

# STUMMIN

SMALL GROUP  
LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE  
SCHOOL  
FOCUS

## THE BIG QUESTIONS

**NOVEMBER 15, 2023**

Week 3 of a 4-week series  
about identity, belonging &  
purpose

### BOTTOM LINE

You belong here.

### SCRIPTURE

*[Lydia] and her household  
were baptized, and she  
asked us to be her guests.  
“If you agree that I am a  
true believer in the Lord,”  
she said, “come and stay at  
my home.”*

- Acts 16:15a NLT

*There is neither Jew nor  
Gentile, neither slave nor  
free, nor is there male and  
female, for you are all one  
in Christ Jesus.*

- Galatians 3:28 NIV

### GOALS OF SMALL GROUP

To show students that  
in Jesus, everyone has a  
place to belong, and to  
encourage them to take a  
step toward believing and  
sharing that truth

## >> BEFORE GROUP

**THINK ABOUT THIS:** It's important for middle schoolers to understand the difference between fitting in and belonging. While fitting in means they have to be a certain way in order to be accepted by a group, belonging means they can be accepted just the way they are. As you point your students toward the truth that they belong both with God and your small group, keep in mind that you may be dealing with students who have been told or made to feel the exact opposite. Some of your students may be stuck on the idea that to even belong at church, they have to change something about who they are. The goal of your conversation isn't to give them a list of dos and don'ts or rights and wrongs when it comes to faith. Instead, it's to remind them repeatedly that no matter what they feel or have been told, with God and with you, they belong.

## >> 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.*

### DISCUSS THIS:

- Which friend group from a TV show, movie, video game or book would you want to hang out with and why?
- What's one thing that stood out to you in today's message?
- What's one thing that might help a middle schooler feel like they fit in?
- What's one thing that might make a middle schooler feel like they don't fit in?
- Why do you think people want to fit in?
- Share a story about a time you did something a little crazy or out-of-character in order to fit in.
- What's the difference between fitting in and belonging?
- Describe a place or group in which you feel confident that you belong. What about that place or group is especially welcoming and/or inclusive?
- What's something our group can do to make sure that everyone feels like they belong here?
- What's something our group can do to make YOU feel like you belong here?
- What's something you can do to remind yourself that you belong to Jesus, even if you don't feel like you belong in other places?

### DO THIS:

Have your group members write "I belong" on a piece of masking tape and place it on the bottom of their shoe. After everyone has done this, take a group photo!

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## >> BEFORE GROUP

**THINK ABOUT THIS:** At this phase, friendships are constantly changing. This feels especially unsettling to high school students who are seeking stability and a place to belong. That's why one of the best things you can do as a leader is create a small group where students belong no matter what. This may be a good week to ask students how they feel about small group and what they need from you and the rest of the group to make it feel like a place where they truly belong.

## >> 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:

- Have you ever felt like you didn't fit in? What was that like?
- Experts say after food, clothing, water, and safety, what we need most is to feel like we belong somewhere. What are some ways you have seen people try to belong or fit in?
- Why do you think that when the early church got started it was important to make everyone feel like they belonged?
- The early followers of Jesus, like Lydia, were more than just once-a-week friends. They were all-in for each other. Do you think that describes most Christians today? Why or why not?
- Where do you feel like you can be yourself the most?
- Do you believe you can really be yourself with God? If so, how does that belief impact your life? If not, why not?
- How would you treat people differently if you believed everyone could be themselves and still fit it in with God and God's people?
- At StuMin, what are some ways that we can show people they belong when they show up here?

### DO THIS:

As you wrap up small group time, ask "Who's not here today that we miss?" or "Who from our group haven't we heard from in a while?" Work together to compose and send a text to those people in order to remind them that they belong.