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# **COMPASS STUDENTS**

## TRAINING MANUAL

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## THE 3-2-1 APPROACH

### CONNECTING RELATIONALLY WITH STUDENTS

Every time we gather together, we have the opportunity to recognize students, connect with them and show them that we care. Relationships are very important. In fact, they are “job one” of student ministry. Programs don’t change the lives of students ... caring people do. Here are some simple steps for connecting with students relationally every time we gather.

#### 1. LEARN THREE NAMES

Nothing helps a student feel more connected and special than when an adult leader learns and remembers their name. Whether it is a special event or a weekly program, **make it a priority to learn three new names every time we gather.** If you’re in a group or environment where you already know everyone’s name, challenge yourself to learn three new things about three students you don’t know well. The goal is to connect at a deeper relational level.

#### IDEAS

- Use a student’s name 3 times in your initial conversation with them.
- Try to tie someone’s name to an attribute about them.
- Jot down new names in a notebook or in an app on your phone.
- Pray for God’s favor in remembering names in general, as well as remembering specific names.

#### 2. HAVE TWO MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS

This means, get to at least what we call the “fourth question.” What’s the “fourth question?” Well, let’s start with the first three questions adults typically ask students:

*What’s your name? Where do you go to school? What grade are you in?*

Then, we tend to run out of questions and there is an awkward moment.

What if you had a fourth question (or even a fifth) ready to go ahead of time to try to get to a deeper and more meaningful conversation?

Here are some options to get you started.

#### IDEAS

- What do you like to do in your free time?
- Who lives at your house?

- How did you first get involved with The Compass Church (Journey, High School Ministries, etc.)?
- What is the best thing happening in your life right now?

**The goal is to have two meaningful conversations with students each time we are together.**

The fourth question is the tool we use to get beyond merely learning about a student's name, grade and school.

Our hope is that this meaningful conversation will provide the opportunity for you to pray with at least one student.

### **3. PRAY WITH ONE STUDENT**

Praying with a student may be the most powerful and meaningful thing we do with a student.

#### **THROUGH PRAYER...**

- We demonstrate that we care; focusing our attention on a single student and their unique situation.
- We invite God to show up in the life of a student.
- We provide them with an example of prayer.
- We teach that prayer changes things.
- We demonstrate to those around us that prayer is important and even normal.

When you have the opportunity to pray with one student, do not limit yourself to prayers of petition; asking God for things. Also pray prayers of gratitude, praise, intercession, dedication, and even confession.

When you have prayed with a student, don't forget to make a note of what you prayed for so that you can continue to pray and follow up about the prayer need or answer in the future. This is just one more way to show students that we care and even think of them outside of student ministry programs.

#### **IDEAS**

- If praying out loud is intimidating, practice on your own or with family.
- Pray short, simple prayers that students can understand, remember and follow as an example.
- Keep a paper or digital prayer journal to help you remember for who and for what you are praying.
- Before each ministry opportunity, pray for opportunities to pray.
- Pray for courage to engage in prayer and pray for the imagination to pray passionately and purposefully for each student and need.

**3-2-1 is not complicated. But, it does require commitment and intentionality each time we gather together.**

If you make this a high priority each time we gather together you will find your ministry to be much more meaningful, effective and fun.

**If you neglect this, you will struggle to feel like you are making a difference.**

## **KNOW, SHOW, GROW**

### **RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP WITH STUDENTS**

We like to think of relational discipleship as inviting students to walk with you as you walk with Jesus. This is what the Apostle Paul is modeling and instructing in

**1 Corinthians 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.**

While the concept is pretty easy to grasp, sometimes it's hard to imagine what this looks like practically. **Know, Show, Grow distills relational discipleship down into three simple steps.**

#### **STEP ONE: "KNOW" (ONE INDIVIDUAL AT A TIME)**

There's a big difference between knowing about something and really knowing something. You can know all the specifications about a car. But, until you actually drive it and live with it for a while, you will not really know that the car's driver's side window leaks, that the sound system has been upgraded, that there are hidden treasures in the center console and that the radio presets are all set on sports.

Getting to know a student begins with knowing his or her name and gets deeper through intentional questions – so that we know where they leak, where they are strong, what they treasure and what is filling their head.

A leader who takes the time to get to know each student will develop meaningful relationships that lead to effective small group conversations and produce transformation in the lives of students.

A leader who rushes past this step will find their ministry to be unfruitful and unfulfilling.

If you take the time to get to know each individual student that God has put in your path, you will find your ministry and service to them to be fruitful, fulfilling and fun.

