

Leading Small Groups With Purpose, Lesson #8
Book by Steve Gladen; This Study Guide by Josh Hunt
Good Questions Have Small Groups Talking
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Chapters 15 - 16

OPEN

Let's each share your name and one thing you have learned in this study so far.

DIG

1. **I'd like to concentrate our discussion on the lesson. What makes a good Bible Study lesson good?**

True to the text. Interesting. Applicable.

2. **Jesus was the greatest teacher ever. Think of Jesus' teaching style—not so much what Jesus taught, but how Jesus taught. What can we learn about teaching from the example of Jesus?**

It is not enough to teach what Jesus taught; we must teach how Jesus taught. Jesus taught in such a way as to turn the world upside down.

Jesus didn't have an outreach program. He didn't do marketing. He didn't contact absentees. He didn't seem to worry about attendance. And yet they came. Boy, did they come.

I have spent the last twelve years crisscrossing the country telling groups how they can double every two years or less. Occasionally, I visit classes. Often, they are good, but all too often it doesn't take too much effort to see why Sunday School is failing—and this is a problem an outreach program will not solve. They are failing because the teaching is crummy. It is nowhere close to what I describe in *You Can Double Your Class in Two Years or Less* as "half-way decent teaching." It is in a different time zone from the teaching of Jesus.

This book is an effort to examine the teaching style of Jesus with a view to helping teachers teach more like Jesus. Who wouldn't want that? — Josh Hunt. (2012). *Teach Like Jesus*.

3. **Let's look up Matthew 13:34 in as many translations as we have represented. Does someone have the Message? What do we learn about teaching from this verse?**

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. Matthew 13:34 (NIV)

All Jesus did that day was tell stories—a long storytelling afternoon. Matthew 13:34 (MSG)

Jesus constantly used these illustrations when speaking to the crowds. In fact, because the prophets said that he would use so many, he never spoke to them without at least one illustration. Matthew 13:34 (TLB)

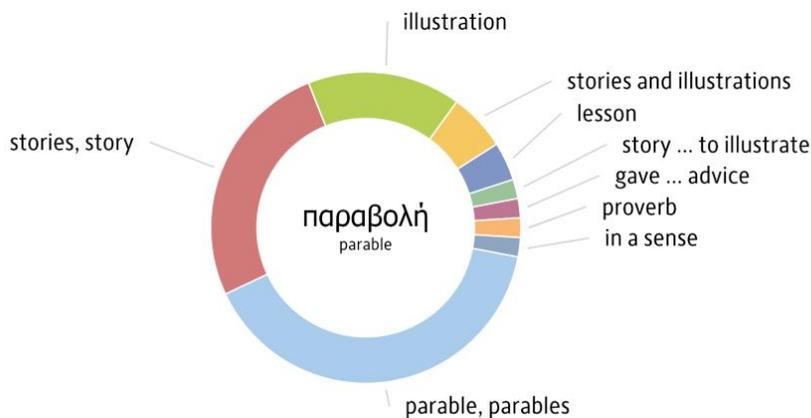
Jesus used stories when he spoke to the people. In fact, he did not tell them anything without using stories. Matthew 13:34 (CEV)

Jesus used illustrations to tell the crowds all these things. He did not tell them anything without illustrating it with a story. Matthew 13:34 (GW)

Jesus used stories to tell all these things to the people; he always used stories to teach them. Matthew 13:34 (NCV)

4. What is the difference between a story and a parable?

The Bible calls them parables—which gives us the idea that this is some special kind of spiritual story. Curious thing about that word parable: it is not really a translation of the Greek word. It is a transliteration. A translation is where we take the Greek word and translate it into English. A transliteration is where we take each Greek letter and turn it into an English letter. The Greek word for parable is παραβολή. If we were to actually translate it, we would translate it with the word “story.” This is in fact how the New Living translates the word half the time. Here is the breakdown of how the word is translated in the NLT:



Of course, we have gained a good English word in the process: parable, which is an equally good translation. — Josh Hunt, *Teach Like Jesus*

5. Why are stories such a powerful way of teaching?

Modern brain research has confirmed what teachers have long known: stories stick to the brain. As one writer put it: “We think in story. It’s hardwired in our brain.”¹ The question is why? Why do stories stick to the brain? Why is the brain “Teflon” when it comes to remembering almost everything and Velcro to remembering a good story?

