



**61 SMALL GROUP FAITH AND LIFE DISCUSSIONS**

**15 CREATIVE METHODS**

by Lyle Griner  
Peer Ministry Leadership

# INDEX



## 1. METHOD: Deep Deeper Deepest

### **Stress** – PAGE 9

Students are experts on the topic of stress. Some stress can be healthy, but others experience too much piled on from too many directions. This is a conversation about helping friends de-stress. It is about being “living water,” the kind Jesus offers the woman at the well in the story found in John 4.

### **Family** – PAGE 11

We all experience the great joys and stresses of being family. Friends help friends navigate family by listening, affirming and supporting each other. Churches can offer families extra support and people to reflect on life with.

### **Step Out of the Traffic** – Psalm 46:10 – PAGE 13

Being aware of God’s constant flow of love, grace, peace and hope requires us to take pauses out of our regular routines. “Come Out of the Traffic” is a look at being spiritual and the various ways to do so.

### **Friends Preventing Suicide** – Romans 8: 38-39 – PAGE 15

Friends help friends in many ways. Sometimes that includes helping them stay alive by listening to them, standing up for them, and by finding them help. This is an important discussion because many, if not most, youth have talked to friends considering suicide. This is an opportunity to share and receive helpful wisdom in how to help.

## 2. METHOD: Where Would You Be?

### **Football roles** – 1 Corinthians 12:28 – PAGE 20

With a football stadium outlined in the middle of the group, participants lay down markers comparing a football game to your own faith and life! Where would you be? On the field? In the band? Watching from the stands? Maybe buying a hot dog?

### **Ski Map - God’s Guidance** – Psalm 37:23-24 – PAGE 22

Are you coming down a triple black diamond set of moguls? Are you on the beginner bunny hill? Or, drinking hot chocolate in the chalet? Hopefully you are not in the first aid station! Imagining and comparing faith and life to a ski map is a fun way to enter into a conversation about real life and faith topics.

### **World Map**, – Genesis 1:31 – PAGE 24

With the world map in the middle of your group participants, mark various places to answer the prompts. These can range from topics about favorite places, to places of poverty, to spiritual places.

### **School Cafeteria** – PAGE 26

Cliques and divisions are discussed as participants answer prompts by placing markers on outlines of their school cafeteria. A favorite question is, “Where would teenage Jesus sit?” The conversation continues by exploring societal divisions beyond the cafeteria walls.

## 3. METHOD: Five Finger Voting

### **Biblical Bits** – PAGE 29

Short Bible verses about life invite participants to rank how they perceive themselves. Some honest self-disclosing conversation easily follows.

### **Morals and Values** - Verses about Light – PAGE 31

A list of controversial statements invites participants to wrestle with some of their own morals and values. The second half of the discussion is about God’s light in a dark world.

### **Like and Dislikes** – Ephesians 4:32 – PAGE 34

Here is a list of 60 random things to either like or dislike. Pick a number, give a finger ranking between one and five and then share why you gave that ranking. Share memories, stories and feelings behind each item. Perfect for getting to know each other better.

### **Are You a Good Lover?** – PAGE 36

Many scriptures speak of love and they all sound good, but are also extremely challenging. Participants get to rate themselves while also learning to understand the need to lean on God as a constant, lifelong source for love.

## 4. METHOD: Say More

**Time** – Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8 – PAGE 39

Time, especially the lack of it, is on everyone's mind. Ecclesiastes chapter three begins, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." Each line of this scripture is followed by inviting prompts to say more.

**Grateful** – PAGE 41

Twelve scriptures about gratefulness are followed by two unfinished sentences allowing participants to say more.

**Commandments** - Exodus 20: 3-17 – PAGE 43

Conversations about the Ten Commandments enter into the world of ethics, morals, values and legal systems. This discussion allows participants to talk about, imagine, interpret and wrestle with these ten ancient laws.

**Jesus** – PAGE 45

Become a profiler and uncover what you know about Jesus and his patterns of behavior. Considering who this Jesus is, confess how this Jesus has shaped you.

