

FAITH BEYOND YOUTH GROUP BOOK CLUB GUIDE

FAITH BEYOND YOUTH GROUP

As a youth leader, you want to disciple young people. You want to instill a deep, lasting faith in them that extends far beyond youth group. To do that, you need a team of adults investing in the faith formation of your teens.

Of course, if you have a team, you've also got to train them—a task that can feel daunting on top of all the other responsibilities you juggle.

At the Fuller Youth Institute, we want to make training your volunteer team a little easier.

This guide is designed to help you model the Faith Beyond Youth Group Compass to your team so that they, in turn, can use it to instill lasting faith in the young people they serve. This guide is for you if you want to ...

- Train your leaders—even if you've never done so before.
- Build community among your team.
- Share the latest research with your leaders and help them apply it to young people in your context.

This guide will help you lead a Faith Beyond Youth Group book club as your team reads *Faith Beyond Youth Group* together. If your goal is to train your team on the content of Faith Beyond Youth Group without having them read the book, see [The Faith Beyond Youth Group Compass Leader Training Guide](#).

BEFORE YOU GATHER YOUR TEAM

First, **decide how many weeks you want your book group to last.** Two common approaches are to discuss *Faith Beyond Youth Group* over the course of three or six meetings. Here are suggested reading plans for each:

FOR THREE MEETINGS

- Meeting 1: Intro-Ch. 3
- Meeting 2: Ch. 4-6
- Meeting 3: Ch. 7-9

FOR SIX MEETINGS

- Meeting 1: Intro-Ch. 3
- Meeting 2: Ch. 4
- Meeting 3: Ch. 5
- Meeting 4: Ch. 6
- Meeting 5: Ch. 7-8
- Meeting 6: Ch. 9

Create a schedule that designates the day and time for each of your meetings. For consistency, you might find it helpful to meet on the same day and time each time you gather. Ideal times for book club meetings might be:

- Sunday mornings before or after church,
- Wednesday nights (To show leaders how much you value them, you might even want to consider hosting your book club instead of youth group. In this way, you're not asking leaders to give up additional time to attend your meetings—you're using time they're already committed to.), or
- Saturday afternoons.

If possible, provide leaders with the meeting dates six to eight weeks before your first book club meeting. When you publish your schedule, indicate what chapters you'll be discussing at each meeting. Ask participants to read those chapters before you meet.

To give yourself enough time to have good conversations during your book club gatherings, plan to meet for 1-1.5 hours, and provide childcare for those who are parents. (You might even invite some of your teenagers to serve as caregivers in order to form additional connections between students and your team's families.)

To help publicize your book club, visit FaithBeyondYouthGroup.com/insider for free social media graphics, as well as ready-to-use text you can copy and paste to a church bulletin, email, or website.

Decide where you're going to meet. It may be easiest to meet at your church or youth group gathering space. However, meeting in someone's home might create a more inviting space for leaders, which can help cultivate trust. You may even find that your team wants to rotate hosting responsibilities each time you gather.

