

A Sunday Sermon Home Group Guide



This guide is intended to help a Home Group more effectively apply the Sunday Sermon from church.

Settling In: *About 10-20 minutes*

- 1) Make a note to yourself who, if anyone, is missing from your home group this week:
- 2) Spend some time finding out how everyone is doing: make a note for prayer requests.
- 3) Introduce a time of conversational prayer. Make it clear that group members are not required to participate if they are not comfortable.

or

- 4) After a more brief time of prayer...
 - a) Plan a worship or prayer activity that everyone in the home group can join in.
 - b) Be aware of the individual's level of comfort with praying aloud or reading aloud. International students who are still learning English or members who may be dyslexic may be very uncomfortable with these kinds of activities.
 - c) Sometimes singing worship songs can be very uncomfortable to new people in small group settings...proceed with caution!

Conversational prayer means each member taking turns praying for various concerns with reasonably short and to the point prayers.

Opener: *About 10 minutes*

- 1) A good opener will help focus attention on the topic.
- 2) The opener should be an open-ended question(s). You should NOT be able to answer the question with a one-word answer ("yes", "no", or "Jesus").
- 3) The question(s) should be thought provoking and may not have a right or wrong answer.

Mini-teach: *About 10 minutes*

Give an overview of the sermon.

- 1) This should usually be a re-cap of the preacher's main theme(s). Everyone in the home group should be able to participate in the discussion whether they were present for the sermon or not.
- 2) This means you will have taken good notes during the sermon! You can also ask the preacher for a copy of his or her notes if appropriate.
- 3) You will want to focus on the main point of the sermon, not go off on peripheral points that are different than what the preacher intended to communicate to the church.
- 4) Make a note of the main scripture text(s) and the main points of the message.

Remember that some members of your home group may have been absent or may attend a different church on Sundays.

Be careful to not make those who didn't hear the sermon feel excluded or judged for being absent.

Also, don't make those who were present in body but "absent" in mind feel judged if they don't remember details of the sermon!

Discussion: *About 30 minutes*

Developing good questions from the sermon.

- 1) Write good questions based on one of the preacher's main texts.
 - a) That are open-ended
 - b) That are accessible to those new to the Bible
 - c) That are aimed at self-discovery

Good questions result in fruitful discussion, not just "filling in the blanks" with the "right" answers.

If the group is prone to responding with short "correct" answers, try to draw them out further by asking: "What do you mean by that?" or "Could you say more about

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- 2) Group discussion, not lecture what a small group is all about.
 - a) Encourage the student's discussion with one another.
 - b) Lead by asking questions.
 - c) Be sure you ask your questions without using terms only the biblically literate would understand.
- 3) Basic types of questions. From James F. Nyquist, *Leading Bible Discussions*. IVP.
 - a) Observation questions. "These require no prior knowledge, no experience of Christianity, no commitment to any belief."
 - i) Who? ...are the main characters in the story, or who is speaking or who is addressed?
 - ii) What? ...is the plot, the point, the situation?
 - iii) When? ...was it written, what else was happening at that time?
 - iv) Where? ...did this happen, of what importance is the location of the story or the situation addressed?
 - v) Why? ...did the characters do or say what they did, why does the writer include this story or discussion?
 - vi) How? ...does the writer expect the hearers to respond or change?
 - b) Interpretation questions. To "...help group participants understand the meaning of the biblical events..."
 - i) Definitions. What does it mean?
 - ii) Relationship and purpose. What caused a particular action or statement?
 - iii) Significance and importance. Why is this important?
 - iv) Consequence and implication. What would be the results of such an action?
 - v) Relevance and position. How does this fit in?
 - vi) Two-fold meaning. What did this mean then? What meaning does it have today?
 - vii) God-man relationship. What does this imply about God's relationship to man? What does this imply about man's relationship to God?
 - c) Application questions.
 - i) Raise specific questions about the concrete relationships and situations of life.
 - ii) The strongest applications will be those that have been meaningful in your life and in preparatory study.
 - iii) Ask questions that illustrate how the passage would apply to our lives today or how it might change our behaviour if we took it seriously.

that?" or "Does anyone else have a different thought?"

As a general principle, never answer your own questions. Rephrase it, explain it, or drop it. It is assumed that we share a responsibility as a group to make the discussion work. It is not the job of the leader to provide all the right answers.

Occasional times of awkward silence are a small price to pay to retrain a group to carry the discussion.

If you can, allow the group members to "steal your thunder". In other words, if they can be led to discover the meaning of the text rather than be told it is much better for them and the group. Most people like to feel that the best idea is *their* idea.

Try not to "shoot down" patently wrong answers. If this is done consistently it will kill small group discussion. You might redirect by asking other members if they have any other thoughts on the subject.

Encourage a reasonable balance of discussion between members. Highly talkative members can dominate a discussion. You may need to encourage quieter members to speak up: "We haven't heard much from you tonight; do you have any thoughts on this topic?"

Work to create "cross-talk" between members. Initially, all of the responses and questions will probably be directed to you as the leader. The diagram of the discussion might look like a "fan" shape. Try to encourage the members to directly talk to one another. One simple but effective way to do this is to ask the question and then look down at your notes while the member answers. They will be eager to "catch the eye" of other group members.

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Closer:

- The “Closer” should always answer the question: “So What?”
- What are we to go out and do about what we have learned?
- A few Closer ideas:
 - A time of silent meditation and prayer. Asking the Holy Spirit to show us how we are to respond to the Word.
 - A time of confession: “I need to do such and so and I would appreciate your prayers.”
 - A time of journaling, writing down our reflections on the Word.
 - A time of pairing up to share and pray for one another.
 - A time of worship; whether with singing or a alternative worship exercise.

Writing a good home group lesson is hard work! Why not share the fruit of your labour with others? Send your new lessons to contact@radiate-uk.com and we will consider it for the Radiate Home Group Guides and make your work available world-wide (and we'll give you the credit!)