## 5. METHOD: Continuums

**Worries** – Mathew 6:25-34 – PAGE 48

Belonging is high on the list of human needs. This activity invites real conversation about being included and excluded from various groups, while being ensured that we are always on the inside of God's love and grace, our forever family.

**Believing** – Hebrews 11:1-3 – PAGE 50

Explore participants' beliefs on a number of topics including God, the right to die and the evilness of Brussels sprouts. Participants must first mark their beliefs on a continuum before entering into any discussions.

**Group Check-Up** – Hebrews 10: 23-25 – PAGE 52

Use this discussion when it is time to check in on your group's relational dynamics. Use the image of a funnel to describe group process. The group can name how they are doing and what they want to improve on, while also creating a list of group norms.

**Fears** – Isaiah 43:1 – PAGE 55

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you." – Isaiah 43:1 (NKJV). Sharing some fears can be an amusing conversation. Other fears are very sensitive and very real. Allowing for God's care, and allowing for people's support is symbolized by giving everyone in the group a Fear Knot.

## 6. METHOD: Word Starts

**Being In Being Out** – Romans 8:38 – PAGE 59

Belonging is high on the list of human needs. This activity invites real conversation about the ins and outs of human belonging. It also emphasized being in God's forever family experience of love and grace.

**Shine** – Matthew 5: 14-15 – PAGE 61

Matthew 5:14 says, "You are the light of the world." Light comes in a variety of forms and uses which are used in this discussion to illustrate the variety of ways we reflect God's light.

**Spirit Nudges and Heart Tugs** – Mark 8:17-18 – PAGE 63

What did you see, hear or sense this week that concerned you? Maybe you felt a tug at your heart or even a nudge to interact. This experience is both a conversation and a prayer to be shared as a group.

**Faith and Life Rhythms** – 2 Corinthians 13:5 – PAGE 65

A resource everyone can use either as a stand-alone discussion, or as a tool to start every discussion. Describe your day or week by picking a set of contrasting words that help participants describe their awareness of God in the midst of the rhythms of life.

## 7. METHOD: That Makes Me Feel

**Taking Jesus Personally** – PAGE 69

This conversation invites participants to consider various quotes from Jesus and imagine how you would feel if he were speaking directly to you.

**Personally** – Philippians 4:4-9 – PAGE 71

Participants explore a variety of life and faith topics, first identifying a key feeling and then sharing personal reflections.

**Hurt** – Psalm 103: 2-5 – PAGE 73

Hurts of all kinds are a part of life and faith. This discussion explores the feelings and experiences of hurt, and along with that the feelings and experiences of overcoming hurt.

**Heart Checkup** – PAGE 75

Everyone needs a heart checkup. There are multiple scriptures that speak of the heart. Participants use these heart verses to trigger feelings and conversations about their own heart.

## 8. METHOD: Building Up

**Jenga** – Luke 6: 47-49 – PAGE 78 (see extra files for prompts)

54 talk starts and 54 prayer prompts attached to the side of Jenga blocks turns the game truly into a group building experience.

### **Play-Doh Responses** – Psalm 139:13-18 – PAGE 79

Play-Doh is for every age! Especially when that lump of clay is used to help mold your thoughts and form your prayers.

### **Lego And Walls** – PAGE 81

Conflict? One solution is to build a wall! As participants name all the reasons people are divided, build Lego bricks to form a wall. The symbolic wall becomes the center point for further discussion about conflicts.

### **Rocks and Love** – PAGE 83

Romans 12:9-21 describes the attributes of Christians. Participants seek to understand each verse while also affirming the qualities they see in each other.

## **9. METHOD: Talk Box**

### **Jesus Calms the Storm** – Mark 4: 35-41 – PAGE 87

In Mark 4, Jesus says, “Peace be still,” and calms the storm. We all have storm stories. Some are weather storms, but others include current issues that are of concern. Others may be personal life storms. This discussion invites sharing, as well as the support and prayers from all participants.

