

## Crucial Conversations in Small Group Facilitation:

As a small group facilitator, there is a good chance your crucial conversation skills will be well exercised. Whether it is addressing an unhealthy group trend, mediating an argument between group members, or confronting a group member with a disruptive personality, you can use the skills below to help guide you through the conversations that will keep your group on track.

### Important Reminder Before you Begin:

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” John 15:12

When approaching an individual about a disruptive behavior, talk to them first in private. Don't discuss with the group or other members beforehand.

#### 1. Start With Heart-

Ask yourself the following questions to be clear on your intent:

What do I want for me/the group?

What do I want for the individual?

What do I want for the relationship?

#### 2. Pray-

Before you meet with the group or individual, invite God to be present in your conversation. Ask Him to help you communicate out of love and for the message to be received in love.

#### 3. Make it Safe-

a. Ask permission to share your observations with the individual.

*Say something like... “Would you mind if I shared some of my observations about your participation in the group?”*

b. Use “Contrast” statements to help clarify your intention to the individual.

“I don't want....”

“I do want.....”

#### 4. “S.T.A.T.E” (What you Came to Say)-

a. **S**hare your facts/observations

b. **T**ell your story

c. **A**sk for others paths

1. **T**alk tentatively

2. **E**ncourage testing

#### 5. Move to Action:

a. Ask how you can help

b. Follow up

“Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;” 1 Peter 5:2-3

### **Scenario 1 – One and Done**

One of your new group members, Sue, was really excited about the study your group was doing when she signed up. Sue came to the first introductory meeting but has not returned to the group, nor has she called or emailed to let you know she won't be there. Thinking back to the first meeting, you realize that most of the other members were young couples and a great deal of the conversation focused around kids. Sue was a little bit older and you are starting to worry that she felt as if she didn't belong. She is new to the church and you want her to be involved. You finally drum up the nerve to pick up the phone and call her.

### **Scenario 2 – Constant Talker**

Damon is the guy in your group who always has something to say. As the facilitator, you are often anxious that other people won't have the opportunity to share or that you will have trouble staying on time when he gets going. In addition, whenever someone else shares, he frequently interrupts to tell about a similar experience of his own. You want to be respectful of his feelings but it is becoming noticeable to the rest of the group and you are concerned that the group will not survive if Damon continues to dominate.

### **Scenario 3 – Opinionator**

Courtney has some very strong political views. She is passionate and the group is very aware of her stand on gun rights, gay marriage, and abortion. It seems that no matter what the subject of discussion is, Courtney can loop it back around to the importance of taking a firm stand on one of the many hot political topics. You agree with her on many of the issues but can sense that there are members of the group that are very uncomfortable with her strong views. You watch members clam up and see their bodies stiffen while she's talking. The group will not survive the semester if you don't have this crucial conversation.

### **Scenario 4 – The Dispute**

Your group just finished a service project cleaning up one of the local high schools. When deciding which of the schools to help, the group was not unanimous. The decision was between a local high school and another school up North that had been a victim of arson earlier in the year. The majority of the group wanted to serve the immediate community, but a few had children that attended the North County school and were passionate about that project. When it came to the day of the project, Jerry, who had voted to help the other school, had something come up and was unable to attend. David, who was the lead on this service project was convinced that Jerry didn't want to help because of the school choice. David was angry and voicing his frustration to other members of the group as well as acting passive aggressively to Jerry. Jerry did not come to your last group meeting and has told you that he is not comfortable coming when David is there. You finally get them to agree to a meeting with you to talk it through. You address them both, then start with David's story.