

Before this session, we want you, the small group leader to answer this question, “Who are the people who have impacted me, who helped me grow in my faith?” Maybe that person was a teammate on your high school volleyball team or a roommate in college. Maybe that person was a neighbor, or a relative. Maybe it was your small group leader when you were in youth group. There are people in your life who have played a key role in helping to shape and grow your faith—including how you view God, yourself and others. Today’s small group dialog is a great opportunity for you to tell your story, and then help students identify who are some of the people God has already used in their lives to grow their faith.

Create meaningful conversation. Adjust questions as needed, and don’t feel like you need to answer all of them.

1. What is a way you took what you know and turned into an action this past week? How do you think doing this on a regular basis could help you grow spiritually?
2. If you had to name the five people who have most influenced you in your life, who would they be? (Don’t just think of your best friends.)
3. What made these people so influential? Did you know at the time they would have such a big impact on your life, or did you only realize it in hindsight?
4. How would you define a providential relationship?
5. Have you ever thought of your relationships with other people as “spiritual”—as something God uses to grow your faith? Is it strange to think that these relationships that grow us spiritually don’t have to only be ones with our youth pastors or small group leaders? How can relationships with anyone be spiritual?
6. Have you ever thought of yourself as being a providential friend for someone else? If you knew you had that kind of potential, would it affect the way you live or treat other people? How?
7. Have you ever seen bad relationships influence someone’s life? What happened?
8. What are some environments you can begin to place yourself in that will help you find the right kind of providential relationships?
9. Are there people in your life who are influencing you in a negative way? What can you do this week to be careful in those relationships?
10. Spend some time talking about the kind of providential relationships that helped each of you (including the SG leader) grow in your faith. What were the characteristics of those relationships? Share a story about one person who was pivotal in your spiritual growth. Make it a point this week to get in touch with them somehow to let them know how much his or her investment in your life means to you.

NEXT STEP: This week is the start of the XP for this series. Your student ministry team will have journals for you to distribute to your students. When you hand each student both a journal and a pen, have them write their names on the inside of the journals, then ask them to write the words “providential relationships” at the top of the front page. Tell students to write the names of some people who have been providential in their lives. Make sure you tell your students to bring their journals with them each week. You will need to remind them about that this week. (See the XP document for more details.) You may also want to encourage students to send a “thank you” note this week to someone who has been a providential relationship in their lives.

This is our final week of the Grow Up series, and this one may be the toughest one, because we're talking about a way that we grow that most of us wouldn't choose—pivotal circumstances. A pivotal circumstance is that moment when a significant challenge or stress provides us with an opportunity to see God in a new way. As you walk students through this concept, consider sharing some of the pivotal circumstances in your life. And if you need a prompt, consider this—the trials, the circumstances can be an opportunity for us to see who God is because they cause us to lean into Him more. They are moments we may not choose, but if we were given the chance to “redo” them another way, we may not change a thing because of what we gained in the process.

Create meaningful conversation. Adjust questions as needed, and don't feel like you need to answer all of them.

1. Have you seen your spiritual life grow since we started this series? What happened? Or how have you seen God grow your faith in the past—maybe in ways you didn't even realize?
2. Think through the most significant moments in your life. How were they pivotal? How did they shape your faith, for better or for worse?
3. Why do you think God uses pivotal circumstances to grow our faith?
4. Has God ever shown up in a time when you didn't expect Him to? What happened?
5. We can't make pivotal circumstances happen, but we do have a choice on how we respond to pivotal circumstances when they do come our way. What do you think we can do to respond to them in a way that grows our faith?
6. Have you ever thought about the difficult circumstances in your life as accidents? How does it change the way you think about these circumstances when you think of them as having potential to make your faith bigger?
7. In light of what we've learned this week, how can you better respond to different pivotal circumstances when they come your way?

NEXT STEP: This week continues the XP for this series. Ask your students to write the words “pivotal circumstances” at the top of the next available page. Tell them to write down some of the ways they have grown during tough times in their lives. (See the XP document for more details.) You may want to consider asking your students to bring their journals with them next week, and spend some time talking about the ways God has grown their faith even just through the course of this series.