### **Life Journey** – Proverbs 3:5-6 – PAGE 89

Shoes are symbolic of journeys. Have everyone pile their shoes in the middle of the group. As various prompts are asked, have each participant pick a shoe that best helps the person tell his or her life and faith journey stories.

### **Nature Box** – Psalm 19: 1-4 – PAGE 91

Whether you’re camping, canoeing, backpacking or having a conversation about creation, this is your discussion guide. Have participants pick up small items found in nature and lay them in the center of your group. These items are picked by individuals to help share their responses to the prompts.

### **Spiritual Fruits** – Galatians 5:22-23 – PAGE 93

Did you know each of the spiritual fruits found in Galatians 5 have a color? You might think so after this discussion. Have participants pick up a crayon or a paint chip that helps them describe his or her response to the prompts.

## **10. METHOD: I Say, You Say**

### **Enemies** – Luke 6:27-36 – PAGE 96

How do we handle enemies, hatred, cursing, abusive, and wicked people? Luke 6:27-36 suggests some ways. Participants will write their first reactions using just a word or phrase. When responses are shared, the facilitator can easily be drawn in to discussion.

### **Theology Dive** – John 1:1-5 4 – PAGE 98

Theology comes with words, many challenging words. This is a dive into participants’ thoughts, opinions, feelings and even perceptions of religion and its many words. It is a dive into why these words matter for a person’s personal faith and life.

### **The Jesus Cycle** – Corinthians 11: 1-2 – PAGE 100

Pick a day or season celebrated by Christians. Round one: write a word that describes that day or season for you. Round two: write down the word you think Jesus would write. Use the words to trigger the deeper meanings, memories and experiences.

### **Words From The Word** – PAGE 102

Listen to a scripture passage. Each person writes down the word or phrase that stands out. The group then shares their words and phrases followed by their thoughts and feelings.

## **11. METHOD: Random Draws**

### **“One-Anothering”** – I John 4:19 – PAGE 106

One-Anothering is a collection of biblical verses containing the words, “one another.” For example, “love one another,” “live in harmony with one another,” and “bear one another’s burdens”. Thirty-seven of these verses are cut into strips and placed in a box that can randomly be drawn for deeper discussions about how we live with one another.

### **Deep, Deeper, Deepest** – PAGE 111

Choose your discussion by drawing a prompt from one of the containers labeled DEEP, DEEPER, and DEEPEST. Participants will find their conversations ranging from silly to very personal.

### **Experiences** – PAGE 115

Experiences invite participants to share memories that have shaped who they are. Draw from the box a prompt ranging from the serious to the just plain fun. All are designed for groups to talk about topics that are not usually brought up in everyday conversation.

### **Faith Talk** – PAGE 118

Included is a list of random prompts for faith conversations. Use this in a small group, for one-to-one mentoring, or for family times. Listening to each other’s faith stories is like hearing each other’s hearts.

### **IFs** – PAGE 122

“Ifs” are great icebreaker questions. Use them for a fun getting-to-know-each-other activity. You could also choose to draw one or two prompts at the beginning each time your group starts. Either way, this is great way to get the conversation rolling.

## 12 METHOD: Ready 60s

### **My Story** – Isaiah 41:10 – PAGE 130

This is a list of 100 words and short phrases that will prompt a variety of personal stories. Some of the topics will produce some laughs while others deep heart felt faith and life discussions. This is a great discussion choice when a group wants to get to know each other better.

### **God's Story** – PAGE 133

60 church words! For some, these words are part of everyday vocabulary. For others, they may seem like a foreign language. Randomly pick a number and unpack the ideas, stories, questions and all else that comes from this set of religious words.

### **Our Story** – PAGE 135

Begin with a list of 60 relationship words or phrases. This is a unique opportunity to unpack the many mysteries of human interactions by picking a word that will provoke some great discussions from a variety of angles.