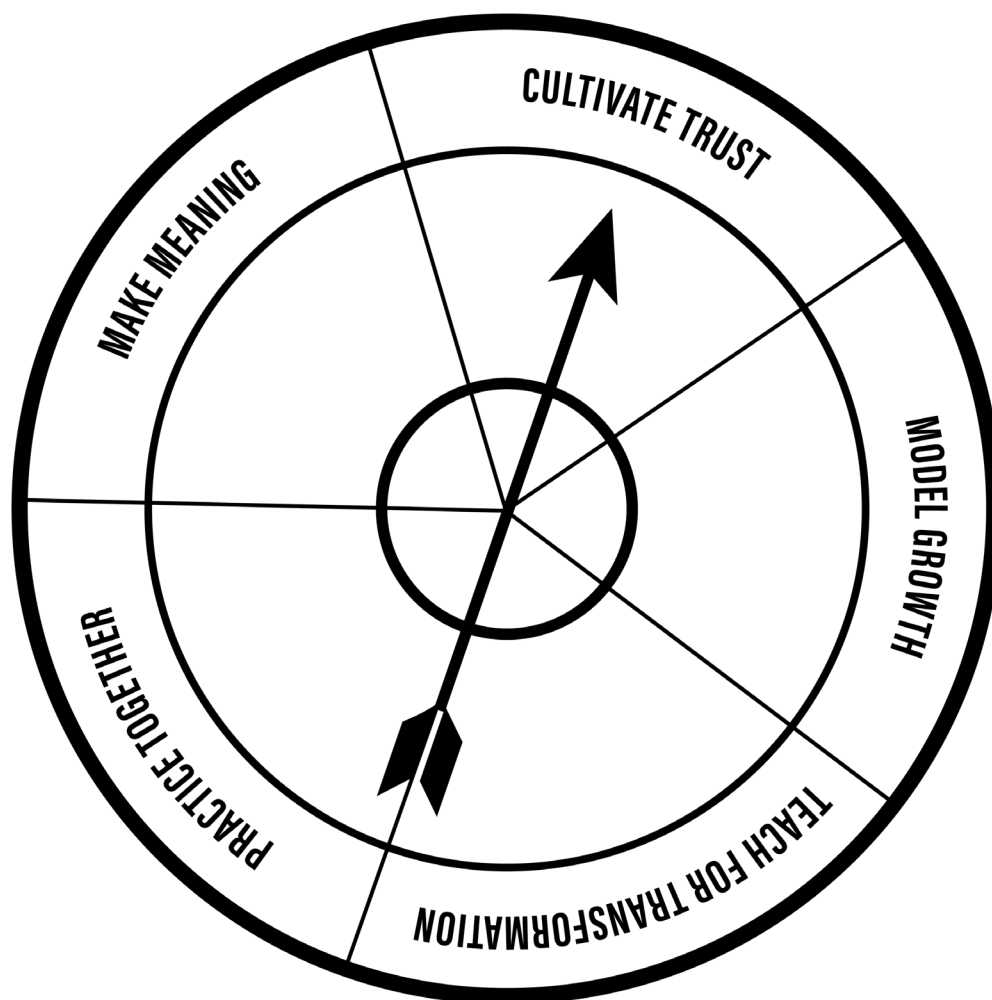
Regardless of where you meet, consider what the seating arrangement communicates about your goals. While circles can invite sharing, rows might limit it. Round tables can create communities within communities that foster conversation and learning opportunities.

Plan food for your leaders—either snacks or a meal. If you serve a meal, provide something other than the food you typically serve when you're with teenagers. Be sure to offer a variety that accommodates everyone's dietary needs.

LEADING BOOK DISCUSSIONS BASED ON THE 5 FAITH BEYOND YOUTH GROUP COMPASS POINTS

The Faith Beyond Youth Group Compass is a research-based discipleship framework. Each of its five compass points launches you in a practical direction for teen discipleship that forms character. It's also a great tool with which to equip your volunteers.

During each book club meeting, you'll get to know one another, model points of the Faith Beyond Youth Group Compass for your leaders, discuss what you're reading, and explore practical ways of implementing this discipleship framework in your specific ministry.



We recommend structuring an hour-long book club meeting in the following way:

- **Share (15 minutes):** Get to know your team better as you share your responses to questions and activities focused on cultivating trust, modeling growth, or making meaning.
- **Explore (30 minutes):** Discuss what you're reading as well as how various parts of your book club meetings reinforce what it means to teach for transformation.
- **Apply (15 minutes):** Make your discussions practical by committing to concrete ways in which your team will practice together what it's been talking about in your ministry.

If you're meeting for 90 minutes rather than an hour, extend each section below by another 10 minutes or use that extra time to give your team announcements or do some youth ministry planning together.

Share (15 minutes)

Goal: Get to know your team better as you discuss questions and activities focused on *cultivating trust, modeling growth, or making meaning*. As trust increases among your team, your leaders will see first-hand how they can cultivate trust with teenagers in your ministry.

Each time you gather (with the exception of the week you discuss chapter 8, *Make Meaning*), choose one of the following prompts to help your team get to know one another.

(continued)

1. Think about when you were a teenager: Who was an adult you trusted? How did that adult earn your trust?
2. Tell us about a time when someone betrayed your trust. What did they do? Was trust ever restored? If so, how?
3. What are you currently learning?
4. Choose one of the characteristics the Fuller Youth Institute studied in its Faith Beyond Youth Group research: compassion, perseverance, or forgiveness. How have you grown in this area in the last six months? How do you hope to grow in this characteristic in the next six months?
5. Tell us about a time when you recently made a mistake. How did you make things right afterward?
6. If you could do one thing over again in your life, what would it be and why?
7. Who or what has most impacted the way you respond to failure?
8. What's one thing you wish every teenager understood about failure?
9. Think about something you're currently questioning or doubting in regard to your faith. Do you feel like you can safely express your questions or doubts at church? Among our leaders? What, if anything, do you think would need to change in order for this space to become safer for you to do so?
10. How has your faith changed over the last four years (the amount of time a teenager spends in high school)?

