go? How will you get there? Are there any gifts that would be given or received? Share with the group.

As a group, come up with a list of 15 problems that face teenagers today. Then discuss how you would rank them from 1 (greatest) to 15 (least). What are some possible solutions?

Individually, write down the top 5 things you like to do the most. Share those with the group and find out what you have in common.

As a group, come up with a list of the 10 worst jobs.

Get into groups of two. Have each pair decide which items they would salvage after being shipwrecked that would help them stay alive. Come together and share, then vote on the pair most likely to survive.

# How to Find Out Where Your Group is Spiritually

At the beginning of the year, you will want to start to get a feel of where each individual is in their spiritual walk. That way, you can tailor your questions to fit their individual needs and experiences.

## **The Direct Approach:**

- When did you become a Christian? Can you share your testimony?
- What do you think it means to be a Christian? (Do they understand Jesus?)
- Are you 100% sure you are going to heaven when you die? Why? (Assurance)
- What things are you doing to help you grow as a Christian? (Disciplines)
- Describe your relationship with Jesus.
- How has your life been changed by your relationship with Jesus?

## **The Indirect Approach:**

- What would you tell your friends that our church believes?
- If you had the opportunity to tell your friends how to become a Christian, what would you say?
- Can a murderer get to Heaven? Is there anyone that can't?
- When is it okay for a student to lie or cheat? Why?

## **A Bonus Question:**

- Why is it important that Jesus rose from the dead?

# What Do I Say?

## Assistance with the Big Theological Questions

### God loves us more than anything...

- Genesis 1:26-27 – He made us in His image.
- Genesis 3:8 – God walked with us in the garden every day because He wants to be in a relationship with us.

### We messed it up...

- Genesis 3:4-6 – We sinned. To sin means to disobey God or to cause somebody else to slip up.

### There's a price to pay for our mistakes...

- Romans 6:23 – Dying is the price we pay for disobeying God but God gives us eternal life through Jesus.

### God sent His son to pay the price for us...

- Philippians 2:8 – Jesus died on the cross to pay for our mistakes.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21 – Jesus took all our sins away.

### Now we can live forever with God...

- Romans 6:23b – God gives us life forever because He wants to, not because we earned it. But we can respond to it.

## HOW CAN I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

**Hear...** Romans 10:17

**Confess and Believe...** Romans 10:9-10

**Repent – Ask for forgiveness...** Acts 2:38

**Be Baptized...** Acts 2:38

**Live the Life...** Colossians 3:17 and Philippians 2:12-13

# Valuable Books and Websites

## Books

- [Celebration of Disciplines](#) by Richard Foster.
- [My First Two Years in Youth Ministry](#) by Doug Fields.
- [Purpose Driven Youth Ministry](#) by Doug Fields.
- [Handbook on Counseling Youth](#) by Josh McDowell.
- [Youth Builder](#) by Jim Burns.
- [The Be-With Factor](#) by Bo Boshers.

## Websites

- [www.HollywoodJesus.com](http://www.HollywoodJesus.com) (books, music, movie reviews)
- [www.YouthSpecialties.com](http://www.YouthSpecialties.com) (Over 60 categories of links. It provides short descriptions of each site and a marker to let you know what's new.)
- [www.TheSource4YM.com](http://www.TheSource4YM.com) (29 recommended sites on youth ministry.)
- [www.RelevantMagazine.com](http://www.RelevantMagazine.com) (Current issues, music and movie reviews)
- [www.EgadIdeas.com](http://www.EgadIdeas.com) (Games)
- [www.YouthPastor.com](http://www.YouthPastor.com) (Thousands of sites of interest to youth pastors, helpfully categorized by 18 main topics and 111 sub-topics. Brief descriptions of each site.)
- [www.YouthMinistry.com](http://www.YouthMinistry.com) (Over 40 categories and well organized.)
- [www.Youthwork.co.uk](http://www.Youthwork.co.uk) (42 categories with lots of great links. Each topic is laid out in more discussion format.)
- [www.Youth-Ministry.info](http://www.Youth-Ministry.info) (While much less comprehensive than either Youth Work or Youth Specialties, Youth-Ministry.info seems to be more selective and gives more of their personal input on each site. 29 categories in all.)

# Student Profile

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Birthday \_\_\_\_\_ AIM \_\_\_\_\_

Facebook \_\_\_\_\_ MySpace \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' Names \_\_\_\_\_

## A Couple of Questions

How long have you been coming to Parkview? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you like about Small Groups? \_\_\_\_\_

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What would you say it means to be a Christian? \_\_\_\_\_

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List your extra-curricular activities and the season that they take place if applicable:

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# **Small Group Covenant**

## **The Purpose**

To deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ, as we strive to be His disciples. Through the bond of a small, united support group, we will work at building our commitment to Christ and the church.

## **The Plan**

We will meet weekly for prayer, study, and relationship building.

We will make strong efforts to get to know one another on a personal level, functioning together in trust, and Christ-like love.

We will respect one another and the group at large. This will require not bringing cell phones or homework to group, listening to each other's ideas, and participating in the lesson plan.

We will make strong efforts to get to know our Lord and Savior on a personal level. We will do this by striving to pray and read our Bibles daily.

We will weekly ask the members of our group if they are praying, reading the Bible, and getting involved in worship services and youth group activities. As a group, we may decide on other life areas to hold each other accountable (For example: scripture memorization, service to others, reaching non-believers, purity of mind, purity of relationships, etc.).

## **The Promise**

I understand that the purpose of Small Groups is to deepen my relationship with Christ. I know that my Small Group is a commitment and I will do my best to keep it a top priority. Through it, I hope to grow and mature in Christ and help the others in the group to do the same. I will make the commitment to be a part of a Small Group for the next year.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_