

Group Leader Training Scenarios

Someone at your table will be the challenger, and someone else will be the leader navigating the challenge. Everyone else will play the role of a group member.

Scenario #1: Theological Difference in the group.

When a group member says something that makes your theological radar pop up, they may be saying something untrue (or uninformed). As a leader, here are some things you can say:

- *“Tell me more about that” OR “What do you mean by that?”*

As you get more information, what they said might be clarified. Or, they might

- *That’s actually not what the church believes, and what the Bible teaches, can we talk about that after group?*
- *Hey, thanks for sharing. The Bible actually teaches this....(provide verse). I’d love to chat after group and learn more about what you might mean by that.*
- *Does anyone else have thoughts or opinions about this?* (This will allow for some of the more mature group members to chime in and begin to correct the theological error)

Another good pointed question, that can be asked lovingly:

- *That sounds interesting...Where do you see that in the scripture?*

Scenario #2: Disagreements of other kinds (Political, views on how the church is operating, etc)

Some disagreements in group can be quickly handled because of the groundwork done at the beginning of the year:

- *Set boundaries about what is talked about in group (Ex. “We aren’t a political group” or “We aren’t a Multi-level Marketing platform”)*
- *Bring the group back as necessary by saying: “Hey, I appreciate you and what you’re saying...as a reminder of what we agreed upon for our group, we aren’t going to dive into that deeper. Let’s turn back to this one question about the material/text.”*

If someone brings up something that hasn’t been talked about as a boundary, then a leader could say something like:

- *Hey, I appreciate you bringing that up. What I’d like to do is table that for now, and then I can chat with you after group. What we gather to do here is pretty focused, and we don’t have a ton of time to be together. So let’s chat after, but for now we’re going to stay focused on the question.*

Scenario #3: Someone says something insensitive and clearly lacks empathy

There may come a time when someone in the group lacks empathy, and is not aware of everyone's story. Because of that, they might say something that is quite insensitive, and even offensive to someone else in the group. Below is an example of that using our countries Military, and a way to handle it.

- **Group Member says:** *Ya know, I just don't get our military – it just feels useless and not ok to train people to go into battle and kill others.*
- **Leader could say:** *That sounds like a pretty strong feeling you have. My guess is we have a variety of opinions represented here...and for some it's even personal. Why don't we table that for now, and I'd love to chat with you after group and hear more of your thoughts.*

There are obviously lots of insensitive things that could be said (talking flippantly about pregnancy, infertility, financial gains/losses, etc), so please apply the potential answer however you see fit. The goal here is to shepherd all parties involved – the person lacking empathy, and the people affected by it.

- **Next Step:** *Meet with the person lacking empathy – coach them to “feel other people's feelings” so they can grow in what they say.*
- **Next Step:** *If known, meet with the person offended by the lack of empathy. Assure them that they are loved, and there is a place for them in the group.*

Scenario #4: Needs in group that go beyond ability

Sometimes there are group members that will consistently ask for help (financial, resources, rides, etc). Scripture calls us to carry each other's burdens. There is also wisdom in how we go about caring for people...and the church can help be a resource here.

After praying and asking the church for wisdom, the next time a group member brings up their need, you could say something like this:

- *Thank you for sharing. As you know, we are willing to help – and we love to help you! I also think there are other resources out there for you...so let's chat after we are done here about some next steps we can take to make sure you get the help you need.*

Scenario #5: An Over-talker or and Under-talker

In every group there are those who stay silent, and there are those who don't. Both are fine to an extent. When someone becomes too silent, or becomes too disruptive, what do we do? Here are some quick ideas:

Over-talker

- Outside the group: *It's usually good to first take them aside outside of group and get to know their story. Then you can respectfully and politely ask them to save some thoughts so others can answer. You could say something like, "I really do appreciate your enthusiasm and willingness to share your insights. However, something you might not be aware of is that the frequency of your speaking and the length of your responses has a potential stifling effect on other people sharing. I'm sure you don't mean for that to happen, but I'm afraid that it sometimes does."* THEN you can ask them, *"What is your reaction to what I've said?"*
- In the group: Gently say something like, *"Adam has been saying some really helpful things. Does anyone else have something to add?"* or *"We've heard a lot from some people on this last question. For this next question let's hear from some others in the group."*
- Avoiding eye contact with the person who over-talks is also a tactic that may work.

Under-talker

- Outside the group: *Again, it's usually good to get to know someone's story first before asking them to do something. This is a great idea even if there isn't an issue in group!*
- In the group: A leader can say generally, *"We are usually hearing from a few people, does anyone else have something to add? All of you are valuable to the group, and we will benefit to what you have to say."*