

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership Study Guide

LEADING SMALL GROUPS

LESSON 2: METHODS OF TEACHING IN A SMALL GROUP

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module titled Leading Small Groups. The purpose of these lessons is to equip the developing leader with skills and understanding in order to successfully lead a small group. A small group may be a Bible Study or Discipleship group, or any other small group used for discipleship and ministry. The focus is on building strong communication skills and positive relationships, accompanied by an attitude of love and service. Equipping yourself to be a better small group leader will enhance your ability to disciple and teach others, and at the same time, create a more enjoyable experience for everyone. This module is designed for those who are currently in church leadership, small group leadership, or a member of a small group. Hopefully members of a small group will one day take on leadership responsibility of such a group.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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LEADING SMALL GROUPS

LESSON 2: METHODS OF TEACHING IN A SMALL GROUP

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

This lesson explores learning styles, teaching styles, and effective methods of communicating within a small group setting.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

For many of us, our ideas of what education is are formed in early childhood. Many people think that learning should look a certain way – perhaps a knowledgeable teacher speaking to quiet students who are sitting in rows, trying to absorb every word. Excellent teachers and memorable lessons often break this mold! Consider how stories, object lessons, field experiences, demonstrations, and personal testimonies have played a part in what you have learned over your lifetime. You might find your participants resistant at first to some of the unconventional methods or conversational approach suggested here. However, these are only ideas to get you thinking about various teaching methods. Some will work better for you than others! At the end of the day, it is important to realize that our main responsibility is to facilitate learning. When it comes to spiritual truths and learning how to live life as a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit does most of the teaching! We are merely a tool in His hand.

GETTING STARTED

1. When you set out to learn something new, how do you learn it best? By reading and research? Observing others? Or trying it 'hands-on' for yourself?

2. What is something you have always wanted to learn or know more about? What has stopped you from achieving this?



STUDY

❖ **THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:** Each person is uniquely created by God! This truth is especially important to keep in mind as we look into the philosophy of education. When we want to know how to create the best learning environment for those in our small group, we must take into consideration the way we teach and the way our students learn. Many of us prefer certain environments and methods of teaching, but our preferences are not always the best!

- The Bible gives advice on learning. What do the following passages say? Read and write down what you learn.

Proverbs 1:5	
Proverbs 18:15	
Proverbs 9:9	

If continuous learning is such an important part of our lives, we ought to pay careful attention to the best ways to both learn and teach others.

Some groups choose to share the task of teaching or facilitating the lesson, resulting in many people finding themselves in the role of a teacher at some point. Each of us can improve our teaching by considering new methods as well as having our lessons well prepared.

❖ **LEARNING STYLES:** Educational theorists suggest that each person has preferred methods of learning information. Small groups have the freedom to use many methods of learning in order to more effectively teach truths. Identifying different styles of learning within a classroom and choosing to present material in different ways leads to an increase of information retention. Each of us has one or sometimes a mix of learning styles.

- To the learning style chart that follows, draw a symbol underneath each learning style name to help you remember it.
- In your small group, you may have both social and solitary learners as well as visual and verbal learners. This doesn't mean that they cannot learn by another method. However, the material will have the greatest impact in their preferred style. Using visuals and charts along with an oral presentation, and a role play activity followed by a group discussion, will reach many more learners than a lecture would.



Types of Learners	
Visual Learners	prefer pictures, images, demonstrations. They would rather read about something in a book or see it happen.
Oral Learners	prefer listening to presentations, discussion and music. They would rather listen to a description of something than read it.
Physical Learners	prefer using body, hands, sense of touch, and movement. They would rather engage their bodies in doing something rather than talking or reading about it.
Social Learners	prefer to learn in groups or as a class. They are collaborative learners.
Solitary Learners	prefer to work alone or engage in self-study. They are individual learners.

❖ **HOW JESUS TAUGHT:** Consider that Jesus used many methods to teach His followers! He didn't stick to one method to teach a range of topics and situations. He used His wisdom to discern what was needed for each audience and occasion. Beside each of the listed examples below, identify the types of learners who would have benefited from this method:

- **Jesus Asked Questions (Matthew 16:26):** _____
- **Jesus Used Visual Illustrations (Mark 12:41-44, John 8:6):** _____
- **Jesus Demonstrated (John 13:3-7, Matthew 9:10-12):** _____
- **Jesus Told Stories (Matthew 13:34, Matthew 22:1-3):** _____
- **Jesus Lectured (Matthew chapters 5-7):** _____
- **Jesus Created Learning Experiences (Luke 9:1-10):** _____



- ❖ **TEACHING METHODS:** A teacher who wishes to be effective will ensure his or her teaching is characterized by variety. In this lesson we will examine three teaching methods, when they are best used, and how they can be combined to enhance individual learning.

➤ For each method below, identify when it would be best used.

TEACHER AS LECTURER		
Teacher stands at the front of a classroom to deliver information through a lecture. This may be read from notes, and there is little interaction with the students. Students are expected to remember the material, and/or take notes.		
Pros	Cons	When Would You Use It?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covers the most material in the least amount of time. • Can be delivered to a very large group. • Organized, logical and efficient. • Widely understood, and seen as 'traditional' learning. • Good for oral learners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be dull, and students are low on engagement and motivation. • Difficult to convey attitudes of the heart or specific skills through lecture alone. • Students' questions go unanswered. • Lecturer cannot gauge student comprehension. 	

