

WORKSHOPS ON BIBLICAL EXPOSITION

SMALL GROUP LEADERS GUIDE

We are having this Workshop and gathering in Small Groups in order to increase our capacity and confidence in handling God's Word faithfully and accurately. Our hope is for each person to make progress on their own work.

METHODOLOGY

Our goals are accomplished through three parts of our Workshop:

- *Instructions*: teach principles for how to better handle biblical texts
- *Expositions*: encourage you by sitting under the teaching of God's Word
- *Small Groups*: practice Bible-handling skills with peers on your own work

PARTICIPATING IN A PRE-WORKSHOP

As a Small Group leader, you have a few goals and responsibilities at the Pre-Workshop:

OBJECTIVES FOR THE PRE-WORKSHOP

- *Command of the Text*: growing in understanding of the passages
- *Equipped to Lead*: growing in helping participants make progress through self-discovery

BEFORE THE PRE-WORKSHOP STARTS

- Prepare all of the Small Group passages and be ready to discuss them.
- Familiarize yourself with the names of the people in your group and pray for them.

DURING THE PRE-WORKSHOP

- Connect with your *Apprentice Small Group Leader* (if applicable) to determine which passages (s)he will facilitate.

LEADING A SMALL GROUP

MODIFIED SOCRATIC METHOD

In Plato's dialogues, the Socratic Method (debate or cross-examination) is a dialectic method of inquiry applied to the examination of key concepts. That is, it is a way of exploring ideas through discussion. It is used by teachers to foster as much interactive learning as possible by drawing the student into and arriving at their own conclusions. In this way, they do their own work, often being driven to frustration (*aporia*), so that they realize that their answers were insufficient and have to work to come up with new answers.

At Workshops, we strive to use this modified Socratic Method. We want participants to engage in the independent critical thinking that leads to a deeper understanding of the principles and better

use of them when they go home to do their own work. Here are a few ways this might look in a Small Group:

- Use questions to get the participants to learn the material through their own discovery. In doing so, they will develop ownership of the principles.
- Reinforce content of the instructional sessions. Draw the pictures of the principles and outline the work on the whiteboard, asking questions as you go.
- Do not (immediately) answer the questions you (or others) raise, or you will lose an opportunity to help participants discover the answers on their own.
- Remember, the goal is to help the presenter take the next step for their work—not to get everyone on the same page about the *right answers* or the *right understanding* of the text. You might only have time to focus on one issue and leave the other issues unresolved.
- Point participants back to the Scriptures, ask them to back up their answers from the text.
- Never justify your conclusions with references to secondary works (e.g., commentaries).

TONE

The Small Group time is the most important aspect of a Workshop. A leader's tone is critical to success during this time because it will foster participant interaction. Any time critique is invited, tensions will inevitably rise. Your goal, as a Small Group Leader, is to set the tone for mutually beneficial group critique.

- Upon arrival at the Workshop, look for the people in your group and introduce yourself.
- Model a teachable spirit by sharing how you are making progress as well.
- Balance reassurance and correction to help the presenter. Your ability to help each participant is maximized if you genuinely care about each person.
- Leave your ego at the door. Critique is not personal, but pastoral! You are the leader, not the expert. Your perspective may be right, but your goal is to help each participant take one step forward in their own work.

AT THE FIRST SMALL GROUP MEETING

You have 15 extra minutes at the beginning of the first small group to accomplish the following:

- *Take leadership of your group.* Be the first person to arrive in your room. Sit in a place that gives you easy access to the whiteboard. Welcome everyone. Reinforce the goals of the Workshop and its three parts (Instructions, Expositions, Small Group Practice).
- *Introduce yourselves.* Have each participant share things like their name, church name, ministry role, and number of times at a Workshop. Remember, you will have time to talk more later. Take notes.
- *Introduce the Apprentice Leader* (if applicable) and explain the role.
- *Set the expectation.* The purpose of the Small Groups is to help each participant make progress in their own work by practicing using the principles. This is important to state because the group will naturally focus on their own interpretation of the text (as in a Bible

study) rather than on the presenter's worksheet. You will especially be tempted to focus on what you learned in the pre-Workshop. While offering a compelling interpretation of the text can help presenters realize something they missed, focusing on your own interpretation must not be at the expense of interacting with the presenter's work. It is not nearly as important to get to the right answers on the text as it is to help the presenter identify the most important ways that they can better employ the principles in handling the Scriptures.

