

Suggestions for Using Sermon Material for Life Group Discussion

Basic Idea

- Rather than using a pre-printed curriculum, Life Groups discuss the sermon from the previous Sunday
 1. Life Group members take notes for discussion from Pastor's sermon (this is key since there is no other 'homework')
 2. Discuss sermon questions grouped into one of these three areas each week:
 - **CONNECT** - discussion questions from the sermon that have to do with our personal relationship with God
 - **CULTIVATE** - discussion questions from the sermon that have to do with our relationships with each other as brothers/sisters in Christ
 - **COMMUNITY** - discussion questions from the sermon that have to do with our sharing Christ with the lost
- Leaders have a number of questions to choose from for each of these areas but must ask at least two from each to help bring balance to the discussion time.
 - Questions can come from the leader (you can write them yourself or I will be glad to help you come up with some), OR
 - Leaders assign questions each week, on a rotating basis, to group members. For instance, this week family A & B do CONNECT questions, C & D do CULTIVATE Questions and D & F do COMMUNITY questions. Next week, each group gets a different area. Alternately, each member could write 1 or 2 questions from each group for discussion each week.

Some weeks, it may seem hard to come up with questions from a given area. For instance, this past sermon series on Desperate Households it may seem difficult to come up with COMMUNITY questions dealing with how we apply this to our relationships with the lost. If I were leading a group, I would want to bring in this aspect to help remind group members that everything we are learning at church is supposed to be equipping us to offer hope to a lost world. Here are some questions I might come up with for this past week's sermon "Popcorn Parenting".

- COMMUNITY - Pastor talked about caramel, cheese and butter style parenting in his sermon (briefly summarize what these were if it was not already discussed). Do you have any non-Christian friends who are currently trying one of these styles and it is not working for them? What are some ways you could bring up the subject with them and share some of the Godly principles we learned Sunday?
- CULTIVATE – Pastor talked about all the different “non-discipline” techniques that have been given to us from various “experts” through the years. Do you have a friend in the church who believes in Biblical discipline as you do? If so, how do you encourage and help each other?
- CONNECT – Can you share an example of a time when you tried disciplining your child (“seasoning”) and came to an impasse? Did you pray about it? Can you share any concrete answers/testimonies the Lord gave you through this experience?

Other weeks, it may seem difficult to draw people into a discussion of the sermon because they may feel the sermon doesn't apply to them. For instance, in the Desperate Parenting series, a single person with no kids or an older person whose kids who are grown may feel the message doesn't apply to them. In this case, you've just got to be creative.

- CONNECT – What kind of parenting model did your parents follow? Did your experiences growing up as a child help or hinder your ability to see God as a loving Father? How has God helped you overcome negative experiences?
- CULTIVATE – (for an older person) Did you fall into any of the “popcorn parenting traps” pastor talked about on Sunday? Given your experience, what advise would you give parents today who have fallen for one of these traps? (for a single person with no kids)
- COMMUNITY – (for a single person) Do you have friends/neighbors who have kids but are not good parents/do not spend time with their kids? What opportunities do you have to show Jesus' love to these kids? Do you take advantage of these opportunities? If not, how could you?

The purpose of the questions is to get people to interact with the message...to make personal application. Hopefully creative questions will help draw people out of the “me mentality” whether it is “this message does not apply to me” or whether it is someone who rarely thinks about the unsaved because they don't have any unsaved friends (maybe questions about applying what they have learned to the unsaved each week will help them realize this need in their life).

If you decide to try this method, here are a couple things I would ask of you:

- Please make sure you cover at least 2 questions in all three areas to help keep the discussion balanced.
- If group members are bringing the questions, be sure to help them come up with discussion questions and not mini-sermons. Questions are supposed to spark discussion, not be “sermon notes”
- Sermon discussions are not “pastor roasts”. It is ok to ask, “What did you think what was said in regards to this...”, but you will need to make sure the discussion stays on topic and is not a platform for somebody's pet doctrine that the sermon may not have agreed with.

Lastly, whether you are using this method or written curriculum, please don't let your group discussion turn into the Oprah Winfrey show. Opinions are ok, but we need to teach our members that “all opinions are NOT equal.” We need to challenge them to back up their opinions with Scripture. Many of our members are not used to this, so it may have to ask a few times, “Where do you see that in Scripture?” or “What does Scripture say about that?” When they don't know, encourage them to study it during the week and then share with the group the next week what they learned.