#### **IDEAS**

- Names are important. Don't fake it. Asking for a reminder is one way to say "you matter."
- Pay attention to non-verbals like what a student wears and with who they connect.
- Parents can be a great resource for getting to know a student.
- Use a notebook, "Evernote" or another note-taking app to develop a profile for each member of your group.

## STEP TWO: "SHOW" (ONE CONTACT AT A TIME)

Do you remember being a kid and running into your teacher at a store or somewhere in public? Surprise! ... they are real people too! This is what happens when we show up in the life of a student; the relationship becomes a bit more real.

Showing up doesn't have to be complicated, time-consuming or expensive. It is as simple as making an intentional connection outside of the typical ministry environment. **The goal is to SHOW students that you care.**

### IDEAS

- Send a text message (after a parent/guardian approval form is received), Direct Message or simply "like" or "fav" on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook.
- Hand write and mail a quick note to say that you are thinking of them ... or, "Happy Birthday!"
- Attend one of our weekend worship services weekly and make it a priority to find and greet your students during the "turn and greet" time.
- Find out when your students are performing and show up to a game or recital. You will be amazed at how entertaining their events are and the impact you can make showing up at a school event!

Think about your relationship with a student like gardening. The seeds of a relationship are planted through getting to know them. The relationship is nurtured as you show up regularly, watering and feeding it through careful attention and support. Growth is happening but it takes time before things can be seen above the soil and ultimately fruit is produced. So, **be patient with steps one and two ... growth is coming!**

## STEP THREE: "GROW" (ONE STEP AT A TIME)

Listen to how the Apostle Paul talks about spiritual growth:

**1 Corinthians 3:7 It is not the one who plants or the one who waters who is at the center of this process but God, who makes things grow.**

The fact is, we can't make anything grow. But God loves to produce growth in students' lives through us!

The key to being used by God to produce spiritual growth and fruit in a students' life is faithfulness to God and obedience in doing the things that God instructs us to do.

If we look to Scripture, it gives us a good idea of what the early church did that God used to produce growth.

**Acts 2:42 & 47b They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer ... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

If we devote ourselves to the same values, here are some ideas of things that can help.

## IDEAS

- Share a Scripture verse or story that speaks to what a student is thinking, feeling or experiencing.
- Share a helpful resource like a Scripture reading plan, book, song, website, video or message that might help a student take a step of growth.
- Encourage or invite a student to experience God through another ministry of the church like: Baptism, Discover The Compass, Membership Class, serving with Community Impact or in a weekly ministry like CompassKids, The Compass Café or Guest Services, signing up for a Mission Trip, and especially attending Weekend Worship Services.
- Devote yourself to praying with a student weekly or share a meaningful prayer with at student that might help them as they seek God, His truth and His will. The most important thing to remember is that God makes people grow. We don't have to convince or coerce a student to do anything.

Our job is simply to follow Jesus faithfully and share what He has given us with the students we are privileged to walk with, one step at a time. Not every step is visible and nobody changes overnight. But, **as we are faithful to God and prayerfully aware of students we will see them grow.**

## A FINAL WORD ON DISCIPLESHIP

There will be seasons of ministry when the soil is hard, the work is difficult, and the growth is hard to observe. In those times it is tempting to just go through the motions or even to give up – but don't! **Things always grow under the soil before the evidence of that growth can be seen above the soil.**

Hear the encouraging words of the Apostle Paul:

**Galatians 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.**

*Don't give up!*

Together, with God's help, we can do this! One day, we will look back together and we will see a harvest of God's faithfulness in our student's lives...**"if we do not give up."**

## ELEVEN KEYS TO UNLOCKING GREAT SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP WITH STUDENTS

These eleven keys are principles that govern good group facilitation.

Leading a good discussion is a skill just like teaching, cooking, or playing an instrument. These skills can be learned and developed with increasing effectiveness. They can be applied and mastered by anyone who desires to excel at facilitating good small group discussions.

**As you use these eleven keys within your small group, keep in mind that they are both directive and diagnostic.** That means that these eleven keys will direct you as you prepare for and plan an excellent small group time. And, on those occasions when your group time didn't go as planned, these eleven keys serve as a check-list to help you diagnose the problem and correct it in the future.

#### 1. CREATE A GOOD PHYSICAL ATMOSPHERE

Group leaders have to be intentional about preparing the proper space for their group.

- Form a circle where everybody has eye contact (nobody on the outside or laying down). The tighter the circle, the better.
- Set good lighting and a comfortable temperature
- Clear your space of distraction.
- Set your expectations regarding phones and digital devices.

