

General Hints and Helps

As you read over the information in this section, we want you to view the materials as your tools and not as your "master." Be flexible and creative in your teaching, and feel free to draw from your life experiences to enhance the lessons.



Keep a few teaching principles in mind as you lead your group:

1. **Don't just assume that everyone in attendance has come for the specific purpose of learning more about Christ.** Some may be there because they are curious about what is going on. Possibly the coaches are of the opposite sex. Maybe they have come for refreshments or just for a change in routine. Rest assured, there will be people in attendance who desire a better understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what He means to them. Trust the Holy Spirit to fill and guide you in reaching all groups of people.
2. **Remember where you are and to whom you are ministering.** People will come into the group with different needs and frustrations. Some may be so troubled and preoccupied, they will be unable to learn or retain the information. Just be patient and loving. Others may feel nervous and uncomfortable. Work at remembering their names. It is really important to them that you know who they are.

Also, there are a good number of inmates who are either unable to read or are very deficient in their reading skills. Be careful not to assume they can read. **Never ask people to read; you could embarrass them if they are unable. If you want participation in reading, ask for volunteers.** Observe the group and you will be able to determine who the comfortable readers are. If there are members not participating in the reading, ask them about the pictures. The visuals allow even non-readers the opportunity to participate and be involved in the discussion.

3. **Be sure to cover the purpose and the key concept listed in each lesson.** If the student learns nothing but these truths, he or she will have a profitable experience.
4. **Above all, take every opportunity to show the students that this is much more than an exercise in knowledge.** This is an exercise in application. Be sure to explain that if they will apply the truths of these scriptural principles, their lives will change and the awesome power of God will work in their lives and circumstances as a result. Try to develop a personal application for each point in the lessons.

How to lead a "Knowing God Personally" step

1. **As a coach, you will help them grow in Christ.** To be a more effective leader, work at putting into practice the principles you will be discussing. It is not necessary to master each concept or to feel that your performance in each area is perfect. It is essential, however, that you are growing in your relationship with Christ, in your walk in the Spirit, in your study of God's Word, and in sharing your faith with others.
2. **Create an informal atmosphere.** Your opening question and the resulting discussion should stimulate thinking, but not necessarily supply the answer immediately. Guide the discussion by interjecting further questions. Do not correct wrong answers right away, but use them to stimulate thinking. Corrections can be made in your summary.
3. **You, as the group leader, are not a lecturer, but a facilitator and discussion leader.** You should not dominate the discussion, but should lead and draw it out. Be prepared to suggest ideas and ask questions to keep the conversation rolling when it lags. If a member of the group is saying something productive and to the point, you should not be quick to inject your own thoughts. Guide, clarify, and summarize. You should see to it that the discussion stays centered on its purpose.



4. **Be yourself.** Depend on the Holy Spirit to work through the person you are, not through an artificial spiritual leader image that you may feel you should project. Be free to not have every answer.
5. **When you ask a question, allow time for students to think before continuing.** Then listen to their answers rather than mentally planning what you are going to say next. Remember, you are teaching people, not lessons.
6. **Each group has its own personality.** Some groups are active while others are more subdued. Adapt your leadership style to fit your group. Be open to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you help your students apply the lessons they are learning.
7. **Your objective in all Bible studies is to encourage spiritual maturity among the group members.** This will eventually lead to introducing non-Christian family, friends, and others to Christ.

The use of questions

1. **If you sense confusion about a question, restate it in different words or from another point of view.**
2. **If someone asks a question that is off the topic, tactfully explain that you will hold that question until the end of the session** and, if time permits, deal with it then. Or, you can add it to a list of subjects to be covered at a later time.
3. **Keep the discussion relevant and personal.** Avoid arguments. Don't let one or two people dominate. To redirect the discussion, restate the question, or go to the next question.



4. **To stimulate discussion, ask such questions as:**
 - What do you think this passage means?
 - What can this passage teach us about God, ourselves, our responsibility, our relationship to others?
5. **Help students to apply the passage personally.** Ask:
 - What significance does this have for us today?
 - What does this mean to you?
 - How does (or will) this affect your life?
6. **Try to ask questions that will not result in verbatim repetition of the lesson content.** Encourage thoughtful assimilation of ideas.
7. **Questions should be adapted to the knowledge and experience of the group,** giving special attention to both the quickest and the slowest members of the class with an opportunity given to each. Use the diagrams and the "Keep Growing By" section.
8. **Questions should be asked in a conversational, spontaneous way,** as if personally addressed to each member of the class, before one is selected to answer.