

## H2O DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY

The Student Ministry @ Highland Baptist Church

### Character Qualities for Leaders

- Consistently maturing as a disciple of Jesus
- Seeking growth as a leader
- Love for others
- Ability to listen
- Willingness to administrate and delegate responsibility
- Humility

### Job Description

- Commit to group leadership at Highland for one school year (renewable!)
- Administrate all aspects of a group's life
- Enable the group to build friendship and community
- Pray daily for yourself, your church, and your small group members
- Participate in all training sessions
- Seek counsel from Ronnie or David for your group when necessary
- Meet weekly with your H2O group
- Help your group members to see themselves as participating in the mission of God. Find ways to get your group to move beyond discussion and toward action!
- Spend at least 5 hours a week preparing for, leading, and fostering relationships with your small group. This includes going to coffee or lunch!



## Sparking discussion in your Group

- Everybody wants to have great discussion in a group. But what is good discussion?
- Good discussion requires involvement, deep thought, and an intentional facilitator.
- **Remember** – Students lives can only be impacted and affected by the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. We as leaders just need to work to create the optimal environment for the Spirit to work.

### **Here are some facilitating goals for sparking good discussion:**

1. Work to engage and involve everyone in the discussion.
2. Challenge students to internalize the topic – how does it relate to them personally?
3. Work to create a safe environment for vulnerability.
4. Make sure everyone who gives input feels valued and affirmed.
5. Avoid advice giving as a leader. During a discussion, make it your goal to form everything you want to say into a question.
6. Make sure the main topic stays the main topic. Think of the main point like a tree trunk where all the branches (discussion) stem from the trunk and draw nourishment from the trunk.

### **The key to facilitating great discussion is asking great questions. Here are some suggestions:**

#### **1. Ask open-ended questions.**

- a. Questions with one-word or one-sentence answers kill discussion.
- b. A good question might be, “Why do you think commitment is necessary for a successful small group?”

#### **2. Ask good follow-up questions.**

- a. When a student gives an answer, use it as a launching pad for more discussion on the topic.
- b. E.g. “That’s a great thought, but can you unpack what you mean when you say that discipleship requires commitment?” Or, “What makes you say that?”

#### **3. Don’t be afraid to stir the pot.**

- a. Great discussion happens when there is questioning among your group. Don’t avoid the topics that are “debatable.” Be ready, though, to manage the discussion when it gets heavy like this. Refer to the section of this manual entitled “Answering the Hard Questions” for help.

#### **4. Ask application questions.**

- a. E.g. “How does this concept change your perspective of discipleship or God?”
- b. E.g. “How will you change your attitudes or actions this week because of this Scripture?”

## Managing different student Personalities in your Group

- As a facilitator, you need to manage the different personalities in your group. Sometimes it's necessary to suppress a personality and other times you have to work to draw someone into the conversation in order to have a productive and enjoyable group discussion. It's important to remember that the Holy Spirit changes peoples lives, but you are tasked with creating the optimal environment.
- Here are a few common group personality types and some practical ways to manage them:

### **1. The dominant Personality – this person is always the first to answer questions and needs to get his/her two cents into every conversation.**

- a. If this gets out of hand during group, don't be afraid to remind the entire group that everyone needs to contribute in order to have the best discussion. This works for the non-talkers, too. A good way to say it is that if there are 10 people in the circle, everyone needs to contribute 10%.
- b. If you discern that this can wait until after group-time, have a conversation with that person 1 on 1. Tell them that you need to work on pulling more people into the conversation and you would like them to help you. Ask them to try and be the last person to give an answer, and work out a signal that lets them know to wait until others have answered. Give them ownership in a positive action, not corrective discipline.

### **2. The non-Talker – this is the opposite of dominant. This person comes to group to listen and leave. They are too timid to interject their own thoughts, especially with the other types of personalities in the circle. Chances are, they have really great things to say, you just have to draw them out intentionally.**

- a. This is easily remedied by asking specific people questions. Don't give them an option. Let them know the entire group needs their input and they are valued.
- b. Make sure to affirm these people as often as you can. They need your encouragement since you're asking them to put themselves on the line by speaking up.

