

# SMALL GROUP LEADERS

*preparing to lead a group*

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## GOAL

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The purpose of this workshop and, especially gathering in small groups, is to increase our ability and confidence in handling God's Word faithfully and accurately. Our goal is for each person to *make progress* on their work.

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## LEADING UP TO THE WORKSHOP

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- Be ready to discuss each of the Small Group texts. Prepare well. *Note: we will cover each passage at the pre-workshop gathering.*
- Familiarize yourself with the names of people in your group and be in prayer for them.

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## AT THE FIRST SMALL GROUP SESSION

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- Be the first person to arrive in your room for the first session.
- Make sure to sit in a place which gives you easy access to the white board.
- Welcome everyone. Consider a few items to note. Examples include:
  - Everyone should have been assigned a passage and brought completed worksheets for every member of the group.
  - Figure out who is doing what passage and determine if there are any gaps
  - Reminder that we're all here to learn and grow. This is not a teaching session, but a group collaboration to help each other on our work.
  - Recognize that it can be intimidating, but we're not here to impress or act like anyone has all the answers. Everyone's work could use some improvement.
- (optional) do some sort of an ice-breaker
  - Name, how long at the church, favorite meal, family, etc.

NOTE: for the fall 2015 workshop there will be extra time for a "get to know you" question, which we will give you several examples to choose from or you may choose your own. Do this question while people eat dessert and/or fruit. It should last about 15 minutes, as we are adding this time to the first small group session. After that, the timing should remain the same.

- Explain that each person will have 5 minutes to walk the group through their work. Please stick to the 5 minutes.
- Explain the format of the session for each passage:
  - Someone is assigned to read the passage and then pray.
  - Each person assigned the passage will walk the group through their work. This will happen back-to-back, for a total of 10 minutes.

- One person will be assigned the role of “questioner” for each presenter. This person will ask a “get the ball rolling” question about their work<sup>1</sup>. The presenter will respond. Then the other questioner will ask the second person, followed by response. This should total about 15 minutes.
- The discussion for both presenters is now open to the group. This leaves 10 minutes for full group discussion over the passage.

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#### FORMAT

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*Do your best to stay on schedule.*

- You will have 70 minutes per Small Group session.
- You will have two texts per Small Group session.
- Allow for 35 minutes per text (two presenters per text).
- Allow some time for prayer after the second text.

Some things to consider:

- If you have a passage where only one presenter will share it will most likely leave some extra time at the end. Consider using this time for some good application and praying together.
- Don't let anyone dominate.
- Try to let the tone of “helping the work along” be in the air, verses we're here to correct you and teach you how to do it right. Pointing things out that are wrong or missed is appropriate, but do so with grace.

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#### METHOD

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At Workshops, we strive to use the Socratic Method. We want participants to engage in the independent critical thinking that leads to a deeper understanding of the principles and better use of them when they go home to do their work. In other words, as a small group leader, you should use questions to drive the discussion.

- Always try to ask questions of the presenter, especially before you present your own work.
- Use questions to get the participants to learn the material through their own discovery. In so doing, they will develop their own emotional ownership to the principles.
- We should not (immediately) answer the questions we raise, or we will lose an opportunity to help participants discover the answers on their own.
- Remember, the goal is to help the presenter take the next step for their work—not to get everyone on the same page about the ‘right answers’ or the ‘right understanding of the text.’

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<sup>1</sup> Example 1: you mention that the theme is \_\_\_\_\_, but then I see in your application section there doesn't seem to be anything that flows out of that theme. I could be missing the connection, but could you explain that? Example 2: As I read the passage I notice that the word \_\_\_\_\_ is repeated several times. Do you think that is significant? Could you explain why you chose not to use this as part of the structure of the passage?

- Make use of the white board during the discussions to reinforce the principles. Draw the pictures and walk the group through work, asking questions as you go.

A weakness of the Socratic Method is that it can make the instructor the guru, instead of pointing participants directly to the text. Be careful and work hard to keep the participants in the Scriptures and your own approach very accessible. Never justify your conclusions with references to work they haven't seen in some form.

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#### TONE

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The Small Group time is the most important aspect of a Workshop. Because the Small Groups is so important, the tone of these Small Groups is critical to our success. Anytime critique is invited, tensions will inevitably rise. Your goal, as Small Group Leader, is to set the tone for mutually beneficial group critique. Think about the idea of "spring training", where the baseball veteran and the rookie join together to go over the fundamentals. Remember:

- Everyone is here to learn.
- Opening yourself up to critique is a vulnerable thing.
- Your single best tool is a well-crafted question.
- Leave your ego at the door. Critique is not personal, but caring for one another.
- You are the facilitator, not the expert. Your perspective may be right, but...your goal is to help each participant get a little better, not become experts.
- Get the participants to interact. They will surprise you.
- Draw the participants out as you plant the principles in.
- Balance reassurance and correction to help the presenter (not you or anyone else).
- Your ability to help each participant is maximized if you genuinely care about each person.

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#### DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS

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Without hearing the presentations you are going to hear, it can be difficult to anticipate what will make a good question from the Small Group Leader. Nevertheless, there are generally a few areas of weakness in all presentations. These questions are meant to help you, the Small Group Leader, think through the presentation and begin to tackle your response. These questions are listed in a specific order to help you identify problems. For example, if the theme is off, the aim will likely also be off.

1. Does the participant explain the structure of the text and how it shapes the emphasis? You might ask:
  - What was your structure again? What was the emphasis? How did you arrive at that structure and emphasis? What strategies did you use to arrive at your structure?
2. Does the participant explain how the text fits within the context? You might ask:
  - How did the passage before this contribute to your understanding? What's the bigger theme in this section of the book? How does your passage function in its context?

3. Does the participant explain how the text fits within the message of the book? You might ask:
  - What is the main theme of this book? How does your passage contribute to it? How does the author's big picture aim give guidance on your passage?
  
4. Did the participant get a good theme? Was it grounded in the text? You might ask:
  - Can you please repeat your theme? Where in the text is your theme grounded? How might you change your theme in light of our discussion? What does the group think of the revised theme?
  
5. Did the participant provide appropriate aims? Are they grounded in the text? You might ask:
  - How does your aim follow from your theme? Given what you know of the author's agenda, what do you think he intended for his readers to do or to think as a result of this passage? Where in the text might you point people to see the aim? What would these applications and implications look like in your church?