Life Group Training
Acts 2: 42-44

I want to thank everyone for being here and taking the time out of your Sunday to go over the handbook. I hope the food blessed you and for that reason alone it was worth missing some playoff football.

I want to give you some of the house keeping items first. Really just some good reminders as we are moving into the new year of kinds of things that we expect when you sign up to lead life groups and serve our students.

1. To the best of your ability, we need you here by 6:15.
2. Planning Center (Service) and Geneva (Community and communication) is your best friend.
3. We are doing the best, with the space we have – in June we will have our space back
4. Bring your best self – We get to do this, not we have to do this
5. Sit and worship with our students - aim for at least one leader on every row of seats

Really the purpose of us meeting as a youth team is that I want to pour into your cup. So often we come Wednesday after Wednesday, Sunday after Sunday and give and give.

Please know that we don't take it lightly. I am beyond grateful for every single leader here in this room.

You have endured a lot of transition

It's one of the first things that I noticed when I walked into students for the first time. I saw so many leaders in the huddle, and I thought man this is amazing, Whoever the youth pastor is, really knows how to gather people together and their leadership structure must be off the charts for all of these leaders to be showing up like this.

Turns out, you have been doing the best you can without one. What that means, is that your heart is full for these kids. It means that you truly care for the well-being of the next generation. It means that your heart breaks for the things God's heart breaks for.

I can't thank you enough for being a part of this ministry.

So, with that, I want to share my heart for youth ministry.

I didn't grow up in church. I didn't really come from a Christian home. My church when I was really little was sports. We played so much baseball growing up it was ridiculous.

Travel baseball was our thing. When I got into high school I was burnt out from baseball and so football became the end all be all.

I didn't grow up with a biblical foundation. I didn't have a youth leader saying hey, you don't need to go to that party. You actually can put down your phone, that substance. Your identity isn't rooted in you being the captain of the football team; it's rooted in Christ.

So my prayer for our students is that they know there is a loving God, who wants a new life for them. A life rooted in Christ. A life that they can one day be proud of. We aren't just trying to get kids to stop partying and vaping, we want them to be good wives and husbands. Good mothers and fathers one day. I truly believe that if we can help them understand the love of Christ now, we can see family trees change. Strongholds that have been over their families for generations be broken.

I have an incredible mentor that helped me through what it looks like to be an apprentice to Jesus. He worked as our YA pastor, moved on to a campus pastor and now oversees a really challenging region in the pacific northwest for Young Life.

Young Life put together what's called the relate project. It surveyed over 7200 kids from the ages of 13-24 so this is basically gen alpha, barely gen z.

41% of all Gen Zers are not confident they are "worthy of being loved" (rated 0–7 out of 10). From ages 16 to 18, adolescents show the lowest confidence that they are worthy of receiving love.

So how are we going to change this? What does that truly mean? How can we make sure that our students know the love of the Father. That there is someone named Jesus. That Jesus died for you, to wash away your sins, your pain, your anxiety.

We can make this happen in life groups. Trust me, the Lord can work in a sermon. The Spirit can move during worship. People will find themselves immersed in God's love during this time, but I truly believe life transformation happens when we are talking it all out in life groups.

And so, I want to give you some tools. I want to get everyone on the same page as to how we can change that 41%. I want us all to have a better understanding of how we can best use that 20ish minute window in those classrooms to see breakthroughs.

So, I have really framed this training around the early church. I always find myself going back to Acts Chapter 2 because I think it's so crucial as to what the church should do.

[42] They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. [43] Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. [44] All the believers were together and had everything in common.

Setting the table

2:42a "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine"

We see in the first few moments of the church after the day of Pentecost, that the things that happened after, are a clear picture of the day-to-day life of the church. Now that the Spirit has moved, now that we have 3,000 members, now that tongues of fire and the sound of rushing wind has happened, what do we do?

They continued steadfastly upon the apostles teaching. We first need to make sure the gospel has been shared. That is our approach when we are going into a gathering and having one of our leaders, or our pastors give a sermon.

