

## LIFE Group Leader Handout

January 24, 2021

### ***The Two Questions We Will Always Keep Asking***

Pastor Michael O'Connor

#### **Scripture-- 1 John 3:23**

*And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.*

#### ***Main Idea--Because God's People Believe, They Live Supernatural Lives; They Love One Another***

*...believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ...*

Question #1--Are my thoughts and actions showing I believe God and his word?

*...love one another, just as he has commanded us.*

Question #2--What is God's best way to show love in this situation?

*For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy.*

(I Thessalonians 2:19-20)

#### **Application--**

- Talking about Question #1--**Are my thoughts and actions showing I believe God and his word?** In what areas have you been challenged to take God at his word this week? What lie does this question expose in your thinking and acting?
- Talking about Question #2--**What is God's best way to show love in this situation?** How have you had opportunity to apply this question this week? How did it clarify the right attitude and action?

# Ideas for Shepherding a Group

*By Thom Corrigan*

## **1. Send a Note of Encouragement**

It takes just a few moments to write a note, and you can cover the whole group in a few months by writing one a week. If you invite the group to get involved (as in phone calling, #4), then everyone will get a note in the same time period! E-Mail is sometimes easier than mailing a note. There aren't the restraints of having to buy a card or stamps, although it's always great to get home at the end of a long day and find a personal note from someone offering a word of encouragement.

I find that just a simple greeting and a note to remind the person that I appreciate them, or a scripture reference or to let them know I am praying for them, can really turn a person's day around or add the finishing touch to a day that is going well. Don't get caught up in the idea that you have to spend a lot of time (or money) to do this right. Just do it, and the people in your group are sure to appreciate it.

## **2. Take the Time to Notice**

Take the time to notice others. People feel included and encouraged when you notice (and tell them) they changed their hairstyle or are wearing a piece of clothing that enhances their appearance. Noticing personal growth is a meaningful way to care. For example, someone who has worked on changing his behavior that was previously distracting or destructive needs to be told that you see the progress he is making. Look for little, incremental changes. Don't wait until he has worked at something for months. We need to recognize and applaud small steps in the bigger process. "I notice you are trying to ... " or "I see you have been working at ... It really shows!"

A simple way to train yourself to notice others is to talk less and watch more. One of the greatest ways to offer care to the people in your group is to simply notice what is going on in their life and reflect back to them that God is at work, and you can see some fruit from His work. Train the people in your group to "notice" and you will strengthen the fabric of the group as well as other relationships outside the group. Taking notice of someone's life and offering encouragement is a simple exercise that can pay big dividends.

## **3. Ask About Previous Prayer Requests**

When I share a prayer request for myself or a family member, it is comforting to know others in the group are going to join me in asking God for an answer, direction, protection, or provision. It encourages me when someone approaches me a week or two later and inquires about my request. If I have received the answer to my prayer, I get to praise God and share about the answered prayer. If I am still praying and waiting, I know I have at least one other who is "standing in the gap" with me.

Reverse the roles and follow up on prayer requests from the members of your group. If needed, take notes to help you remember to pray and for what. It will also be a reminder later to ask about answers to the prayer. Prayer is one of the most powerful privileges God has given us. Use it freely, and expect results!

## **4. Help Group Members Learn to Deal With Difficult People**

I have led many groups and have encountered some interesting individuals in those groups. Each time a person who was difficult to live with, who lacked certain social skills, or who expressed inappropriate behavior started attending the group, we were presented with a decision. We could decide to love, accept, and forgive this person, or we could let him know that he made us uncomfortable and eventually drive him away from our group. I am proud to say that most of the time our group took the high road and determined to accept the person regardless of where they had been, what they had done (or was doing) or how they presented themselves.

I believe one function of the small group is to act like a triage unit and outpatient clinic. We cannot handle destructive or divisive behaviors, but we can handle many of the issues that people struggle with if we offer grace and mercy. As a leader, you need to have sufficient boundaries in place so that you do not

take ownership of a person's problems, but you can surely project an attitude of support and encouragement, speaking the truth in love.

God has entrusted to us a sacred trust to love and care for His people. It is a blessing to see a group invest in a member who has had a rough life, has been abused, or simply lacks skills to interact in pleasant and healthy ways. Our groups really show their distinction over other groups of people by the way we compassionately reach out to the lost, the broken, the prodigal, and the outcast. We have an opportunity to be a safe, redemptive place. You may need to refer some people out to a pastor, counselor, or other caregiver for issues you are not trained or able to deal with, but the group can definitely be a safe port in the storm for anyone who wants to get well and grow as a child of God.