

# HOW TO LEAD A SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### **WORKSHOP ONE** **THE SMALL GROUP**

#### **I. WHAT IS THE DESCRIPTION OF A SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION?**

##### **A. What it is:**

1. *A planned conversation.*
2. *Between three or more people.*
3. *On a selected topic.*
4. *With leadership.*
5. *With 6-8 participants*
6. *Circular group seating*

##### **B. What it is not:**

1. *A lecture*
2. *A conversation between the leader and one student.*
3. *Several one-to-one conversations between the leader and some students.*

#### **II. THE VALUE OF THE SMALL GROUP**

##### **A. Advantages**

1. *It encourages participation from all members.*
2. *It allows for a good exchange of ideas and convictions.*
3. *It develops leadership skills.*
4. *It provides opportunity to share leadership.*
5. *It stimulates the sharing of new ideas and convictions.*
6. *It encourages honesty in real life issues from those involved. This gives the group an opportunity for personal involvement in the concerns of others in the group and outside of the group.*

##### **B. Of course there are also some limitations:**

1. *It involves only a limited number of people (4-12).*
2. *It requires good preparation by all members.*
3. *It covers a limited amount of material.*
4. *It requires skilled leadership.*
5. *Many people are not ready to share freely in a group.*

#### **III. PERSONAL NEEDS MET THROUGH THE SMALL GROUP**

##### **A. Expressed and Unexpressed Needs**

1. *The need for discipline in personal study of Scripture.*
2. *The need to learn correctly.*
3. *The need for accountability in personal application of Scripture.*
4. *The need to learn from others as applied Scripture is seen in their lives.*
5. *The need to learn to speak freely.*
6. *The need to have others care for them on a personal level.*

- B. Desire for Fellowship
- C. Desire to be a Part of Something

#### **IV. PRACTICAL INTERACTION WITH STUDENT COACHES**

- A. Have you had any experiences in the past with small groups?
- B. What personal needs do you think will be met through our workshop small group?
- C. See Workshop six "Introductory Questions" for additional questions.

## **WORKSHOP CHAPTER TWO GROUP DYNAMICS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **I. PRINCIPLES OF LEADING A SMALL GROUP**

- A. Try not to answer your own question
- B. Rephrase your questions if necessary
- C. Respect the importance of each individual
- D. Allow time for thought questions
  1. *Ask the question*
  2. *Pause briefly. Allow thirty seconds or even a minute for people to think about it.*
  3. *Call on someone for an answer.*
  4. *If there seems to be doubt about the meaning of the question, rephrase it.*
- E. Encourage discussion
  1. *Ask questions to stimulate discussion.*
  2. *Show approval. "Thank you for that answer". "I appreciate your contribution".*
  3. *Be ready to comment on answers.*
- F. Take advantage of controversy
  1. *Other passages of the Bible known to the group may provide the answer.*
  2. *Further study at home may lead to decisive information.*
  3. *Disagreement may be irresolvable and so members should be encouraged to "agree to disagree," having come to an understanding of one another's viewpoint.*
- G. Review Periodically
- H. Emphasize the Positive
  1. *No group member should ever be told bluntly his answer is wrong.*
  2. *Quite often a certain part of an answer can be commented upon.*
  3. *Wrong theology does not need to be approved.*
  4. *Make sure the members' answers to the leader are clear.*
  5. *Remember to raise the truth to the same level as the untruth that is being told.*
- I. Carefully Challenge Superficial Answers
- J. Occasional Use of Background Information
- K. Larger groups.

## **II. PRINCIPLES IN HANDLING PROBLEM AREAS**

- A. Encourage the new and shy members of your group with simple questions.
- B. Gently restrain the too talkative members.
- C. Ask the uninstructed questions of fact from the text.
- D. Try to help the 'tangent chaser' to pursue the purpose of the study.
- E. Question irrelevant contributions
- F. Help the member who approaches the passage, looking for problems.
- G. Show the 'well informed' member the value of keeping to this passage.
- H. For a thoughtful discussion to occur there must be enough time for students to think.

