



SMALL GROUPS

SMALL GROUP STRATEGIES FOR
DEVELOPING FAITH IN YOUNG
PEOPLE'S LIVES



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FORWARD



As youth leaders, our desire is to see faith develop in the lives of the young people we lead. This faith development is the role of the Holy Spirit – it's not something we can manufacture or make happen.

Nevertheless, we do have a role in creating an environment which is most conducive to allowing God's Spirit to do His work. This online course is based on the conviction that small groups are the best environment in which to nurture faith and aims to help you maximise your effectiveness as a small group leader.

The course is divided into five sections.

1. **The Value of Small Groups:** You will learn why small groups are an important part of an effective youth ministry.
2. **Theories of Learning:** You will learn principles for helping young people to maximise what they learn in your small group.
3. **Preparing Good Discussion Questions:** You will learn how to structure discussions and how to ask good questions.
4. **Assessing Effectiveness:** You will learn how to assess the effectiveness of your small group according to five criteria and how you can improve.
5. **Small Group Dynamics:** You will learn about some common dynamics present in small groups and how to overcome them.

Let's get started!

PART 1: THE VALUE OF SMALL GROUPS



In a world in which bigger is better, it's easy to overlook the value of "small". We can easily fall prey to the desire to see big numbers come to our youth groups and use them to reassure us that we are doing at least something right and that our ministry is successful.

However one of the things that makes youth ministry difficult is that the ultimate effectiveness of what we are doing each week is often not apparent for months or even years. Anyone can grow a large youth ministry ("Did someone say free pizza and soft drink?"). Growing an effective ministry is more challenging and the fruit of it is often not immediately evident.

The problem of large numbers is that it's easy to lose the depth of relationship that exists with small numbers and is integral to effective faith development. Discipleship is more than broadcasting information. It's about engaging young people in a caring and instructive bond that draws them closer to Jesus and into a real and lasting relationship with Him.

This is the value of small groups in youth ministry. It draws young people together in a Christian community of peers facilitated by older and more experienced leaders who can act as role models and guides on the journey of faith.

What is a Small Group?



Before we go any further it's good to pause and consider what we mean by the term "small group". Let's use the following headings to clarify what is meant:

1. Size

How "small" is a small group? Generally, you need at least two young people to have a group. If only one person turns up to one to your small groups you might combine with another small group, although they may surprise you by expressing a desire to meet one to one with you.

When does a small group cease to be "small"? Eight to ten people is near maximum. Once you reach these numbers you are likely to find that some people stop contributing. If possible consider splitting the group once you have ten or more. (More on how to do this well later)

2. Gender

Should groups be single gender or mixed? Up until about sixteen years of age, single gender is likely to work best for three reasons. Firstly, girls generally mature earlier than boys and are more apt to reflect deeper and more openly than boys of the same age. Secondly, girls discuss feelings more readily and are more comfortable doing this when others are willing to do the same. Thirdly, young teens often lack the confidence or sensitivity to know how to appropriately relate to the opposite sex in a way that enhances the group process. Showing off, teasing and shyness can be common behaviours when small groups are of mixed gender.

Once young people turn sixteen there can be value in having mixed gender groups. It is helpful for both boys and girls to gain an understanding of how each other are approaching life and faith. However, there is no hard and fast rule about this. Sometimes young people who have been in a single gender group for three or more years want to stay together and build on the dynamic that exists, at least until entering a young adult ministry.

3. Activity

When we refer to "small groups" in this course there is an assumption that these groups regularly engage in Bible study, discussion and prayer together. While they may (and should) meet and mix socially, gathering together over Scripture as they talk with each other and with God is the core activity of a small group. Out of this comes a desire to reach out to others, inviting them to be part of the group.

The Biblical Basis for Small Groups



The following gives us a Biblical basis for developing a ministry built around small groups:

1. The nature of God

Close relationships are deeply grounded in the nature of God. He Himself is a “small group” of three persons —the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—that constitute a single God (1 Peter 1:2). As God, He deeply desires relationship with mankind (John 15:5) and was willing to come, live and die in the person of Jesus in order to secure a relationship with us that is both intimate and eternal (1 John 3:2)

2. The example of Jesus

It is notable that although Jesus was followed by the crowds (Mark 3:7,8), He chose just twelve to spend most of His time with (Mark 3:13-19). Within the twelve, it appears as though there were three He was particularly close to and spent more time with (Mark 9:2-9; Mark 14:32-34). This begs the question that if Jesus felt He could most effectively invest Himself in a few, why should we expect to invest our lives in more?

3. The example of Paul and the early church

This same pattern of discipleship shown in the life of Jesus is imitated by Paul and others as they were used by God to spread the gospel and establish churches. Paul frequently mentions individuals at the opening and closing of his letters and of these, a few names continue to crop up such as Timothy and Titus. Similarly, in the Book of Acts we read of Paul consistently serving alongside only a few whom he invested in, such as Barnabas and Silas.

Through these examples, we see the power of relationship within discipleship. Small groups allow us to build close relationships with our young people, modelling and teaching them what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Within the context of a close relationship with us and others in the small group they come to learn of and experience God’s unconditional love.

A Place to Belong



Over the years churches have debated “belonging” and “believing”. There are those that say, “You can’t really belong to us until you believe the things we believe.” These are “believe before belong” churches.

Others emphasise belonging over believing. They say “You belong here even if you don’t yet believe what we believe.” These are “belong before believe” churches.

It is our conviction that youth ministries need to adopt a “belong before believe” approach. Not only does this fit with the gospel message of a God who accepts us while we are still sinners (Romans 5:8), but it is entirely appropriate for young people who enter or youth rooms seeking reassurance they belong before being willing to grapple with questions of faith.

Small groups are a key strategy in giving young people a sense of belonging. It’s much easier to give people a sense of belonging in a group of eight people than it is in a group of eighty.

As a small group leader, it is good that you exhort young people to believe, but it’s essential that you place a high premium on their desire to belong and do you all you can to ensure this need is met.

It won’t be met just because a group is small. At times our sense of not belonging is greater in a small group than it is in a large one because in a small group the expectation of belonging is greater as is the pain of this expectation not being met.

