

SMALL-GROUP LEADER'S

QUICK GUIDE

to *(Almost)* Everything



Syler Thomas & Steven Tighe

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Introduction

Where we tell you who we are and why you should read this book...

Welcome, small-group leader!

Ministry to teenagers is crazy important. That's why we wrote this book. We're passionate about helping small-group leaders (like you) learn how to be transformational influencers. As we wrote this guide, we pictured ourselves sitting with you around a table piled with coffee cups and giant apple fritters the size of dinner plates. Likely someone gave you this book because you're leading, or have been asked to lead, a small group. We want you to know that what you're doing (or preparing to do) is vital and eternal. In just a minute we'll tell you why. But first, introductions...

Who are we?

We're both youth ministers, and we've known each other for a long time. In fact, as a teenager Syler was in a small group that Steven led. Here's the bedtime-version story of how we became friends and eventually partners in ministry...

Once upon a time, there was a young engineer named Steven. He'd just moved to Austin, Texas, for his first job and knew no one, so he joined a close-by church to meet people. The church was full of people his age, and they were some of the friendliest, coolest-seeming people he'd ever met. Except for one thing. They talked about Jesus all the time. Steven grew up in church, but he'd never heard people talk, much less joke, about Jesus. At first Steven tried to talk them out of the whole Jesus thing, but he gradually came to realize that the Jesus they talked and joked about was actually worth giving up his life to follow. Shortly after that

revelation, he started helping them lead the church's youth group. This is where Steven's and Syler's stories connect.

Once upon a time, there was a boy named Syler. His family attended the same church that Steven had just joined. Syler got involved with the youth group, and when he was a senior, Steven asked him to join a team of senior highers who helped lead the middle school youth group. That ended up changing Syler's life. Here's a photo of that leadership team—with Syler on the left and Steven on the right—from December of 1990 (self-timer; there were no selfies back then).



Syler wanted to be an actor, so he headed off to Chicago to attend a school with a great drama program. He had no intention of ever serving in ministry, so it's sort of hard to explain why he graduated and then entered seminary. In seminary he had *zero* intention of ever going into youth ministry, but when he graduated, the best offer he got was a youth

pastor job. He took it, then accidentally fell in love with youth ministry, then kept at it for 20 years and counting.

In the meantime, Steven, who had no intention of leaving his well-paid job in engineering, inexplicably decided to move to Pittsburgh to take a position teaching youth ministry at a denominational seminary. Since then he has been working with teenagers and training the people who serve them, and he and Syler have stayed pretty close (in fact, most of the youth group they were a part of has stayed pretty close).

And one day, over deep-dish Chicago pizza, Syler and Steven (the two friends who seemed least likely ever to work with teenagers—maybe like you?) decided to write a book.

There. That catches us up.

And now, in case you're unsure that you have what it takes to be a small-group leader, let's put your mind at ease.

Good places to shop for the skinny jeans all youth workers must have... (by Steven)

We can picture what typical youth workers are supposed to look like. They're young, fun, and hip—and teenagers seem naturally drawn to them. A lot of people never even consider working with teenagers because they don't think they fit that impossible description.

Here's the good news: You can relax. The majority of people who work effectively with teenagers are none of these things, and you don't need to be, either (as Syler would tell you, I've been young but never hip). Serving with teenagers isn't like being back in high school—you don't need to dress a certain way or act a certain way or worry about your relative hip-ness. You need only three things to be an effective small-group leader:

- 1) Love Jesus.
- 2) Care about teenagers.
- 3) Be willing to build and invest your time in a relationship with them.

It turns out that one of the things kids need most is older people who genuinely care about them, and *you* already care or you wouldn't be reading this book. My friend Luke leads a small group in a Canadian church. If I asked him to share his story, he'd tell you he doesn't fit the "typical youth worker" template. Nevertheless, a few years ago, he was asked to consider discipling the teenagers in his church. Despite his serious misgivings (*"I'm an introvert. The thought of spending time with young people feels overwhelming. Do we even speak the same language?"*), he started meeting with a group of students. The result has been a small, thriving, close-knit community. Luke explains, "It turns out that young people can smell 'care' under layers of nerd."