## **III. PRACTICAL INTERACTION WITH STUDENT COACHES.**

- A. Do some role playing of the problem areas.
- B. Use "Miscellaneous questions" listed under Workshop six to lead a discussion.

# **WORKSHOP THREE THE PREPARATION OF QUESTIONS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

- A. Unprepared Questions
- B. Prepared Questions

## **I. THREE TYPES OF PREPARED QUESTIONS:**

- A. Observation Questions
- B. Interpretation Questions
  - 1. *A definition of a word.*
  - 2. *Purpose.*
  - 3. *The relationship.*
  - 4. *Significance.*
  - 5. *Consequence.*
  - 6. *Relevance.*
  - 7. *Application.*
  - 8. *Divine/human relationship.*
- C. Application Questions
  - 1. *How relevant is this question?*
  - 2. *Does the question lead to action?*
  - 3. *How personally is the student (the one being asked the question) involved by the question?*

## **II. EVALUATING YOUR QUESTIONS**

## **III. SUMMARY**

## **IV. PRACTICAL INTERACTION WITH STUDENT COACHES**

- A. Ask a few people to illustrate the 3 types of basic questions of observation, interpretation, and application on a familiar Bible passage.
- B. What is the relationship between the three types?
- C. Have different people define and illustrate the four categories in question evaluation.

## **WORKSHOP FOUR EVALUATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **I. EVALUATING QUESTIONS**

- A. Group discussion in general
  1. *"Did the discussion seem to flow logically together?" "Why or why not?"*
  2. *"Was the material covered as desired?"*
  3. *"Was everybody involved in the discussion?"*
  4. *"Were there tangents?" "If so, how could you have avoided it?"*
  5. *"Was there a good atmosphere in the group?"*
  6. *"Was everyone there? Were they on time?"*
- B. Evaluating the Coach
  1. *"Were you well prepared? Did you need more time for study? How much?"*
  2. *"Which questions (prepared in advance), stimulated the best discussion? Why?"*
  3. *"Which questions stimulated the least discussion?"*
  4. *"Did you answer your own questions?"*
  5. *"Did you lecture or hold a conversation with one or several members of the group?"*
  6. *"Were you encouraging, enthusiastic, and confident?"*
  7. *"Did you reflect a learner's attitude?" "Did you show vulnerability?"*
  8. *"Did you force your ideas on the group?"*
  9. *"Did you follow the outline closely?"*
  10. *"Did you have time for application and summary?" "Why or why not?"*
  11. *"Did you begin and end as scheduled?"*
  12. *"Did you involve others in helping with the group?"*
- C. Spiritual Benefits
  1. *"Are the members gaining new knowledge?"*
  2. *"Is there new understanding?"*
  3. *"Are attitudes and actions being changed?"*
  4. *"Is specific spiritual growth seen in the lives of individuals?"*
  5. *"Do you see an increasing commitment to one another among your students?"*
  6. *"Is there a freedom to share from one's personal life?"*
  7. *"Is there a desire to share with others what they have learned?"*

#### **II. PRACTICAL INTERACTION WITH STUDENT COACHES**

- A. *"What are your general impressions or attitudes about evaluating this way?"*

- B. "What suggestions do you have, about following through with a periodic evaluation?"

## **WORKSHOP FIVE HANDS ON PRACTICE**

### **I. PREPARING QUESTIONS**

- A. Choose a Bible passage or lesson from your lesson or book.
- B. Write out five questions for each of the three types of questions.
- C. Use the evaluation chart (from chapter 3) and give each of your questions a value mark.
- D. Have as many persons as possible share some of their questions with each other.

### **II. APPLYING GROUP DYNAMIC PRINCIPLES AND THE USE OF QUESTIONS**

- A. Choose a group member (with some previous experience) to lead the group for 25-30minutes.
- B. Ask a few people to observe your group and make evaluations.
- C. Take some time to evaluate the dynamics of the group and the use of questions.
- D. If time permits, give others opportunity to lead the group.