To help young people feel as though they belong, small groups should be:

1. **Welcoming:** What do you do and say when a new person joins your group? Do you acknowledge them as new and have everyone introduce themselves? Do you show genuine interest in them without asking personal questions that might seem invasive? Do you let them know you’re glad they came and invite them back a second time? All of these contribute to helping newcomers feel a sense of belonging. And if your small group has a tendency to be cliquey, do you challenge this attitude and remind them of their responsibility to join you in welcoming new people?
2. **Accepting:** A sense of belonging is established by more than just being welcoming. All of us have a deep need to be accepted and if we feel people don’t accept us it’s doubtful that we’ll ever feel like we really belong in the group they belong in. As a small group leader work hard to create a place where everyone is accepted regardless of personality, ability and belief. One of the tests of a youth group’s effectiveness in making young people feel accepted is the presence of those who find it hard to gain acceptance in other places such as school or even home.
3. **Engaging:** A true sense of belonging occurs when we feel more than welcomed and accepted. It occurs when we are confident enough to engage with the small group, contributing to discussions, sharing feelings and requesting prayer. Guide every member to that place of trust and involvement. Some will get there quicker than others, but when they arrive, they will truly experience belonging and in doing so will be open to considering belief.

People to Belong To



It should be evident by now that you as a small group leader have a critical role to play in the lives of your small group members. You are not just someone to lead a Bible study or discussion; you are someone who is pastorally responsible for each member's welfare. God is calling you to build into their lives and one day you'll be required to give account for how you have built (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

The responsibility you have to "pastor" your young people means that you are in a place to meet an even more fundamental need. Yes, they need a place to belong, but they also need people to belong to.

In everyone's faith journey, there are people who have shown up and become catalysts for their spiritual growth. As a leader, it's possible to get so caught up in your programmes and preparation that you forget God was revealed man through an actual person – the person of Jesus Christ.

As a small group leader who wants their young people to know God, you must never forget that the most powerful way of revealing Him is through adults who love them as He does. Every young person needs at least one adult who looks out for them and greets them each week; an adult who will sit and listen, whether they feel like it or not; an adult who will regularly pray for them and follow up on conversations about the challenges they face in life.

In short, they need someone who will show them what God is like by demonstrating His love for them and sharing with them what He is like. They need someone to do life with them; someone they can imitate in order to develop their own Christian faith and character (1 Corinthians 11:1).

They need someone like you to give them a personalised sense of belonging. Don't hesitate to call them "yours" as a reminder to both them and you of the "belonging" dimension to your relationship.

Small Groups and Prayer



Small groups are the ideal vehicle for praying for young people's individual needs. In larger groups they often lack the trust and confidence to share a need.

Each small group time should conclude with prayer where needs are shared and prayed for. If needs become apparent during the discussion, stop and pray there and then. This communicates that prayer is a natural part of life – not something put off until the time is “right”.

Drawing near to God in prayer will bring your small group closer together. Never underestimate the power of answered prayer to draw young people to God. Don't think, “What if God doesn't answer?” Consider what might happen in your small group if He does!

To make the most of prayer times in your small group, consider the following suggestions:

1. **Keep a small group prayer diary:** Record needs and answers in a book that you, the leader, hold on to, being careful not to allow others in the youth group to see it. As your young people see answers to prayer, their faith will become stronger.
2. **Pray for one need at a time:** Don't collect a list of prayer needs from everyone and then try to remember them all in one all-encompassing prayer before you finish! Chances are you'll run out of time or forget someone and have them leave thinking no one cares. Instead, when someone shares a need, pray for just that need, gathering around the person if they feel comfortable with you doing so. The very act of praying this way for one person at a time will give them a powerful sense of being loved and cared for.
3. **Be sensitive:** Don't pressure young people to pray out loud if they are not comfortable doing so. God hears silent prayers too! Over time their confidence will grow.
4. **Pray conversationally:** Avoid long prayer speeches – they discourage the less confident from praying. You are probably the most confident pray-er in your small group so keep your prayers short so young people don't feel like they have to pray as long and confidently as you. Encourage people to build on one another's contributions in much the same way as we do when we have a conversation.
5. **Listen to God:** Teach your group to listen to God while they pray. He may place a verse on their heart to share, or give them an impression or insight. Create a culture where young people are encouraged to sensitively pray and share what comes to mind. Avoid “thus saith the Lord” pronouncements and leave the one being prayed for free to take on board or discard anything that is shared.

PART 2: THEORIES OF LEARNING



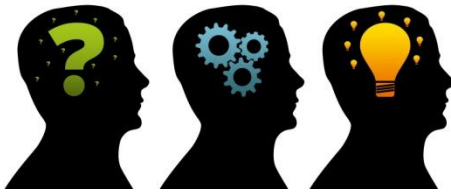
Building a relationship with the young people in your small group is an important dimension of discipleship, but there is another. Our role is also to teach (Matthew 28:19,20) and help them learn, and to do this effectively we need to have a basic understanding of how people best receive information and apply it.

While it's true that it is ultimately the role of the Holy Spirit to lead young people into an understanding of truth (John 16:13), to bring truth back to mind later (John 14:26) and to give them the power to apply what they learn (Acts 1:8) that doesn't mean learning takes place despite anything we might do.

A skilful small group leader will make it easier for the Holy Spirit to do His work by understanding and applying key theories of learning.

In this section you will learn a number of useful practices to improve your teaching, making it easier for young people to understand and recall.

Learning Styles



When it comes to learning, most of us have a preference as to how we like to receive information. There are three “learning styles”, with characteristics as follows:

1. **Visual:** Visual learners learn best when information is written down or displayed on projector, especially if this information is visually interesting and well set out. When participating in Bible studies, they like to have the questions written out in front of them.
2. **Auditory:** Auditory learners learn best when information is explained to them. They are often distracted by having to follow notes, preferring instead to just listen to what is said in a sermon. In a Bible study they like to examine an issue through free discussion and debate.
3. **Kinaesthetic:** Kinaesthetic learners learn best when movement is involved. When they are required to sit and listen or to follow notes, they become quickly bored. They love to have a pen and paper, not to take notes, but to doodle! Rather sit in a Bible study they prefer practical activities, visits to sites, exhibits, role plays and working models.

A simple way to discern the preference of your small group members is to hand out a list of your questions at the start of a discussion time. The visual learners will refer to them often, checking on progress and silently reading the questions along with you. Auditory learners are more likely to set the questions to one side regarding them as unnecessary or even a distraction. Kinaesthetic learners will scribble on the paper if they have a pen or make it into a dart if they don't!

Regardless of our preference, studies in learning show that the more senses and styles people use when learning, the more likely they are to understand and retain what they learn.

A further dimension in learning styles is the social dimension. When a task is set, some people prefer to accomplish it in groups while others prefer to work alone learn alone. Rather than say, “Let's work on this in small groups” give young people the choice of whether they work in a group, a pair, or alone.

Motivation to Learn



It's not always easy to motivate young people to learn. Learning is most likely to take place when you as the small group leader intentionally set out to meet the following four needs:

1. The need for a sense of need

For someone to learn, they must first want to learn. Decide what you want your group to know and do at the end of the discussion and then imagine being one of your young people and ask yourself the question, "So what?"

The better your answer to this question, the more effective you are likely to be in convincing your young people to learn.