Picture the mind like a fort. Your job as a teacher is to get your information past the gate. The ego pushes the doors closed, keeping everything out. The ego doesn’t think it needs any information. It certainly doesn’t think it needs to change in any way. The ego diligently guards against any outside information coming in—particularly convicting or life-changing information.

How do you get the ego to relax and quit pushing against the door? Distract him. Tell him a story. Get him thinking about something else. He gets so caught up in the story that he forgets about pushing the door closed. The door swings open and your information gets through.

The classic example of this is the story of Nathan confronting David the king. People got their heads chopped off back in the day for confronting the king. People got their heads lopped off for being in a bad mood in front of the king. How does Nathan confront David the king? He tells a story. The story is so masterfully told that David forgets all about himself (this is often hard to do). He gets all fired up about the injustice in this story.

2 Samuel 12:5 records that David was hot. Look at how the various translations treat this phrase:

2 Samuel 12:5 (NIV) David burned with anger against the man.

2 Samuel 12:5 (CEV) David was furious.

2 Samuel 12:5 (ESV) Then David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man.

2 Samuel 12:5 (HCSB) David was infuriated.

2 Samuel 12:5 (MSG) David exploded in anger.

2 Samuel 12:5 (NKJV) So David’s anger was greatly aroused.

David was so caught up in his own anger that he didn’t realize that Nathan was talking about him. The light came on when Nathan said four words: “You are the man.”

Jesus often used this approach with the Pharisees. I don’t think they saw themselves as the elder brother until the very end of the story. — Josh Hunt, *Teach Like Jesus*

6. Another popular method of Jesus’ teaching was asking questions. We have over 100 examples of Jesus asking questions. Why do you think Jesus asked so many questions when He taught?

One of the classic examples of Jesus using a question to teach is found in Luke 9:18 where Jesus says, “Who do the crowds say that I am?”

¹ Cron, Lisa (2012-07-10). *Wired for Story: The Writer’s Guide to Using Brain Science to Hook Readers from the Very First Sentence* (Kindle Location 179). Random House, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

Why did Jesus ask this? Did he not know? That could be. When he became human, he set aside some of his god-ness. In another context, he said he did not know the day or the hour when he would return. I think it is more likely, however, that it was a teaching moment for the disciples.

This is what I call a warm up question. It is a get-em talking question. I write small group curriculum for a living. I start nearly every lesson with this kind of question. It is a question to get the group started talking.

People have said to me, “I have tried using discussion questions and my group doesn’t want to talk.” Do what Jesus did. Get them talking about somebody else. People love to talk about someone else. I think this is why Jesus asked them about what other people thought. It is always easier to talk about what other people think than to share our own convictions or feelings.

Once Jesus got them talking, Jesus narrowed the focus: “Who do you say that I am?”

Peter declared one of the most profound statements in the entire Bible: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!”

Stated a different way, Jesus led the disciples to hear one of the most profound statements in the entire Bible. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Question: why did Jesus craft this centrally important teaching in the form of a question? Why not just say it to his disciples: “I am the Christ, the son of the living God!” It would have been a lot safer that way.

A lot of teachers don’t like questions because they are into safe and they know that questions are not safe. You ask a question and you have no idea what kind of answer you might get. If you make a statement, you can carefully craft it so you know exactly what you are going to say.

On this occasion of teaching one of the most centrally important things in all the Bible, Jesus chose to use the teaching method of a question.

Why?

Jesus knew when Peter declared him to be “the Christ of God,” that Peter would be changed by this declaration.