### **III. PRACTICAL INTERACTION WITH STUDENT COACHES**

## **WORKSHOP SIX A RESOURCE OF QUESTIONS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **I. INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS**

- A. "Do you remember what the divine truth or principle was in our last lesson?"
- B. "Would someone like to share what happened when you applied that truth at home or work?"
- C. "Let us go around the room and share a joy, a praise, or a problem." "Now let us pray about these things." "Would each of you pray for the person on your left?"
- D. "What activity gives you the most satisfaction in your service for Jesus? The least satisfaction?"
- E. "What do you want or expect to gain out of the lesson tonight?"

#### **II. OBSERVATION QUESTIONS**

- A. "Who is the human author?" "How much do we know about him?"
- B. "To whom is the passage addressed? believers or unbelievers, Israel or Gentiles, an individual or a church?"
- C. "What is the author's purpose in writing this? Is it to warn, admonish, discipline, instruct, encourage, inform, etc.?"
- D. "Is it addressed to a specific circumstance or situation?" "If so, what is it?"
- E. "What words/phrases in this passage do you think are the key ones? Which words/phrases do we need to define in their context in order to draw out the meanings in this Scripture?"
- F. "How would you define this key word/phrase in the context of this passage?"
- G. "How many synonyms can you think of for this word?"

- H. "How many antonyms can we list for this word?"
- I. "This word has a very interesting etymology, that is, a historical and cultural application. Do any of you have any idea of the historical and cultural background to this word?"
- J. "Can you think of other places in the Scriptures where this word/phrase is used? If so, let us look at them and see if they might help our understanding here."
- K. "Does this word/phrase make you think of any unique experience in your life which you would like to share?"
- L. "Do you think that your understanding of this word/phrase is contradicted or supported by the following Bible references?"

### **III. INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS**

- A. "Do you detect any kind of promise or assurance that God has clearly given or implied for us?"
- B. "Do you note a command here for us to obey?"
- C. "Do you see any kind of example He has given us here to follow?"
- D. "Is there a sin here that He is telling us to avoid?"
- E. "Is there a warning here regarding false teachers or false doctrines?"
- F. "Is there a truth God is giving us here?"
- G. "In your own words how might you state the main idea in this passage/chapter?"
- H. "How would you interpret the meaning of this passage?"
- I. "Could you summarize what you think is the message, or the truth, or the principle, God is conveying to us in this passage?"
- J. "How would you state the antithesis to this truth or principle?"
- K. "Can you detect more than one meaning or application of the truth contained in this passage?"
- L. "How can you use an ocean, , ant, tree or other things to illustrate the principle under discussion?"
- M. "How can you make this into a diagram, illustration, demonstration, or act out this principle so that it could be understood by a ten year old child?"

### **IV. APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

- A. "What principles or truths did you learn from this lesson which you can apply in your relationships with non-Christians at work, home, church, or in the neighborhood?" "How can you apply them?"
- B. "Which of these things can you apply in your family?" "How?"
- C. "What things did you learn in this session that will be effective in witnessing to unbelievers?"
- D. "What did you learn that will make you a more effective edifier of your brothers and sisters in Christ?"
- E. "In what area do you feel a need for greater knowledge and understanding in order to be a more effective witness or edifier?"
- F. "Can you think of events in your life which might demonstrate how this principle works?"
- G. "How many of you are willing to apply this truth/principle to a non-Christian in your sphere of influence at least once this week, and be willing to share what happened at our next meeting?"
- H. "Write down on a sheet of paper the name of the person you are going to apply this divine principle with in this coming week. Put your name also on the paper and give it to me. Next week we will ask you to share what happened when you applied it."
- I. "Write down one commitment to God, based on the understandings and insights you have gained, regarding a change you intend to make in your attitude/behavior for Christ's sake."

### **V. MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS**

- A. "Describe briefly how you came to Christ."
- B. "What are some of the things you enjoy doing the most?"
- C. "What is your least favorite task?"
- D. "What do you consider as one of your present greatest needs?"

## **CONCLUSION**