

## Small Group Structure 101

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Jay Heiss & Scott Nagle

### Summary

This video discusses the importance of small groups in youth ministry for fostering healthy communities and discipleship. The speakers, Jay Heiss and Scott Nagle share their experiences and strategies for implementing successful small groups. They emphasize the need for committed leaders who can build long-term relationships with students, creating a safe environment for spiritual growth. The video covers topics such as using hooks like food events to attract students initially, allowing leaders to move up with their groups over multiple years, and the ideal group size and structure. It also addresses common reasons small groups may fail, such as quitting too soon or having the wrong structure, and provides suggestions for overcoming these challenges. Overall, the video highlights small groups as the foundation of a youth ministry, enabling discipleship and the development of a spiritual family.

### Main Points

#### Introduction to Small Groups

It starts by explaining the concept of a leadership lid, where each person can only know a few people well. They suggest using small groups to go beyond this relational reach, allowing students to connect more effectively.

#### Attracting Students with Hooks

The speakers discuss using hooks, such as food-themed events like 'Bring a Friend Sunday' with pancakes or cronuts, to attract students to the ministry initially. However, they emphasize that while students may come for the hook, they stay for the relationships.

## **Small Group Structure and Leadership**

The ideal small group size is 8-15 students with one or two committed leaders. The speakers recommend having leaders move up with their groups over multiple years to build long-term relationships. They share examples of successful leaders who have invested in their students for four or more years, leading to larger and more connected groups.

## **Reasons for Small Group Failure**

The speakers acknowledged that small groups could sometimes fail and provide potential reasons, such as quitting too soon before groups have time to gel (which can take a year), having the wrong structure or leaders creating an unsafe environment. They emphasize the importance of patience, flexibility, and addressing issues promptly.

## **Benefits of Small Groups**

The speakers highlight the benefits of small groups, including discipleship, developing a spiritual family, giving leaders ownership, and fostering characteristics like affirmation, acceptance, and modeling. They encourage sharing success stories to inspire others and emphasize that small groups should be the foundation of the youth ministry, not just an additional component.

## **Action Items**

- Implement small groups of 8-15 students with one or two committed leaders.
- Allow leaders to move up with their groups over multiple years to build long-term relationships.
- Use hooks like food-themed events to initially attract students to the ministry.
- Create a safe environment within small groups for students to share and process spiritual matters.
- Be patient and give small groups time to gel, which can take up to a year.
- Evaluate and adjust the small group structure if it is not working effectively.
- Address any issues with leaders creating an unsafe environment promptly.
- Share success stories from small groups to inspire others and highlight their importance.
- Small groups should be treated as the foundation of the youth ministry, not just as an additional component.