



Refocus

BREAKOUT NOTES:

Relational Environment: Listening Well and Asking Good Questions:-Norten

Casting Vision for and Creating a Strong Relational Environment for your Life Group

There are 5 non-negotiables for leading a group:

1. Biblical Foundation-everything we do will be rooted in the word of God.
2. Relational Environment- a safe space for all to come as they are.
3. Intentional Leader- One, who continuously seeks to help others grow spiritually.
4. Reproducible Process- the framework that facilitates spiritual growth, discipleship, and the branching of healthy groups.
5. Overall Alignment- Understanding groups at Southeast all have a similar flow and feel.

Listening well and Responding with Intentionality

Being a good listener can improve the relationships you have with family, friends, and co-workers. When you listen well, people will realize you care about them; however, because we communicate mostly electronically now it can be difficult to meet face-to-face and really listen. Luckily most of our groups do meet in person and those that do not, are meeting through Zoom so you have the advantage of “face-time” regardless of the method you are currently using to lead.

As a life group leader, you need to be the eyes and ears of the group. Setting expectations (early and often) about how, why, and when we communicate is crucial to the cohesiveness and functionality of your group.

Choose to be intentionally present. During your time together, it's important to remind everyone to turn off your/their phone or silence it. Eliminating distractions and focusing on the person talking to you conveys thoughtfulness and care. Also, group is for adults, so making sure to have proper care/supervision for any kiddos during your meetings. As adorable as those little humans can be, they also have the power of distraction built in. Same goes with our furry friends. I am guilty of this, and it is a constant battle to keep my doodle at bay when we are meeting.

Become an other-minded listener. “Contribute over consume” James 1:19 says: “My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger. So, when you do speak, make sure you are asking open-ended questions. Asking for generalized one-worded responses will never keep people in the heart space we look to maintain in LG. Seeking to understand rather than understood, will create a safe environment for other people to be heard and valued. =

Be empathetic and don't judge. “Use humor responsibly” When your people are being vulnerable and sharing their truth, try to see the situation through their eyes and understand how they might be feeling. You cannot do this if you're judging them when they talk. People will open more when they know you're not judging them. Extending respect, grace, compassion, and forgiveness the way you would want it extended to you. =

Show that you're listening. “Don't fix or rescue” This speaks to your body language. Use eye contact. Lean forward and learn to nod, especially when they give out suggestions, this gives encouragement to the other person to talk more. Try to avoid thinking about what your response to them will be. This allows you to stay in the moment and gives time for the Holy Spirit to work through them and you.

Don't talk when the other person is still talking. “Cross-Talk” Rule of thumb: wait for the other person to finish talking before commenting or asking a question. Pause; give a moment to ensure the person speaking has finished their thought completely. It is rude to stop the person mid-sentence because you need to talk. Also, when you don't understand, don't hesitate to ask them to repeat what they have just said. If possible, you can also consider repeating what they just said to ensure you have fully understood it.

Responding (asking good questions) after you've listened well. When a listener responds verbally to what they hear and remember-for example, with a question or a comment-the speaker/listener roles are reversed, at least momentarily allowing for a deeper connection and trust to be built between the two. Responding well adds action to the listening process

Responding appropriately requires that you think before you speak. When you respond automatically, you risk saying something you don't mean and possibly offending the other person. Give time for the Holy Spirit to work both in you and the person speaking. Allowing this time provides space for Him to meet you in the middle

Responding well paves the way for a strong foundation with your people. This foundation will build trust and show them you care about their life, story, and faith journey.

Five healthy ways of responding after listening well:

1. Advise and evaluate. While this is the most common response, and the one we are all most inclined to, it may also be the least helpful. As you listen with intention, try to read between the lines to ensure that advise is what the person is looking for.
2. Analyze and Interpret
3. Reassure and Support
4. Questioning and Probing
5. Understanding and Paraphrasing