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Casey's Blog...

Title: Does it matter?

College - that was a fun time for me. I really enjoyed the college lifestyle. Who wouldn't enjoy hot wings from a local bar at 12:00 AM on a consistent basis? I used to love going to Krispy Kreme at 2 AM with my girl friend Kacie, and we would get all the left over doughnuts for free. I would eat until I was sick. Oh yeah, I had a meal plan that was all you can eat as well. I loved to eat and hang out with friends. I loved to think about what I was going to do when I graduated. I loved to be able to go to class or miss it. One of the things I really loved about my college experience was small classes, which the college I attended offered. I never sat in a huge auditorium where I was just a number. I went to classes where people knew my name. Then in my business classes, we would always break into project teams for the semester. I loved my project teams for a number of reasons: 1) because I would depend on the A student to do most of the work :) and 2) I loved to hang out with 3 or 4 people verses a whole class. The smaller the circle, the more fun I had.

The same is true in group life. The smaller the circle the more effective and fun the group will have together. Here are some of your comments from last week's question on the report form and my response to your comments:

A ladies' group leader commented, "Our group is small, and I think that makes sharing/bonding almost easier! For a shy person, less people to "open up" in front of is less intimidating."

A couples' group leader wrote, "If it is too large it tends to limit the ability of in depth discussions with one another. Ten to twelve seems to be our optimal number for honesty."

Another ladies' group leader stated, "I believe we can have a little larger group (8 maybe) but so much depends on regular attendance where we know each other and can reach that level of trust."

1. People tend to open up more in smaller groups.

Size does matter in group life. Five to six is the number of people a gender based or singles' group needs to have in it. Ten to twelve is optimal for couples' groups.

A couples' group leader observed, "If the group gets too big, there will be a drop in honesty. People in a smaller group, over time with trust and heart, will mature. The group leader, with a lot of prayer and preparation, must lead by example with an open heart to have the group follow the leader. The leader is not leading unless the people are following."

Another couples' group leader commented, "[Size matters] a lot. Having been in a small group of eight people and in another with as many as eighteen, eight was much more open."

2. If your group grows too big, what do you do?

This leader talked about the group getting too big. What do you do when that happens? Multiply soon. If you are over the optimal number, your group needs to look into multiplication. It is just reality that honesty/community will drop when the group numbers go up. People have to build more lines of trust, which rarely happens in very large groups. So it poses the question: Is there ever a time when your group is too large to add people to it? Well, yes and no. Always be open to inviting people into your group. However, know that you will have to make a transition to multiply more quickly if your group gets too large too quickly.

A couples' group leader wrote, "I think group size and honesty have an inverse relationship. Breaking down into male / female groups--on occasion--seems to improve honesty and relational depth."

3. Breaking up into smaller groups during group time...

Yes, breaking up into gender based groups is good from time to time, and feel free to do that whenever you think it is appropriate. I also suggest breaking up into smaller groups with couples as well. However, if you have an optimal group size, you don't have to worry about this as much because openness will increase dramatically.

Work on your group dynamics by trying to get to an optimal size!

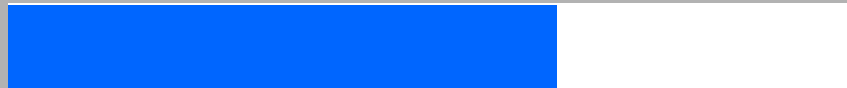


The Search for Real Relationships

Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky

Transferring data...64% complete
16 out of 25 leaders committed



Objectives

- To evaluate our approach to being honest with others.
- To share examples of truth in love conversations in our relationships.
- To allow the group to talk about being honest within the group relationships.

Facilitators' Guide

- After fifteen minutes, gather your group together to go through these questions. Open with prayer and move into the questions quickly.
- The questions this week are deep in that it takes a biblical truth and helps us evaluate how we apply it to our relationships. Honesty applies to all relationships, but we want to end by focusing on the relationships within the group. The more your group experiences honesty within those relationships, the more you will experience community in its truest, biblical sense as a group. Take time to pray before your group meeting for the time you will have together and for your group members. Ask God to take your group to a level of honesty that you have not experienced yet. Asking God to get involved is one of the best preparations you can do for your discussion this week.
- As you prepare for your group meeting, choose which of these questions you want to be sure to address, understanding that you may not be able to complete them all in the time allotted.

1. How did your family handle being honest with one another when you were growing up?

- No matter where your group is in the Great Revolution, this question is a great way to get to know each other a little better. A person's family life growing up can give insight into why they are the way they are today.
- Remember, the idea here is not honesty about petty matters of opinion. We are talking about honesty (truth in love) with the intent to grow in relationships and as individuals. Don't allow the group to get off track by talking about negative situations in their lives that are not the kind of biblical honesty we're aiming to address.