- *Reinforce the Sermon Preparation Worksheet (Teaching Preparation Worksheet).* Explain that they should follow the prescribed format and present their material succinctly. Their entire presentation should take approximately five minutes.
- Explain the various roles:
 - *Reader:* Read the passage and pray for the group.
 - *Presenter(s):* Present their material succinctly in five minutes or less.
 - *Responder(s):* Offer an encouraging word and ask a question to probe the presenter's work.
- Explain the format. You have 90 minutes per Small Group (45 minutes per passage).
 - identify the presenters and assign the reader and responders
 - 1-2 minutes—read the text and pray
 - 5 minutes—first presenter
 - 5 minutes—second presenter
 - 1 minute—first responder (responds to first presenter)
 - 10-15 minutes—open discussion on the first presentation
 - 1 minute—first responder (responds to second presenter)
 - 10-15 minutes—open discussion on the second presentation
- Explain that good questions focus on principles and the presenter's work. They often begin with *how*, *what*, or *why*.

WHITEBOARD

The whiteboard is another important teaching tool. Use it to your advantage by drawing and writing what you are asking about. Don't limit yourself to drawing *new* things. Reinforce pictures and ideas the participants have already been exposed to. A few ways you might consider using it:

- At the beginning of each small group, draw the pictures of the principles that have just been taught at the top of the board to reinforce them. Leave them there for the whole Workshop.
- Reinforce strategies by writing them on the board.
- If a presenter revises a main point, write it on the whiteboard as they work on it.
- As the presenter and group arrive at new conclusions, draw or write them on the board.
- List the roles (reader, presenter, first responder) and assignments for each passage in that session.
- Write the end times for each passage to set expectations and stay on schedule.

APPRENTICE LEADERS

A healthy Workshop continues to train new Small Group Leaders. We do this using an Apprentice Leader role. Apprentice Leaders are Leaders-in-training (not assistants). The primary goal in having Apprentice Leaders is for them to acquire experience leading according to our parameters. In many ways, the Apprentice Leader acts as a normal participant.

Apprentice Leaders are expected to:

- Attend the pre-Workshop.
- Prepare and present assigned passages at the pre-Workshop.
- Acting as a participant, prepare and present two assigned passages for the Workshop (these might not overlap with their pre-Workshop assignments).
- Lead the discussions for two of the passages during the Workshop.¹
- Initiate a conversation with the Small Group Leader after their first time leading to solicit feedback in order to better lead on the second passage.

Small Group Leaders are expected to:

- Encourage their Apprentice leader.
- Debrief after each Small Group to share insight with the Apprentice leader on how to lead well in this particular group dynamic.

WORKSHOP FOLLOW-UP

Following the Workshop, your CST representative will ask you for recommendations for potential leaders whether it is your apprentice leader (if applicable) or a participant. Here are the criteria:

- Builds rapport and sets a helpful tone.
 - Demonstrates personal care in their interactions.
 - Is clear and specific in their interactions.
 - In moments of confusion, restates what a presenter shares or a participant questions.
- Builds credibility.
 - Holds a formal role as a pastor (men) or Bible teacher (women) in their church.
 - Regularly preaches or teaches expositionally.
 - Desires to make progress themselves.
 - Applies Principles correctly.
- Asks good questions.
 - Identifies weaknesses in worksheets.
 - Crafts a line of questioning that addresses the weakness identified.
 - Reinforces Principles and strategies in their questions.

¹ Ideally, the Apprentice Leader is leading on texts 6 and 7 (4 and 5 at women's Workshops). This will not always be the case, depending on which texts the Apprentice Leader is assigned to present. At the pre-Workshop, the Apprentice Leader and Small Group Leader should discuss which texts the Apprentice Leader will lead.

- Doesn't *teach* or share their own opinion, but focuses on the presenter's work.

ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS

Without hearing the presentations in advance, it can be difficult to anticipate what will make a good question from the Small Group Leader. As you listen to a Worksheet presentation keep in mind, you are trying to identify one area where you can help a participant make progress. Here are a few categories to think through:

- *Omissions from the Worksheet:* Are there questions or parts of questions they ignored or misunderstood? For example, did they find the structure but fail to write an emphasis? Did they list out context but fail to explain how it informs the text? Did they give an application for believers but not unbelievers?
- *Misapplications of the Principles:* Did they fail to follow through with a principle? For example, did they give a breakdown of the structure but summarize the passage instead of giving the emphasis? Did they make Theological Connections in the Biblical Context question? Is their main point too long?
- *Omissions from the Text:* Did they apply the tools well but miss something essential in the passage? This could be a key verse or a keyword.
- *Inconsistencies in the Worksheet:* Is there continuity in their responses to the questions? For example, is the structural emphasis visible elsewhere on the Worksheet? Is their main point obviously related to the author's main point?

