

# 5 STEPS TO MAINTAINING ORDER IN A SMALL GROUP SETTING

This is mainly a challenge for younger groups, especially the boys. While a certain amount of distractions are to be expected for younger groups, it is important not to let things get out of hand. We need to teach kids to honor God's word and the value of processing it with a community of believers. Here are 5 steps to helping you have a group that knows and stays within appropriate behavioral boundaries.

## 1. CLARITY

You've got to be clear on the purpose of the group and the expectations for your time together. Be specific and give them clear cues. For example, when you're ready to transition from a time of hanging out to a time of Bible study, tell them every week what is about to happen and the behavior you expect from them. Have someone pray out loud as a way of marking the transition from goofy to serious. You also need to be clear up front about the consequences that will follow if your expectations are not met. Remind them regularly about the "three R's" you'll see listed below.

## 2. CONSISTENCY

Once you are clear about how things should be, you have to be consistent to ensure that you get the results you're hoping for. "First time, every time" is a good rule to follow. If you ask someone to stop doing something, you should expect them to respond the first time you ask and every time you ask. If they don't, you need to be ready to impose consequences with consistency. Be gentle and kind, but you've got to let them know who is in control. If you're inconsistent, they will walk all over you.

## 3. REQUEST

If someone does something out of line, the first thing you should do is request that they change the inappropriate behavior. Along with this request, inform them that next time they misbehave, they will be re-seated beside you (like a child) and if they continue, your next step will be to remove them from the room. You don't want to have to do this but will have to for the sake of the group.

## 4. RE-SEAT

If you have a repeat offense, do not make a second request. The whole group needs to know that you mean business. Your next step is to kindly re-seat them next to you so that you can keep an eye on them. You don't want to be a pushover but also don't want to appear mean. Be sure the group and the individual know that you don't enjoy enforcing rules but that you are doing so because you really believe the discussion is important and you don't want anything to ruin it. You can apologize for having to do it but don't back down.

## 5. REMOVE

This is the worst. If a kid continues to disrupt the group, you will need to ask them to go into another room. If you have two leaders, one may go with them to keep them company. Be certain to have a follow up conversation with them afterward and make sure they understand why they were sent out. Tell them that you aren't mad at them and that you care about them and that you hope they will come back and benefit from future discussions.