If your group doesn't know each other well yet, be sure to allow people at least a minute to reflect (or even write down) their answer before inviting them to share it. If your group is large, consider asking people to share their answers in small groups. In addition to being more welcoming, this will also save you time!

On the week you discuss chapter 8, *Make Meaning*, instead of using one of the discussion prompts above, help your team make meaning from a recent issue, topic, or event. In the days leading up to your book club meeting, pay attention to what people in your community are talking about. Choose something prominent and explain what you've been hearing to your team. Then ask people to add to your summary.

Discuss some or all of these questions to help your team make meaning from this issue, topic, or event:

- Why do you think people are talking about this issue, topic, or event?
- How are (or aren't) the people involved in this issue, topic, or event demonstrating Christlike character? How does that make you feel?
- What does this issue, topic, or event mean for teenagers in our community?
- How might your faith help you understand or make sense of this issue, topic, or event?
- How does your faith compel you to respond to this issue, topic, or event?

Consider asking a few experienced volunteers in advance to serve as discussion leaders for this activity. Give them a copy of the questions above so they know what you're asking of them.



10 TIPS TO HELP ENCOURAGE YOUR VOLUNTEERS TO ENGAGE AND CONNECT

Leading a discussion well can help your team feel confident as they cultivate trust, model growth, and share their personal stories. Here are ten tips for facilitating authentic sharing and good connection among your leaders.

1. Set the tone as people arrive for your training. Greet people (by name, if possible) as they enter your space. Introduce yourself to those you don't yet know. Help connect people with those they might not know or with those who share common interests. Ahead of time, consider whether nametags might be helpful in this group to reduce awkwardness and increase name recognition.
2. Ask people to keep the stories shared during your gatherings "in the room," or confidential.
3. Occasionally, answer one of your own questions first in order to model the type and level of sharing you'd like to see from your leaders.
4. Don't be afraid of silence. If no one immediately answers your questions, silently count to ten. More often than not, someone (often a person you don't expect) will jump in. If no one does, reword your question to make sure people understand what you're asking.
5. If there's a known "talker" in your group who tends to dominate conversations, sit beside them. This will make it harder for you to make eye contact with them. Since eye contact can encourage speaking up, less eye contact often helps a person to respond less.

6. When someone shares, thank them for contributing to your conversation. Then build upon what they're saying. Ask whether others in the group agree or disagree with what's been shared. Summarize the wisdom people share to keep your discussion moving.
7. Invite people to respond to questions in different ways. Occasionally partner group members 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. Rather than always inviting verbal responses, ask people to write out or draw their responses on sticky notes and then read each other's answers.
8. Take breaks when needed. You never know what feelings sharing might prompt. If you sense a topic or question is stirring up emotions for some, consider taking a break in order to help reset the room.
9. Don't forget to pray. Consider opening and closing with prayer, but also find ways to authentically pray during your meeting, perhaps in response to a particularly vulnerable moment of sharing.
10. As you cultivate trust among your leaders, you'll find that people will likely share more vulnerably with one another. Pay attention to what's being shared and follow up as needed afterward. Offer care and support to your leaders.

Explore (30 minutes)

Goal: Discuss what you're reading, and consider how various parts of your book club meetings reinforce what it means to *teach for transformation*.

Model *teaching for transformation* by using discussion questions to wrestle with the content found in each chapter of *Faith Beyond Youth Group*. You can use some or all of the discussion questions found at the end of each chapter as the basis for your discussion.

Once you begin discussing the Faith Beyond Youth Group Compass (chapters 4-8), you might find it helpful to include two additional components during this **explore** segment:

1. A summary of the compass point you're talking about. (You can create your own or use the Faith Beyond Youth Group Compass At A Glance handout on page 13 of this guide.)
2. A discussion about how you've incorporated the compass points into your book club meetings using some of these questions:
 - How have you seen us incorporate this compass point into our time together? What has or hasn't worked well?
 - On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being very well, how well do you think we use this compass point in our ministry with young people? Why?
 - How might better integrating this compass point into our ministry with young people help us form faith that lasts beyond youth group?
 - As a leader in our ministry, what do you feel are some barriers to implementing this compass point in our ministry? How can we overcome them?

Consider asking different leaders to take turns leading your book club discussions in order to share your authority (a practice that's part of *teaching for transformation*) and help them become better discussion facilitators.