2. The need for a sense of involvement:

In order to be properly motivated, a young person needs to feel like a participant in the learning process, not a spectator. They need to be drawn into the learning process and have their senses engaged. Simply talking at them will have limited effect and boredom will quickly set in. Have them share their own ideas and invite them to be participants, not spectators.

3. The need for a sense of discovery

As a small group leader, resist the temptation to too quickly share your own answers without providing young people with the time and tools to reach their own conclusions. When we discover something for ourselves, we understand the information at a deeper level and we are more likely to apply it to our lives.

That's not to say however that there is no place for you as the leader to express your own views or communicate God's Truth. Just don't do it in a way that kills discussion. Instead, try to generate further reflection and conversation as your young people grapple with what they are hearing in the light of what they already believe to be true. Trust the Holy Spirit to convince.

4. The need for a sense of enjoyment

When a young person is having fun while learning, they'll stay engaged longer and learn more. Avoid making your small group too dry or intense by providing for and allowing an appropriate level of relaxation and humour. Laughing and having fun together can break the ice and bring a group closer together.

Food is another good way to make your group time more enjoyable. What teenager doesn't like to eat? Have snacks and drinks on hand but don't allow these to distract or dilute depth.

Jesus-Centred Bible Study



The danger you face in leading Bible discussions is turning it into another school lesson where young people are expected to learn information and apply what they learn. Thus we reduce our small group time to a mix of information to be believed and demands to be met.

Information and thought given to application are obviously important when it comes to reading the Bible, but there is a more important dimension. The Bible is more than a book of principles and practical advice; it is a book of a Person!

When those despondent followers walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus they were joined by the resurrected One they'd watched die on a Roman cross. We read how Jesus *"took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."* (Luke 24:27). In other words, He didn't just do an exegetical word study of the passages – He showed how they all spoke of Him.

Having done this God's Spirit opened their eyes and they went from encountering Him in Scripture to encountering Him in person.

This mirrors what Jesus-centred learning is all about. We use Scripture to point to Jesus, praying that God would reveal Himself to our young people as they focus on who Jesus is and what He did.

Here are some practical tips for doing this:

1. Whatever topic you're discussing, use it to point to Jesus, reflecting on His words and example in relation to the topic. For example, if you're discussing temptation, think about how Jesus dealt with temptation.
2. Whatever Bible character you're discussing, use them to point to Jesus. For example, if you're looking at the life of Moses, discuss ways in which He was like Jesus and ways he was not.
3. Whatever Bible passage you're discussing, use it to point to Jesus. For example, if you're discussing Psalm 23, think about how Jesus shepherds us through life's trials.

Again, there is nothing wrong with an "understand and apply" approach to Bible study, but our ultimate goal must always be the "abide" approach. As young people draw closer to Jesus their desire to follow him is borne out of love and attachment, not compulsion and guilt.

PART 3: PREPARING GOOD DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Because Bible study is such a vital ingredient in youth ministry, it's important that we prepare well. Whether you're writing your own Bible study from scratch or leading a discussion someone else has prepared, you need to understand the principles outlined in this section and apply them in your preparation.

If someone else has already written the study – you may have found it online or had it given to you by your key leader or youth pastor, you still need to prepare, altering questions as needed, deleting some or adding your own.

You need to do this because:

- The young people in your small group are unique – there is no small group like your one! No matter how skilled the original author of the Bible study is, they are not writing the questions with your group in mind.
- God has insights about your group that no one, not even you, has. He knows what has been happening in their lives this week and He knows what state of mind they will be in when they arrive at your meeting.

All this needs to be done prayerfully with a desire to hear from God. It cannot be rushed at the last minute. Your time with your small group is too important for that.

You owe it to them and to God.

Aim



The first step in preparing a Bible study is to have a specific aim for what you want to discuss. Too often we come up with a topic and then ask a number of unrelated questions around it with no clear sense of direction. The result is that our young people end up hearing a number of vague messages rather than one clear message.

Before you write down a single question write down your aim. Ask yourself two questions: “What do I want my young people to know and/or do at the end of this discussion?” and “What aspect of Jesus and who He is, do I want them to encounter?”

With this in mind, a good aim will be:

1. **Precise:** It will contain a single point that is skilfully driven home rather than a few points not so forcefully made. If you do come up with two or three points, study them separately over the coming weeks. Doing this is a “bow and arrow approach” rather than a “shotgun approach”. With the shotgun approach we aim our Bible study in a general direction and the pellets are scattered— no one person feels the full effect of what is taught. In contrast, the bow and arrow approach takes careful aim and hits a single target. The young people for whom the study applies are powerfully challenged or comforted all the way through it.
2. **Practical:** It will be concerned with what we want young people to do, not just what we want them to know. Clearly we will be imparting knowledge but it is not knowledge for knowledge’s sake – it is knowledge we expect them to act on. Making our aim practical means we help them see what God wants them to do with what they learn.
3. **Personal:** It will express the intention that the Person of Jesus – His words and deeds, will in some way impact the young people’s lives.

For example, suppose you were discussing the topic of temptation. Possible aims for your small group might be:

- To approach temptation as Jesus did
- To look to Jesus help when they are tempted
- To understand how giving into temptation grieves Jesus
- To appreciate what Jesus did in overcoming the power of temptation

Content 1: Hook



Having settled on an aim we begin by preparing the first section of our Bible study which we call **Hook**. Our goal in this section is to begin to explore the topic and communicate its relevance. Young people will come to our Bible study because they want to, because they have to, or because they feel they should. Whatever the reason, our aim initially is to motivate them to participate. They need us to capture their imagination so that they become convinced that the topic is worth discussing.

The first question we ask is perhaps the most important question in the whole study because it gives a clue to the young people about whether the next thirty or more minutes will be interesting or not. Good “hook” questions will be:

1. **Relevant:** They will connect with the world in which young people live and will relate to their life experiences. If questions are not relevant young people will lose interest and they will lose interest.
2. **Opinion based:** When you ask young people to express opinions, there are no “wrong” answers. Everyone can get involved and express their thoughts without fear of correction.
3. **Open:** These are questions that cannot be answered with “yes”, “no” or a simple one-word answer. In other words, ask “How?” and “Why?” rather than “What?” and “Who?” You can be sure that if a question requires a one-word answer, an apathetic teen will give you just one word!
4. **Impersonal:** People take time before they trust others enough to share something of themselves. Personal questions that require more vulnerability can come later when the group is more relaxed and willing to be open.
5. **Creative:** Questions that contain an element of tension, ambiguity, intrigue or surprise draws young people into the conversation. There are many creative techniques you can employ. Involve them in a story related to the topic by reading a newspaper article, discussing a clip from a movie, looking at lines from a popular song, acting out a role play or presenting a drama. Create discussion by together brainstorming ideas and discussing which is the best answer, or by having debates over whether we agree or disagree with an interesting and somewhat ambiguous statement.