Jesus taught that we are changed as much by what we say as what we hear. Mark 7:15 (NIV) “Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean.’” “What comes out of a man”—what a man speaks is what makes him clean. We are changed by the truth when we speak the truth. When Peter declared Jesus to be the Christ, he believed ever more firmly that Jesus was the Christ.

This is why the Bible makes a big deal about “if you confess with your mouth.” (Romans 10.9) It is not that God needs to hear. It is not even that others need to hear. It is that you need to say. When

you confess the truth with your mouth, you are changed by that truth. — Josh Hunt, *Teach Like Jesus*

7. Let's talk about a few common problems in group life. One is people being continually late. How do you deal with that?

Start on time.

That may sound trivial, or persnickety, or overly formal for a group. Whatever. Start on time.

"But, if we were to do that, half our group isn't there and they would miss it." Start on time. One of the reasons people show up late to church events is the leadership is in the habit of starting late. We reward the people who are late by accommodating their lateness. We punish the people who are on time by not starting on time.

I would not have thought this was any big deal if it were not for my wife. She does training with me. She trains children and preschool workers, while I train adult workers. She has a talk called K.I.D.T.E.A.C.H. The "A" in this acrostic "Arrive early." When she first told me that I thought it was a little trivial. But, based on the feedback she has gotten from church leaders across the country, I have come to see the importance of bringing this up. She has told me story after story after story of people who have come up to her after conferences and thanked her for bringing the time issue up. "It is a real problem around here. Teachers don't show up on time." — Josh Hunt. (2008). *Good Questions Have Groups Talking*.

8. What about overly talkative people, what do you do about that?

The following are some suggestions for dealing with overly-talkative small group members (in increasing order of severity or riskiness).

1. Make sure it is not you that is being over-talkative.
2. Reiterate any agreed-upon ground rules, like "Let's listen to one another," or "Try to reverse your normal pattern and talk less/more."
3. Use careful question directions such as, "I want two people who have not said anything yet to respond," or "I want everyone to answer this one."
4. Use a stopwatch (literally) to set time limits on answers (no one will mind, for everyone will be in the same boat).
5. Sit right beside the talkative person, reducing the eye contact which cues contributions.
6. Interrupt the person in the middle of a long speech and say, "You have made several excellent points—let's see if there is any response to what you have said."
7. Stop looking at the person while he or she is talking—it usually will slow the person down, again because eye cues cease.

8. Expect a mature group to do the work for you, with members humorously and gently reminding the talkative person that he or she is “doing it again.” When trust has been built, such communication is possible.
9. Ask the person privately to help draw quieter folks out. (This is a favorite suggestion in textbooks, but it is dangerous because most talkative people are not dumb—they will know what you are up to—and, besides, quieter folks do not like being drawn out.)
10. Ask the person privately or publicly to shut up (in many ways, the private approach is more risky).

Some of these suggestions may appear to include impolite behavior. But my point is that even interrupting a member is worth it if the health of the group is at stake. — Williams, D. (1991). *Seven Myths About Small Groups: How To Keep From Falling Into Common Traps*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

9. How do you draw out quiet people—or should you?

Wanda Wallflower: Sometimes she is so quiet for so long that you even wonder if she is dead. Her silence mystifies many in the group who don’t know whether she is disinterested in the discussion or in them or what. The ability of the group to come together is limited by her lack of involvement.

It is possible that Wanda is feeling deeply alienated from the group and therefore has withdrawn. Alternatively, she may simply be a very quiet person or fairly nonverbal. Keep striving to establish an environment that encourages widespread participation. Be quick, but not phony, in affirming contributions. Sit across from Wanda so you can make eye contact and look for nonverbal hints that she has a comment to offer. Only ask direct questions as a last resort. — Whallon, D. (1995). *Redeeming Conflict. In Small Group Leaders’ Handbook: The Next Generation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

10. What do we do about poor attendance?

But now that you’ve established a groundwork of meaningful and enjoyable relationships, it’s time to invite other people. A good place to start is with absentees and recent visitors to your church—particularly if the absentees from your church haven’t been absent too long. The longer people have been absent, the more difficult it is to get them back. The Bible teaches that we’re to care for everyone, not just people with good church attendance.

