

LIFE Group Leader Handout

December 8, 2019

School of Love

Pastor Michael O'Connor

Scripture--I Peter 1:22-2:3

22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24 for

“All flesh is like grass

and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers,

and the flower falls,

25 but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Main Idea--Extend Ourselves in Love Toward One Another; God Supplies Support

The Command: *“...love one another earnestly from a pure heart...”*

God's Support--

- We are family (1:23)
- We take our instruction from the same source (1:24-25)
- We see our need for grace (2:1)
- We have the same objective (2:2)

“...if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.” (2:3)

Application--

- Are you treating your fellow believers as children of the same heavenly Father?
- Are you actively seeking to implant the seed of God's Word in your heart?
- What common struggles affect you the most in your relationships with others?
- Is Christlike spiritual maturity your primary ambition?

Maintaining Spiritual Focus

Are You Leading to a Place You Have Been?

By Rick Lowry

Small group leadership is a detail-intensive ministry. Lesson preparation and regular contact with group members are hard enough to squeeze into a busy leader's calendar. Add to these the scheduling of hosts and refreshments, information updates and attendance at training sessions, and it becomes one of the most demanding ministries in the church. With all these elements to keep up with, it is easy to lose a spiritual focus; administration can overshadow our true goal of discipleship. Here are some ways that I, as a small group leader, maintain a spiritual focus.

GROWTH ATMOSPHERE. My goal as a small group leader is the spiritual success of the individuals God has placed under my spiritual care. I am willing to do whatever it takes for the members to find God's will for their lives and to help them move in an upward direction? As their shepherd, I am coming to God on my knees and saying, "God, please give me insight into each person's life in my group, so I can determine what exactly they need in order to move to the next spiritual level."

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION. Spiritual leadership means making the Bible the foundation of group life. We rightly think of small groups as a tremendous relational opportunity. But as vital as relationship building is in small groups, the Word of God is still the foundation. It should be obvious to any visitor to our group meeting, any random week, that the Bible is essential to us.

INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE. A spiritual leader knows his or her group members well. This takes time, building trust and expressing interest. This knowledge begins with the little things. Do I have the birthdays of the people in my group on my calendar? Can I name their children? Do I know their struggles? Jesus modeled a depth of care as He who "lays down his life for the sheep." When was the last time I made a sacrifice to see my group members grow in Christ...a sacrifice of time perhaps, doing a little extra preparation to give this week's lesson a creative edge? Or a sacrifice of energy to get them involved in a service project. A good leader knows the group members and chooses activities based on their spiritual needs.

VALLEY WALKING. Romans 12 encourages us to "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and mourn with those who mourn." That implies a level of intimacy. It means we have taken the time to enter into the joys and pains of the life of another person, which is a vulnerable and risky business. A member experiencing a spiritual valley sometimes will shy away from the group he or she previously enjoyed fellowship with. A wise group leader will perceive when a member is experiencing shame or guilt. That leader will go to them, offer assurance, and even help heal relationships between them and members of the group that may be strained. "Blessed are the peacemakers." In Jesus' story from Luke 15, the shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one wanders off. He leaves the other ninety-nine and searches for that sheep until he finds it. That's the kind of shepherding that takes place in the valley.

GRACE MOTIVATED. Small group leaders are spiritual shepherds. Some people look at sheep and see dirt, smell manure, and perceive some of the dumbest animals God made. Others look at sheep and see gentle companions, valuable for their wool, and submissive in spirit. How do I see the people under my care in this small group? Do I think of them as an imposition, interrupting my schedule, or am I available to them because I see the potential in every single one of them to reach God's design for their lives?

PRAYER AND DEPENDENCE. I will never experience any spiritual success if I attempt to lead my small group by my own power and wisdom. I must depend on God. I must pray daily and fervently for God to do his work among my group members. As I lead, I keep my eyes on Jesus. He went to the trouble of purchasing His people with His own blood. He will not refuse wisdom to those of us He has called to aid in the spiritual formation of His redeemed.

PERSONAL HOLINESS. The most important thing I can do to lead my flock spiritually is to be spiritual myself. Most people won't automatically gravitate toward spiritual concerns in a group discussion. They look to the leader to open the spiritual door and invite them in. I cannot lead people to a place I have not been (or maybe even am not willing to go). My daily prayer is "Lord, how closely am I walking with you?" I have developed ten questions to ask myself on a regular basis in order to make sure I am knowing God more and more deeply (*see last week's article "Ask Yourself" for a more detailed focus of these ten questions*).