

12 Guidelines for Leaders

The effectiveness of a group rests largely upon its leader. Where there is poor leadership, their group will have difficulty keeping alive. Yet almost anyone who is willing to learn can be a good leader with training and experiences. Here are twelve guidelines for leaders.

1. **Set the tone of *friendliness*.**

- Learn the names of everyone in the group. Greet them as they arrive, and immediately make them feel comfortable. This requires that the leaders always be there early.

2. **Be sensitive to individual needs.**

- Learn where the members of the group are coming from, where they are hurting, and what problems they are facing in their lives.

3. **Share honestly your own needs.**

- The leader's transparency or vulnerability will create openness in the group. Refrain from confessing other people's sins, but do not hesitate to confess your own.

4. **Listen with loving concern to what others are saying.**

- Try to hear not only what they say, but what they feel. Keep eye contact with the group.

5. **Keep the group's *purpose in focus*.**

- Meetings can get off on tangents unless called back to their mission. If someone seems to sidetrack the group, you might say, "That's interesting, Bob, but let's look at this subject now." Or you could say, "We seem to be getting off track," then move on.

6. **Ask questions to direct thoughts.**

- This is the way to keep the discussion on target without monopolizing the conversation. A good leader will talk not more than 20%-30% of the time.

7. **Welcome silence.**

- Let people think. After asking a question, if no one responds in 60 seconds, you can ask, "Did everyone understand the question?" And then rephrase the question.

8. **Encourage participation.**

- If someone seems to dominate by talking too much, let the person finish then say, "That's good. What does someone else think about it?" It is the responsibility of the leader to see that everyone takes part.

9. **Get people to make personal application.**

- The leader must not let people talk in generalities. Ask, "How is it at home, school, or at work?" you might say, "Give me a specific illustration of this in your own life, Bill" ask them to use the first person singular—"I am facing..."

10. **Clarify what is happening in the group.**

- Help the group see the issue. "What does this mean to you, Jane?" might be a question. Bring the discussion to a meaningful summary.

11. **Let the group minister to each other.**

- At this point, the group really fulfills its purpose.