If you love Jesus and can invest a couple of hours a week giving teenagers what they so desperately need, you have everything it takes to lead a thriving small group. Our goal is to help you learn how to do that.

Polite youth ministry versus transformational discipleship...

(by Syler)

Here's the thing: There are thousands of small groups in the world, but not all of them are thriving. In a lot of groups, you'll find teenagers content to go through the motions. They show up for a couple of hours a week, they're generally well-behaved, and they sort of participate—in a word, they are...*polite*.

"Polite" perfectly describes the environment of my first (and, it turns out, my only) youth ministry position. The kids were nice and well-behaved and Christian-y. But no one was opening up about their struggles or actually showing their real selves to each other. Their primary friend groups were outside the ministry. The church youth group was just this thing they did for a couple of hours a week that had no connection to the rest of their lives. And I felt the same way—I knew this church position was just a brief roadside attraction on the way to what I was really called to do.

And then we went on a weeklong mission trip to Mexico, and everything changed.

Walls came down, people opened up, and that atmosphere of manufactured politeness melted away. Stuff got real. I laughed harder that week than I had in years. And Jesus showed up. I can't point to a single moment that week and declare, "There—that's when it happened." Simply, over the course of a challenging week, a group of teenagers and adult leaders grew in their fondness for each other, fueled by the power of the Holy Spirit. We lost our facades, and because of that our lives changed as we pursued Jesus together. When we returned home, the "Mexico Breakthrough" transformed our ministry environment. These students now cared passionately for each other, understood Jesus in a whole new way, and began inviting their friends into that community.

A similar transformation happened in my high school youth group. Until my senior year, I was part of a thriving ministry full of wonderful people. But while others in the group were growing as disciples, I maintained a polite distance. In my senior year, after Steven asked me to help lead the middle school youth group, my life changed. Because of my new role, Steven met weekly with me and two other high school leaders. We studied the Bible together, worshipped together, and prayed together. All of this forced my focus off myself and onto others, and I began to understand what it meant to be a disciple.

If the best we can hope for is "polite" youth ministry, then honestly, what's the point? Jesus is calling us to join him in making disciples, not polite churchgoers. The goal of any effective youth ministry is *transformational* discipleship, and it most often happens in the context of a small group. When your ministry environment encourages life-on-life mentoring as you pursue Jesus together, the fruit is profound. You get young people who sacrificially love one another, who care for the forgotten and marginalized, and who live not for their own glory but for God's.

None of this happens by accident. So in the pages that follow, we'll walk you through the milestones that have marked our own journey and show you how to "prepare the soil" of your ministry environment for the kind of growth that produces Jesus-size fruit.

Transformational discipleship changes the world... (back to Steven)

Transformational discipleship isn't just a goal for teenagers; it's Jesus' goal for his whole church. But if it's a goal for all Christians, why do we need a book that talks about how small groups transform teenagers into disciples? Well, because kids need special attention!

First, a staggering fact: Adolescents are more open to the Gospel than they will be at any other point in their lives. This is not that surprising when you consider that the teenage years are the setting for most of the big decisions we make in life—the people we're going to spend our lives with, the choice of a career path, and yes, what "religious" path we'll follow. According to a 2019 study by Ministry-to-Children.com, those who have not committed their lives to Jesus by their 21st birthday have only a 16 percent chance of ever doing it. Transformational discipleship is important for teenagers because that's when the majority of humans come to Christ.