### **Choices, Changes And Challenges** – PAGE 137

You will find a list of 57 common choices, changes or challenges often faced. Pick a number and share, wonder, struggle, even confess personal journeys about the realities of life. Groups may find themselves offering support, encouragement and prayers.

## 13. METHOD: QUOTES

### **Poverty** – PAGE 141

Build your own discussion concerning poverty using a series of quotes and Bible verses. You will find plenty here to get your group talking!

### **Hindsight and Foresight** – Philippians 4:8 – PAGE 144

Adults were asked, "If you could go back in time what would you tell your teenage self?" This is a collection of their answers. Participants will imagine themselves coming back in time as well as going forward in time to tell their adult selves something that should be remembered.

### **Faith Forming Wisdom** – Hebrews 13:17 – PAGE 147

Use this one with your adult leaders. It is a series of quotes that has some wonderful wisdom for education and ministry world. Let participants pick the ones that most stand out and then unpack the wisdom and thoughts.

### **Jesus Said** – PAGE 49

Here you will find a list of a few of amazingly cool quotes from Jesus. Let participants scan and pick ones that seem to speak to them. Invite participants to say more, unpack it and ponder what it says for their lives.

## 14 METHOD: Real Questions

### **Tough Issues** – PAGE 154

Explore 109 real questions from youth from around the country. This set of questions asks about a variety of issues and concerns allowing participants to wonder and enter into wider and deeper discussions.

### **Faith and Religion** – PAGE 159

Explore 113 real questions from youth from around the country. This set of questions asks about a faith and religion allowing participants to think about what others wonder, while exploring and talking about their own faith questions.

### **God** – PAGE 165

Explore 109 real questions from youth from around the country about God. Allow participants to wonder along with the writers of these questions. Exploring these questions will certainly get some great conversation going.

### **Questions Prayed** – PAGE 170

If you were to pray a question what question would you pray? Explore 61 real prayers from youth from around the country. Allow participants to read these prayers, wonder about the teens and stories behind the prayers, while participants consider their own prayers.

## 15. METHOD: Chat Stations

### **Love** – I Corinthians 13: 12-13 – PAGE 175

What? The English language only has one word for love? The ancient Greeks had eight! Four of which show up in the Bible. Expand and broaden your understanding of love as you travel through a series of love reflection stations.

### **Self- Worth** – PAGE 185

Belonging, uniqueness, purpose and hope are four words pulled from psychology. They are human needs that make up our self-worth. Ironically, they are also the very core of God's promises. It is our faith that fills our most human need of self-worth.

### **Stop - Drop - Shop** – PAGE 191

All ministry begins with seeing. Participants rotate through various stations to STOP and reflect on observed concerns. Together they DROP inside of themselves, exploring the nudges of the spirit and the why their concerns exist. Together they SHOP for options to take actions.

### **The Lord's Prayer** – PAGE 201

People visit various prayer stations representing the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. At each station, participants contribute their own prayerful words, thoughts or even drawings resulting in prayer collages.

# #1

## THE METHOD

### DEEP – DEEPER – DEEPEST

Choose your depth. Start where your eyes land.

Note that the prompts are not numbered. If you number things, people assume there is an order they must follow. Let the group start where they want, and take the discussion in the direction the group needs to go.

This method is one of the easiest to write. The biggest challenge in writing is keeping the prompts short.

Deep - This is the shallow end of the pool! These are the not-so-deep questions. Think of these as the icebreaker questions. The ones that anyone can talk about.

Deeper - These prompts are about the topic and the scripture. They will lead into conversation about ideas and opinions.

Deepest - These get personal! They ask participants to talk about themselves. They ask about your own experiences, feelings and thoughts.

Consider printing three copies and stapling the edges together to form a triad that can stand in the middle of the group. Now everyone can see the prompts. Have everyone sit close. Some groups end up laying on their bellies. Add some candles and dim the lights to make an intimate atmosphere conducive for great discussions.