One of the best and most natural ways to get absentees back is to regularly invite them to parties. — Josh Hunt. (2010). *Make Your Group Grow*.

11. Next, Steve discusses gossip. Anyone have a smart phone? Look up a few verses on what the Bible says about gossip.

A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret. Proverbs 11:13 (NIV)

A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends. Proverbs 16:28 (NIV)

The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts. Proverbs 18:8 (NIV)

A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much. Proverbs 20:19 (NIV)

Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down. Proverbs 26:20 (NIV)

The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts. Proverbs 26:22 (NIV)

For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. 2 Corinthians 12:20 (NIV)

12. Imagine gossip is a problem in your group. What would you do about it?

So what should we do if we hear a rumor about someone else? If we are in conversation with a person and they begin to express words that put another brother or sister in a bad light, we have a responsibility to interrupt such speech and exhort them to speak directly with the person they are criticizing. If an email containing gossip is sent to us, we should disregard the content and ask the sender to go to the one person being spoken against.

In all circumstances, as much as lies with us, we should not be a party to gossip, and we should confront those spreading evil speech. We must not forget that matters of concern about others must be confirmed with witnesses (Matthew 18:16), and others should only be notified if the person refuses to stop their sinning. We sin by entertaining accusations against others that have not been confirmed by witnesses or that have already been repented of. It is sinful to spread information about the past sins of others when they are already under the blood of Christ.

On occasion, there are times when we should also go to the person being targeted and make them aware of it. We should then ask for them to confirm or correct what is being said. This is the loving thing to do. Think about it: if someone was spreading something negative about you, would you not want to be made aware of it? Again, love treats others the way we wish to be treated.

It's not good enough to ask the gossiper if they've spoken to the person gossiped about. In my experience, oftentimes a person spreading the gossip will say "yes," but when I've tracked down the person being gossiped about, they will deny having had such a conversation. Or the conversation really wasn't a conversation at all. Nothing can replace going directly to the person being spoken about.

Whenever we hear gossip, we should consider these questions: Would I want someone talking about me like this? How would my family feel about this? My spouse, my mother, my father, my children, my best friends?

Have you ever noticed that speech that tears others down travels like a brush fire, but news of repentance and restoration seems to move along at a snail's pace? Why is it that we often immediately believe and embrace negative assessments of people, but reports of repentance, change, or the dispelling of a false rumor are met with skepticism? As believers, the exact opposite should be our practice. We should be skeptical of adverse words about others, and quick to rejoice in and embrace news of the dispelling of a rumor or another's repentance!

Satan's nature is to be the "accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12). In fact, the word Satan means "adversary," and the word translated devil literally means "slanderer." That should speak volumes.

A careful reading of the Bible shows the destructive nature of gossip and slander. It says, "The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts" (Proverbs 18:8). Gossip is likened unto poison that once someone drinks, they cannot get out of their system. And it always separates people. Even close friends and loved ones. Put another way, gossip not only damages the person being gossiped about, but it also damages the person hearing the gossip, because it causes them to judge the other unfairly.

So, the next time you hear a rumor, go to the person being talked about. Never spread something about another person without talking to them first and having an open mind to hear their heart. Our mouths play a very important role in the pursuit of mutual edification and peace. Our words should be carefully chosen and designed to build up, not to destroy.

<http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2010/plaguegossip.html>

13. How do we deal with people in our groups that are generally obnoxious?

Walter, who was in our college fellowship, seemed to me to be abrasive, obnoxious and arrogant. Since I found myself irritated by his mere presence, I studiously avoided him. You won't be surprised to know that he wasn't that impressed with me, either. I remember feeling quite justified in my assessment of him and must have expressed it to one of the fellowship's leaders.

