

Bible Reading Group Critical Success Factors

1. Location & Time	Assessment 1 -5				
1. accessible to all					
2. noise, ambiance					
3. (if over a meal) food quality, cost					
4.					
2. Recruiting					
1. prayed for new participant(s)					
2. my antennae was up all week					
3. happy w my sales pitch ¹ , or reworking it					
4. used sales pitch once this week					
5.					
3. Week's Bible Passage					
1. meaningful to audience					
2. long enough to respect Biblical content					
3. short enough to respect time constraint					
4. group shares in choice of Bible passages					
5.					
4. Discussion					
1. reviewed Goals ² & Key Guidelines					
2. discussion balanced among all; each felt respected					
3. no one acted as an expert teacher					
4. facilitator modeled being a co-learner					
5. group got to powerful conclusions					
6. shared prayer requests for the coming week					
7.					
5. Follow up					
1. prayed for everyone, once; emailed reminders					
2. rotated leadership of discussion					
3. selected 1 participant for personal time					
4.					

¹E.g., "Pete, doing anything that helps you grow spiritually these days? does it work? It seems I always need help staying in touch / hearing God / moving toward..."

² The Goal can be expressed in different ways: to grow spiritually (2P 3:18) , to hear God's Voice through the text (J 5:37), to see the Glory of God (2C 3:18), etc.

Three Questions for discussing any Bible passage

(Ice Breaker: "What did you like or not like in this passage?")

1. What is the **one main theme**¹?
 - What was the author saying to his first audience? Look for repeated words, ideas, concepts.
2. **What was God like for them**² (Father, Son or Holy Spirit)? What was He...
 - doing? thinking? feeling? wanting?
 - What was He *not* doing that you wish He had been?
 - Do you like this God? Would He like you?
3. How does this **push you / us**³? challenge you?
 - What do you think God is trying to say to you / us?
 - Though you may say you believe this about God, how does your outward life reveal you really don't?
 - When you forget God is like this, what disturbing thoughts and harmful emotions hinder you?

For the first 2/3 of your discussion try to stay focused on what the original audience would have thought. How would *they* have understood this passage? What would *they* have thought about God? Then, in the last 1/3 of your time, discuss what God wants for *us*. Your observations about God must not change as you bring them into our century.

- ¹ The Holy Spirit spoke through the biblical author to an original audience. The terms, syntax, symbols mean what that *first audience* understood them to mean. Meaning resides with author and first audience. The Holy Spirit preserved that original meaning in the Bible for His people in all cultures throughout history. It means today what it meant then.
- ² God never changes. He is the same in His desires for us as He was for them. He wants for us what He wanted for them. He deals with us, mostly, as He dealt with them (though significance and application may look different in OT/NT and in various cultures). The Bible answers, "Who are You, God; what do you want for me/us?"
- ³ The best applications come from 1 question: "How can I / we replicate in my culture what the Biblical author was calling for in his culture?" "What response was God seeking from them? How would I express this response in my culture?"