Jesus was an expert at doing this. We see Him walking with His disciples and teaching them using illustrations that were relevant to their world such as the farmer (Matthew 13:3-8), the shepherd (John 1:1-18), as well as the birds and the flowers (Matthew 6:26-30).

He would tell stories such as those of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) and the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) that would make His listeners think about an issue and reflect on their own lives. He would also ask questions and make statements that made them stop and think, such as in the conversations with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21), the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-27) and the Samaritan woman (John 4:4-16)

The key throughout this initial phase is to get them talking and sharing ideas. Don’t worry too much if they share all sorts of heresies! We can look at those in the next section. Simply say, “That’s an interesting thought. What do others think?”

Content 2: Book



Having given opportunity for young people to share their opinions in the opening part of our Bible study it is now God's turn! In this second section, we want the young people in our small group to turn to His **Book** and reflect on what *He* has to say. Your aim here is to simply help them understand what the Bible says. They may not *agree* with what they read and it is not your purpose here to argue with them. Simply help them comprehend what God says and leave the Holy Spirit to do the work of convincing them.

In preparing the Book section, keep the following points in mind:

1. **Selecting the passage(s):** At least one should be a narrative or story as this will hold young people's interest more than a teaching passage will. Study this passage first and then select other passages if time permits that clarify the point being made. In keeping with the desire to be "Jesus-centred", try selecting a passage that makes reference to Jesus. To avoid confusion, be sure everyone has the same version.
2. **Prepare the questions:** Ask questions will aid understanding and help them see beyond what a passage says. If you ask simple comprehension questions such as "Who did this?" or "Who said that?" young people won't bother answering as the answer will be self-evident. So explore a passage's meaning and significance by asking them why they think people said and did certain things, and how they might have been feeling. Keep your questions to the passage you are reading and don't ask questions that assume prior Bible knowledge or those with little background knowledge will feel excluded, or worse, stupid.
3. **Research the context:** When studying passages be sure to explain context to them and use commentaries and other reference books to find out more about background culture at the time and how the passage relates to other parts of Scripture. Not only will this give you confidence to know you are not teaching error, but it will also make the discussion more interesting for your small group.
4. **Be prepared to listen to them:** Allow space for your young people to ask their questions about the passage. It's easy to make wrong assumptions about what interests them or what they do or don't understand. Sometimes we are trying to answer questions they are not asking. Create an atmosphere where it is OK to disagree or have doubts. This allows space for the young people to explore truth for themselves. Instead of insisting they are wrong, learn to ask questions that help them to see their error but don't force the point or try to "win". We don't want them believing something because we said they should, but because they worked it out themselves.
5. **Summarise:** Finally, a good strategy to ensure they have understood a passage is to ask, "What, in your opinion, is the main lesson we can learn from this passage?" This not only ensures they have understood what the passage is saying, but it prepares them for what is to follow next.

Content 3: Look



Having discussed an issue ourselves (Hook) and having looked to see what God has to say about it (Book), the next question is: **“So what?!”** The third section of an effective Bible study for young people helps them grapple with answers to this question. It encourages them to examine their lives in the light of what they have been reading and discussing.

It’s worth remembering that your young people sit in class five days a week learning a lot of information. Very little of what they learn makes demands on them at a moral or behavioural level. It is information that leaves them personally untouched. All they are thinking is, “Is this important?”, “Will there be a test on this?”, and “Do we have to include this in our assignment?”

When they have become so used to absorbing information that does not challenge their values or behaviour, it is easy to treat a Bible study as just another exercise in gaining knowledge. This is why this section is so essential. It challenges them to reflect on the personal implications of what they have been reading and discussing.

When preparing your questions, keep the following points in mind:

1. Don’t ask questions that require “right or “wrong” answers”. Instead probe feelings, problems, triumphs, failures and personal insights. In other words, ask questions that encourage depth. Young people need to be challenged to go beyond superficial answers and to be confronted with the personal impact of what God is saying to them.
2. In asking personal questions begin with questions that encourage reflection on the past before moving onto questions about what is presently happening in their lives. Questions about the past are less threatening and having shared answers to these, young people are more likely to have the courage to talk about the present.
3. In encouraging young people to share openly and at depth, remember that this is easier said than done for them. In general, girls may not open up and share feelings until about age thirteen. For boys, it tends to be around fifteen. Prior to that, it is difficult for them to have the developmental capability and confidence to share about their lives with any real depth.

That’s not to say we should not ask younger teens those questions that require self reflection. If we don’t ask these questions young people will never answer them, and remember, even if they don’t answer these questions out loud, it doesn’t mean they don’t think silently about them.

Content 4: Took



As important as the previous section is, this final one is even more important, and unfortunately more neglected. “Look” questions focus on the past and the present whereas “Took” questions focus on the future, and how the young people will put into practice what they learn. Again, they are unlikely to do this unless you facilitate the process by asking the right questions.

Of the four sections, this is the easiest. Usually only one question is needed and that question is, “What will you do this week to put into practice what we talked about?” We can use variations on this but what it does is make the application specific (“What will you do...?”) and immediate (“...this week...?”). It reinforces the idea that a key purpose of Bible study is application. As Scripture says, we are to be *doers* of the Word and not just *hearers* (James 1:22-25).

There are a couple ways to handle this section:

- Older teens who know and trust each other well may talk quite freely while others will need more encouragement. One idea is to have them write an application down on a piece of paper. The act of writing it down crystallises their intent and helps them to remember to apply it. Explain that what they write is between them and God although if they’d like to share it with the rest of the group they may.
- Younger teens generally find it more difficult to imagine and verbalise an application. To help them, you might try writing down some possible applications and have them choose one or come up with their own. You may then go through the list and ask for a show of hands for each option, inviting them to explain if they wish.

Having encouraged the group to apply what they have learnt it’s important to follow up on their progress. Simply going on to the next topic the following week with no accountability gives the impression that application is not that important, even if you say otherwise. However, accountability should never be judgemental but offered with love and encouragement.

For example, if a young person indicates a way in which they want to apply what they have been learning, contact them through the week and ask how they are getting on. Affirm them if they have made progress and encourage them if they haven’t. If progress is made by the following week, give them the opportunity to share with the rest of the group.

Remember to always end your small group time with prayer – see earlier notes.

Content: Putting it all Together



To further illustrate how this works, below is a Bible study on temptation with seven questions that utilise the Hook, Book, Look and Took template. Read through the questions, noting the rationale behind their use and their place in the Bible study.

Question 1: What are some temptations that are common for young people today?

HOOK: There are plenty of answers to this question and it's unlikely any answer given will be "wrong", so everyone can contribute and feel involved and included.