We have provided helpful questions for you. It helps to ask questions related to the Principles already covered in the Workshop since they will be fresh on their minds and you have a common language to reinforce them. Remember, the best questions are open-ended and facilitate self-discovery.

- Did the participant explain the structure of the passage?
 - What strategies did you use to arrive at your structure?
 - In this genre, what strategies are available to us for finding structure?
 - How do the parts of the structure fit together?
 - How did your structure work help you arrive at your stated emphasis?
 - We learned a new strategy in the Structure instruction (e.g., plot arc). Can you try that now to see what new information you get?
- Did the participant explain how the context informs the meaning of the text?
 - How does the context you have listed here inform the meaning of your passage?
 - How did the passage before/after this contribute to your understanding? How does this passage contribute to the larger argument or story?
 - What is the situation of the original readers? How does knowing that historical context help you understand your passage?

- We learned some new information about biblical context in the instruction. What was it again? Now, what biblical context do you see in the passage? What from what you have listed on your sheet is biblical context? Why do you think the author referred to that passage?
- What cultural context would the original audience have understood that you need to follow up on? Which of these might be relevant for understanding this passage and why? How would explaining them to your audience help you make your point?
- Did the participant state the main point the author is arguing to his audience clearly and accurately? Was it grounded in the text?
 - How did you move from the emphasis of the passage to the main point the author is arguing?
 - Now that we understand who the original audience is, how can you rewrite your answer in a way that reflects the work you did in historical context?
 - I noticed that you introduce a new idea in your author's main point that we haven't seen on your worksheet yet. Where is that coming from? Why isn't it in structure or context?
 - Your answer sounds more like a summary. What do you think the author wanted his audience to think, believe, remember, do, repent of?
 - How can you state that more concisely as one idea?
- Did the participant make good gospel connections?
 - What strategies did you use to find your gospel connections and why?
 - In this genre, what strategies are available to us for connecting to the Gospel?
 - Of the possible connections listed, which is most closely connected to the main point that the author is arguing?
 - What part of the gospel is in view from that connection?
 - How is the gospel being used in this passage?
 - How might considering an additional strategy strengthen your work?
- Was the participant's main point for *their* audience clear?
 - Who did you write this main point for? Who is your audience?
 - How does your main point follow from the author's main point?
 - How does your connection with the gospel influence your main point?
 - You introduced a new idea in your main point that we haven't seen on your worksheet yet. How did that come into play?
 - Let's look at your answers to #1, #3, and #5. What consistency do you see between your responses?
 - How would you restate your main point in 13 words or fewer? What would you cut to make your main point more concise?

- Did the participant write clear applications? Are they grounded in the text?
 - How do these applications flow from the main point you are arguing to your audience?
 - How specific to the text are your applications? How does your exegetical work inform your applications?
 - Why is this passage important for a non-Christian to hear?
 - If the Application Principle was introduced at this Workshop: We learned some new strategies for applications. What would you want to add or change?

- Did the participant provide a title and outline? Our goal here cannot be to judge the poetic quality of an outline so much as to assess whether it effectively communicates the main point they are arguing to their audience without undermining the nuances and details of the passage.
 - How does your outline help you argue your main point?
 - What is the relationship of your points to the main point you are arguing?
 - What might be a better way of arranging your points to serve your main point?
 - How did you decide what points and how many to make? How might you combine/separate points in order to better argue your main point?
 - How does your outline reflect the exegetical structure?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON PEDAGOGY

Frank Coffield, David Moseley, Elaine Hall, and Kathryn Ecclestone, "Learning Styles and Pedagogy in Post-16 Learning: A Systematic and Critical Review," *Learning & Skills Research Council*, January 2004.

Harold Pashler, Mark McDaniel, Doug Rohrer, Robert Bjork, "Learning Styles: Concepts and Evidence" in *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, December 2008, 9(3): 105-119.

Cedar R. Riener and Daniel Willingham, "The Myth of Learning Styles" in *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, August 2010, 42(5): 32-35.

Paul A. Kirschner, John Sweller, and Richard E. Clark, "Why Minimal Guidance During Instruction Does Not Work: An Analysis of the Failure of Constructivist, Discovery, Problem-Based, Experiential, and Inquiry-Based Teaching" in *Educational Psychologist*, June 2010, 41:2, 75-86.

David A. Kolb and Ronald Fry, "Toward an Applied Theory of Experiential Learning" in C. Cooper (Ed.), *Studies of Group Process* (New York: Wiley, 1975, 33-57).