Second, Jesus singles out young people for special attention. In Luke 18:16, some parents are trying to bring their kids to Jesus, but the disciples stop them. Jesus sharply rebukes them for keeping the children away. In Luke 17:2, Jesus uses some strong language to describe the consequences of misleading a young person: "It would be better to be thrown into the sea with a millstone hung around your neck." A millstone is huge and heavy; swimming with one tied around your neck guarantees a rapid descent to the seabed. And then there's John 21, where Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him, responding to Peter's first response by urging him to "feed my lambs." In the following responses, Jesus changes his imperative to "feed my sheep." It sure sounds like Jesus is trying to emphasize something with Peter: First go to

the young (lambs), then focus on the older (sheep). Jesus is feisty when it comes to young people and their faith. And so are we.

Third, it's important because it's hard to be a teenager. The chances of teenagers permanently damaging their lives before they reach the age of 21 are high. Opioid addiction has become an epidemic, especially among young people. Researchers say widespread addiction to smartphones, social media, and a consumer mindset is producing the most anxiety-ridden and depressed generation in U.S. history. Suicide has eclipsed homicide as the number-two killer of teenagers and is growing at an alarming rate (accidental death is the number-one killer of teenagers). Altogether it's a pretty scary picture. Young people need all the help they can get, and youth ministry can be a powerful guardrail. Syler has a friend who compares effective youth ministry to time travel: You're reaching into the past to stop life-mistakes before they happen.

We hope by now you understand that what you're doing is important. Not only does the gift of your presence matter to teenagers and their families, but it matters to the church and to Jesus. We want to help you figure out how to do it well.

Before you get to the rest of the book, a warning is probably appropriate. We get pretty passionate about working with teenagers and are apt to frequently talk as though something is the MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THE WORLD. Stay calm. You can't do everything in this book perfectly. That's okay. If some of it is useful, use it. If not, don't worry about it.

One last thing before you turn the page and get going! You know how films sometimes include a little bonus scene at the end? We like those, so we've done something similar at the end of each chapter—a "Chapter Coda" (a coda is something tacked on to the end of something). You'll find stories, poems, quotes, and even a recipe for Syler's world-famous pumpkin bread. Which is nice.



How to Be a Great Small-Group Leader

(by Steven)

In the introduction I touched on the story of how my life changed when I joined the church that Syler’s family attended. But I left out some important details. I was first attracted to the church when I saw, firsthand, how much others my age were enjoying each other. I was surprised by their open, welcoming attitude toward me, even though I was a little put off by how much they talked about God. I started spending more and more time with them and eventually discovered that most of them were serving as volunteers in the church’s youth group.

My first visit to the youth group was mind-blowing—one of the profound turning points of my life. I’d never seen a group of teenagers who were so affectionate with one another. They laughed all the time. They sang worship songs unselfconsciously, with energy and vulnerability. They hugged but not awkwardly. They were curious and polite to strangers (like me). The whole group—adults and teenagers—genuinely enjoyed each other. The energy in the room was magnetic. I was smitten. I had no idea what was going on, but I wanted to be a part of whatever it was.

I didn’t know it then, but Jesus knew exactly what was going on in that group: “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples” (John 13:35). Of course, I’d seen this verse before, but I hadn’t experienced it as a real thing. I assumed Jesus was giving us

a kind of warning, like “Treat each other well so strangers don’t think Christians are jerks.” But in this youth group, I discovered that people who love each other the way Jesus is describing create an irresistible community. It’s impossible to see it and not want to be part of it, right? Is this not every person’s secret dream—to finally find a group of people who love you and enjoy you for who you are, without posturing or deceit? Where people actually love you like Jesus loves you?

These young people and the adults who led them created a relational space that invited the Spirit of Jesus to thrive and move. They became “living stones” (1 Peter 2:4). And when a group is under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a ragtag collection of broken people morphs into a visceral experience of the body of Christ. Collectively, the group acts like Jesus acts. And that changes everything.

Soon I started volunteering, and eventually I led the group. Dozens of young people came, got involved, and met Jesus. It has shaped my entire life since then. This chapter is about what I saw in those teenagers and how, by the grace of God, we can become the kind of people who shape a group like that. And as Syler and I prayed about the message of this book, our passion for conveying the reality and power of loving, compelling, Jesus-centered relationships bubbled to the surface. There is unsurpassed redemptive power in a healthy small group; when the relationships are intimate and infused by the Spirit, nothing is more life-changing.

