

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

If you want kids to feel safe enough to share themselves deeply with others in their small group, then it's up to you to establish trust and confidentiality. Some small-group leaders use a written or verbal agreement, committing members to that whatever is shared in the group stays in the group. They don't tell their parents or their boyfriends the particulars of what they hear in their small group, and you don't tell your spouse. If what you hear from a student during a meeting of your small group makes you think that a one-to-one talk would be appreciated or helpful, it is no breach of confidence for you to meet with the student later that week and talk personally.

There are critical exceptions to this rule. If a student confides anything that even hints at physical or sexual abuse, Relig is required by state laws to report that information to law enforcement authorities. Inform Tony or Marie immediately if you hear of self-destructive or addictive behavior of students in your small group. We will help the young people connect with resources.

If confidence is broken in your group, deal with it immediately so that trust can be reestablished. Meet privately with the group members who were involved, either individually or together, depending on circumstances. Your goal is to help kids learn when to share personal information with a third party, and when to keep such information to oneself.

## **ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS** **QUESTIONS THAT GET RESPONSES**

Whether they're personal questions, topical questions, or faith questions, the way you ask them can make the difference between lively small, group discussions and dead ones.

### **1. Avoid yes or no questions.**

Stay away from questions that begin with "Is there ... ?", "Are they ... ?" or "Do you think ... ?" Instead ask more why questions. Run your questions by a friend before your small-group meeting and see if they're dead-end yes-or-no questions, or if they provoke exploration, opinions, and discussion.

### **2. Don't ask questions that assume an answer.**

Asking "How does Jesus show his anger in this passage?" assumes that a) Jesus is angry, and b) there is a right answer you want your kids to discover. The problem with such questions is that they tell students too much without leaving students room to discover answers and insights themselves. A better question: "What is Jesus feeling in this passage? Why do you think he feels this way?" Leads to a much more interesting discussion.

### **3. Write questions that are relevant to your kids.**

Some good questions will come to your mind during the meeting, but spend some thinking time before the meeting- about where your kids are, what their maturity level is, what in the session is particularly relevant to your students and thoughtfully write out most of your questions. Kids are more likely to talk if questions clearly reflect issues in their own lives- and what they learn from the discussions will be more valuable to their spiritual journeys.

### **4. Learn how and when to ask direct questions.**

Direct questions may lead to meaningful dialogue, but only with the right people at the right time. The wrong time to ask direct and personal questions is probably the small group's first meeting. Try the less threatening and open it up to the group in general instead of directing the question to an individual. As your small group grows in trust and openness between members, you can gradually use more direct questions to challenge your kids personally.

### **5. Ask questions that deal with feelings as well as facts.**

Your goal is to engage your students' hearts as well as their minds. It's usually safer to deal with issues objectively rather than personally. Yet the longer your small group meets, the deeper and more personal your questions can become.