

LESSON ESSENTIALS

LEADING SMALL GROUPS

LESSON 2: METHODS OF TEACHING IN A SMALL GROUP

As the leader of the group, there is great temptation to always take on the responsibility of teaching the lesson each week. If you are taking on the responsibility of discipling one, or many, of the members of your small group, you will want to make sure that you are giving them opportunities to lead and to teach in your small group. Not everyone is born a teacher. While some come by the ability very naturally, most others require formal training, or a good example to follow, in order to develop the skill of teaching. How can you incorporate that kind of training into your small group?

There is great benefit to all the members of the group if the lessons are led and taught by various group members. The process of equipping your members to lead does not need to be arduous or overwhelming for anyone involved. This lesson can give some ideas for you to help build the skills of your group.

Learning in a small group is accomplished in two primary ways: first, by the formal teaching element of the meeting. Second, learning happens through the sharing of leadership in the group.

Surely one of the greatest ways to learn something is to prepare to teach it to others. By giving this opportunity to your members, you allow them to study in a deeper way.

If you are already in a discipleship relationship, you know that it can be a large investment of time. To consider adding small group leadership training to your schedule could seem overwhelming. However, the small group meeting is a great opportunity to both formally model good teaching methods to one, or many, disciples.

Learning in a small group is accomplished in two primary ways: first, by the formal teaching element of the meeting. The members of the group sit and listen while the leader instructs them. This is particularly necessary if you have a large number of new believers in your group. During the early days of their faith journey they will need to receive Biblical instruction from you and will have many more questions than contributions to make to the group discussion. Second, learning happens through the sharing of leadership in the group. While you may still maintain the role of leader, you may delegate leading the study or facilitating the conversation to a member who is ready to take on increasing responsibility. Surely one of the greatest ways to learn something is to prepare to teach it to others. By giving this opportunity to your members, you allow them to study in a deeper way, and you also create an opportunity for you to give them constructive criticism on how they led, how they excelled, and how they could improve.

Practically speaking, how do you implement such a teaching model? First, begin with a teaching style of “teacher as lecturer”. This involves you systematically teaching through a topic or series of topics. As was just explained, this will lay a proper foundation of knowledge so that your members know what content to teach. While this is particularly necessary with a group of new believers, we all always have more to learn from the Word and can always benefit from sound Biblical lectures.

Second, you can move towards a “teacher as demonstrator” style in order to model interesting and varied teaching styles. This phase will have you using object lessons, visual teaching aids, and more to enliven the teaching segment of your small group meeting. The members of your group will be inspired to think of how they might present a topic and what creative ways of communicating they could use to teach like you have demonstrated.

Third, as you see the maturity in your members increase, move into “teacher as facilitator” style. Here your members will help to carry the conversation and discussion time of your meeting. You will still be responsible for the overall direction of the night, but you may encourage the members to come up with open questions for the

group, or you may ask them to suggest answers to others' questions. This will give you and them the opportunity to see their level of confidence in directing conversation and in knowing when to fill a moment of silence and when to wait for someone else to fill that space. You will learn a lot about your members' abilities in this phase.

Finally, switch roles with a member giving them the chance to be "teacher as facilitator" for a meeting. Now, they will be the one who is encouraging others to carry conversation, and to be responsible for the direction of the evening. They will have the safety of knowing you are still present so that they do not feel obligated to have all the answers. However, they will learn much about how to lead a group under your watchful eye and will benefit from the input and feedback from all the group members.

Of course, if your member shows great promise as a leader and teacher, you will want to also give them opportunities to lead an evening as "teacher as lecturer" and "teacher as demonstrator." When the time comes, you will want to encourage the members who have teaching skill to begin their own small group. This is one way that the body of Christ can be fruitful and multiply: by raising up leaders who go on to raise more leaders!

It can take humility to be willing to share and to delegate the responsibilities of teaching in a small group. However, it is of immense benefit to everyone involved, and indeed, for the body of Christ as a whole, for leaders to take on the duty of training the next generation of teachers. Hebrews 10: 24 instructs us to, "... consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." Teaching in a small group is certain one way to fulfill that mandate.

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IN REVIEW

- An essential part of discipleship is training the person how to lead and teach in a small group, and there is no better way to add that to your discipleship program than to model leadership in a small group.
- There are several phases of modelling good teaching including lecturing, demonstrating, facilitating, and then delegating those same roles to your student.
- Humility is required to teach others to lead, but it will be a great benefit to the Kingdom of God as many workers are prepared to go out and teach His Word to many people.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- How did you learn to be a teacher? What teaching style do you typically use when leading your small group?

- How could you use the styles mentioned in this lesson to enhance the good work you are doing currently

- Pray and ask the Lord to reveal to you the small group members that have potential to be teachers and leaders, and then pray that the Lord will give you the energy and the willingness to train them to lead.

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