

Leader's Helps

Your Role: A Facilitator for the Holy Spirit and an Encourager

A Facilitator for the Holy Spirit...

People remember best what they articulate themselves, so your role is to encourage discussion and keep it on track. Here are some things you can do to help:

1. Ask questions and allow silence until someone speaks up. If the silence seems interminable, rephrase the question, but don't answer it yourself!
2. Direct the group members to look in Scripture for answers. For example, ask, "How can you see Solomon's despair in verse 17?"
3. Place chairs in as small a circle as possible. Space inhibits sharing.
4. If your group has someone who monopolizes the discussion, try these action steps:
 - A. Pray not only for her control, but that you can help find ways to make her feel valued. Excessive talking often springs from deep emotional needs.
 - B. Wait for her to take a breath and gently say, "Thanks, could we hear from someone else?"
 - C. Go around the room with a question.
 - D. Take the monopolizer aside and say, "I value your input in the group. But I have wondered if you realize how you come across at times." Though this is painful, it truly

may help her to see herself in a new light and make changes that will help her dramatically⁵. The memory work will be useful in your group members' lives. If they aren't doing these exercises, call a few from the group and ask them to be good examples with you. Soon the others will follow!⁶ Occasionally call on the shy people when it seems as if they might have something to share but need a little encouragement. Tell them they can simply toss the ball to someone else by saying, "I don't know, Linda, what do you think?" if they don't have anything to share. If they form this habit in the beginning, you will have a richly interactive group instead of just hearing from the few who are comfortable sharing.⁷ Bring nametags for the first few weeks. Print first names in large letters with a black marker.

8. If your group has trouble getting through all the questions, circle the questions you want to discuss in the group and pace yourself.

An Encourager...

Most women who drop out of a group do so not because the study is too challenging, but because they don't feel valued. As a leader, here are a few steps you can take to help each woman feel valued:

1. Greet each woman warmly when she walks in the door. This meeting should be the high point of her week!
2. Affirm answers when you can genuinely do so: "Good insight! Great! Thank you!" And always affirm nonverbally with your eyes, a smile, and a nod.
3. If a woman gives a wrong or off-the-wall answer, be careful not to crush her. You can still affirm her by saying, "That's interesting, what does someone else think?" If you feel

her response must be corrected, someone in the group will probably do it. If no one does, space your correction so it doesn't immediately follow her response and is not obviously directed at her.

4. If this is an interdenominational group, set the ground rule that no one is to speak unfavorably of another denomination.

5. Send notes to absentees and postcards in appreciation to the faithful. Collect e-mail addresses, for this will simplify your role immensely.

6. Don't skimp on the prayer time. Women's emotional and spiritual needs are met during the prayer time. If they can learn to lift their needs directly in prayer, it will not take a lot of time.

Helps for Specific Questions

One

Contentment Cannot Be Found "Under the Sun"

Day 1

How Could Someone So Wise Be So Foolish?

8. One of the dangers of worldly blessings like wealth and power is that we are tempted to forget God. We seem to stay close to the Lord when we are in need, as Solomon felt his need as a young ruler, but we so often forget the source of our blessing and begin again to depend on ourselves. You may find other insights from the group.

11. Lead the way for your group by making yourself vulnerable.

Day 3

Approaching Poetry in the Bible

10 E. We tend to remember better poetry. Ask, for example, which account of the parting of the Red Sea was more familiar. Poetry also appeals to our hearts for word pictures such as “under His wings” tap into the right brain. However, prose helps us truly understand the facts.

Day 4

The Narrow Perspective

Despair (Narrow View)	Hope (Broad View)
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1:3	What do we really gain	Anything we do for the
	from all our hard work?	Lord will last eternally.

1:9	Christ makes all things new.
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1:14	Christ gives meaning.
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2:11	Store treasures in heaven.
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2:17-20	Though we know sorrow,
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In Christ there can be inextinguishable joy.

2:21-23 It is possible to pass on a spiritual

legacy that will not fade away.

Lora 9/2/09 6:05 AM

Comment [1]: I don't see the value in repeating this chart from the chapter.

Two

Contentment Begins with an Eternal Perspective

Day 5

An Eternal Perspective Changes Everything

12 C. Work is a gift of God, for it was given before the fall. If our attitude is to serve God with our work, it can be a great blessing. Likewise, wealth can be a blessing when used thankfully and to glorify God.

Three

Walk By Faith and Not By Sight

Day 3

Resolve to Live By Faith

5 F. Some see this as the soul. The soul can only be satisfied by God.

Four

A Contented Woman Faces Life Realistically

Day 2

Better to Have Never Been Born!

11. Lead the way in showing them how to speak truth to their souls from the invisible world. For example:

- If you see someone getting away with injustice, you could say to your soul: One day God will repay (from Romans 12:19.)

If you have been betrayed by someone, you could say to your soul: All of us are sinners, and I am too (based on Romans 3:23.) But Jesus will not leave me (based on John 14:18.)

Five

God Is the Answer, but He Must Be Approached the Right Way

Day 4

Guard Your Soul From Emptiness

21 B. This is key: If we cannot be thankful, it is probably because we are expecting too much

from the things under the sun, asking from them what they can never give. Material blessings are wonderful, but they were never meant to meet our deepest longings. Husbands are gifts, but they were never meant to be Saviors. Food is a gift, but if we expect it to satisfy our longings, we will turn to gluttons and still be discontented.

Six

A Contented Woman Allows Pain to Enlarge Her Soul

Day 1

The Wise Woman Faces Death and Pain Forthrightly

1 A. Contemporary parallels might be fine clothing, a name on the door, a beautiful [home](#).

[5](#). Facing pain is facing reality. If you live in denial, you are postponing the inevitable. If you never face reality, your soul cannot heal. Likewise, allow your friends to grieve, even if it makes you uncomfortable. You are helping them through the pain. Empathize and don't try to distract or to fix.

Hear from a few. Hopefully they think about their own deaths, the brevity of life, the need to redeem the time and be ready to face God.

Seven

Living Realistically in the Face of Death

4. This is an important question, especially for those who think the Christian life is all about denial. Take time with it.

Eight

Life Is Short, So Live Like You Mean It!

Day 1

Cast Your Bread Upon the Waters

2. Nature gives us signs that it is going to do something, yet there are no guarantees. It may look like rain, but it might not. A tree may look like it is going to fall a certain direction, but may not. Likewise, we should make the most informed decisions we can when taking risks in living and giving, but there are no guarantees.