

servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."

—Matthew 23:10-12

"And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant."

—Luke 22:25-26

The salient point is that we are to be facilitators, servants that point towards the Master, careful not to allow the focus to rest on us. It's far more important to have the desire to *host* a small group than to desire being a *leader*. Christ's requirements for a leader are simply someone willing to serve others.

Teaching

The purpose of the teaching element is for the leader to guide the group through one main point the leader has learned from the selected portion of Scripture and to facilitate group discussion. This main point may be a practical spiritual lesson, a story line or even a theological concept.

When using Bible study guides developed by Walk with the Word this concept can be observed in action. Suggested questions are placed in parallel with each section of Scripture to facilitate group discussion while guiding everyone point-by-point towards a greater lesson.

The basic structure for these studies follows what is known as the "Inductive Bible Study System". In its simplest form, it's the process of studying Scripture by first observing (who, what, where, why and how), interpreting (what does it mean), and application (how does it apply to my life). The question and answer style of the studies facilitates group discussion to observe, interpret and, most importantly, actually apply biblical truth.

After the leader has focused the group with opening prayer, he or she:

- ☼ Provides context for the main point (lesson, theme)
- ☼ Introduces the main point
- ☼ Traces the main point through the Scripture portion
- ☼ Includes appropriate facts of information gained from personal study
- ☼ Supports the main point with cross references as appropriate

Walk with the Word Bible studies follow these points but also highly encourages you to develop your own studies as you delve deeper into God's Word.

Application

The purpose of application is to help group members identify personally with the main point. Without personal application, the study never goes beyond the dissemination of facts and information. Application should be taking place throughout the entire study!

The leader may facilitate application by:

- ☼ Encouraging group members to share how they might apply the main point to their lives personally. It's often just a simple manner of opening it up to the group by asking, "What does this say to you personally?"
- ☼ Sharing a personal testimony. If we are to become the type of leader Jesus has defined (a servant of others) we may need to inspire confidence in the group by personally relating how a particular lesson has changed/is changing our walk with Christ.
- ☼ Sharing a story or illustration. Often we'll come across testimony or situations that parallel the main point of the lesson being taught.

to each meeting having read and considered the passage to be studied.

- ☀ Use or develop an outline of the passage to be studied that emphasizes a main point you've learned or want to convey.
- ☀ Help group members identify personally with the main point.
- ☀ Allow other members in the group to share ideas, insights, knowledge, facts and themes they themselves learned.
- ☀ Encourage members to share how God "spoke" to them personally from the portion of Scripture being studied.
- ☀ Make an extra effort to find ways to lovingly encourage members to go further in their study and application of God's Word. Always remember Christ's instruction to be a servant to them.

It's not difficult at all to effectively accomplish all these things in a one-hour meeting. If you're blessed with a group that can allow more time, consider first expanding the areas of prayer and fellowship rather than adding additional Scripture study. Even in a small group setting you want to achieve a balance of the things that make meeting in His Name the most life-changing. Structure the time to include sharing of personal life events, prayer for individual needs, prayer for your church at large, and time to genuinely fellowship with each other.

If at all possible, set out at least one more chair than people attending the group at any given occasion and lead the group in asking God to send someone to fill that chair next time you meet.

Pray that you encounter the "worst" small group "problem" imaginable: The group becomes too large and must split to form more than one small group.

