

Reformed University Fellowship **Leading Bible Studies Conference**

Session 6: Leading a Bible Study

- I. Preparing for the Meeting
 - A. Recruiting the people.
 - 1. Where will you get the people?
 - a. Dorm area.
 - b. Class.
 - c. Special interest.
 - d. How you form the group will affect other aspects of your ministry.
 - 2. How will you contact them?
 - 3. How will you invite, encourage, persuade them to come?
 - B. Selecting a place.
 - 1. Easy to find.
 - 2. Easy to get to.
 - 3. Comfortable atmosphere.
 - 4. No distractions.
 - 5. This is more important than you think.
 - 6. Possibilities: dorm room, lounge, seminar room, cafeteria corner, your house.
 - C. Choosing a time.
 - 1. When the people will be available.
 - 2. When the people will be most receptive.
 - 3. When the leader is available.
 - D. Setting up the room.
 - 1. Enough comfortable seating.
 - 2. Good lighting.
 - 3. Comfortable temperature.
 - 4. Reasonably tidy.
- II. Mechanics of the Meeting.
 - A. Beginning the meeting.
 - 1. Welcome everyone and make introductions.
 - 2. Use an ice-breaker for a few weeks to facilitate relationships.
 - 3. Explain the process and expectations of the Bible study to the people in the group.
 - a. The purpose of the group: discuss the passage at hand.
 - b. No one knows all the answers.
 - c. Everyone says something wrong at some point.
 - d. We are all learning together.
 - e. Your role is to facilitate discussion, not to teach.
 - f. Come to large group to hear teaching.
 - g. When the study will end.
 - 4. Begin with prayer.
 - a. For a new group, it might be best for the leader to open with a simple prayer for God's blessing.
 - b. As the group develops, they ought to share requests and pray for each other. (This could also be done after the study.)

- B. Leading the meeting.
1. Encourage everyone to speak.
 - a. Recognize those who have not spoken much.
 - b. Call on people by name if necessary, but only those people who will not feel too awkward about it.
 - c. Be sensitive to different levels of spiritual and personal maturity; direct questions appropriate to the ability and comfort level of each person.
 - d. If necessary, speak to someone who talks too much outside the meeting; enlist his help in drawing out others.
 2. Affirm all contributions; learn to find something positive to say about anyone's contribution, even false ideas – be encouraging.
 3. Keep the study moving.
 - a. Develop a sense of pace that is appropriate for your group.
 - b. Don't get bogged down on minor points.
 - i. This means you must be clear about what the 2 or 3 major points of the study should be.
 - ii. Deflect minor points to another time, like after the study.
 - c. Summarize the discussion.
 - i. Do this when enough has been said on a point and most people have had a chance to speak.
 - ii. Here you are playing the role of moderator.
 - iii. E.g. say, "So are we all saying this passage teaches that Jesus is the Son of God?"
 - iv. One sentence is about right; this is no time for you to hijack the study and preach a sermon.
 4. Encourage interaction among the group members.
 - a. Set the example by using one person's comment as the basis for your next question.
 - b. Call attention to agreement or disagreement among members.
 - c. Encourage them to resolve differences of opinion themselves.
 - d. Ask one what he thinks of another's statement.
 - e. If they too easily (unthinkingly) state a position, express doubt so they can gang up on you.
- C. Keep the study moving in the right direction.
1. Try to avoid dead periods in conversation, but give people time to think.
 2. If you get a glazed look from one of your questions, reword it to make it clearer.
 3. **Never** answer your own questions!
 - a. This is the fool-proof way to sabotage your Bible study.
 - b. Remember the idiotic professor in *Paper Chase*.
 - c. Reword the question.
 - d. If that doesn't work, move on; often the point will come up later.
 - e. In the worst case, go home, ask someone for help, and try again next week.
 4. Try to avoid conversation off the topic.
 - a. Listen politely to a tangent, then steer the conversation back to the passage.
 - b. "That's interesting. Now what do the rest of you think about Jesus' statement in verse 5?"
 - c. Keep the conversation on track by making your questions very specific.
 - i. Not: "What are some false ideas people have about Jesus?"
 - ii. But: "What are the two most common heresies about the nature of Jesus?"
 - d. However, don't make them so specific they are insulting.
 - i. Not: "What did Jesus do to the leper in verse 5?"
 - ii. But: "Why did Jesus touch the leper?"

- D. Ending the meeting.
 - 1. Close in prayer.
 - a. For a new group, the leader might pray for God's help in applying the scripture.
 - b. As a group develops, others should join in praying for application.
 - 2. End on time!!!

- III. Tips for Stimulating Conversation.
 - A. Always try to involve the group in answering questions that arise.
 - 1. Refuse to answer questions they can figure out for themselves.
 - 2. Redirect questions to the rest of the group.
 - B. Identify with the perspectives and attitudes of your students in asking your questions.
 - C. Play the devil's advocate; promote a wrong, but plausible interpretation, and see how long it takes them to figure out the problem.
 - D. When the group is stuck with two competing views, solve it the American way – hold a vote to decide which truth is correct.
 - E. Let them pass by an essential point until they get stuck, then point them back to it.
 - F. Occasionally refuse to clear up a murky secondary point for them – let them stew on it for a few weeks.
 - G. Suggest real situations in their own lives where the passage applies.

- IV. Tone of the Group.
 - A. You want to create a warm and accepting, but also stimulating and exciting environment.
 - B. You want to create a sense that scripture is both understandable, but also mysterious; practical, yet rich literature; serious, but enjoyable.
 - C. You want to develop an insatiable appetite for discussing God's word.

- V. Summary.
 - A. Most people can lead effective Bible studies if they are trained and supervised, and if they practice.
 - B. The goal of a Bible study is to transform people.
 - C. The means of accomplishing this goal is conversation – discussion among everyone in the group.
 - D. Your personal thorough study of the text is essential.
 - E. Carefully prepare questions which will engage the group.
 - 1. Follow a natural thought process.
 - 2. Use creative questions.
 - 3. Drive application to the heart.
 - F. Keep the study moving in the right direction.
 - 1. Keep moving toward the main point.
 - 2. Prompt students to interact with each other.
 - G. Remember that the scripture is the word of God, the source of life, and the gospel of Christ.

- VI. What's Next?
 - A. Practice!
 - B. Visit each other's Bible studies on campus to observe and evaluate.