### **3. The Topic-Turner – it doesn't matter what you are talking about, this person has no filter and will bring up a completely off-topic subject. These people love tangents, and they often start with long stories.**

- a. If you're not careful, tangents will eat up your group time. This is where "facilitator" comes into play. You lead and manage time, so don't be afraid to step in.
- b. Ask them to save their question or topic for after the current discussion.

### **4. The Bully – this person tends to make slightly insensitive comments here and there. They love to be the center of attention. They are similar to the dominant personality, but are usually less interested in saying right answers.**

- a. It's important in these situations to be affirming to the others in the group. Let them know that group is a safe environment by quieting the bully. Your group members need to know they can trust you to maintain security and safety in a vulnerable environment.

## Answering the Hard Questions

One inevitable aspect of small group leadership is that you will be asked questions that you have no idea how to even begin to answer.

“Can God create a rock big enough that He Himself cannot move?” “Do you believe angels are on earth watching over us?”

“Why isn’t the Apocrypha (Deuterocanon) a part of the Protestant Bible, but still is a part of the Orthodox Bible (Septuagint)? Didn’t the first century Christians use the Septuagint?”

**The good news is that you don’t have to know how to answer them immediately. But you must deal with them—so how?**

**1. Validate the question** – students need to feel like their questions, no matter how easy or hard, are accepted in your group. Also realize that validating one person’s question makes the others in the group more comfortable. A statement as simple as, “That’s a great question...” suffices. Every question is a potential growth opportunity for you and your group.

**2. Respond with humility** – even if you could answer a question with great detail, don’t. This is your chance to spark discussion in your group. If the question is worth pursuing, open it up to the entire group BEFORE giving your own response. No matter what, though—don’t act like a know-it-all. They are not there to hear your rants or biases.

**3. Be a team player** – If you co-lead, ask your co-leader if they have any thoughts on the matter before voicing your own.

**4. Postpone your answer** – Ask for permission to research the question a bit. Use the resources listed in your Leader Manual to find something out about the topic and to have something tangible to bring back to the next meeting. If you don’t find anything there, or you want some guidance, get in touch with David or Ronnie. If you choose this tactic, do not forget this during the week. Follow through.

**5. Challenge the student** – Don’t let them get off that easy. They asked the question, so they must have some interest in knowing an answer. Refer the student to some Bible Study Resources that could help them answer their question. Your manual includes a list of common and free helpful resources for tough questions.

**6. Don’t forget about your original topic** – Most difficult questions are the result or the cause of a tangent. Don’t be afraid to set the question aside for the time being and finish the discussion or Bible study at hand. Make sure and get back to it, though. If you ignore a question, it may be the last question anyone ever asks.

## What if my students aren't Coming?

There are basically 2 principles to avoiding attrition in your group. They are outlined here:

### 1. Use "commitment" language.

a. H2O Groups are based on commitment, so this won't be anything out of the ordinary. Your students need you to talk up the level of commitment to the group. They will respond to what you make of it. If you make it a big deal, they will. If you use passive language, they will respond passively.

b. It is always okay for H2O Group leaders to use language like "expect," "need," and "anticipate" when referring to H2O weekly attendance.

### 2. Establish consistent communication through multiple mediums.

a. Your students are most likely disorganized or highly organized but overcommitted. They need you to send them reminder e-mails, Facebook messages, connect with them on the phone every once in a while, or even send random text messages to them about H2O (i.e. "I'm excited about H2O on Monday night, see you there!").

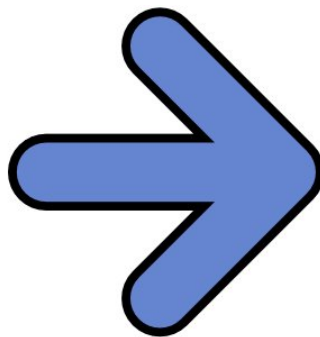
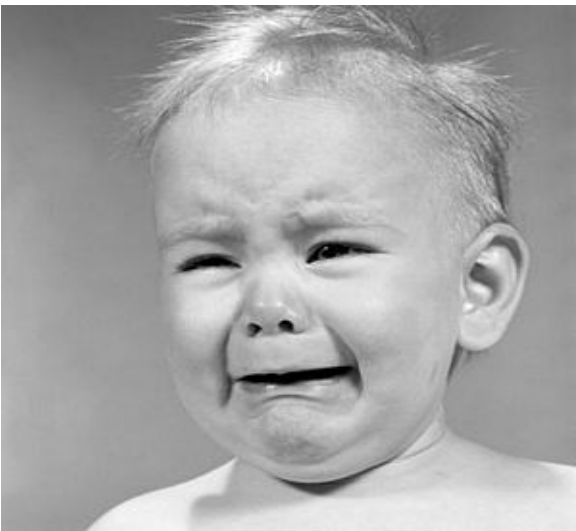
b. Don't swamp your students with reminders – but nudge your way into their life a little bit. This is a method of exemplifying your commitment to them.