Question 2: "It is wrong to be tempted!" Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

HOOK: There is a degree of "tension" in this opening question designed to hook young people in. It may spark some debate but will lead to the realisation that being tempted is not wrong – it's how we respond to them temptation that's important.

Question 3: Read through Genesis 3:1-13. What do we learn from Adam and Eve about how not to handle temptation?

BOOK: This passage is a narrative – a story, and so will hold young people's attention as we move into looking at the Bible. It tells us how not to handle temptation.

Question 4: Read through Matthew 4:1-10. What do we learn from Jesus about how to handle temptation?

BOOK: This second passage focuses on Jesus, making our study "Jesus-centred" and giving a positive alternative on how we might handle temptation.

Question 5: Think of some temptations you have faced in the past and overcome. How did you do it?

LOOK: We are moving on now to a personal question but one that focuses on the past, making it easier to talk about.

Question 6: Share with the group about any temptations you are facing now. How are you handling them?

LOOK: This second "look" question focuses on the present, making it more challenging to answer but more valuable.

Question 7: What can you do this week to make you more able to cope with the temptations you face?

TOOK: This final question challenges young people to think about how they might put into practice what they've been learning.

PART 4: ASSESSING EFFECTIVENESS



You can have the best prepared Bible study possible, designed using the Hook, Book, Look and Took template, and yet your Bible study can go poorly simply because you lack the necessary small group leadership skills.

Equally, you may have prepared a very average Bible study and the group can go well because you are skilled in leading a small group.

One of the most useful assets in youth ministry is the ability to critique your own skill levels, not in a way that causes you to feel discouraged, but in a way that inspires you to do better next time.

In order to help you in this process we will look here at five criteria to measure the effectiveness in leading your small group. For each of these you will learn some specific strategies you can employ that will improve your ability to lead next time.

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Criteria 1: Involvement



Goal: Everyone contributed at a level at which they felt comfortable.

The world is divided into introverts and extroverts. Introverts are people who, when asked a question, pause, think, come up with six possible responses and then speak out the best one. Extroverts, on the other hand, are people who, when asked a question also come up with six possible responses but instead of pausing, they start to speak out all six and eventually settle on the best one. In other words, introverts do their thinking in their head, while extroverts think out loud.

In reality, these labels are not two separate boxes but two extremes on a scale on which all of us fit somewhere. Where young people fit will impact the way they contribute to your discussion.

It is important to realise this because the first criteria to measure your effectiveness by is *not* “Everyone contributed equally”, but “Everyone contributed equally *at a level at which they felt comfortable*.” If you try to get everyone to contribute equally the introverts will leave your small group complaining that they felt pressured to share, while the extroverts will complain that you kept trying to get them to be quiet!

Your goal is to have the introverts leave the room saying, “That was great – I got to say six things and everybody listened to me!” while the extroverts will be saying, “That was great – I got to say sixty-six things and everybody listened to me!”

So how do we make this happen? Here are some ideas:

1. **Breaking the sound barrier:** Because they have a few possible answers in their head and because they have yet to determine which one is right, an introvert may fear speaking out too soon in case their answer is ridiculed by others. So very early on in your Bible study ask a question for which there is no right or wrong answer – one that merely calls for an opinion. Doing this allows the introvert to contribute to the group (break the sound barrier), and to be affirmed for their opinion, giving them the confidence to contribute further.
2. **Parting invitation:** Give space to the introverts to contribute by saying “Is there anyone else who has something to add before we move on to the next question?” This causes the extroverts to become silent as they have said all they wanted to say and are eager to move on. It also gives space for the introverts to express the thoughts they have been carefully formulating while listening to others before a new question is considered.
3. **Loving exclusion:** Discourage the more talkative ones from dominating by saying things like, “What do others think about what [name] just said?” The question immediately cuts this one extrovert out of the conversation but does so in a way that doesn’t leave them feeling hurt. When a second person shares their thoughts you can ask, “So what do others think about what [name] and [name] just said?” Now we have cut two people out and have provided more space for the introverts to speak up and share their thoughts.
4. **Body language:** People who are a little reluctant to share frequently give off non-verbal signals before talking, such as moving forward on their chair or starting to open their mouth. Scan your eye over the group pausing momentarily at each person as these people will often wait for you to make eye contact before speaking up.

Criteria 2: Direction



Aim: The group stayed on track and covered all that God intended.

You don't have to lead a Bible study group for teenagers long before you are confronted with the inevitable sidetrack. Whether it's a joke they've heard, a story from school, or something they have seen on TV or the movies, some teenagers they will want to break in and share their thoughts, whether they are relevant or not.

Alternatively, it's not uncommon to find that a discussion takes a turn in an unexpected direction – one that covers different but important ground. You as a leader are then confronted with the decision to either head in this new direction, or guide the group back to the questions previously prepared.

In both instances it is worth noting that this criteria requires that you ask yourself if you covered all that *God* intended in your Bible study – not that you covered all your questions. There is a difference, and of course it's not always easy to tell if we got it right. Often it's only in hindsight we get a sense of whether or not we made the right call at the right time.

In order to better fulfil the requirements of this criteria learn to assess sidetracks as they arise. Sometimes a story or a joke from a young person can "loosen up" a quiet group and make them more ready to share when you direct them back to the topic. Other times it can destroy the moment. Learn to discern the difference before the sidetrack takes hold.

When assessing a sidetrack keep in mind the following three "laws":

1. **The law of participation:** When discussion moves in a new direction note how many are participating. Is it just one or two or are most of the group engaged? Are quieter ones showing signs of opening up and sharing when previously they had been quiet?
2. **The law of profit:** Is the topic one of value that might profitably edify the group? Is it a topic you can use to challenge or encourage them? Or is it one of little value?
3. **The law of presence.** Do you have a sense in your own spirit that God is directing the discussion in this new direction? Or do you sense a check within and a prompting to return to the original question?

When all three laws seem to be in alignment allow the change in direction but be aware that this shift may be brief, or may need to last for the rest of the Bible study.

Criteria 3: Interaction



Aim: Discussion took place with minimal involvement from the leader.

One of the most satisfying moments in leading a small group is when we get to lean back in our chair and watch the conversation between young people fly back and forth. It is that moment when they forget we are there, so engaged are they in conversation with one another.

Yet as fulfilling as that moment is, often we as small group leaders inadvertently do all we can to prevent it.

A common mistake is the temptation to make a comment on every person's contribution. Imagine that you start a Bible study holding a ball of string. As you get underway with your first question you take hold of the end of the string and pass the ball to the first person to speak. They, in turn, hold on to the string and pass the ball to the next person to speak. At the end of the group time you look down on the pattern made and notice that instead of a random pattern of conversation it is in fact a "to-ing and fro-ing" of the string between you and each person who speaks.