#### 2. CREATE A GOOD SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE

A good spiritual atmosphere is one that is familiar, safe, trustworthy and spiritually focused.

- Pray! Don't forget to acknowledge God at the start of each gathering.
- Say their names! Make sure to welcome each student and let them know you are glad they are there.
- Everyone's opinions, questions, and input is valued. You can disagree, but no put downs or personal attacks.
- Nothing leaves the group. If you encounter something that puts a student in danger, immediately reach out to your campus Compass Students Pastor.

#### 3. ESTABLISH YOURSELF AS THE LEADER

Leaders lead. It is a lot easier to start strong and then lighten up than it is to regain lost authority.

- Be prepared. You cannot lead where you have never been.
- Clearly set the expectations from the beginning. Respect and courtesy are essential.



- Gently but firmly address anyone who distracts or detracts from the group environment or discussion.
- Keep your group on task. The discussion guides or group studies have been developed for a reason. Do not disregard the plan.

#### 4. BE AWARE OF TANGENTS

Tangents can be healthy and helpful or unhealthy and unhelpful. They often begin with a question or comment about something off topic and leave a leader wondering if this is a “God-thing” or a “goof-off thing.” Here are some tips to discern the difference.

- Pray and ask God for wisdom to know the difference.
- Ask the group if this conversation is something they all want to pursue.

If you’re not sure, validate the question or concern and invite the student to follow up one-on-one after group time.

*“That’s a great question/observation but I’m not sure this is the time or place to discuss it. Can we connect after group is over?”*

#### 5. THE 20% RULE

Good discussion facilitators talk no more than 20% of the time.

Talking more than 20% makes you more of a teacher or counselor than a facilitator.

**Small groups are not teaching environments; they are labs for students to work out their faith and questions together in community.**

#### 6. SILENCE IS OK

Avoid the temptation to “fill in the blanks.” When you ask a question and there is silence ... be willing to wait it out.

Here are some benefits of silence ...

- When nobody is speaking, that’s when the Holy Spirit does.
- That awkward silence communicates to the group that you do expect an answer. (Do not always come to their rescue!)
- Silence gives the quieter, more thoughtful students the space they need to respond.
- You are improving your percentage for Key #5!

## 7. BE KIND & REAL

Respect goes both ways. If we want students to engage authentically we have to respond with kindness and a genuine interest in what they have to say. Do not overreact – even if they say something that you believe to be heretical or just plain goofy.

If you overreact, snap, or make someone feel dumb, you will lose that student and likely your whole group. We are not looking for students to mindlessly repeat church answers. We want them to have honest, meaningful discussions.

When you make a mistake or overreact, be quick to take responsibility and apologize. A humble apology will go a long way to regain the respect and affection of a group.

## 8. ASK PROBING, OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Quality questions show genuine interest in a student and encourage deeper, more meaningful conversation.

- Avoid yes or no questions unless there is a follow-up question like “why?”
- Asking the “why” questions as a follow up will help take conversation to another level.

## 9. ONE-SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

The people in your group are very unique and each individual deserves a unique approach.

- Leave room for personality styles; not everyone participates in the same way or style.
- Avoid using blanket statements (“You are all …”) or applying blanket rules (“Everyone must read!”)
- Creating unique opportunities or roles for students that are quieter, more creative, energetic, strong-willed or otherwise unique will help them engage more in the group. Be creative!

## 10. WATCH NON-VERBAL CUES

Non-verbal communication is made up of body language (55%) and tone of voice (38%). Only 7% is actually communicated through the words we use! Here are some things to watch and listen for:

- **POSTURE** – is a student facing the group, leaning in and listening or turned away counting ceiling tiles?
- **ENERGY** – is a typically engaged student uncharacteristically quiet or a quiet kid unusually loud?
- **FACIAL EXPRESSION** – eye-rolls and smirks are obvious. But, so are: lack of eye contact and tightened lips.

## 11. BE SPIRITUALLY PREPARED

Most leaders come into our ministry environments after a busy day.

We recommend taking some time in your car before you ever enter the building to get yourself spiritually focused for your ministry time.

Pray, prepare your heart with worship, enjoy some solitude and just breathe – God is with you.

### A FINAL WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

While these keys are an important and helpful resource as you lead your group, don't forget your greatest resource - **you are part of a team!**

There are veteran leaders, coaches and pastors within the Compass Students Ministry that love you, pray for you and want to help you thrive as you minister to your students.

**Let's lean into God together and see how He uses us to help students learn to walk with Jesus.**