**But what if you practice these principles and students still don't come and don't return phone calls or emails? Here are some suggestions:**

1. Put the ball in their court. Send them an e-mail that says to them you love them and want them to come to group. Express that you appreciate and miss their views and input.

2. Ask questions that express your concern about their spiritual lives (i.e. "I've noticed you haven't been to H2O in a while and I can't seem to get in touch – is there something going on in your life that you'd like to talk about in private?") This may just have to be something you leave in an e-mail inbox and hope they respond.

3. Whatever the circumstance, operate with grace and love. These will be the characteristics that win students back into groups or at least give them a clear picture of Christ.



## Ideas for getting to know your students

There are two basic interpersonal theories that you should be aware of:

1. Men build intimacy side by side – by doing something
2. Women build intimacy face to face – by talking

Here are some ideas for you to use as a springboard:

1. Throw a Football
2. Do your grocery shopping together
3. Play tennis
4. Go hit golf balls (even if you don't golf)
5. Go bowling
345. Play table hockey in the Cave
7. Go to a park and do anything
8. Ride bikes
237. Go visit the animal shelter
10. Play ping-pong in the Cave
11. Climb the wall at the SLC
12. Go canoeing at the marina
13. Throw a Frisbee
14. Play basketball
15. Buy and fly kites
16. Challenge another group to a sport
17. Play charades
18. Host a cook out
19. Play board games
20. Go to Waco Water Park
21. Go to the skating rink
22. Go fishing
23. Play video games
24. Visit elderly church members
25. Play miniature golf
26. Float in the Brazos river
27. Throw horseshoes at Cameron Park East
28. Challenge a group to a scavenger hunt
29. Play racquetball
30. Have a skit/improvisation night
31. Build a campfire somewhere
32. Walk on the Lake Waco Dam
33. Go Christmas caroling

34. Have a water balloon fight
35. Go to the Mayborn Museum
36. Go to a ball game
37. Cameron Park Zoo
38. Paint a room together
892. Have a guys or girls night.
893. Do a group service project!
41. Try sports together that you don't play
42. Sit on a roof and talk
43. Have a picnic
45. Climb trees
46. Go shopping
47. Play pool
48. Make art together
49. Walk the Bear Trail
50. Bake cookies/desserts
51. Show old pictures of yourselves
52. Wash your cars together
53. Host a study hall for your group
54. Weekend road trip
55. Go to concerts
56. Hang out in coffee shops
57. Volunteer together
58. Explore Waco together
59. Rearrange furniture



## Bible study resources

These tools can help you prepare for weekly sessions, answer pressing questions from students, or aid you in your everyday Bible reading. They are all completely free and easily accessible via the Internet. This is obviously not comprehensive, but these are a few really good ones that I recommend:

### **biblestudytools.com**

Find most any Bible study resource you need here. Dictionaries, Concordances, Commentaries, and more are available to you here.

### **BibleGateway.com**

A great Bible reference tool.

### **BiblePlan.org**

Develop a customized plan for reading the Bible.

### **Carm.org**

A 5013 nonprofit Christian apologetics organization whose purpose is to equip Christians with good information on doctrine, various religious groups (Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.), cults, Evolution, New Age, and related subjects.

### **TheResurgence.com**

The Resurgence is a reformed, complementarian, missional movement that trains missional leaders to serve the Church to transform cultures for Christ.

(Disclaimer: A good resource for literature, and video, but we don't necessarily agree with all of their theology.)

### **OTHER GOOD SITES:**

**studentministry.org**

**thefish.com**

**relevantmagazine.com**

**simplyyouthministry.com**

**fulleryouthinstiture.org**