Apply (15 minutes)

Goal: Make your discussions practical by committing to concrete ways in which your team will *practice together* in your ministry.

To apply chapters 1-3 to your ministry, use the story of Ryan (found at the end of chapter 1) as your inspiration. Then create a picture (either a literal drawing or a written description) of what you hope faith beyond youth group will look like in the lives of the teenagers in your ministry. Consider these questions as you create your picture of faith beyond youth group:

- How would you love to see teenagers with a faith beyond youth group live out their faith on Mondays-Saturdays?
- What Christlike characteristics would you like teenagers with faith that lasts beyond youth group to exhibit?
- How would you hope a faith beyond youth group impacts a teenager's sense of their identity, belonging, and purpose?
- Imagine a young person from your ministry who has a faith beyond youth group five years after high school graduation. What might that person be doing in their free time? How might they treat people? What causes might they care about?

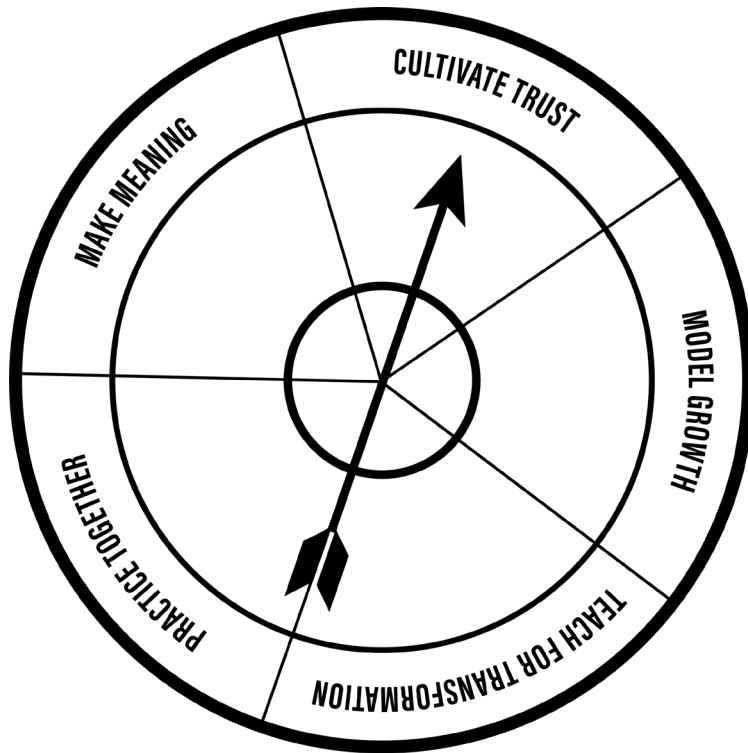
Creating a vivid picture of what faith beyond youth group looks like in your context will help your leaders know whether or not you're forming it.

To apply each point on the Faith Beyond Youth Group Compass, ask each leader to commit to one practical way they will implement each compass point as they serve teenagers in your ministry. (Feel free to have leaders pick from the navigational tools found in chapters 4-8 of *Faith Beyond Youth Group* or to brainstorm additional ideas on practically implementing each compass point in your ministry.) Record their commitments so you can follow up with leaders and encourage them as they seek to implement that practice.

Begin your next book club by asking leaders to share what they did, how it worked, and what they learned from experimenting with this practice. This will help your team hold one another accountable for its commitments and work together to implement the Faith Beyond Youth Group Compass in your ministry.

FAITH BEYOND YOUTH GROUP

COMPASS AT A GLANCE



CULTIVATE TRUST

Relationships, which are critical to forming lasting faith in teenagers, are built on trust. The young people in your youth group might not yet trust you—even if they like you. To cultivate trust, show up consistently in their lives. Be authentically you. Listen to what teenagers are saying (and to what they're not saying) and respond with empathy.

MODEL GROWTH

Modeling is showing others who you are every day. Teenagers wonder, *Are you for real? Are you the same outside church as you are inside?* They're watching for what your everyday actions reveal. When you make a mistake, take steps to make things right, and learn from the experience, you model growth. When you share failure stories, you let teenagers know they belong even when they screw up. When you express your own doubts and questions, you make it safe for young people to do the same.

TEACH FOR TRANSFORMATION

Young people learn best when we engage their whole beings. So don't just talk at students, talk *with* them. Don't tell a teenager what to think when you can help them discover for themselves what they believe and why. Teach for transformation by following Jesus' example: build upon the work of others, tell stories, ask questions, and commission others with authority.

