

HOW TO LEAD:

The Scoffer

MAY MAKE THE LAST PERSON WHO TALKED WISH THEY HADN'T.

DO'S

DON'TS

DO *this*

... *Not* THIS

Attempt to understand possible "whys" beneath the scoffing:

- Frustration with flawed social norms & limited perspectives.
- Longing to be an individual; for compelling, honest dialogue.
- Desire to enlighten listeners, or appear insightful.
- Past pain from conventional ideas.

Ostracize the scoffer (or reject valid points) because they're a pain in the neck.

Instead, show that those off-the-beaten-path, outspoken, and even rude are welcome here. (I.e., show them the gospel.)

Appreciate their individuality, confidence, & ability to think differently.

Assume their confidence goes to the core. Scoffing can mask deep insecurity and can seek power or control.

Understand they may not value agreeableness or group unity. Still, work to maintain the emotional safety of the group.

Abandon the discredited person: "[Name] does bring up some things that are valid and important to hear..."

Ask them to answer first. Find something to agree with. When disagreeing, stick to facts.

Sideline group discussion to make sure the person who's right "wins." Pick your battles (i.e. areas of essential doctrine, etc.)!

Approach privately, acknowledging their strengths.

Then focus on behavior: "Your comments may not encourage emotional safety. Be yourself; bring alternative ideas. But do it without tearing others down (see Ephesians 4:29)."

Pretend "I was just joking" excuses pain they're causing (see Proverbs 26:18-19).

Instead, respond calmly, confidently: "We all love having fun. But not through digs at each other. Keep the joking constructive."

Help them shift their focus from "me" to "we." Scriptures that may help: John 17:23, Romans 12:16; Ephesians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 1:10.

Indulge sarcasm with laughter, or let the scoffer drive a wedge between group relationships.

Say, "It seems you're feeling __." Ask a sincere follow-up question.

Feel like you must respond every time; silence sometimes speaks loud enough.

If you're the target, be gracious but honest. "That's painful to hear. Not sure you heard the heart of what I'm saying."

Expect change to appear overnight. So pray for the scoffer to see how and why they're causing pain, and to heal from their own hurt.