Why Are Relationships So Important?

As biblical Christians, we believe in one God. We don’t hold to a pantheistic view like the Greeks or Romans or Hindus. At the same time, we know from the Bible that God is “triune”—he is the Father (Matthew 11:25), the Son (John 1:1), and the Spirit (John 14:26). So when we talk about the “one true God,” we’re referencing the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—God is in relationship with himself. He is somehow mysteriously, miraculously, one... But the three distinct Persons experience total unity with one another, an eternal braid of affection and unity of will.



It sounds funny to say, but the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit *like each other*. They delight in one another. They enjoy their relationship and love working together. And Scripture tells us that God created us to enjoy the Three-in-One the same way they delight in each other. We've been invited into their eternal joy and delight! This invitation into joy is scattered throughout the Bible—in Psalm 16:5-11 and Philippians 4:4 for starters. But one of my favorite versions of this invitation is embedded in the Westminster confession: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit enjoy each other, and as we commit ourselves in relationship with God, we are invited into their joyful affection.

In his John 14 prayer, Jesus pines for a relationship with us that mirrors the way he and the Father are one. He wants the rich, affectionate relationship that is at the center of the Trinity to flow into every crack and crevice of his kingdom—and into every ministry environment.

Jesus not only models what a rich, joyful, loving relationship looks like, but he often focuses on it with his followers. So he upgrades the Second Great Commandment—“Love your neighbor as yourself”—with a new commandment—“Love one another as I have loved you.” And he spends most of his time shaping his 12 friends into a family, a community, that reflects the intimate relationships enjoyed by the Trinity. He's fashioning a fitting vessel for the Holy Spirit to inhabit after he leaves the earth.

In the same way that Jesus is seeding community among his disciples, we make rich, affectionate relationships a high priority in our small groups. It's central to our “job description”—to love our teenagers with the kind of care and attention that encourages them to form close relationships with each other. We do that by making our love for Jesus primary; out of our vertical intimacy flows horizontal intimacy. And that's an important reminder: Our small group doesn't belong to us; it belongs to Jesus. We're only taking care of it for him.

WWJD?

You know those WWJD bracelets? They reference the famous book by Charles Sheldon *In His Steps*. WWJD stands for What Would Jesus Do? It's a reminder to always consider what Jesus would do in any situation, before we speak or act (and screw things up).

Maybe those bracelets seems cheesy to you, but from a broad perspective, the concept is a helpful reminder for every ministry leader: Jesus is our “way, truth, and life.” Whenever we make a decision, before we react to a problem, and prior to writing our discussion questions, we reconnect to Jesus and consider the “lean” of his heart in that situation. But it's hard to mull what Jesus would do in our disparate circumstances if we know very little about him. And so the Bible is a primary way we come to know him; we prioritize the stories about him in the four Gospels. We study the way he treats his disciples, his enemies, and authority figures. We watch how he enters into challenges and pay attention to the strategies he used to transform lives. We let Jesus teach us who he is and what he does; we don't saddle him with our assumptions and preconceived notions. We invite him to model for us how to lead a small group.

Jesus already has plans and dreams and goals for our teenagers, so we pray to join him in his mission in their lives. We plead for him to draw them to himself. We seek his plans and commit ourselves to help bring his plans into reality.

Your Main Purpose as a Small-Group Leader

If we're leading our small group as an extension of Jesus, it makes sense to ask what his purpose for the group is. We'll talk more about this in the chapter on how to plan a healthy small group, but for now let's address this central question: “What is my mission as a small-group leader?”



In the spirit of WWJD, our big question is, “What does Jesus most want for the kids in this small group?” Well, we already know he’s longing for them to love him and follow him into a relationship defined by joy and fruitfulness. So that’s our main goal: to guide teenagers into a deeper relationship with Jesus and form them into a community that the Holy Spirit can live inside.