Not only are you interrupting the natural flow of conversation but you are teaching the young people *not* to engage in conversation with each other. Instead, your group discussion has become a series of dialogues between you and each individual young person.

There are a couple of strategies you can use to avoid this:

1. **Engagement.** Resist the urge to add your own comments after everyone's contribution. Sometimes we think our role is to immediately correct or affirm every comment made by a young person. Instead of doing this right away, encourage the group to respond to what someone has said, by simply asking "What do others think?" As your small group gets used to you doing this, all you'll eventually need to say is "Uh huh" or even remain silent, and someone else in your group will jump in and contribute.
2. **Environment:** Ensure everyone sits in a circle and can see everyone else. That will encourage sharing between small group members. If people can't see each other they are unlikely to talk to each other.

Criteria 4: Vulnerability



Aim: Young people communicated beyond a superficial level.

A challenge you may face in your small groups is that young people have a tendency to give superficial answers – the ones they think we want to hear. Nothing kills a group quicker, yet nothing ignites a group more than honesty, transparency and vulnerability. When one person takes a risk and goes a little deeper it gives others the freedom and confidence to do the same.

But before we go any further, why is vulnerability important? When young people are open and honest with their peers and let their walls down, they open themselves up to receive understanding, affirmation and acceptance. The doubts, hurts, concerns and failures that they experience are brought into the light and through the response of their small group they experience God and His love.

As noted in the previously, young people can take time to acquire the developmental maturity required to share at depth about their thoughts and feelings. You may have tried to encourage this only to become disillusioned by the awkward silences or immature responses that followed.

Here are some pointers to assist you as you try again:

1. **Persevere:** Don't lower your expectations by not asking the deeper questions. If necessary skip over questions in order to ensure you have time to ask those questions that call for greater vulnerability. If you never ask the deeper questions young people will never go deeper in their responses.
2. **Patience:** Give young people space to think about their answer. Don't be afraid of some silence. If it seems like no one is going to share, you go first. Share your own experiences and struggles, past or present then ask the young people if any of them can identify with what you have said and if so, to describe what happened.
3. **Praise:** Affirm those young people who *do* have the courage to share. By creating an atmosphere of affirmation you will encourage others to talk about their personal experiences and responses to what you are discussing. At times young people may threaten to destroy this atmosphere with ridicule. If that happens, speak firmly and lovingly, explaining your refusal to tolerate such behaviour. Challenge the whole group to work together to create a safe place for everyone to be honest and real.
4. **Pattern:** Set a pattern for vulnerability by being willing to be vulnerable yourself. Do this within reason and with wisdom. No every challenge you face will be appropriate to share, but if you never share anything of yourself your young people will either find it hard to identify with you or will feel they can never live up to the standard of perfection you present.

Criteria 5: Encounter



Aim: Young people experience a “God moment”.

A “God moment” is not just something dramatic such as falling down under the influence of the Spirit, hearing an audible voice from God or experiencing healing for an ailment. More commonly a “God moment” is far less apparent though perhaps no less profound.

Some common examples are:

1. **An “aha” experience:** We have all experienced a moment when something in Scripture really made sense to us, perhaps for the first time. We knew the facts of what is written but at that moment those facts found their way from our head into our heart.
2. **Peace that passes understanding:** A “God moment” can happen when a young person comes to your Bible study and are upset or weighed down by something that may be happening at home or at school. During the course of the discussion something is said that seems to be just for them or it may be that your small group prays for them. As they head home that night nothing in their world has changed, other than the fact that they experienced “a peace that passes all understanding” (Philippians 4:17).
3. **Application:** A “God moment” is also evident when a young person goes away from your Bible study with a determination to apply what they have been learning. Such an attitude is evidence of God at work.

There are many other “God moments” to be experienced that include a sense of encouragement, conviction and comfort. All these are the work of the Holy Spirit and when they are happening regularly in the life of your small group Bible study, young people will want to keep coming, not just because their friends are there or because they like you, but because it is a place where they and others regularly encounter God.

The question that arises then is “How do I create a God moment? What strategies can I employ that will give some guarantee that God will show up and transform lives?” The answer is simple: pray.

Pray that **each individual** in your group that they would be drawn by God to attend and that God would in some way encounter them through a “God moment”. Allow God to direct your prayer: for some you will pray for greater understanding while for others you might feel led to pray for comfort or conviction. Pray for those who don’t yet know God that they would commit their lives to Him as a result of an encounter with Him.

Pray too for **yourself**. Pray that you would remain sensitive to God’s voice as you lead and that you would have the courage to take a risk when you sense His prompting. In doing so always avoid doing anything that might embarrass a young person. God will never lead us to divulge some secret such as a sin they are struggling with or a failure they have experienced. He will however reveal things to us in order that He might bless them.

PART 5: SMALL GROUP DYNAMICS



It goes without saying that leading small groups is tricky because we are dealing with real people – people who won't always act and react in predictable ways.

As you lead you'll come up against a number of dynamics that require a correct response which can't be easily defined. Often when faced with the question, "What should I do?" the best answer is, "It depends!"

In this final section we will look at some unique dynamics at work when you lead small groups and will learn some useful strategies for dealing with them. Despite the lack of assurance over the correct response because "it depends", we will nevertheless provide some suggestions for proceeding that may or may not be helpful.

Ultimately, the answer is not found in a formulaic response but in seeking God and hearing from Him as to how best to proceed.

As you read through this next session, ask God what He is saying to you as you face these small group dynamics.

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Setting for Small Groups



Walk into any room and it immediately begins to “speak” to us. The things it says are likely to affect your small group’s mood and feelings, and consequently their attitude to participating and learning. Again, what is conducive to one person is a distraction to another. Be prepared to try various options and configurations.

1. **The room:** Consider the size of the room. A large room can feel impersonal while a small room can feel cramped. It’s easier to make a room “smaller” by the use of screens than to make a small room bigger. Is there another room available or can you swap with a smaller group?
2. **The atmosphere:** Decor can have a big effect. A dreary room means a dreary atmosphere. Consider posters, coloured light, candles etc. Get the young people to make suggestions on how to improve the atmosphere and give them a greater sense that this is “their” room.
3. **The temperature:** Turn heaters on in winter or open windows in summer before the young people arrive. Make the room feel comfortable the moment they walk in.
4. **Seating:** As noted earlier, it’s important for your young people to be positioned so that can see one another. This promotes good conversation. Some groups work best with the young people sitting/lying on the floor, while others contribute best in comfy armchairs or seated around a table. Experiment and see what gets the best response.

Discipline in Small Groups



Discipline is one of those unpleasant tasks few of us enjoy. We love to teach young people and help them with their problems but discipline is something we either regard as an unwelcome necessity or something we ignore altogether in case the young person decides they don't like us anymore.

