



# 3 BIG QUESTIONS

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## BOOK GROUP Quick-Start Guide

FULLER YOUTH INSTITUTE

For use with *3 Big Questions That Change Every Teenager:  
Making the Most of Your Conversations and Connections*,  
by Kara Powell and Brad M. Griffin.

## READY TO HOST A BOOK GROUP FOR LEADERS, PARENTS, OR MENTORS?

Maybe you want to help your volunteers who wrestle with awkward silences in youth group.

Or support parents who can't figure out how to get their kids to open up more.

Or guide mentors and caring adults who want to build relationships with young people.

If you dream of more adults in your church having meaningful conversations with young people that help them grow in faith, a *3 Big Questions* book group can be a powerful next step.

Book discussion groups open up intentional space for adults to explore the concepts, research findings, and practical ideas found in the book, look back at their own stories, and identify next faithful steps in their relationships with teenagers.

We've put this short guide together to help you get going!

## STARTING YOUR BOOK GROUP

You might want to use *3 Big Questions* with an existing small group, Sunday School class, or parent group. Or if you are forming a new group for this series, think about who you would like to invite. It may help to start by defining your goals:

- Do you want to host a parent group, mentor group, volunteer/youth ministry staff group, or some sort of mixed-role group? (*Tip: Hosting leader and parent groups at the same time could result in fruitful conversations beyond the group sessions.*)
- If you're hosting parents, do you hope to engage parents with kids in both middle and high school, or host separate conversations by age group? Or what about a group for parents of preteens who are looking ahead to the adolescent transition in their families?
- Are you reaching out to grandparents who are raising their grandkids, stepparents, foster parents, and others who are serving in parental roles?

Once you have determined your aims for the group, identify a few book group leaders. Perhaps you are the right person to lead the group, or maybe you could invite an experienced parent or volunteer to help.

## NOW THAT YOU HAVE A GOAL AND LEADERS, YOU CAN BEGIN TO GET THE WORD OUT AND INVITE PARTICIPANTS.

**Group Tip:** Visit [3BigQuestionsBook.com/share](https://3BigQuestionsBook.com/share) for free social media graphics, as well as ready-to-use text you can copy and paste to a church bulletin, e-mail, or website as you invite members to join your small group.

Schedule your meetings at a time that will work conveniently for the group, ideally aligned with rhythms already in place in your church. Set a consistent time and location, and invite participants.

Determine what kind of space you'll meet in. Will people sit around tables? In rows? Will you meet in someone's home? Think about the best environment to help your group members feel comfortable and share openly with one another.

We recommend structuring your book group as a six-week series, but you could expand to 10 sessions by discussing just one chapter per session. Our recommendation for a six-week series is as follows:

1. Group kickoff and Chapter 1
2. Chapters 2-3
3. Chapters 4-5, Identity
4. Chapters 6-7, Belonging
5. Chapters 8-9, Purpose
6. Chapter 10 and group wrap-up

Every participant needs a copy of the book *3 Big Questions That Change Every Teenager: Making the Most of Your Conversations and Connections*. You can ask participants to buy their own copies, or if you'd like to order for the whole group, bulk purchase discounts can be found [exclusively in the FYI store](#).

## PREPARING FOR GROUP MEETINGS

*The book is your primary guide for each discussion.* Before your group meeting each week, give yourself enough planning time to read the designated chapter(s) and become familiar with the “Reflect and Apply” questions at the end of each chapter. It’s helpful if you and every participant individually process these questions ahead of time. Note that some questions apply to the adult reader, and others to young people around us. We believe it’s critical to process our own journeys of identity, belonging, and purpose in order to support our kids and students well.

You may also want to mark pages, sections, or quotes throughout each chapter that you think the group would benefit from discussing.

If you find that your group enjoys discussion and finds it challenging to get through all of the questions for discussion each week, consider selecting a few key questions you would most like to discuss and begin with those first. Pay particular attention to time management during the first session, as it will set the tone for future meetings. You may even wish to set a timer for the personal introductions segment if you have a larger group or need to be sure time is shared evenly among members.

While you can lead your discussion group without any additional supplies, you may want to have pens, poster paper, markers, and other supplies on hand for making lists or sharing ideas.

Participants might like to use journals for personal reflection and group session notes, especially if they don’t like writing in books or prefer to use e-readers.

## LEADING GROUP MEETINGS

Here are a few tips for leading the group sessions to facilitate sharing and connection.

### **Create a safe environment for participants to share.**

This small group journey invites adults to open up about their thoughts and experiences throughout your weekly discussion times. These responses can create connection and a sense that they are not alone, so it’s worth taking steps to make the group comfortable. To do this you might:

- Make some brief introductory remarks about the challenges of parenting and/or working with teens and how common it is to experience seasons of joy and seasons of struggle.
- Ask group members to keep the stories shared during group time “in the room,” or confidential—especially stories about young people. Similarly, encourage parents to keep stories and examples focused on their own actions and responses as parents rather than divulging too many details about their kids’ words and actions.

- During the first meeting, give your small group an opportunity to discuss and agree on how they'll navigate opposing viewpoints. Agreeing on these things at the start will create a space where participants feel more comfortable talking about their worries and frustrations. As the group's leader, protect that agreement by thoughtfully reminding the group of their commitments to one another as the weeks progress.

## Create an engaging environment for conversations to thrive.

As you navigate the discussion questions, consider changing group dynamics from time to time. Perhaps instead of posing questions to the whole group, partner group members up occasionally and invite them to share one-to-one. If your group is so large you're finding there isn't time for everyone to share, try breaking into smaller groups of three or four for some or all of the questions, and reserve some time for large-group interaction and reflection at key points.

As the leader, watch the clock or ask someone to keep track of time. You'll see a suggested group schedule below.

Throughout your small group's journey, make time to check in with your group members. If a parent or leader shares that they're going through a particularly challenging season, lift them up in prayer, and reach out to let them know you've been praying for them. It's our hope that the members of your group will grow to become a support network for one another along the way.

## Create and follow a consistent schedule.

Participants will appreciate basic structure and consistency in your group meetings, and knowing what to expect can help facilitate good conversation. A basic 60-minute structure might include:

- **Welcome and gathering activity** (10 mins). Open with a question aimed to get participants talking and sharing about their leadership and/or parenting experience over the past week. (Note that you might need to allow more time for this section during your first session so that your group can get to know one other.)
- **Discussion questions** (45 mins). Forming the largest part of your time together, utilize end-of-chapter discussion questions based on the week's reading to help foster conversation and community with one another. You can also use open-ended prompts such as sharing a highlight from the reading, a passage that stood out, or something that raised a question.
- **Work for next time** (1-2 mins) Remind participants about reading for the week ahead, and commit to taking one action step during the week.
- **Closing prayer** (3-5 mins) Conclude your time in prayer with and for one another as appropriate.

## **BONUS: QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR BOOK GROUP IF CONVERSATION STALLS**

- What was your most defining moment as a teenager? Was it a big win, loss, or life-changing event?
  - What questions about life and faith did that moment stir in you?
  - What did adults in your life do that helped? Or what do I wish adults had done that would have helped?
- What is a question or situation you faced with a teenager this week that connected with the search for identity, belonging, or purpose?
- Think about a movie you've watched or a book you've read recently. Where did the themes of identity, belonging, and purpose show up?
- What is something different you want to do in your relationships with teenagers based on what we're learning together?
- How are you seeing changes in your relationships with teenagers based on putting ideas from the book into practice?
- Select a question from the list of 170 questions in Appendix B (p.261-280) to ask the group (or pair people up and have them select questions for each other).