

SMALL GROUP ALL-STAR ★ CARL MASSA

10 Helpful Hints for Leading a Good Small Group Discussion

Carl's notes from the Small Group Leaders session of the Shepherding Meeting

1. **Pre-plan questions to guide the discussion in a purposeful direction.**
   Plan ahead. Never walk into the session cold! Even when using the message questions, have a few extra in your pocket! Also, it's a good idea to share planning with your spouse so they understand the direction of the meeting.

2. **Lead to a discussion, not to assumed, short, obvious answers.**
   Ask "what," "how," and "why" questions—questions requiring a thoughtful response.

3. **Seek to explore meaning beyond facts.**
   The goal is to move God's Word from the head, which holds facts, to the heart, which holds meaning. A time to share personal stories.

4. **Promote understanding by encouraging thoughtful responses.**
   Rather than heady, factual responses, help them dig deep into their hearts with responses that actually mean something.

5. **Point to biblical truths, not just personal opinions.**
   Opinions are fallible, and everybody has one. Truths are not.

6. **Direct questions toward specific individuals to draw everyone into the conversation.**
   "Dan, how can you apply this truth to your life?" Try to involve everyone at some point during the meeting. Do this with care and love, not pressuring the individual.

7. **Don't be afraid of silence. Be patient.**
   Don't fill that pause.

8. **Be transparent about your own spiritual walk and struggles.**
   Share just enough with honesty and humility. Model it.

9. **Encourage personal and specific application throughout the discussion—don't just wait until the end.**
   Application should be the rhythm of discussion, not an add-on. I've heard it said that "knowledge without application is lifeless."

10. **Remember, Covenant Small Groups are about people being transformed by God's Spirit through God's Word. It's not about what people have learned, but who people are becoming.**
    This is our bottom line: conforming to the image of Christ! I've also heard it said, "If God's Word hasn't changed me, it hasn't saved me!"