

Practical Tips for Leading Effective Life Groups

- 1. Start and end on time.** Starting on time will establish a practice of people coming on time. Timeliness on both ends shows respect for people.
- 2. Make sure the room setup is such that everyone can see everyone else.** In most homes, this will be a limiting factor as to the number of people in the small group. Having people sit on a stairway or in an alcove usually inhibits them from participating.
- 3. Design the room setup and rules of engagement so that there is a minimum of distractions.** Have a policy regarding phone calls and childcare so that these and other issues will not be disruptive for others.
- 4. Include a short review of previous weeks if the flow of thought is important and to help those who were absent feel part of the group.**
- 5. Start with easy questions.** This serves the purpose of getting people talking. Observation questions - *What does it say?* - are a natural way to do this. You might even employ a “hook” - an observation or question about life in general - that most everyone can identify with to open your discussion if doing so sets the stage for the direction you want the study/discussion to take.
- 6. Seek to involve everyone in the interaction.** If one or two people are monopolizing the responses, you will need to stop this. Rather than specifically calling on a person, generically ask for responses by those who have not had a chance to say anything. If this practice continues week after week, you should plan to approach the offending party and let them know you appreciate their participation but ask them to be sensitive to your goal of involving others.
- 7. Don't let all the questions and responses come to you, the leader.** If you see this pattern developing, ask others to respond to a question or to share their perspective. Keep this up until the conversation flow is naturally multi-directional.
- 8. Don't allow yourself to become the group expert.** As appropriate, you may need to encourage people out of their comfort zones to take leadership. Co-lead a study with a new leader or meet with him or her mid-week to answer questions and be a resource. Look for ways to affirm them after the study.
- 9. Don't accept a wrong answer for fear of offending.** If there is a wrong response, you can ask the person to state the verse or phrase that prompted their response. (By the way, this is a good practice even if the response is correct.) You can also ask others if they agree or if they understand it differently. If a person often gives a wrong answer and you need to have it corrected, look for an opportunity to affirm them when they give a correct answer.
- 10. Don't allow statements that denigrate another denomination.** The study is intended to be a Bible study, not a justification of one church doctrine over another. There may be a few exceptions if having a variety of responses enhances your purpose. Be careful, however, to ensure this technique will not offend anyone. If the truth is to offend, let that truth come directly from the Scriptures.
- 11. Stick with the text being studied.** Almost every passage should have its understanding incorporated in the immediate context. Usually the recipients of one of the Apostle Paul's letters or epistles were not required to have read a previous letter as a prerequisite for understanding the current letter. When in your personal study you find a cross-reference to be helpful, use it carefully. If you want everyone to see that passage, make a statement and direct people there together.
- 12. Draw the study to a conclusion (may need a time keeper).** Don't quit without some sort of summation. Usually this is best accomplished before heading into the application phase. Discovering a bunch of interesting facts does not constitute a good study.

13. Don't forget to do "application praying." This helps draw the study to a proper conclusion. Don't be troubled if it takes a few weeks to get everyone in the pattern of doing this.

Things to Keep in Mind Each Time You Get Together

- 1) Make your group a priority (Frequency)
- 2) Be as open as you can with your life – this is especially critical for the leader (Authenticity)
- 3) Encourage our spiritual maturity (Mutuality)
- 4) Respect each other's differences (Courtesy)
- 5) Support in times of need (Sympathy and Service)
- 6) Accept and own your weaknesses (Humility)
- 7) Speak the truth in love (Mercy and Gentleness)
- 8) Total and complete confidentiality – please do not repeat anything about what is said or happens at our small group meeting unless it is about you (Confidentiality)
- 9) Support our purpose (Unity)

REMEMBER: Every person is on a journey – hopefully toward their God created destiny. There is no benefit in trying to compare journeys or where each person is in their journey; the important thing is that everyone in the group make progress on their individual journey.

The Importance of T – T – E – A

T Truth

T Transparency

E Encouragement

A Accountability