

Transparency as a Leader

Leader Huddle Discussion Guide

Ice Breaker:

- Which individual has had the biggest positive impact on your faith journey? How did they impact you?

Teaching: Transparency as a Leader

We've all been there, haven't we? There's something that's tearing us apart, and we're just not sure who to tell or what to do. Maybe it's a sin: lust, drunkenness, gossip, pride, greed. Maybe it's a wound from the past: betrayal, neglect, divorce, the loss of a loved one. Maybe life just isn't what it seems. Maybe you're fine on the outside but on the inside you're crumbling because your business is falling apart, you can't have children, your marriage is on the rocks, or you're wrestling with depression.

And in the midst of all of this you're expected to lead a group of people, to disciple them, to help them grow to become more like Christ, to build a community. And you don't know what to do. Do you tell them the things that plague you? Begin this week's group by announcing all of your problems? Or do you hold it in, remaining strong for them, being their rock so that they have someone to lean on?

As Pastor Mark says, **"Truth is found in the tension of opposites."**

You can't hold it all in. It will tear you apart, wreck your soul, and short-circuit your leadership. But by the same token, you can't treat the first night of your new small group like an AA meeting... unless your small group is an AA meeting. You'll freak people out. They're not only unlikely to return to your group, you've made it less likely they'll check out someone else's group, lest they have to endure that all again.

As your group matures, your level of transparency grows.

In a group where bonds are strong, where ties go deep, where there is trust and love among the members, it may be appropriate to share your deepest, darkest secret with the entire group. Your honesty and transparency will likely cause them to reciprocate. They'll open their lives to you and to one another, and that's when discipleship and life transformation really begin to happen. That's when true community takes root.

However, in a group that has just formed, where people may not even know each other's names, you probably don't want to unload every hurt and hang-up you have.

The question isn't, "What is appropriate to share with my small group?" The answer to that is everything. Everything is up for disclosure and discussion.

The question is rather, "What should I share with my small group at this moment in my development and in the development of the group?"

You

We're all at different stages of dealing with the messy parts of our lives. The first time you tell someone about a particular sin problem, or past hurt, or whatever, it's going to be messy. You need to tell someone who you trust can react with grace, keep a secret, and walk with you. However, if this is your fiftieth time telling someone about your mess, it's a lot less messy. And your motivation is likely different. You're probably asking for their help; sharing who you are to deepen your relationship; setting an example of transparency and accountability; or comforting and supporting them in their own mess.

Your Group

What is the current character of your group? Is what you're telling the group likely to harm the group or help it grow?

When you're sharing something with your group, it's okay for there to be a level of discomfort and awkwardness. Going deeper in relationships is often uncomfortable and awkward. Your job as a group leader is to push people to grow, not coddle them. You just have to make sure that your pushing them will help them grow in a healthy way, not cause harm. It's painful yet beneficial to prune a plant, but prune it too much and you'll kill it.

The Risk

There's always a risk involved in being transparent, and it's tough to know exactly what the right balance is. You won't always get it right. Sometimes you'll share too much too soon, leading to a bit too much awkwardness. Other times you'll fail to open up when you should, leaving the group at a superficial level when it's ready to go deeper. You won't always get it right, but that's okay. That's part of community. That's part of discipleship. That's part of life.

Discussion Questions:

- What's your secret sin? (Just kidding! Maybe...)
- Describe a time when someone was vulnerable in a group setting and it had a positive impact. What did you learn from that experience?
- Describe a time when someone was vulnerable in a group setting and it had a negative impact. What did you learn from that experience?
- How open is your current group to vulnerability on the part of the members? On the part of you, as the leader?
- To what extent are you willing to be vulnerable with your group? Why?
- Is there something you need to do to move your group to a greater level of transparency?