

STUMMIN

SMALL GROUP
LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE
SCHOOL
FOCUS

I HAVE QUESTIONS

FEBRUARY 10, 2021

Week 2 of a 3-week series
about questions

How do I win an argument?

BOTTOM LINE

You never win an argument
if you lose the relationship.

SCRIPTURE

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

- James 1:19 NIV

GOALS OF SMALL GROUP

To help students understand that the real “win” in an argument is to preserve the relationship with the other person even if we disagree with them.

To help students understand and practice how to argue in a healthy, constructive way.

>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: Middle schoolers see the world in a very black and white way. And that means most of them probably see arguing similarly. In other words, they probably think it’s bad. The goal of this conversation is to help them see that arguments can have both a positive and negative impact. It’s all in the way they handle it! The language you use to talk about arguments is key here. Be sure to differentiate that arguments and fights are two different things. And be quick to acknowledge that there may be students in your group who have to argue in order to stick up for themselves. That’s why framing your conversation about arguments being a healthy, and even at-times positive thing, is so important.

>> DURING GROUP

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don’t feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.

DO THIS:

- Have your students debate with each other over something simple like food, clothes, musicians, Netflix shows, sports, etc. (You can split your group into pairs or divide your group in half for this activity.)

DISCUSS THIS:

- On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable are you when other people argue around you?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable are you when you’re the one in the argument?
- What’s one example of something a middle schooler might argue about with . . .
 - a parent or other family member?
 - a teacher/coach/director?
 - a friend?
 - someone they don’t like?
 - someone they don’t agree with?
- What’s one way arguing can be a positive thing? A negative thing?
- What’s the difference between an argument and a fight?
- Why is it important to understand someone else’s point of view in an argument?
- What’s one thing you can change to improve the way you argue?

DO THIS:

- Hand out the provided resource sheet and have students take it home and place it somewhere they can find it easily. Remind them that when it comes to arguing, we need to care more about the person than the point we’re trying to make. They can use this sheet to help them do just that!
 - If you have extra time, read through the resource sheet and share stories about times you did things on the “do” and “don’t” lists. What was the result?

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THINK ABOUT THIS: Keep in mind that for students, conflict and arguing today looks different than it did when you were their age. Students’ understanding of conflict and arguments now include what they observe as they see their parents and peers argue about politics, sports, and whatever else is being debated on social media through sub-tweeting and the dreaded comments section. Technology can easily dehumanize the other person when they’re typing or texting words on a screen instead of speaking to another human directly. It’s normal to “ghost” someone they no longer want to talk to or just unfriend, unfollow, or block them on social media instead of actually learning how to address conflict. Learning to prioritize relationships in the midst of conflict is a skill that will help students in every area of their life, so it’s something worth fighting for!

>> DURING GROUP

Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed and ask thoughtful follow-up questions as the conversation unfolds. Don't feel like you need to answer every question.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What’s the dumbest argument you’ve ever had? What made it a dumb argument?
- What’s your primary fighting style?
- Who do you get in the most arguments with? Why do you think there are some people you argue with more than others?
- How have you seen your fighting style affect your relationships?
- Read James 1:19. Which one of these statements comes most/least naturally to you?
- What’s the difference between being slow to anger and letting people walk all over you?
- Think about the last argument you had and how it affected your relationship with that person. What would you change about how it went assuming the goal of preserving the relationship? What went well?
- What changes do you need to make in order to argue in a healthier way?
- What does a healthy relationship look like after an argument?

DO THIS:

- James says we should be slow to speak. Brainstorm some things we can do while we are waiting to speak that can make us see the other person as a person and not just an opponent in an argument.
- Using the provided resource sheet, share stories about times you tried some of the things on the “do” and “don’t” lists while arguing. What were the results? Encourage your group to focus on using only the “do” items during times of conflict this week.