

STUMIN

SMALL GROUP
LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE
SCHOOL
FOCUS

START THE PARTY!

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

Week 2 of a 3-week series
about abundant life

BOTTOM LINE

An influencer knows that
everyone is invited.

SCRIPTURE

When Jesus heard this, he said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do." Then he added, "Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.' For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."

- Matthew 9:12-13 NLT

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To encourage students to invite and include others the way Jesus invited and included all people

>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: This week's conversation centers around the dynamic of fitting in or feeling left out. This is a huge deal for your students, as middle schoolers want to be included by their peers more than just about anything else! Be aware of the tension your students may be feeling related to the desire to fit in as you lead this week.

>> 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:

- Where in your life do you feel like you fit in the most? The least?
- Share about a time that you intentionally or unintentionally left somebody out. How did they feel about it? How did you feel?
- What makes it challenging to treat everyone as if they fit in with you and your friends? Is it more or less challenging to treat everyone as if they fit in with God?
- Does it surprise you to know Jesus shared a meal with people who didn't really fit in with their culture? Why or why not?
- What practical things can we do here at StuMin (especially in our small group) to make this a place where everyone feels included? What should we avoid doing?

DO THIS:

Give everyone the provided journal page and something to write with. First, ask your students to brainstorm and write down a way they could include someone who may feel left out. Then, ask your group to discuss and write down the actual words they'd use in a text, on social media, or in a conversation to actually invite that person. The goal is to help your middle schoolers find language and develop skills to invite someone into something. In this case, that "something" could be inviting a friend to StuMin!

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THINK ABOUT THIS: There may be no phase of life where being "in" or being "out" is more noticeable than high school. For your students, the desire to be seen as "in" or included is huge. That means the pain of being "out" is strong in this phase, too. You may have some students who are doing whatever it takes, for better or for worse, to stay "in" with their friends and social circles right now. At the same time, you may also have students who are dealing with the feelings of being newly or constantly "out" in their world. Be aware of the weight of both as you guide the conversation this week.

>> 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:

- Where in your life do you feel the most "in"? How about "out"?
- What have you done in the past to get or stay "in" with a particular group? Was it worth it? Why or why not?
- Does it surprise you to know Jesus shared a meal with people considered "out" in their ancient society? Why or why not?
- Read Matthew 9:12-13. What's an example of showing mercy in today's world?
- Have you ever felt welcomed in and included by someone when you really needed it? Tell us about it!
- To "pay it forward," who is one person in your life you can make an effort to include?
- How can you take one step to get to know someone who you've seen as "out"?

>> DO THIS

This week, remind your students that your small group is meant to be a place where everyone is invited, welcomed, and "in" with each other. To make sure this is a core value for your group, let your students speak into the vibe they want to see in small group. Create a list of values for your group together and talk about what it actually looks like to live these values out in group together.