TEACHER AS DEMONSTRATOR		
Teacher retains the teacher-centered learning, but goes beyond straight lecture. Teacher uses visual media, charts, dramatizations, practical demonstrations, role playing and practice.		
Pros	Cons	When Would You Use It?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some material must be demonstrated in order to be understood. • Role playing allows people to make mistakes in a non-threatening environment, and test solutions to problems. • Material may be more memorable. • Charts and visuals explain concepts better than words. • Use of storytelling can be moving and memorable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all venues are equipped for visual media technology. • Sometimes it costs money to create visuals. • Roll playing, dramatizations, and hands-on practice take time and repetition. • Role playing may create fear in insecure participants. • May be difficult to demonstrate effectively to a large audience. • Requires more preparation and organization. 	



TEACHER AS FACILITATOR		
<p>Switch to learner-centered experience. The role of the teacher is to guide and encourage self-learning through carefully constructed learning experiences and group discussions. This method is best with smaller groups and motivated older youth or adult learners – students learn how to learn. This style focuses on activities, collaboration, and group problem solving.</p>		
Pros	Cons	When Would You Use It?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students remember and take ownership of what they actively learned. • Promotes self-learning and discovery of skills that extend beyond the classroom. • Develops critical thinking skills. • In Bible classes, students learn what the Bible says and how to use it, rather than what someone else says. • Teacher can teach how to use tools (internet, concordances, etc.) for further learning. • Teacher can create learning activities that require application of content in creative ways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not best for topics with lots of information or processes that need to be demonstrated. • Requires the most preparation for teachers. • Takes time to allow for student self-discovery or group discovery. • Discussions don't always lead to helpful conclusions. • Problems occur when the group does not examine what the Bible says, only how they 'feel'. • Discussion or exploration may not always stay on topic. 	

➤ Which style would you be most comfortable using? Which style would be most interesting to you as a learner?

➤ How could you use a mix of these styles in leading a small group?



- ❖ **LESSON PLANNING:** When preparing to teach or lead a lesson, we should take into consideration creative ways to present and explore information.

➤ Here are just a few ideas that will work in many situations. Can you think of others?

ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES	
The following learning experiences can be used in many of the above teaching styles to improve the way information is taught to students. They are more learner-centered and interactive in exploring ideas.	
Breakout Groups	Quickly divide the class into small groups (4-8) and have them discuss a question, solve a problem, look up verses of the Bible, and then report back to the class as a whole.
Debates	Set up a formal debate between students in order to see both sides of an issue. Keep it civil and under control. Inviting two experts (or a panel of speakers) to a formal debate helps students make an informed decision.
Artistic Response	Some topics lend themselves to an artistic response – consider creative writing, painting, dance, drawing, drama, sculpting or textile work. Especially useful for children and youth.
Research/Reporting	Instruct students to research a topic to report to the class. This may involve conducting interviews outside of class, writing, or creating a verbal presentation.
Field Trips	Consider visiting a different venue to conduct a lesson or explore an idea. A visit to another church, farm, a mission site, or a community may help you illustrate topics or ideas. Visiting a new place can make the Bible come to life!
Case Studies	Reading over case studies – true stories of a problem or situation – can help a class discuss possible solutions and apply their knowledge.
Play	Adults as well as children learn much through play! Sometimes this means including a game, quiz or contest. These should be purposeful – not a time filler.
Other Ideas...	

With all of these different ideas, how can you apply them to your small group Bible study or discipleship group? The answer lies in proper lesson planning. Even the simplest group get-togethers will benefit from having an objective and a few points you want to cover in your time together! When preparing to teach or lead a lesson, we should take into consideration creative ways to present and explore information whenever possible.



The following steps should help you come up with a lesson plan. In the chart below, consider a topic that you may teach on in the future and decide what activity or steps you should take for each part of the lesson. Or consider how you could structure a lesson on a passage such as Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 6:10-18, or Matthew 5.

1. Objective: Have a clear reason for meeting together and something you want to accomplish. This might be teaching about a topic, a Bible text, or issue. Objectives should be measurable – something someone will be able to do, recognize, or see.	
2. Introduction: Create an introductory activity that will help connect the topic to the students' lives. Some ideas include fun activity, questions, a short video, or role playing.	
3. Observation: This stage asks 'What does the Bible say?' or 'What is the problem we are looking at?' or 'What is the need we have?' The students should be clear on what it is they are learning and why.	
4. Explanation: At this stage, the teacher wants to provide the students with the answer. This may happen through direct lecture, visual explanations or demonstrations, or group discovery activities.	
5. Application: In this stage, application of these new truths needs to be made. How will this change my life? What do I need to do with this new information?	

- ❖ **CONCLUSION:** With some preparation, practice and prayerful reliance on the Holy Spirit, we can teach the truths of God in a way our students will remember them. Even in a small group, we can create real encounters with the truth of God's Word that will change their lives!



IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Each of us is unique, and we learn in unique ways. In order to help others learn, we ought to consider the best learning environment for them.
- ❖ Learning styles differ – there are visual, oral, and physical learners. Some prefer learning socially while others learn in solitude.
- ❖ Jesus used many different teaching methods to reach different learners. We can teach as Jesus did by varying the way we present information.
- ❖ Teachers can take many roles – lecturer, demonstrator and facilitator.
- ❖ In order to create effective learning experiences, we must plan our lessons. This involves identifying the lesson objective, creating an introductory activity, an observation activity, making time for explanation and application.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How could your small group benefit from more variety in teaching styles or activities? How would your small group respond if you tried something very different?

2. What will be the greatest challenge for you in putting this material into practice?