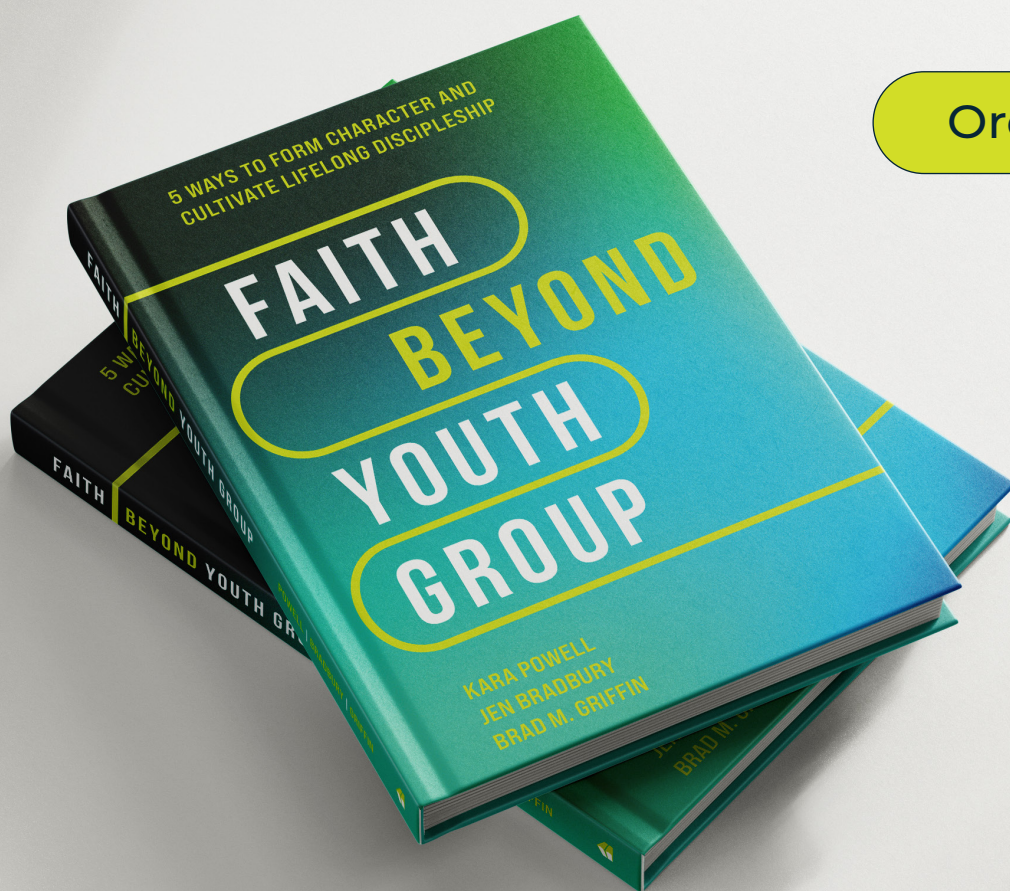
PRACTICE TOGETHER

Everyday life is the training ground for character formation. Once you've taught for transformation, practice applying what students have learned together. Walk with young people through a cycle of action and reflection, helping them try service, leadership, hospitality, and holistic practices that move faith out of their heads and into their hands and feet.

MAKE MEANING

Throughout their everyday experiences, teenagers wonder, *What happened? What does it mean? Where is God?* What now? Guide students through cycles of action and reflection and help them make meaning by tapping into the power of naming experiences, evaluating actions, and connecting what they're doing with the Bible's stories and characters before they go out and try again.

RESHAPE YOUR MINISTRY FOR REAL IMPACT— NOT JUST IN YOUR YOUTH ROOM, BUT EVERYWHERE STUDENTS GO



Order Now

Building on two decades of the Fuller Youth Institute's work and incorporating extensive new research and interviews, *Faith Beyond Youth Group* identifies the reasons it feels like you're working so hard but having so little impact, and offers five ways adult youth leaders can cultivate character for a lifetime of growing closer to Jesus rather than drifting away. With practical insight and tips, you'll find out how to cultivate trust, model growth, teach for transformation, practice together, and make meaning so that teenagers can become adults who hold fast to Jesus and boldly live out a robust faith in the world around them.

Teach your teens compassion from the inside out



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Based on research with over 350 ministry leaders, field-tested by youth groups around the country, and chock-full of tips from leaders like you, *Compassion from the Inside Out* is a 4-week high school ministry curriculum to equip your students for a lifelong journey of faith-filled compassion.