

SMALL  GROUP

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

Let's Talk About . . . What to do when adults disagree / Week 1

BEFORE GROUP

BOTTOM LINE

Jesus shows us how to love people even when there is tension.

SCRIPTURE

Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, "What do you want with her?" or "Why are you talking to her" (John 4:27 NLT)?

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another (Galatians 5:13-15 NLT).

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students recognize how they might feel or react when the adults in their lives disagree and to point them toward following Jesus' lead to love others despite division and tension.

THINK ABOUT THIS

As you lead the conversation this week, keep in mind that students will be coming to it from all kinds of backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs. Some may live in environments where adults never fight or disagree in front of them, while others may be surrounded by conflict at home. Some may have parents or caretakers who speak openly and passionately about politics, religion, and other hot-button issues, while some may have little clue about how the adults in their lives feel about those things. Some may have been on the receiving end of hatred and hurt from authority figures in their lives, while others may be following the lead of the adults in front of them. Regardless, do your best to not villainize any viewpoint that the parents, guardians, or adults in your students' lives may hold. You don't want to create division between the student and their authority figures. The hope for this conversation isn't to convince students that those adults in their lives who argue or disagree are bad or wrong. Rather, it's to help them begin to think critically about the viewpoints they hear from anyone and to respond to differences, disagreements, and division the way Jesus would: with love.

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the content as needed, and don't feel like you need to complete everything listed.

DURING GROUP

DO THIS (EXPERIENCE 1)

Ask your students a harmless, light-hearted question that prompts them to choose a side. Feel free to select topics relevant to your context and students. We've included a list below to get you started:

- Which is better: burgers or tacos?
- Does pineapple belong on pizza?
- Cold showers are better than hot showers.
- Would you rather go on a hike or to a movie?
- What skill is more valuable: creativity or logic?

Once your students pick a side, have them defend their position and monitor how the conversation slips into tension. Use this experience to lead into the following Small Group discussion questions.

DISCUSS THIS

1. What hot topics or hot takes typically divide middle schoolers?
2. What about adults? What hot takes or hot topics typically divide the grown-ups in your life?
3. Thinking specifically about politics, why do you think that topic tends to divide people?
4. How can disagreements like that cause tension...
 - a. In your home?
 - b. For your family?
 - c. In yourself?
5. How does it make you feel when the adults in your life can't seem to get along? How do you usually respond?
6. What can we learn from Jesus' example about how to respond to tension or disagreements?
7. What do you think it means to "love your neighbor as yourself"?
8. The next time you face a disagreement or division, what's one step you can take to love your neighbor as yourself?

DO THIS (EXPERIENCE 2)

Lead your students in praying for their city, nation, and world. Consider finding out who your elected officials are and pray for them by name. Be careful to not insert any political opinions you may have, as this is a time to demonstrate for students how they can love, encourage, and pray for people even if they have different viewpoints, political leanings, or beliefs from their own.
