

How to Be an AWESOME Small Group Leader

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Many churches today use a Large Group / Small Group format. That simply means all the kids first gather together for a large group teaching that may utilize videos, skits, object lessons, puppets or games, and a gifted teacher who is able to engage a large group of children effectively. Then, the kids break into small groups for discussion, a simple game perhaps, and other activities to help dig a little deeper into the lesson topic.

If you are a small group leader, here are FIVE TIPS to make your time as effective as possible:

#1 Understand how important you are! Often small group leaders sell themselves short. They may not have the “up front” skills of the Large Group teacher and so they may mistakenly think that they aren’t as important. Nothing could be farther from the truth! Your role is critical. No matter how amazing your large group teacher may be, they are teaching to a LARGE group. They can’t have the relational impact that you can. Notice, Jesus amazed large crowds, but he poured his life into a small group called the disciples. The crowds ran when Jesus was dying, but it was those disciples who carried on his work. Your students are your disciples! The greatest impact on children is what they learn in a small group setting. There are things you can do that a large group leader simply can’t. You can ask questions to see where each child is in their understanding. You can pray for each one specifically because you can learn what each of their needs are. You can challenge them to live out what is being taught, then follow up to see how they are doing. Large group casts the net, but small group is where the fish are reeled in! You have the opportunity to make a huge difference in the lives of children!

#2 Take your role seriously. If you think you are merely providing a fun time for the kids while their parents are being ministered to, you are completely missing the boat. As much ministry happens in a children’s small group as does in “Big Church” - perhaps even more! I Peter 5:2 tell us, “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them--not because you must, but because you are willing... eager to serve.” You are a shepherd to the kids in your small group! Wow. Think about what that means! It’s an important role that must be taken seriously. The Bible also says we will give an account for how well we shepherd those in our care! (Heb. 13:7)

#3 Be relational! Your job is not just to help children participate and “be good.” It is to “be Jesus” for them. It’s ok to ask yourself, “What would Jesus do?” Jesus wouldn’t be on time; no, He’d come early! He wouldn’t be getting ready for his class while there were kids around; He’d be ready before they arrive. Then, He wouldn’t stand at the edge of the room; He’d be in the midst of it talking to the kids. He wouldn’t be on His cell phone; it would be turned off and He’d be engaged with the kids. He wouldn’t be sitting off to the side of the kids; He’d be sitting with the kids, maybe even on the floor with them. He would be asking them meaningful questions and listening intently to their answers. He would be offering gentle but Godly advice. He might even stop and pray for them in the middle of a conversation - because something came up that needed to be prayed for right then and there, regardless of what is going on around them. He would get down on their eye level. He would play with them. He would laugh with them. The children wouldn’t even realize he was a “leader” or “authority figure” because they would see Him as a friend. Yes, this describes your role. From the moment you enter the room, your role is to relate to kids.

#4 Be intentional. You are on a mission - and you choose your words, actions and activities to accomplish your mission. If you get a small group guide, you know ahead of time what the ONE THING is that you are trying to drive home through everything you say and do during your short time with the kids. Whether it is a game with a point, looking up Bible verses, facilitating discussion questions, or doing an activity, you are constantly repeating the main point and illustrating it as many ways as you can. When parents ask their kids, “What did you learn today?” your students are quick with their answer because you repeated it so many times, it is on the tip of their tongue!

#5 Be fun. Of course we want kids to have a great time. At my church, our goal is to make Sunday the best day of a kids week. Kids should be laughing and smiling and having a great time - but fun isn't the goal. It is a means to a much more important goal: that they come to know Jesus, and grow in their relationship with Him. I like to say, "I'm serious about fun!" That means that I never lose sight of the grave seriousness of what we are doing - saving kids from the dire consequences of a life lived outside of God's design. We are saving kids from unimaginable pain and suffering... that's serious business. But the good news is we can have FUN leading kids toward a life that will be everything God has prepared for them. (Jeremiah 29:11)

In summary, here are some BONUS practical ideas that will make you the most awesome small group leader ever!

- Learn your kids' names.
- Ask them questions that get them talking about what interests them.
- Let them hear you pray for them - passionately!
- Use small gifts as a tangible expression of your love.
- Speak words of encouragement to them constantly.
- Use your Bible - make it central to your time.
- Be funny, but be sincere.
- Send post cards in the mail.
- Bring cool show-and-tell items that relate to your lesson. (Be visual.)
- Learn pocket magic tricks, riddles, jokes and other things kids think are cool.
- Show them you care by the way you talk, pray and ask questions.
- Surprise them with unexpected treats.
- Master a skill that will impress only kids (an amazing paper airplane, yo-yo, etc.).
- Have your own funny things you do that no one else does.
- Provide challenges they can step up and accomplish.
- *ADD YOUR OWN IDEAS!*

As a small group leader - you have an incredible opportunity to make a huge difference in the life of a child. Embrace this opportunity and own it. Someday when your kids are asked about their spiritual journey, YOU will be a part of their story as they share the impact that YOU made on them! They won't be talking about a cool video or funny skit in the large group time, they will be talking about what you did in small group that helped steer them in the right direction.

Now go be an AWESOME small group leader!



Another helpful resource from Kidology.org