



**Straight Talk about Working
with Kids, Teens & In-Betweens**

Study Guide

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE + SAINT LOUIS

Why are you doing this, anyway?

Pages 4–5, 8–9

Before you read

List three things you'd like to achieve in your work with kids, youth, and their families.

After you read

- ◆ Why are you doing this, anyway?
- ◆ Do you think youth ministry is “the most rewarding work a person can do”? Qualify your answer.
- ◆ What positive gifts can youth leaders offer young people?
- ◆ What unique gifts do you offer young people?

What kids want from their leaders

Pages 10–13

Before you read

What do you think kids want from their leaders?

After you read

- ◆ What challenges do young people face that are the same or different from what you faced at their age?
- ◆ Agree or disagree? “I learned that one of the most important things I can do as a leader is to invite students into my life. When they see the real me struggle, doubt, and fumble, they relate to me in a deeper way. Because, in the midst of our wreckage as sinful people, the Holy Spirit still works and shines forth through us” (p. 10).
- ◆ Which positive characteristic that leaders can offer young people most resonates with you?

Signs that you're a leader

Pages 14–15

Before you read

Do you consider yourself a leader? Why or why not?

After you read

- ◆ Who are you? What is your purpose in life?
- ◆ How can you use your God-given gifts and talents to guide others?
- ◆ What motivates you to work with kids, teens, and their families?

Figure out who you are as a leader

Pages 16–25**Before you read**

Describe yourself in three words.

After you read

- ◆ Who are you in Christ Jesus?
- ◆ What do you feel most passionate about?
- ◆ What skills or talents can you offer as you serve kids, teens, and their families?
- ◆ Cassie said most of us serve with a mixture of selfless and selfish desires, but “the Holy Spirit works through us to bless others. You, my friend, are incapable of changing hearts and eternally influencing people, because that’s God’s role. . . . God can use you, but it’s not *about* you. It’s about Him” (pp. 21–22). How does this mind-set change the way you serve the Lord Jesus and His church?
- ◆ What attitudes do you need to curb in order to reach young people and their families with the love of God in Christ Jesus?

Take care of yourself

Pages 26–32**Before you read**

What do you do to take care of yourself?

After you read

- ◆ Which aspect of wellness is a strength of yours—mental wellness, healthy relationships, physical wellness, or spiritual health?
- ◆ What can you do to improve each area of your life—mental wellness, healthy relationships, physical wellness, and spiritual health?

Section 2: Learning the basics

Dive in!

Set goals and get started

Pages 34–37

Before you read

Where and why did you start working with young people?

After you read

- ◆ What small efforts can you make day in and day out to benefit your work with kids, teens, and their families?
- ◆ Jot down a short, highly personal statement to guide your work with kids, teens, and their families.
- ◆ Name a Scripture verse that encourages you. How can you make it more accessible to you when you need it?

What do you do first?

Support and serve with others

Pages 38–43

Before you read

What first steps have you taken to work with kids, teens, and their families?

After you read

- ◆ Which first-step strategy was most helpful for you to hear?
- ◆ Agree or disagree? “Being a leader means supporting others, even when you disagree with them” (p. 42). Cite an example from your own life.

Nurture and support families

Pages 44–48

Before you read

Finish this sentence: I would describe the families I work with as . . .

After you read

- ◆ What surprised you about the demographics on page 45?
- ◆ How can you help equip families as spiritual centers of faith? What shifts would you need to make for this to happen?

Set up safe practices

Make emergency plans

Pages 49–56

Before you read

Finish this sentence: When working with kids and youth, our safe practices include . . .

After you read

- ◆ List safe practices you had not thought about before. Do you agree or disagree with them?
- ◆ How can you implement safer practices today?
- ◆ What emergency plans or policies do you need to implement? Involve people who need to help and commit to a date to put these plans in place.

Avoid self-sabotage (single-handed destruction of your own efforts)

Pages 57–61

Before you read

Share a time when you made a mistake that taught you something valuable about ministry.

After you read

- ◆ Which of the ten mistakes in this section are you most susceptible to?
- ◆ How can you avoid this mistake going forward?
- ◆ What new insight can you use today to stop self-sabotage?

Manage conflict and communicate with others

Pages 62–67

Before you read

On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 as best, how would you rate yourself as a communicator?