One Sunday afternoon, two of the leaders came to my dorm room to ask me to serve on next year's leadership team. My stomach dropped when they told me that they were also inviting Walter, and they wanted me to "work on" my relationship with Walter. In fact, they said that they were intervening for his sake, my sake and for the sake of the fellowship.

As a result, Walter and I committed to having a weekly dinner together just to learn more about one another. I found myself becoming less judgmental of several of his characteristics. Our mutual appreciation began to increase. We became friends and eventually strong partners. The reconciliation that was induced by the intervention of several fellowship leaders became a spiritual gift to me and Walter. Two years later he asked me to be a groomsman in his wedding.

Let's be clear. Unresolved conflicts are liabilities. Few things undermine a group faster than when several members grow frustrated with one another. However, when we allow God to bring peace and health to relationships, there is great gain.

In Walter's and my case, the benefits were threefold. First, we each had a new friend. Second, we learned to become good members of the leadership team. Third, our friendship was an encouragement to other Christians and a witness to a circle of non-Christian friends that we shared. A whole host of relationships grew as a result.

As we handle conflict with others, we also grow individually. We come to more clearly understand what motivates our actions and what values underlie our relationships. This discovery process can be quite humbling, but it can lead us back to greater reliance upon our God. God is in the business of transforming both our relationships and our personal character. He is awfully good at both, if we will let him. — Whallon, D. (1995). *Redeeming Conflict. In Small Group Leaders' Handbook: The Next Generation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

14. What does Steve mean by an “Extra Grace Required” person? How do you deal with an EGR?

Occasionally someone in your group will require more attention and care than the average member does. This condition may result from a crisis or an illness and may be temporary or become chronic. Being in Extra Care Required (ECR) territory is not good or bad; it simply reflects reality. Your group can handle a lot of ECR situations if you remember to navigate the tension between kindness and confrontation.

When my (Russ) family lost our home to a fire, I became our group's ECR person for a few months. Our small group had to come alongside me and mete out extra kindness and support. That's just common sense.

Most extra care situations are seasonal, lasting a short time until the situation is under control or has been adequately addressed. But what if the situation becomes chronic? When a person has long-term ECR needs, you should begin to move carefully from kindness to confrontation. To be clear, you should not drop or ignore kindness; you simply begin to bring the confrontation component of healthy conflict into play. Lest you think we lack mercy, don't stop reading. This is where you will learn to provide kindness and care without placing excessive demands on the leader or the group—and that is a good thing!

Begin by setting boundaries for ECR people. Help them understand what the group can and cannot do for them. Unless you begin to confront the reality of the situation through studied conversation, conflict will ensue. The needy member will demand more than a group can provide, and members will feel cheated when week after week, their needs get swallowed up by the ECR member's concerns.

For example, in one group, the leader explained privately that no more than fifteen minutes of any meeting could be directly devoted to the ECR person (for prayer, sharing, or updates). During social time before, after, and between meetings, each member would respond as able. The leader also advised the ECR member to join a support group that focused on the particular issue. (Christian counseling, support or recovery groups, or other professional services can provide great backup in

situations that move beyond the group's ability to respond adequately.) The member could attend support sessions without having to leave the small group.

The small group can be a loving, caring vehicle working in tandem with more specific and intensive care channels. Other group members are not overlooked, and the ECR person can receive long term care within boundaries that work.

This is definitely a discernment issue for leaders. Again, knowing the kindness-confrontation continuum is very helpful. Such knowledge allows a group to remain compassionate and supportive without draining all its resources to meet one member's needs. A group can give the wonderful gift of community to someone who is in a season of needing care, if they respond by walking the small group tightrope in the right way. — Donahue, B., & Robinson, R. (2009). *Walking the small group tightrope: meeting the challenges every group faces*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

15. What do you do when tension develops between members of your group?

Sometimes people just rub each other the wrong way. Everyone in the group can sense it. It usually doesn't involve overtly sinful behavior. But it can be just as toxic. Underneath may be pride, envy, or simply an inability to connect relationally. One member may not understand another's communication or thinking patterns. Or a member may have annoying behavioral or habitual quirks (like the person who clicks their fingernails or twirls their hair or always has bad breath!) that drive some people nuts. No matter how hard you try, people get on each other's nerves. You can try to dismiss this in the name of kindness, thinking, "People will be people." Or you can do the right thing and confront the situation, name the tension, and seek to improve group dynamics.

