

How to Lead a Small Group at Phoenix Fest



One of our speakers' goals is to set the table for you to have great discussions with your students. Each session talk is like an appetizer for the main course. The main course is the small group time you'll have with your students at the end of each talk. We don't view these small group times as a time-filler, rather this is the time when deep discussions happen and life change begins. With this in mind, here are a few tips to lead a productive small group discussion...

TREAT IT WITH IMPORTANCE - Your students will know if this small group time is important to you by how you treat it. Give it time and space. While great conversations can happen as you walk, small groups will need a bit more time than the time it takes to get back to your campsite. Find a space that keeps distractions to a minimum, and sit facing each other.

KEEP IT SMALL - About 8-12 students is about ideal. The hope is that every student, who feels comfortable, will share personally during each small group opportunity to process what they heard and experienced.

KEEP QUIET - This is an opportunity for your students to share... so let them! Speak as little as you need to keep the conversation going and on track.

SILENCE IS OK - It takes students about 10-12 seconds to process their thoughts... sometimes we can hijack this time because the silence feels awkward. By allowing silence and waiting for the answer, it trains students to know that you expect an answer - and won't just eventually 'tell them the answer'

KEEP IT REAL - Expect students to share doubts and questions about their faith. This



is a good thing because it shows they trust you and that they are making the faith their own. For faith to take root, it needs to be processed out loud. As Kara Powell says, “Doubt isn’t toxic to faith... unexpressed doubt is.”

BE SUPPORTIVE - Your role is not to be the one answering all the questions. You are there to provide a context for students to discuss their questions and wrestle with them. Don’t feel you need to answer these questions. Just because your students share a question or doubt doesn’t mean necessarily they expect an answer right then and there - or at all. We know it sounds counter-intuitive, but this may be the first time they’ve actually shared what they did personally. So the best thing to do is affirm their honesty and commit to figuring it out together. This is not the time to pull out your apologetic textbooks and argue their doubt away. These will however provide the topics for ongoing conversations throughout the weekend and beyond.

DON’T GET THROUGH ALL THE QUESTIONS - The questions are there as a guide, but if your students go in another direction, follow what they’re interested in and where the energy is taking the group. Small Group questions for each session will be displayed on the screens in the auditorium, and posted on our social media platforms for you to access.

