3.5 Small Group Lesson | Preschool

LEADER DEVOTIONAL

One day while getting off of the bus in the 5th grade, my brother and I could tell that something was up. Our parents were already home and waiting for us halfway down the street. This wasn’t normal. Why weren’t they at work? When we asked what was up, they simply told us they had taken off work that day and had a “date day.” We weren’t buying it; something still seemed weird.

As we approached the house and headed for the front door my mom corrected our course. “Hey, why don’t you head this way,” she said, directing us toward the back yard. “Your dad and I have something to show you.” To my memory, I think my brother and I let out a “no way!” at the very same time. Our parents had given us a trampoline! This might seem like a small thing to a lot of people, but not to a 5th grade boy! We dropped our backpacks in the middle of the yard and tore off toward the new toy. We jumped on that thing for years and had some of the most wonderful times. In fact, I even led a friend to Jesus on that trampoline. We had some amazing times, because of an amazing gift. And for that, I will always be thankful.

When I remember how my parents gave us such an amazing gift, I am reminded of the words of Jesus, “If you…know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts…” (Matthew 7:11). Whether it’s something that simply brings us joy (like the trampoline did for me) or something that meets one of our many needs, our God is a God that gives generously.

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SMALL GROUP SKILL BUILDING

Dealing with Difficult Kids

If you’re like a lot of other small group leaders, when you signed up for the job, you may have imagined yourself pouring out wisdom to a group of kids as they sat in wide-eyed wonder of everything you said. They laughed when they were supposed to laugh, they talked when they were supposed to talk, and they followed your instructions without deviation. But if you’ve been on the job for any length of time, you know that’s pure fantasy. The truth is that most kids are very well-behaved most of the time, but there’s always one! You know the one I’m talking about. You might even be picturing their face right now. If your heart rate is beginning to rise, take a deep breath. Here are a few tips to help you keep difficult kids from wreaking havoc on your group:

Don’t hesitate to separate kids. If you have two kids in your group nicknamed “Dynamite” and “Fire,” don’t sit them next to each other! Some kids just make lethal combinations and when put together, they lose all ability to control their behavior. Simply ask one of the kids to move so they’re no longer seated together.

Have a consistent set of consequences. Having consequences for misbehavior is a way of creating boundaries. Kids love boundaries. In fact, they thrive when trusted adults create and enforce boundaries. State the consequences ahead of time so that all of the kids are aware of them. You might use something like the “3 Strikes” rule. Work with your ministry leader to determine what the different strikes mean or find out if there’s already an established set of consequences for your ministry.

Include the parents in the problem. No one knows the kids in your group better than their parents do. Not only can the parents give you insight into the source of the problem, they can probably help you fix it as well. Talk to your ministry leader ahead of time to find out if there’s any way he or she can assist you with that conversation.

Don’t be afraid that they’ll stop liking you. A lot of small group leaders have a fear that if they enforce boundaries, their kids will no longer like them. Actually, the opposite is true. When you create and enforce boundaries, kids will respect you. And the more they respect you, the more they’ll like you. You might be surprised to find out that the kids you have the closest relationship with are often the ones you’ve had to discipline the most.