



HOW TO LEAD A STUDY • CRUCIAL ELEMENTS

Though groups may include a variety of members, personalities and people from a wide range of backgrounds, there are some elements which characterize every effective Christian small group. A prospering small group will have each of these elements: quality biblical content, community, self-discovered learning, progressive lifechange and outward impact.

1. Quality Biblical Content

This might come as a surprise, but small group Bible studies study the Bible. Central to the Christian faith is the belief that God has revealed Himself to us in His Word. The Bible is the means by which we learn about God and His desires for our lives. Small groups which foster growth in Christ must go to God's Word to discover how to experience God's life-changing power.

At the end of each small group, members should walk away knowing they've delved into God's Word, Ideally the group will spend time in one main passage, discuss it among themselves, and work toward understanding applicable truths. The leader should strive to choose sections of the Bible that intersect the lives of those in the group so they see the relevance of the application.

2. Community

Community is the sense within the group that members are a team bonded together as friends and committed to each other's well-being and growth. This doesn't happen all at once, but healthy, growing groups have an increasing sense of community. Over time, individuals rejoice together, and share in sorrow together. These groups move from being "Tom's group" to "our group," as members begin to take ownership of the group. The leader can help facilitate this, but community is not primarily a leadership issue. Rather, it's a oneness that becomes apparent when individuals come to value others in the group.

3. Self-Discovered Learning

As a leader your role is to stimulate group members to discover biblical truths for themselves. Leaders don't need to know all the answers, but they need to know enough to guide the group to the answers. They also need to be skilled in asking good questions to draw group members into lively discussions about biblical truth. As everyone contributes, new discoveries will be made that individuals would not have thought of on their own.

Self-discovered learning is different than simply sharing opinions. A good small group discussion on a passage in the Word should help people discover biblical truth through observing, interacting, studying and processing the content together.

4. Progressive Life-Change

Successful small groups ultimately help bring about changes in the members' lives. The goal is to apply what is being learned through the power of the Holy Spirit. Many groups settle for a good discussion, thinking this is the goal. If a group stops short of being a catalyst for life-change, it has fallen short of all God intends for the group.

One of the strengths of a small group is the healthy responsibility individuals develop toward each other. They'll look out for each other and help each other keep different commitments to change. Often small groups provide the strength members need to begin studying the Bible for themselves or make some changes in their lives.

5. Outward Impact

A small group needs an outlet to put into action what they are learning. As the group reaches out to others, at least two things happen: the group is strengthened and more lives are changed. Seeking to make an impact is a difficult step for many groups because it's safer to become ingrown. But virtually all groups need to take the key step of turning the focus of the group from "getting" to "giving."