

Tips for Disciplers

LEADERSHIP FUNCTIONS OF A DISCIPLER

- I. GROWTH functions provide opportunities for disciples to maximize their potential, learn new methods and grow in their relationship to Christ.
 - A. Provisional involvement - inviting disciples into a pretend or "What if" situation helps the group to think about change. "Suppose we did obey this command, how would it affect my relationship with Him?"
 - B. Confrontation - a direct challenge to a disciple's ideas, challenging him to rethink his position may challenge him to move, to become more integrated.
 - C. Feedback - letting a disciple know how her thoughts impact you helps her know whether the message she is sending is the message being received.
 - D. Dealing with feelings - communicating your awareness of an internal response to another's ideas and allowing those feelings to be expressed and dealt with.
 - E. Process observations - calling the group to accountability when it is perceived that the group is on a tangent, avoiding the real issue, wasting time or hoping for miracles, etc.
 - F. Modeling - being a living example of using the group experience for one's own personal growth and sharing that with the group.
 - G. Checking it out - if you do not understand where someone is in his/her feelings about what is going on in the meeting, check it out. Ask!
- II. PROTECTIVE functions aim for the psychological safety of all group members, creating an atmosphere where all feel free to talk honestly and openly while dropping defensive postures.
 - A. Confidentiality - assuring the group that their sharing will be kept in confidence by the others. Occasionally mentioning its necessity will help accomplish it.
 - B. Trust-building - built by the discipler risking the expression of his feelings openly, risking the confrontation of someone tactfully when needed and showing his own confidence in knowing what he is doing.
 - C. Support - reinforcing the feelings of others whether or not you agree with them. Communicating "I may not agree with you, but you are okay."
 - D. Assessment of vulnerability - knowing the amount of psychological stress a disciple can handle. Assess where the group members are and offer protection to those less capable to cope. Over-protection can stifle.
 - E. Sanctioning - giving permission to discuss touchy or taboo topics or forbidding discussion if the topic is too touchy.
- III. FACILITATING functions help to encourage interaction among disciples.
 - A. Redirecting questions - asking the questioner to answer her own question or to ask someone else to respond.

- B. Gate-opening - asking a disciple to join in by directing a specific invitation to him... "What do you think...?"
- C. Question to the group - to prevent one member from monopolizing the Discussion, ask, "What is the group feeling on this?"
- D. Prompting - providing entry by providing cues for a silent member. "John, I know you've had experience with this. Could you tell the group about the discussion we had recently?"

IV. MAINTENANCE functions which help a group work efficiently and fairly.

- A. Time-keeping - a discipleship session should begin and end on time. It should normally last one hour. A discipler should be available after the session to share with any disciples who hang around.
- B. Keeping "on target" - not allowing the discussion to go out on tangents. Be firm and direct in keeping the group on the subject. Stick to the lesson.
- C. Distributing "air time" - hold monopolizers in check and invite the quiet disciples to get involved.

Note: A discipler may be overwhelmed by all the above functions. They are not to be memorized but simply studied. The discipler will be surprised how these functions will become a part of his/her leadership style. Review them periodically! You could even have someone be an observer for you and list the functions most evident in a session.