Interpersonal tension may develop between a small group leader and a group member. Effective leadership—moving people toward accountability, asking harder questions—may cause tension as people are faced with their habits, fears, and sin.

At Willow Creek, we do everything in teams and in small groups, including many staff groups. When tension developed between two members of a staff group that I (Russ) was leading, I confronted each party individually and said, "I'd just like to ask you a question. What's your deal with so-and-so?" Each responded by saying, "Oh, did you notice that, too?" I said, "Yes. Would you set some time aside for the two of you to get together?" I just got the two of them moving toward each other.

What if I had let the conflict fester instead of asking each individual a simple question? What if I had avoided saying something that might be a little uncomfortable? I can tell you what would have happened—relational breakdown throughout the group and loss of respect for me, the leader!

Instead, I heeded the signal that the situation might get serious and went after it, just in case. And as soon as I said, "What's going on with so-and-so? I just wanted to see what's up," the staff members were embarrassed that the group and I had noticed. It was additional motivation for them to reconcile their differences. And we all avoided the temptation to go to others, rather than to the

people who were experiencing the tension. — Donahue, B., & Robinson, R. (2009). *Walking The Small Group Tightrope: Meeting The Challenges Every Group Faces*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

16. What do we learn about dealing with conflict from Paul's example in Galatians 2.11 – 14?

Paul's integrity drove him to stand up to Peter, his fellow leader, in front of several Jewish and Gentile believers. He criticized Peter's hypocrisy and demanded that all Christian leaders remain consistent, regardless of the company they keep. Paul teaches us how to critique someone. Consider his checklist:

- Check your motive. Your goal should be to help, not humiliate.
- Make sure the issue is worthy of criticism. Does it really matter?
- Be specific. Don't drop hints, but clearly name the problem.
- Don't undermine the person's self-confidence or identity. Make it obvious that you value the person.
- Do not postpone needed criticism. If the issue is big, act now.
- Look at yourself looking at others. Take the log out of your own eye.
- End criticism with encouragement. Finish on a positive note.

The Maxwell Leadership Bible / Maxwell, J. C. (2003). *Leadership promises for every day*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

17. What can we learn about dealing with conflict in our groups from Philippians 4.2 – 3?

I am just as impressed with what Paul does not do.

He does not spell out a step-by-step process; that was for the two women to work out on their own. Equally impressive, he does not pull rank by adding a warning or a threat, like, "I'll give you two weeks to clear this up," or "If you don't straighten up, I will. . . ."

Paul handled the matter with dignity and grace. While he was deeply concerned ("I urge . . . I urge"), he did not attempt to take charge of the situation from a distance. If anyone is tempted to think Paul was too passive or should have said more, a quick reading of other renderings may help:

- "I plead with . . . I plead with . . ." (NIV).
- "Please, please, with the Lord's help, quarrel no more—be friends again." (TLB).
- "Euodias and Syntyche, I beg you by name to make up your differences as Christians should!" (PHILLIPS).

By repeating the verb (“I urge . . . I urge”), Paul leaves the impression that there was fault on both sides. In fact, the Vulgate, the Latin version of Scripture, uses different verbs in the appeal, which seems to emphasize mutual wrong.

I have seldom seen an exception to this: When disharmony arises between two people or two groups, there is some measure of fault on both sides. The road leading to a breakdown in harmony is never a one-way street. Both parties must be encouraged to see each other’s fault, each other’s failure . . . and meet on common ground with a mutual willingness to listen and to change.