I know that sounds like a huge, daunting job, but don’t worry. Jesus does most of the hard work here. And as a committed adult Christian, you already have the gifts and skills you need for this job. Here’s how to get started...

The Three Key Relationships for Excellent Small-Group Leaders

Guided by Jesus and his Word, effective small-group leaders focus on three relationships: 1) our relationship with Jesus, 2) our relationships with other leaders, 3) our relationships with teenagers. We’ll slow down and walk through each one.

Relationship 1: Our Relationship With Jesus

I know you already know this, but it’s important enough that it needs to be repeated. Your own personal relationship with Jesus will influence the students you work with more than anything else you do, teach, or say. This is not Christian-y hype; it’s the simple truth.

Discipling relationships have a supernatural dynamic rooted in the Rabbi/Talmid relationship that was common in Jesus’ time—the people under your care and guidance become like you. This works apart from and sometimes in opposition to what you say and teach. This is one of the reasons the Jewish authorities could tell that Jesus’ disciples had been with him (Acts 4:13); the longer they were with him, the more like him they became.

- **Always be growing in your relationship with Jesus.** The best way we can help the kids in our small group is to make sure we prioritize our own deepening passion for Jesus. At one time, I strongly encouraged everyone in my small group to spend time daily praying and reading the Bible. I'd make those habits one of the conditions for leadership. Every time we met, I'd have kids report on how they were doing. But I don't do this anymore...

Years later, when one of the teenagers from that original leadership group and her husband started leading the youth group, I was shocked to discover she wasn't teaching and encouraging kids to spend regular time with Jesus. She told me that she felt so much pressure to maintain a "quiet time" in her teenage years that it had destroyed her affection for Jesus. My prerequisite for leadership had morphed into a performance imperative, another must-do on a long list of rules designed to make God happy. She didn't want that to happen to her kids.

I felt doubly terrible. First, I saw how my well-intentioned efforts to promote a deepening relationship with Jesus had degraded into legalism. Second, I was dismayed that this gifted young leader, hurt by my error, was doing little to encourage her kids to develop intentional relational habits with Jesus.

This was a tipping point for me. We can't make following Jesus seem like checking boxes on a to-do list. The point is not the list but the relationship. Now instead of requiring the practice of daily time with Jesus, I ask my teenagers and volunteers to commit to growing their intimacy with Jesus. Sometimes that means daily Bible reading; sometimes that means daily worship; sometimes that means stopping to hash something out with him (time with Jesus doesn't always have to involve the Bible). The idea is to make sure that intimacy with Jesus, not our spiritual performance, is the goal. I still check up on my teenagers and hold them accountable for their commitment, but now the point is Jesus, not going through the motions.



- **Deal with your own sin.** I mentioned the spiritual dynamic that forms students into the image of their leaders and teachers. The wrong lesson to draw from this observation is that since we all sin, none of us should lead or teach teenagers (although if you've understood the implications, it's pretty normal to be wary of "modeling sin"). The right lesson is that the kids in our small group will learn to handle sin the way we do. If we hide and defend our sin or try to appear perfect, so will they. If we live inauthentically, we will raise up young people who are gifted hypocrites. That's one of those millstone hazards. (Note: "Not hiding our sin" does *not* mean we use our small group as a confessional. We must be mature and wise about when, where, and why we share our struggles. Our goal must be to help, not to get our own needs met.)

Leaders serving in the kingdom of God must handle our own sin in a biblical way—with great humility, appropriate confession, and intentional repentance. That's what I want my teenagers to absorb from me. I want them to become eager repenters, always aware that they are broken and in need of Jesus.

- **Invite a mentor or spiritual director to guide you.** We strongly suggest that small-group leaders find a spiritual mentor, sometimes called a spiritual director or a "soul friend." This is a person who can act as a sounding board, a spiritual guide, and an important source of accountability as we do the important work of loving and nurturing our teenagers into Christian maturity.