The first thing to note about discipline is that it comes from the same root word as "discipleship". No doubt we all love to make disciples and yet we cannot make disciples unless we practice discipline. When you let a young person in your small group behave badly you effectively give your approval to something God's Spirit is convicting them over, meaning that you are working *against* God in their life and not *with* Him (John 16:8-10).

Here are some suggestions for handling discipline in your small group:

1. **Be personally disciplined:** Young people will watch you and will copy you. If you interrupt others, talk while they are talking or look at your phone every five minutes, then expect them to do the same regardless of any rules they may have agreed to! In general, rules should apply to everyone, including leaders.
2. **Establish rules:** A good way to establish rules for your small group is to ask the young people what they think the rules should be, and even what the consequences for breaking them might be. You may be surprised at how strict they can be! They will always suggest rules like "only one person talking at a time" and "no name calling or put-downs", often because they themselves don't want to be interrupted or insulted. When a rule is broken you are reminding them to behave according to *their* rule, not *yours*.
3. **Communicate Love:** If you've regularly let your small group know you love them in word and deed you are less likely to get a negative reaction from them when you need to discipline them. Your young people are probably more open to receiving correction from you than you think because they know you love them and want the best for them.
4. **Respond appropriately:** The most common mistakes made when disciplining are to overreact or under react. Assessing whether the behaviour was accidental, inconsiderate or deliberate will allow you to respond appropriately. When assessing behaviour and carrying out discipline, start by doing the minimum necessary. If misbehaviour persists and becomes deliberate, alter your response to gain the required result. For example, if someone is talking out of turn you could pause and wait for them to stop. If they persist, you could politely ask them to stop, explaining the effect of their behaviour on the group. If they continue you may need to speak to them alone later.
5. **Guard your emotions:** When you are disciplining a young person it is important you speak with love and grace and remain in control of your emotions. You want them to know that while they are loved, their actions are not acceptable. If you find yourself struggling with anger, take time to cool down and gain control of your emotions before speaking.
6. **Enforce consequences:** When a rule is broken, avoid the temptation to simply forgive and ignore any consequence. This might seem like a "nice" thing to do but we not only set a precedent other young people will appeal to. We rob them of an important discipleship lesson: our actions have consequences.

Growing and Dividing Small Groups



As mentioned earlier, eight to ten people should be the maximum number of young people in a “small group”. At times a lack of leadership means that it’s simply not possible to achieve this size, but it remains a worthy goal.

It’s exciting to watch a group grow but reaching the point where it has become too large can be challenging at best and destructive at worst when you face the need to divide the group. If you don’t handle growth and division well you risk hurting and even losing the young people you have.

Here are some points to consider and apply:

1. **Recruit a second leader... now:** No one should be leading a small group alone. Consult with your key leader/youth pastor and try to recruit someone to assist you. Talk with your young people – they may have suggestions of people in the church whom they would like to see leading them. You need a second leader not only to share the load but to lead the other half of the group should you eventually need to split. The last thing you want is to have half your small group feeling as though you rejected them and put them with a stranger.
2. **Encourage growth:** Remind your young people regularly of the need to grow God’s kingdom. There may well be young people they know at school who would love to be part of a small group like yours. As a small group plan some fun events they can invite these friends to as an initial point of contact. If you sense they are reluctant to bring friends because they don’t want to change the dynamic that is present and they certainly don’t want to have to divide the group, discuss this openly.
3. **Think out loud:** When you see your small group regularly attracting 8-10 people start talking about the need to eventually divide if you get too big. This allows them plenty of time to get used to the idea and for you to allay any concerns they have.
4. **Move slowly:** Don’t suddenly and permanently split the group when it becomes too large. Do it gradually in stages so that they both experience the frustration of being too big and the enjoyment of being smaller. When 10 or more turn up spend just some of the small group time in two groups – perhaps the “look” and “took” sections of your Bible study and your closing prayer time. Over time you might decide to spend the whole time in two separate groups before eventually making the division permanent.
5. **Move wisely:** Never divide your small group arbitrarily. Keep young people with their closest friends and try to match them with the leader they seem to best get on with. Be flexible and allow young people to switch groups as long as it doesn’t upset the numerical balance. Involve your key leader in the process – they will likely have some helpful insights. Above all pray, asking God to give you insight and wisdom.

APPENDIX 1: Group Activities and Discussion Questions

The following are suggested activities and discussion questions for a whole leadership team to do together once they have completed their online training. Working through these activities and questions is a good way to review what was learnt in the course.

I. Preparing Good Discussion Questions

- i. Agree on a topic and spend time alone or in small groups writing a study based on the four section template: hook, book, look and took. Critique one another's study. How could it be improved?
- ii. Gather together some Bible studies for young people (perhaps ones you have been using) and in groups of 3-4 discuss them and suggest improvements you might make using the keys you have been learning.
- iii. Read through the suggestions for good questions in Appendix 2 and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each one. Rate them as follows:
 - I will probably use this
 - I may use this
 - I probably won't use this
- iv. Watch the clip from the movie "Freedom Writers" (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0463998/>) [00:39:30–00:45:24]. Pose the question, "What do you learn that could be applied to our Bible studies?" and discuss together.
- v. Look at Jesus' conversations with people and notice how He adopts similar principles to those apparent in the Hook, Book, Look and Took template. Read the following passages. What evidence do you see of Jesus hooking people into the conversation with His opening remarks, expounding scripture to them, then applying it and challenging the person to respond?
 - The Pharisees: Matthew 15:1-11
 - Peter confesses Christ: Matthew 16:13-20
 - The rich young ruler: Matthew 19:16-22
 - Nicodemus: John 3:1-21
 - The woman from Samaria: John 4:3-26
- vi. Look at the following messages that were preached in the book of Acts. Note ways in which they used the Hook, Book, Look and Took template.
 - Peter's message on the day of Pentecost: Acts 2:14-39
 - Philips "bible study" with the Ethiopian eunuch: Acts 8:26-38
 - Paul's message to the Athenians on Mars Hill: Acts 17:22-34
 - Paul's appeal to King Agrippa: Acts 26:1-29