#### Discussions

- **Stress. (INCLUDED)**
- **Family**
- **Come Out of the Traffic**
- **Friends Preventing Suicide**

## Description

Students are experts on the topic of stress. Some stress can be healthy, but others experience too much piled on from too many directions. This is a conversation about helping friends de-stress. It is about being "living water," the kind Jesus offers the woman at the well in the story found in John 4.

## Facilitating

Start where your eyes land! Don't just answer questions, help each other share stories, thoughts, feelings and experiences. Listen! Ask! Wonder!

## Thoughts

Open with the story about the woman at the well found in John 4. Jesus talks about giving living water, which seemed to startle the woman. Frankly, if anyone said that to me I would think the person was a bit odd. Jesus never comes back and defines living water, but I think for the woman some of what living water was on that day, was someone sitting down by the well and knowing her stories. Stress! She had many reasons for there to be stress in her life. Talking about that stress and the parts of her life that had not gone well seemed to be the release she needed. When she left, she had to tell everyone about her encounter.

## Biblical Texts

Read and review the whole story. – **John 4:1-29**

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." – **John 4:7**

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water. " – **John 4:10**

---

# STRESS

---

## –DEEP–

- Describe an **AVERAGE SCHOOL DAY**
  - The light, fun, easy, manageable side
  - The heavy, demanding, oppressive, challenging side
- **MY CALM!** Place... Time... Person... Activity... Escape...

## –DEEPER–

- **STRESSORS** teenagers encounter
- **NORMAL** stress vs. **OVER-THE-TOP** stress
- **WARNING SIGNS** that life stressors are over-the-top
- **BEST** methods and **WORST** methods for handling stress
- **COUNSELORS?** What are the stigmas? Fears? Experiences?
- **WHEN** should a counselor be sought?
- **FAITH?** Helpful? How?

## –DEEPEST–

- Imagine **SITTING WITH JESUS** by the well. What would he ask? How would you feel? What would you say?
- What would be **LIVING WATER** for you? What do you need?
- **PERSONAL PRAYERS?** When? For what? How?
- How do you **HELP FRIENDS** de-stress? How do **FRIENDS** help you de-stress?
- **I TALK** about my stress with... **I AVOID** the topic with people who...
- A gift **I NEED FROM GOD** to better cope with life stresses is...
- **SHARE A PRAYER**, or blessing, reflecting the needs shared.

---

Takeaways? Learned? Wondering? Applications? Thinking About?

---

# #2

## THE METHOD

### WHERE WOULD YOU BE?

Ask a question. Everyone places a marker on the place that helps them best answer. As a facilitator, you simply ask, “Whose marker is this? Tell us about it!” The beauty of this method is that everyone has answered the question before anyone has said a thing.

As you ask about each marker, everyone has an opportunity to talk. This also means that more time will be needed for each question. It is possible you will only get through a few of the prompts. Keep your small groups small!



#### Discussions

- **Football Field**
- **Ski Map**
- **School Cafeteria**
- **World Map. (INCLUDED)**

### Description

With the world map in the middle of your group participants, mark various places to answer the prompts. These can range from topics about favorite places, to places of poverty, to spiritual places.

### Facilitating

You will need a large world map and some markers for participants to place on the map as they respond to various prompts. The facilitator will ask about the various markers and invite participants to share their thoughts and stories.

### Thoughts

God created the world and it was good. Then God let people in! While there is much good and beauty in the world there are also places of war, poverty, disasters and pollution. This is a conversation about our personal experiences, hopes and concerns for creation.

### Biblical Texts

"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers." – **Psalm 24:1-2**

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." – **John 3:16**

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect." – **Romans 12:2**

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in<sup>[h]</sup> him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together." – **Colossians 1:15-17**

---

# WORLD MAP

---

God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. – Genesis 1:31

Why? When? Feelings? Memories? Thoughts? Responses? Responsibilities?

## Where Would You Be?



My **FAVORITE** place on earth.

A place I am reminded most of **GOD'S CREATION**.

