

Tips for CBE Small groups for Families

From Sarah Barton Hillmar Covenant Church

- Split age groups and keep small groups small (like 5 kids + parent/grandparent) max. Our group started waaaayyy too large - and too many ages spread across. We now have one group for 3-4 year olds, A K-2 group. And a 3-5th grade group.
- Kids love to track their success. I made a huge chart and every week kids put stickers next to the days they read/listened to the audio. For every 5 days they listen at home, they pick a prize:)
- The Jesus Candle is super powerful for a setting like this - it helps us focus.
- Giving parents questions to prompt their kids at home when they listen has been helpful. (See Small Group Questions for the Family). I encourage parents to ask the question BEFORE they listen, and then come back to it after.
- I also make a 1/2 sheet for VISUALS with one of the five questions (what did I notice, what bothered me, etc.) on each ½ sheet. They can take a stack home each week and kids write/draw their thoughts as they listen. Then, they bring the sheets back and it gives us a starting point for discussions.
- With the little little kids, we do lots of visual things. We travelled Paul's journey together across the church. We drew on big butcher paper our feelings after we listened to Matthew's account of the crucifixion, etc.
- I found that the parents/grandparents/College siblings who bring their kids initially wanted to sit OUTSIDE the circle and observe. FINALLY, as of last week, I've convinced them to sit IN the circle, WITH their child, and to be a PART of the discussion! I started to ask them directly, "What did you notice for the first time, Marta (Mor Mor)?" They get all flustered, but then they usually have an awesome thought!
- I usually have a focus in mind for the discussion. Sometimes - it's not like an adult discussion where you come to the table with a ton of thoughts. For the kids, much of this IS the first time they've heard the stories - so they still need to process them. I've found that often, they have a handful of great thoughts/ questions that are perfect for discussion. But if not, I always have something in my back pocket to ask them.... "I'm wondering - did anyone notice that..... wonder about.... feel....."
- We also end each time with everyone sharing prayer requests. Some weeks I ask the parents/grandparents to pray aloud for the children. Some weeks, the kids pray:)
- Also an important element, I think - we always have a fun snack AFTER our discussion, and play time. Since it's so hot, sometimes I set up a bounce house in the gym, with AC, or we play a group organized game - including the parents!
- We typically fill the time like this: Discussion - 20-25 minutes, Snack - 10 minutes, Play - 20-25 minutes. That time ratio has seemed to work for us. Sometimes the older kids' groups go longer, but not much. A ton can be worked through in less than 1/2 an hour!