So this is the challenge for those of us who enter into the adventure of Christian leadership. For the sake of the kids who are ingesting what you're modeling, do what it takes to grow in your intimacy with Jesus.

Relationship 2: Our Relationships With Other Leaders

If Jesus wants the Trinity's affection, respect, and love to flavor all our relationships, that will include other ministry leaders (and our lead youth pastor, if that's our situation). These relationships influence the quality of the relationships in our small group. Like our relationship with Jesus and our relationships with teenagers, close community with other leaders does not happen by accident; it must be consciously and consistently nurtured. In the kingdom of God, the people we do things with are just as important as what we're doing.

Of course, it's easy to maintain unity when things are working well, but our real differences guarantee tension. And I can't say I love other leaders but sweep our differences under the rug (an efficient way to raise up hypocrites). Instead, we exercise our courage and learn how to enjoy, respect, and value others in spite of our differences. This is the Jesus way, and it's not easy. Three practices have helped me with this:

- 1) When I discover that I'm having trouble with another leader, I commit to praying for that person every day. It's hard for me to stay irritated with someone I'm praying for.
- 2) I've made a spiritual discipline out of spending regular time with the people I have the most trouble with.
- 3) I practice relational hygiene...

Paradoxically, the closer a group of people grows, the easier it is for us to hurt one another. The devil, who is real, loves this. He will work to carefully nurture resentments, unforgiveness, and irritations into irreconcilable vendettas. And once a rift starts between adult leaders, it's not hard to see how it begins to divide the group. Teenagers pick up on things like that quickly, and they inevitably start picking sides. A minor misunderstanding that goes unresolved morphs into a dramatic division between quickly forming cliques.



This is why it's important to practice Ephesians 4:26 wisdom—we must take care of relational issues quickly: “Don't sin by letting anger control you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.” I call this “flossing your friendships.” In the same way we use dental floss to pry the junk out of our teeth so they stay healthy, we drag our feelings of hurt, resentment, and anger into the light so we can maintain healthy relationships.

The practical implication is that our personal issues need to be handled quickly. We can't afford to let frustrations or resentments simmer. If we don't take care of trouble spots quickly, they fester and grow into relational cancer. The devil will use this foothold to damage the relationships in your group.

For example, I like to joke around with other leaders. But many times, usually at the end of a long trip when everyone is exhausted, someone has hurt my feelings by pushing the envelope with their humor. I usually don't realize that I've been hurt until I catch myself getting angry inside, contemplating ways to hurt them or get back at them. It is so hard to stop in the moment, go to that person, and confess that what they said hurt me. It's embarrassing and humiliating, but I've discovered the hard way that letting resentment fester is always worse.

The best way to teach relational hygiene to my students is to practice it with other leaders, and with them. Which brings us to...

Relationship 3: Our Relationships With Teenagers

What does it mean to form close relationships with teenagers? Imagine what some adult could've done for you when you were their age, and figure out how to do that for your teenagers.

- **Show up.** Obviously, there are limits on how and when you spend time with kids (we'll focus more on that in our chapter on boundaries). And yes, even though we're building close friendships with them, we still must mete out discipline and hold them accountable for their words and actions. We're adults, not peers. They need someone older and wiser

who can listen to them and show them how important they are to Jesus by taking them seriously. That means spending our time and attention on them. In a sense, as an adult you have a built-in superpower: *You're older*. For teenagers, one of the most precious resources in the universe is the attention of an older person who cares for them.

The first step in caring is simply showing up. In a society where adults, and especially parents, fill up their margins with busyness and divorce rates are sky-high, an adult who consistently chooses to be with them is countercultural—and a profound illustration of the Father's love. As simple as it seems, the commitment we make to be there for our kids underscores the passion of the Incarnation. God becomes man, just to *be with us*.