II. Assessing Effectiveness

- i. Complete the following sentences and discuss:
 - *“The hardest thing about leading a small group is...”*
 - *“I know my small group Bible study has been effective when...”*
- ii. Listed below are a number of common behaviours of young people in a small group. Discuss suggested strategies for each one:
 - *They take a while to come up with an answer.*
 - *They lack confidence, perhaps through other’s putdowns.*
 - *They don’t know others in the group well and so are reluctant to talk.*
 - *They have natural leadership ability and want to be able to use it.*
 - *They find the discussion boring and need it to be more interesting.*
 - *They have a limited attention span and find it difficult to sit still.*
 - *They are negative toward the group because they are made to go by parents.*
 - *They are seeking attention.*
 - *They feel uncomfortable when people go deep because they feel insecure talking at depth about themselves*
 - *Their parents have modelled a faith that’s never really talked about so they do not feel comfortable in doing so.*
 - *Their life doesn’t match their stated beliefs and being conscious of this they are reluctant to speak about their faith at a personal level.*
- iii. Looking over the above list, have each person share which behaviour(s) were typical of them when they were younger. What strategies helped, or might have helped?
- iv. Without naming names (!) discuss the “difficult people” you have in your small group and share strategies you’ve used or could use, to encourage them to make a more constructive contribution. Try role-playing your ideas.
- v. Assess the room in which each small group holds their Bible study. What improvements could be made in order to create a better setting?
- vi. Spend time experimenting with different seating arrangements and discuss their effect. For example, try the following:
 - *Participants sit in a straight line facing the leader*
 - *Participants sit in a semi-circle facing the leader*
 - *Participants sit in a circle with the leader*
 - *The leader sits higher than the group*
 - *The leader sits at the same height as the group*

- *The leader sits lower than the group*
- *Sit in straight back chairs*
- *Sit on comfortable chairs/couches*
- *Sit on the floor*
- *Lie in a circle on the floor on stomachs and face the centre*
- *Sit around a table*
- *Sit opposite the leader – what's the effect on the person doing this?*
- *Sit beside the leader – what's the effect on the person doing this?*

In doing so, swap places from time to time, giving people the opportunity to be a leader and a participant so that they see and feel the difference these arrangements make.

Discuss what changes you will try making to the seating arrangements in your small group and why.

- vii. Read through the following verses that describe instances of God 'encountering' people through the ministry of Jesus. In each case note the change that occurred in people as a result of the encounter.

- *Healing Peter's mother in law: Matthew 8:14,15*
- *The quieting of the storm: Matthew 8:23-37*
- *A demon-possessed man is delivered: Luke 8:26-35*
- *The large catch of fish: Luke 5:1-11*
- *The Transfiguration: Matthew 17:1-8*
- *Zaccheus: Luke 19:1-10*

- viii. Read through the following verses. What do they teach you about the role of the Holy Spirit in your small group?

- *John 14:15,16*
- *John 14:26*
- *John 15:26,27*
- *John 16:7,8*
- *John 16:13*

APPENDIX 2: Preparing Good Questions

I. QUESTIONS THAT CREATE INSIGHT

When leading Bible studies our aim should be to make them as interactive as possible, involving people in the process of learning and helping them to gain valuable insights. Questions therefore form an important part of this process and it is important that they are well crafted. Below are ten suggested guidelines:

- a. Ask relevant questions - ones that cause them to reflect on their lives in relation to the topic.
- b. Ask for opinions - avoid shallow “right or wrong” answers; instead encourage people to think for themselves.
- c. Ask “open” questions - those that cannot be answered with yes/no/or simple one-word answers.
- d. Ask questions that create tension - questions where there is no easy answer so that they really come to grips with the issue.
- e. Ask questions creatively - use case studies, illustrations pictures etc. to spark discussion.
- f. Ask questions that encourage reflection - “why” questions are best for this.
- g. Ask pointed questions - those that challenge people to think about how the truths they have been learning impact their life.
- h. Ask questions that encourage depth - a goal is to help people to feel comfortable talking about feelings.
- i. Ask questions that allow a breadth of response - avoid narrow questions that force people into answers you may want to hear.
- j. Conclude by asking them how they might put into practice what they have been learning. Doing so not only makes it more likely that they will apply what they learn - it acts as a reminder that all we teach has a practical component to it.

II. TEACHING STRATEGIES THAT CREATE INTEREST

- a. Storytelling: Present and discuss a real or imaginary story or case study - one that has a lot of “tension” in it. Alternatively, share your own story by way of a testimony, or invite a guest and ask them questions.
- b. Poems/Prose: Read a poem or a piece of prose and discuss what it is saying.
- c. Newspaper article: Read a newspaper or magazine article and discuss what it is saying.
- d. Music: Listen to some contemporary music and discuss what it is saying.
- e. Picture: Study a cartoon, picture or photo and discuss what it is saying.
- f. Video/audio: Watch/listen to a video or audio clip and discuss what it is saying.
- g. Aids: Use charts, maps, dictionaries and commentaries to clarify a portion of Scripture.

III. TEACHING STRATEGIES THAT CREATE INVOLVEMENT

- a. Brainstorming: Remember, when you brainstorm there are no “wrong” answers - get people to share their ideas as follows:
 - Use a whiteboard or newsprint to record people’s answers.
 - Use a graffiti board where people can write their own ideas.
 - Form small “buzz groups” for discussion and reporting back.
 - Use a circle response where each person contributes an idea.
- b. Continuum: These involve inviting people to stand in line according to their proficiency/experience/opinion in relation to others in the group.
- c. Decision Walk: Make a statement which you can argue for or against and have people stand at one end of the room if they agree and the other end if they don’t. If they are not sure, they stand in the centre. A discussion then ensues in which people move position as their mind is changed.
- d. Debate: The group is divided into two groups to prepare and present arguments either for or against a proposition.
- e. Action Group: Divide into smaller groups to work on the presentation of a truth or perspective e.g. advertisement, song, mime, role play etc.
- f. Double Up: Each person comes up with an answer to a question. They then form pairs and come up with an answer they both agree with before forming groups of four to do the same, and so on.
- g. Concordant Clusters: Every one answers a question and finds others who agree with them. They stand in a group and share their answers with other groups to see who will agree with them and join them.

IV. TEACHING STRATEGIES THAT CREATE IMPACT

- a. Summarisation: Ask everyone to summarise a passage of Scripture in their own words. Or... Ask everyone to summarise the message of the session in their own words.
- b. Creative Comparisons: Look for an object that represents how you feel or what you think about a certain topic. Or... Identify and explain an attitude or state (e.g. the state of my relationship with God) by comparing it with an object.
- c. On-Site: Present the Bible study at a place appropriate to the issue or passage of Scripture e.g. on a beach (John 21:1-19), in a graveyard (John 20:1-18), on a roof! (Luke 5:17-56).
- d. Role Plays: Set a scenario and have group members come up with their own responses and reactions. Discuss the outcome.
- e. Simulation Game: This is a game that involves your group in an experience that simulates or mirrors a real life situation so that they can reflect on the implications of issues as a participant and not an observer.
- f. Practical Project: Undertake a practical project as an outworking of an issue being discussed (e.g. caring for the poor, sharing one's faith). Reflect on the outcome of the experience.
- g. Creative Reflection: Have everyone reflect on an issue using some form of creative expression, such as art, music or poetry.