

# SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

Love/Hate / Week 1

## BEFORE GROUP

### BOTTOM LINE

Let love be what you're all about.

### SCRIPTURE

*"It's not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart." (Mark 7:15 NLT).*

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen (Ephesians 4:29 NIV).*

### GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students understand that avoiding gossip is less about correcting a bad habit and more about curating a reputation for love and not hate.

### THINK ABOUT THIS

Leaders, in this phase high schoolers cognitively know what gossip is but may not be able to point it out in the moment. Small Group should be the safest place for conversation and connection to happen. As a Small Group Leader, it's our job to model respectful and life-giving conversation. Which means protecting the group from gossip and harmful joking. Even if it seems like no one is offended. While gossip and joking can be the quickest road to connection, it can erode relationships over time.

*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.*

## DURING GROUP

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Name a character on a TV show or movie that is known for hating on others. Would you want that person in your group of friends? Why or why not?
2. When does gossip, or hating on others, feel like a big deal? When does it not?
3. Talk about a time when you participated in gossip and you regretted it. How did it affect your friendship with the person you gossiped about?
4. Read Ephesians 4:29. How would you define unwholesome or rotten talk?
5. How would your relationships change if you asked yourself the question *"Is this helpful?"* before you speak?
6. What kind of person do you want to be known for in your friend group? What is one thing you can do to become that person?
7. What would we want our Small Group to be known for?
8. Imagine we were the kind of Small Group that gossips about each other. What would our Small Group look like by the end of the year? Now imagine we were the kind of Small Group that never gossips about each other. What would our Small Group look like by the end of the year?

### XP (Experience Piece)

At this point, talk through the "Affirming Words" activity (*Note to Ministry Leader: Further details for this XP can be found in the XP folder in your curriculum download*). For this activity you'll need tape, paper, and pens. Help each student tape a blank piece of paper to their back. Then discuss gossip and the way we tend to talk about each other behind one another's backs, challenge your small group to commit to using only love when they speak to or about each other. To practice this, instruct your students to take turns writing affirmations, kind words, or encouragement on the papers taped to each other's backs. After everyone has had the chance to write affirming word on everyone else's paper, have the students read their paper. Talk about the difference it makes in reading affirming words versus hearing negative words. The goal is to help students shift their language about the other members of their group toward love.

### TRY THIS

Leaders, start by saying something like this: "We know this may be easier to talk about than to do. Most of us will be tempted to gossip about someone even before we get home today." Then challenge your students to go a whole week without gossiping and encourage them throughout this week by sending them the verse.

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