

## **Stay Connected**

How do you know if you are being an effective group leader? There are Eight Leader Essentials that we can use as gauges to help us be effective leaders. The first of these is “Stay Connected”.

If we had to name one of the Eight Leader Essentials the most essential, then this would be it! That’s because “Stay Connected” is all about growing your relationship with Jesus Christ. The other essential are also important but they often increase or decrease in urgency depending on the needs of your group or your specific needs as a leader. “Stay Connected” is the essential that is always urgent no matter what is happening within your group or in your leadership.

The responsibility of creating a safe and predictable environment for your group members can sometimes distract you from your own spiritual growth. But just remember that you can’t lead people down a path that you are not on. If you are not growing in your own relationship with Jesus then how can you help others to grown in their relationship with Him?

We want you to grow closer to Him so that you can show your group members how they can grow closer to Jesus. In John 15:5 Jesus says, “I am the vine; and you are the branches. If you remain in me, and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” Did Jesus really say we can do nothing? Yes, it is true. If you really think about it, we always want our group members to experience healthy relationships and spiritual growth that will lead to major life change, but how much of that is really under your control?

As a leader you can encourage growth by providing support and creating a safe and predictable environment where connection and development is fostered, but the responsibility of

your group member's spiritual growth is not yours. You will need personal spiritual guidance and nourishment from Jesus to support your group. If you don't get this, then you will run into your own limitations and leading may feel like a burden. You may even find that you have trouble with knowing your role as a leader.

If you personally stay connected to Jesus, continually growing your own relationship with Him, you invite God to work in and through you. You can become more effective as a leader. You may feel like you are doing less but that allows God to do more. As you lead, periodically ask yourself this question, "Am I staying rooted in my relationship with Jesus Christ? Realizing that apart from Him, I can do nothing." If you cannot confidently answer yes to this question, then it is time to take action!

**One way you can maintain your connection to Jesus is to practice new spiritual disciplines.** As you grow spiritually, what used to keep you close to Jesus may now be robotic and routine. It may be time to try something new. For example, if you tend to get up each morning and sit at the kitchen table with your Bible, try going outside or starting your God time with a worship song. How about getting together with some Christian friends and serving someone in need? Any of these changes could bring some connection back into your relationship with Jesus. Exploring new ways to connect with Him will not only help you but also help your group members towards a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Everyone in the group owns his or her spiritual growth and this includes you. Stay engaged in your walk with God. Remain curious about your faith and how it's developing. And continually take the next step in your spiritual growth journey. That's how we can all stay connected.