After you read

- ◆ Do you agree that a little bit of conflict can sometimes be a good thing? Why or why not?
- ◆ Which of the dos and don'ts on page 65 do you most need to remember?
- ◆ Which communication tip did you most need to hear? Which tip can you start using today?

Recruit, support, and serve with other leaders

Pages 68–75

Before you read

What challenges you most when you try to recruit others?

After you read

- ◆ How could involving more people help your kids, youth, and families?
- ◆ What would you need to do to involve others successfully?
- ◆ What expectations do you have for leaders? How can you best communicate with them?

Section 3: Working with kids & youth

Untrue stereotypes of today's youth

Pages 78–83

Before you read

Finish this sentence: The thing I think most adults misunderstand about kids or young people is . . .

After you read

- ◆ Which stereotype rebuttal most surprised or challenged you?
- ◆ Which stereotype do you want to challenge, and how?
- ◆ What can you do to show others the positive characteristics of kids and teens?

Crafting relevant learning experiences

Pages 84–86

Before you read

List three things you want kids to learn about Jesus.

After you read

- ◆ "Today's kids . . . perhaps more than any other generation . . . need to know why they should pay attention" (p. 85). How can you work "why" into your lessons?
- ◆ How could planning learning experiences benefit your group? Do you, or will you, make this effort?

Learning styles and how they impact those you lead

Practical tips for teaching kids and youth

Pages 87–93

Before you read

What conditions help you learn best?

After you read

- ◆ Think about the way you teach. Which kind of learner benefits most from your methods?
- ◆ What strategies could you use to engage other types of learners?
- ◆ Which practical tip can you put to work next time you teach?

Handling discipline

Pages 94–99**Before you read**

Think about a recent time when you needed to discipline a student. What was your biggest challenge?

After you read

- ◆ Which myth do you need to give up?
- ◆ Which truth about discipline is most helpful to you?
- ◆ Which discipline strategy can you use immediately?

Working with your biggest goofballs

Pages 100–104**Before you read**

What is a goofball? Do you know any?

After you read

- ◆ Name some benefits goofballs bring to a group.
- ◆ Name some challenges goofballs bring to a group.
- ◆ How can you reach your group goofballs with the love of Christ?

Girls vs. guys: what you really need to know

Pages 105–110**Before you read**

Name ways you think girls and guys are alike and different.

After you read

- ◆ What makes girls unique, and what do they need from you?
- ◆ What makes guys unique, and what do they need from you?
- ◆ In what specific ways can you make your group a welcome place for both genders?

Helpful tips for teaching in the real world

Pages 111–122

Before you read

Which age group do you like working with best, and why?

After you read

- ◆ What new or reinforced insight stuck out to you most about your preferred age group?
- ◆ What do you need to remember about the kids and youth you work with?
- ◆ Do you disagree with a tip? If so, name it and say why you disagree.

Tricks that work for all ages

Relating to your students

Pages 123–129

Before you read

What is your favorite way to get your group's attention?

After you read

- ◆ Name a new or reinforced strategy you can use to get your group's attention.
- ◆ Agree or disagree? "Adults make few attempts to understand how [students] actually feel and what they face" (p. 127).
- ◆ Name two ways you can better understand the world of your students.

Get their attention, break the ice, and keep them talking

Pages 130–133

Before you read

What barriers make it difficult to get kids to talk about real issues?

After you read

- ◆ What message do you really want kids to hear from you?
- ◆ What will you do or say to communicate that message?
- ◆ List one strategy you want to learn to use that will engage students. How will you learn to use it?

The “aha moment”

Pages 134–135

Before you read

Name a personal “aha moment.”

After you read

- ◆ How can you balance the importance of building relationships and sharing meaningful content?
- ◆ Tell about a time you witnessed an “aha moment” with a student.
- ◆ How can these “aha moments” encourage you in your work with young people?

My biggest oopsies

Pages 136–137

Before you read

What is your greatest fear in your work with children, youth, and their families?

After you read

- ◆ Which of Cassie’s oopsies made you laugh?
- ◆ Oops! Tell about a mistake you made with your kids, teens, or families.
- ◆ What comfort do we have when we fall short of goals or expectations?

Conclusion

Final words

Pages 140–142

Before you read

What have you learned as you put the ideas in this book to work with your students or group?

After you read

- ◆ What’s the hardest thing about your role with kids, youth, and their families?
- ◆ What blessings have you experienced in your work with kids, youth, and their families?
- ◆ What encourages you in your work with kids, youth, and their families?