A **BUCKET-LIST** place I would like to go.

The **LAST PLACE** on earth I would want to live.

A place where people live and think **DIFFERENTLY** than me.

My **SPIRITUAL** place.

A place experiencing **POVERTY**.

A place hit hard by a **NATURAL DISASTER**.

A place news and politics give a **NEGATIVE IMPRESSION** of.

A place I would like to be in order to **LEARN** firsthand.

A place where God might be **DISAPPOINTED** in what humans did to creation.

A place with someone you would like to **PRAY** for.

---

What's my take away? Learned? Relearned? Thinking more about?

---

# #7

## THE METHOD

# THAT MAKES ME FEEL

This is a very unique discussion method in that it starts from a feeling level. Normally discussions take a long time, if ever, to reach the sharing of personal feelings. To be aware of our feelings is to be aware of our life.

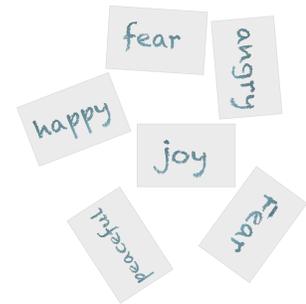
Here is how it works. Ask participants to name various feeling words. As feeling are named, write each word on its own card and lay it in the middle of your group. Ask each member of the group to find a small marker such as a ring, a coin, an earring, a key, a pen cap or some other object that they may have with them. You could also bring a small collection of unique markers for them to choose from.

After the discussion prompt is read, everyone places their marker on a card that best describes their personal feeling. Keep a stack of blank cards and pens ready to add more feeling words if needed.

The job of facilitator is amazingly easy. Everyone has already answered the question and no one has said a word. Just point to a marker on a card and ask, "Whose is this? Tell us about it! Why were you drawn to this word?"

As a facilitator, be ready to ask things such as...

- Tell me more.
- What's behind that feeling?
- How do you normally respond to that feeling?
- Do you have any stories where you remember feeling that way?
- What do you think causes that feeling?
- What do you want to say when you feel that way?
- Is that a feeling you try to mask or hide? In what ways?



**On the next page** is a list of feelings.

Don't try to write all these out on cards, because it could be too confusing. They are here to remind leaders there are more feelings than mad, sad and glad. They may help leaders to guide participants in expanding their feeling vocabulary.



### Discussions

- **Taking Jesus Personally. (INCLUDED)**
- **Personally**
- **Hurt**
- **Heart Checkup**

### **Description**

Participants explore a variety of life and faith topics, first identifying a key feeling and then sharing personal reflections.

### **Facilitating**

Write feeling words on cards, lay them in the middle and let participants place markers on how they would respond to the prompts.

Pick the prompts the people in the group most want to choose.

### **Thoughts**

Being an authentic person requires a practice of being true to what we feel. Knowing what we feel allows a person to speak truth not only to others but also to himself or herself. I think you will find this conversation to be a great way of entering into a variety of real-life faith and life topics. It is designed for the group to pick and choose where they need to go.

---

# PERSONALLY

---



When I think of my \_\_\_\_\_, I FEEL...

## Pick a Topic

- |                |                     |                 |
|----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Life        | 11. Faith           | 21. Hopes       |
| 2. Family      | 12. Home            | 22. Way of life |
| 3. God         | 13. Neighborhood    | 23. Inner soul  |
| 4. School      | 14. Country         | 24. Weaknesses  |
| 5. Grades      | 15. World           | 25. Abilities   |
| 6. Church      | 16. Self-worth      | 26. Christmas   |
| 7. Body        | 17. Self-image      | 27. Birthday    |
| 8. Friendships | 18. Job             | 28. Money       |
| 9. Future      | 19. Purpose in life | 29. Habits      |
| 10. Ambitions  | 20. Relatives       | 30. Use of time |

---

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you."*

*- Philippians 4:4-9*

---

**Takeaways? Learned? Wondering? Applications? Thinking About?**

---