

I Signed Up for What?! Five Frequently Asked Questions About Leading a Small Group

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Let's face it. As new or seasoned leaders, our faults and insecurities sometimes cast shadows of doubt on our confidence to lead well. We think to ourselves: *Who am I to lead a small group?* Uncertainties fill our mind and we may even wonder why we signed up in the first place...

Here are five common questions when it comes to leading and growing a small group:

1. What if I don't feel confident? Leading a small group isn't about your ability. It's about what God will do through you as the group's facilitator. When you realize it's a team effort, your overall view of leading will change. You'll start to feel confident because you're in community and participating with others. Above all, when you trust in Christ to help you lead and guide the discussion, those feelings of inadequacy will slowly fade away.

2. How do I help my group really connect with each other? Getting your group to connect and gel on an authentic level has a lot to do with how you choose to open up. If you lead with a heart of authenticity, your group will feel the freedom to do the same. If you pretend like you don't have struggles or sin issues, your group will never be vulnerable and spiritual growth will remain stagnant.

Early on, share your story and give your group snapshots into your life and who you are. Be honest about your struggles or sin issues. Ask icebreaker questions to the whole group. Love on them well and carve out social time together. And before you know it, you'll be amazed at how naturally your group gels as a whole.

3. How do I deal with awkward silences after I ask a question? Silence can sometimes indicate that you need to restate the question better. Launch questions that get people talking about themselves. If your group still isn't opening up, set aside Bible study and discussion time for a few weeks and provide ways for your group to get to know each other in different settings.

Silence could also mean you need to practice more patience. Wait for about 20 seconds after you ask a question for your group to reflect and think. If your group still doesn't answer, make eye contact with someone directly. i.e.: "John, what do you think about...?" You can also prompt the discussion by being the first to answer your own question.

4. What if I don't know an answer to a question? Consider bouncing that question right back for your group to answer. Let them know you don't know the answer but are interested in their feedback. Tell them you'd be glad to research that one later and get back to them. Being open allows for your group to see that you're all on the journey together. Tough questions, even though intimidating, can carry your group into new

depths spiritually and relationally.

5. What do I do when there's conflict? Even though it's really tempting, don't run away from the inevitable conflict. Bring it to the surface by going to that person alone. Find out what's driving the conflict (Prov. 20:5). Is something triggering a selfish attitude, a constant need to talk, or a critical tone of voice? God speaks about what to do with conflict all throughout Scripture (Matt. 18). Aim for healthy conflict that will build community and not tear it down.