



BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP RESOURCES

Passing the Baton from One Generation of Elders to Another

School of the Shepherds

Discussion Leaders' Guidelines

While the School of Shepherds courses can be studied solo, the learning increases exponentially when it is studied as a group, with a discussion group leader. Your role as the leader will be very important in this process. Here are some guidelines to help you make the most of the discussion times under your leadership.

You can start a group online and add students to your group. This has the added value of providing a group discount in the price. It also enables you to monitor each group member's progress through the material.

A group size can be as low as two people (which is really a one-on-one situation, called mutual discipleship or mentoring relationships), or as many as 12. Groups larger than this can inhibit the free flow of discussion that benefits everyone in the group. Therefore, we recommend groups larger than 12 break down into smaller groups.

Each member of the study group will begin the course by reading the syllabus and completing the first lesson on his own time. The group will then meet to go over the "Review" questions together (to answer any questions that have arisen) and to discuss the "Discussion" questions.

The purpose for the discussion groups is to:

1. **Solidify** the teaching through structured interaction and discussion with others. When it comes to learning, you lose the teaching if you don't begin to interact with, internalize, and embrace it.
2. **Engage** the material through mutual challenge and idea sharing. In other words, you snooze, you lose it. Discussion groups are the means to going deeper.
3. **Share** insights and wisdom with each other. There is more "expertise" at the conference than just the main speakers. Each participant brings his own experience and insights. This truly can be "iron sharpening iron." And it can be a case of those who are older leaders passing the baton of wisdom and insight to those who are younger.
4. **Supplement** the teaching with new questions and applications.

Your role as discussion leader:

1. **Facilitate effectively:** Your task as a discussion leader will be to *facilitate* the discussion, using the pre-designed discussion questions for each lesson.
2. **Teach sparingly:** Your primary role is *not* primarily to provide additional teaching (although that may naturally arise). Rather it is to guide the discussion and interaction of your group.
3. **Question wisely:** The discussion questions for each session will be on the lesson page of the website for this course. But if your group has a hard time understanding or responding to a given question, feel free to modify or improve on it. But give them time to wrestle with each question before moving on. Encourage each member of the group to look at these questions ahead of time, so they are not facing them for the first time and having to think on their feet. You do not need to cover every

question. Begin with the question you feel is best suited to your group of participants. If the discussion carries with one or two questions, that is perfectly fine.

4. **Lead probingly:** As the leader, you will read a question and ask for volunteers to respond. You might ask, for example, “What do you think?” “How would you respond to this question?” “Is this a relevant question for where you are in your ministry?”
5. **Draw out encouragingly:** You may find some people tend to speak more or give their opinion more than others. In order to encourage others to speak, you could say something like this: “You have some great thoughts, Horatio. Does anyone else have any thoughts?” Or, “Heathcliff, you are being quiet; I am sensing that maybe you have some interesting insights. What are you thinking?” (Names have been made up to protect the innocent!)
6. **Contribute economically:** You can add your thoughts as the leader, but it is important that everyone gets a chance to speak up. Allow others to answer first.
7. **Begin promptly and conclude timely.** People’s time is valuable.
8. **Question freely:** If you have thought up some questions or have suggestions to change some of the questions BER has supplied, send them to the BER team in the comment section at the bottom of the lesson pages. Record on a separate piece of paper any questions that arise for the speakers. If time permits, we may be able to answer these over the live feed.