- **Be a “relational pillar” for healthy faith.** In Chapter 8: “How to Understand Adolescence, and Why It Matters,” we focus on the “Relational Pillars of Adolescent Faith”: Christian peers, Christian mentors, and direct experiences of Jesus. As small-group leaders, we become one of these crucial pillars. Our role as Christian mentors supports and builds kids' faith. Of course, we aren't their only mentors. But their access to other ministry leaders is often limited. They'll spend way more time with us than with our church's lead pastor or youth pastor. Time, caring, and conversation are absolutely vital! It's in close relationships with caring adults that real life-change happens. So remember, the way we relate to our teenagers matters. They're trying to figure out if they're as loved by God as we say they are and if there's a place for them in the kingdom of God. Ideally, our community environment will be so infused with encouragement, respect, joy, and honest truth that every teenager will be “infected” by the love of God.



A Challenge and a Request

If we shape our small group into a community of people who love each other the way Jesus loved his disciples, it will change their lives forever. So here is our challenge: Pursue that dream with your group. Decide now that you're going to do whatever it takes to “fertilize” the environment in your group with close relationships, enriching the soil so that growth is organic.

And here's our request: First and always, invite Jesus to be involved in this. Pray now, and pray every day, for the teenagers in your group—that they will fall in love with Jesus and learn to love one another the way he does. Plead with him to shape the relationships in your group so that whenever outsiders see your kids together, they know your kids follow Jesus.

CHAPTER CODA

Syler and I both lead worship. Sometimes when the mood strikes, we make up songs. (It's too lofty to say we write them.) One day Syler and I were waiting for our middle school students to arrive. We were laughing about how people say they hear God's "still, small voice" even though his voice in the Bible is usually huge, loud, and unmistakable. So we started singing about God speaking to Noah, Pharaoh, and Jonah. And that experiment turned into a song that we called "Subtle as a Truck." Here are the lyrics to the first verse and the chorus. Note that you must pronounce the silent "b" in the first "subtle" in the chorus. That's important. Later we took our small group into a studio and recorded it (a GREAT group activity, by the way). You can listen to the recording by searching for "Subtle as a Truck" on YouTube.com.

Let's talk about Noah, and the people in his land.
They were bad. God got mad.
And God said repent, but they didn't.
So God sent a flood, and they all drowned.

CHORUS

Oh Lord, that's subtle. Subtle as a truck.
Driving at your face, crashing through your door.
Hard to ignore (beep beep!).
Oh Lord, that's subtle. Subtle as a truck.

For the verses about Pharaoh and Jonah, check it out on YouTube.com!



Syler Thomas is a longtime youth pastor and a native Texan. He was a columnist for *Youthworker Journal* and is the co-author of *The Jesus Creed for Students and Game Plan: Practical Wisdom for the College Experience*. He also writes for *Leadership Journal* and the *Chicago Tribune*.



Steven Tighe has been involved in youth ministry as a volunteer, paid staffer, nonprofit director, and professor. He serves as the National Youth Ministry Coordinator for the Anglican Church in North America, and he's written for the *Trinity Journal*, the *Christian Education Journal*, and *The Journal for Youth Ministry*.

Group

REAL MINISTRY HAPPENS WHEN

volunteers/small-group leaders are equipped and empowered to reach and develop relationships that make a difference in the lives of teenagers. But so many don't feel like they really know how. *Small-Group Leader's Quick Guide to (Almost) Everything* gives you the practical training you need in the bite-size format you'll appreciate.

HERE'S A TASTE OF WHAT YOU'LL FIND PACKED INTO THIS QUICK GUIDE:

- Why relationships are EVERYTHING in youth ministry, and how to pour fuel on that fire
- How to “decode” teenagers’ behavior in the moment and respond in a meaningful way
- Why *experiencing* a relationship with Jesus matters a lot more than just knowing facts
- How to help hurting teenagers
- How to set healthy boundaries for you and your teenagers
- And so much more!

If you're a smaller group leader who cares for teenagers, you want to make an impact in the lives of teenagers, and feel equipped to respond to their needs. This book helps you do that!

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