2. What characterizes your approach to being honest with others?

- **Avoid at all cost**
- **I can face it, but I don't like it**
- **I feel I do a great job with it**
- **I should hold back at times**
- There are actually two things to consider when answering this question: your approach to being honest with someone *and* your willingness to open up your life and allowing someone to be honest with you. If I had to guess, I'd say most people can face it, but don't like it. I think most people understand the need for genuine honesty, especially in relationships and how we interact with others. If Dan and I never sat down and talked about how we, as individuals, can improve our marriage and relationship, we would continually grow apart. That doesn't mean I enjoy those conversations, but they're necessary. Honesty relates to marriages, kids, family, friendships, co-workers, and group members. It transcends so many different relationships in which people see our lives and we see others' lives.

3. Read Ephesians 4:15 and answer the following questions.

***What is the goal of being honest with each other?**

- There is great benefit in reading God's word together as a group. Ask for a volunteer to read the verse aloud to the group while the others read along. Allow people to share their perspectives on the verse before sharing your own. It helps others to grow by determining what they gather from the verse and not always just accepting what the pastor says from the stage or what you say as their leader/facilitator.
- It is only from God's word that we see the real benefit and goal of honesty in our relationships. And it is only through real relationships with other people that we give permission and gain permission to be honest. When we are honest in relationships, we gain a better understanding and perspective of our lives to see how we can grow and change to become more like Jesus Christ each day. That is the goal of life. The more we become like Christ, the more we love God with all our lives and love people as ourselves.

***How can you be sure that you are speaking the truth in love?**

- People will have different perspectives on this and no answer is wrong. Be sure that each person's response is validated. Be sure to bring the conversation back to the verse. What I see from the verse is that it comes down to our motivation in being honest with others. If it is for any other reason than helping them grow to become more like Christ, then we are potentially not speaking truth and it is most likely not out of love but out of selfish motives.

***What would speaking the truth in love NOT look like?**

- There are dozens of scenarios that speaking the truth in love is not. People probably have personal examples of what they've done or what's happened to them by others, and that will most likely be the basis of their answers. Often times, not speaking the truth in love can add up to bad timing, wrong motives, or personal opinion instead of the truth. What I would be hesitant to accept as an answer is that it is painful when it is not truth spoken in love. Often, the truth about our lives is painful for us to hear. But if it is spoken to us out of love, then the pain is worth the benefit of the growth we experience as individuals and in relationship with that person.

4. Share an example of how you have spoken the truth in love to someone. How did that affect your relationships?

- These questions are deep and personal in nature and may require you to respond first by being transparent with your life. I would also reiterate here about the confidentiality within your group. Remind them that everything that is said in group stays in group. Whether it is a response to a question like this or a prayer request, it stays in that room out of respect for each other.
- I recently had a conversation with my dad that was very painful for me and him, but it was out of love for him and my family as a whole. We both left feeling hurt and guilty for having had the conversation, but we have talked about it and it has produced more trust in our relationship and has made it easier to be honest with each other now.

5. **Share about a time when someone spoke the truth in love to you and place an “X” on the following scale to evaluate your response.**

Received it openly ----- I almost killed them

- Like we talked about last week, some people may be more of an “open book” with their lives and ready to share every detail. That is a great thing, but don’t get bogged down in the details here. We really want to evaluate the responses we have to honesty. The more openly we receive it, the more we promote people being honest with us in the future.

6. **How well is our group doing at giving and receiving the truth in love? Share concrete examples.**

- We could all come back with a “good” or “not so good” response to our group’s honesty, but it is the concrete examples that will really indicate how the group is doing. If your group is mature, you will more than likely have more personal examples of being honest with each other because you are on a deeper level of trust and transparency in your relationships with each other. If you are a “getting to know each other” or “nice” group, you may be doing well considering the phase you’re at within your group. Celebrate where you are, but realize as a group that you can continue to grow in this and that will help move your group through the Great Revolution.

7. **Would you be willing to open yourself up to your Growth Group and ask them if there is any area in your life where you need to adjust? If so, ask your group and listen to the truth spoken in love.**

- This is another one of those questions where you need to model the way. You are modeling the type of relationships and openness our groups are all about. This is the type of community the Bible talks about that will lead to changed lives.
- It may be something you need to stop doing or start doing or continue doing. You may want to ask them about a specific area in your life, such as your leadership of the group or how you relate with your spouse or kids or how you view yourself or insecurities they may see.
- Remind the group of the importance of speaking the truth in love. Remind them too how important it is that they listen and respond to the honesty. Becoming transparent and responding to transparency should be out of love for each other, for personal growth, and for growth in the relationships within the group. So, there is no cause for anyone to get defensive; the goal is to love each other as Christ loves us and to be honest with each other as He desires us to be.