And what is that common ground? The statement Paul makes includes the answer: “live in harmony in the Lord.” Just as we are to “stand firm” in Him, so are we to find agreement in Him. Both sides need to make Him their focus if a solution is ever going to be found. It is as if the Apostle of Grace is saying, “It is important that both release their grudge and state their forgiveness and adopt the same attitude as their Lord when He unselfishly came from heaven to earth to be our Savior. Only then will there be renewed harmony.”

One more thought before moving on. Everything we know of these two women is: They quarreled. Down through the centuries the only answer that could be given to the question: “Who were Euodia and Syntyche?” has been “They were two women from Philippi who lived in disharmony.” That prompts me to ask you: If your life were to be summed up in a single statement, what would that statement be? — Swindoll, C. R. (2009). *Laugh Again & Hope Again*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

18. Two concluding questions. 1: what do you love about your group?

I love teaching. I love the laughter; I love the tears. I love the moments when God breaks in. I love the moments of discovery. I love the hours of preparation. I love the relationships. I love the outreach. I love the opportunity. I love the dream.

I love poring over dusty commentaries. I love reading what the best minds that God has created down through the centuries have said about the passage at hand. I love discovering a Newsweek article or a Chuck Swindoll story that fits perfectly into this week’s lesson. I love being in the flow of what God wants to teach a group. I love it when God orchestrates the circumstances of my life so that I am able to bring an illustration from my life this week that fits perfectly with the lesson. I love getting started early and letting the lesson simmer like rich New Mexico chili. I love pondering and thinking and praying over the passage.

I enjoy leading the discussion. I love that spirit of anticipation as I walk into a group feeling like, “Boy, do I have something to show you guys today! Your lives are never going to be the same.” I love the animation, the energy that comes from teaching. I love asking silly questions that get the group talking and laughing and opening up and getting to know each other. I enjoy opening the word of God together to see what the text says and what the text means. I love the dialogue that is created by a well crafted jump-ball question. I love evaluating where we are and where we should be. I love the testimonies of those more mature in the faith casting a light on the trail for the rest of us. I love the life-changing challenge of application.

Most of all, I love seeing what happens with them. Their eyes brighten. They raise a finger to make a point. They start to speak, then the inner dialogue pulls them back. They pause to think the issue through further. Then, when the thought has fully fermented, they blurt it out without care of who they are interrupting: "Well I think. . ." Their enthusiasm bubbles over and spills into the room. They say something that has never been said before. They think thoughts that have never been thought before. They think. They ponder. They discuss. They disagree in an atmosphere of love. They touch, hold and see things that involve them and never leave them bored.

I love it when people see the gap. Teaching is all about leading people to see the gap. Like when I was sharing with someone once about coming to faith in Christ. We were sitting next to an arroyo in the mountains. He looked across the arroyo and said, "I feel like I am over here, and God is over there." He pointed across the arroyo. He saw the gap. In a little while he prayed and became one with God. He and God and I closed the gap.

Teaching is about closing the gap. It is about leading people to see that they are here and God's standard for their life is there and God would ask them to close the gap in the power of the Holy Spirit. I was teaching recently when a student said, "If I did what you are talking about, it would change everything in my life." She saw the gap. I love it. By God's grace, in coming weeks, she will become willing to close the gap. Through God's power and my teaching and her willingness and the power of the Holy Spirit working in all things, she will do so.

I love seeing the life change. I love watching people grow up over time. It is sad in a way, like it is watching your kids grow up. We are happy, but in a way, we want our kids to be children forever. We want to hold them as babies; we want to watch them take their first steps; we want to hear them utter their first words; we want to teach them again to ride a bicycle and roller blade in the cul-de-sac. Still we know that one of the greatest tragedies is children that never grow up. We scold our children when they act below their age. "Grow up," we say. — Josh Hunt. (1996). *Disciplemaking Teachers*.

19. Second question: what is not yet perfect about your group? What most needs to be improved?

20. How can we pray for one another this week?