1. **It's not just regularly scheduled <u>programming,</u> it's what we are <u>called to do</u>**

Once our students have acknowledged this, once they have sat down and looked at the scriptures, whatever it is that we are teaching that week, we can take another step forward in faith and communicate with them.

This looks like setting a table. Imagine you are getting ready to host for a thanksgiving, you have the turkey done, the potatoes, the pie has been cooling, you've got the people here, but they have no place to sit. You have the scripture, you have the students, you're in this room. And there is no direction! We need to be aware of constantly setting this table for groups that night.

So, what does that look like?

2. **We are always preparing the <u>table for STUDENTS</u>**

Get to know one another. This is such a simple thing to think about, but if we are diving into the group questions right away, it can be hard for students to open up and begin to even think about sharing. – Ice Breakers, highs and lows, favorites, would you rather, whatever your group enjoys doing.

3. **Tell them it's <u>safe</u>**

A lot of times as leaders we just assume that our students know it's a safe space. We wonder why they aren't opening or why they are sharing what they are going through. A lot of times it can be difficult for these kids to admit that something is happening.

The reason we tell them it's a safe space is for the other students. If there is an understanding that they won't be judged for what they are walking through, it can be easier to share. We want to lay a foundation where they can say what's on their minds. You must make sure that you can create an environment that invites the Holy Spirit and allows students to speak up and talk about the things that may be on their hearts. That means you as a leader, tell them you can do that. "I'm here for you, we are listening, we are being respectful because the Lord is speaking to our kids" Setting the tone for the night can let them know they are safe. That they can speak up about what it is they are going through

Family Style

So now that we have set the table, we have laid a foundation on where we want this conversation to go. It's time to ask the questions. We want this to be family style!

Share! Pass it around. Some people like certain things. Make sure everyone has an opportunity to share what's on their hearts.

What that means for leaders, is that since you are the one that did the turkey, the stuffing, the pie, its family hold back. You're the one hosting, make sure everyone else is being fed. If you are the one doing the most talking, we as leaders aren't doing it right.

1. It's facilitation. You're Hosting
- the meal has been made. Let's enjoy this together. If you want to create your own life group with your students and go through another series as a group? That's amazing! If you have suggestions on what it might look like to walk through a book in the Bible? We will take that into consideration. But we do expect you to walk through the questions together. Because the work in the service has been done. The communicator has done the curriculum for you. It's now time to facilitate that. It's time to host the party.

With that said, it's important for us to be clear on what we can share.
2. As leaders, we can share our scars, but we can't share our wounds.

That's what I am here for. We can walk through this thing together. But we shouldn't share with our kids, our financial situations, relationship troubles, whatever it may be. Allow students to engage with each other. Bounce ideas off one another. Expand on the questions, what did you think, what do I think.

Do you need a box?
Or
Would you like to see a dessert menu?

1. **Are we going back for <u>seconds?</u>**

What did we unpack from this group we just had. Did someone say something where you're like ohhh we need some help here. We need pastor Nick to speak life. It can fall anywhere and we as leaders should be prepared to come back to a point person and say hey, this student really needs some help.

Do you need a box really tries to show our students that we now have a responsibility to share the good news of the gospel, that they can bring up their questions to their parents. Mom, we talked about this during our life group, what do you think. Bring the box home! It's leftovers!

Verse 46 and 47 explain that they continued to meet with one another. We need to continue to show up for our students. Do they have a sporting event that we should be aware of? Recital? Anything going on in their lives. I once had a youth pastor explain to me that he has had more life changing conversations about who God is over a game of COD than in a life group. It's about this continuation of being present in their lives. I don't plan on going anywhere any time soon. And you shouldn't either. Because we are talking to a child of God. We are here to strengthen and guide our students.

Share Dessert!

Tell us the highs and lows, what are some of the wins from the night. Let's celebrate and praise what is happening in the life of our students. The early believers praised God for all that he has done, and then the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

What would our ministry look like if we praised our life groups together. If we told our students that we were proud of them. If we told them that they are loved not only by us but by the Most High. With glad and sincere hearts, we had a great Wednesday night.