



Biblical Equipping Part 2

Leader's Tips

Each Heading offers content for a discussion with your coach. Make contact when you've prepared your responses.

Share: Introducing this step to your group means being ready to model it the first few weeks, so be prepared to Share. Also, keeping in touch with group members during the week; checking in on prayer requests, renewing encouragement about a struggle, thanking them personally for their open heart and honest participation in the last group session, - all should give you a point of understanding to prompt someone to kick off the **Share** for the session. If your group hasn't had that previous session together yet, you might start your first session by simply asking one or two people to share a piece of God's Word that enriched their lives this week or share an answer to prayer. You don't have to go all around the circle but when others chime in you can thank them and explain this is what you'll be aiming for as the **Share** portion of your group sessions using Biblical Equipping.

Sharing requires trust and acceptance. If your **Share** time is always an exercise in listening to crickets you might want to talk with your coach about building that environment for your group. As a group leader and a discipler, you want to listen for these cues as people share: changed lives, care for another, spiritual growth: increased trust in God, a next step taken in obedience to God or reports of a faith sharing encounter with someone. When you hear those, thank God verbally, celebrate audibly, congratulate with an appropriate salute, high five, fist bump, pat, hug.

The best way for you to learn as a leader about how the Share step works is to put it into practice with your coach. Contact them regularly and Share what you have seen God doing in your group, your personal growth through the experience of leading, the challenges God is making clear to you through His Word.

Hear: How long your group settles into silence before reading the Word depends on your group's experience with silence and their ability to focus. Fifteen seconds may be all you can take, or it may take a full minute for the gerbil wheel in your head to come to a stop. Talk about it and try it different ways as you learn to use this tool of silence together.

Typically, there will be one person (or more) who is not comfortable reading out loud. No problem! Don't break up the text and read around the circle. I strongly recommend using one voice. You'll find that there are probably several in your group who would love to serve the group in the role. Audio files of the Bible are very accessible these days. You might find one that the group likes.

Talk to your coach about your own comfort level with silence and how you could practice this spiritual discipline.

Ask your coach to direct you to audio resources for the Bible. Perhaps the easiest one to use is the YouVersion Bible App.

Explore: The group is not asked to prepare for this session, only process last week's session. But the person leading the discussion should look for background information on the text or about the author, the audience, the places and context of the time. This kind of background might come from a study guide, commentary, or Bible dictionary. Check out the resources available at Trinity or ask your coach for direction. If there's someone in your group gifted with knowledge or shaped by study, arrange with them ahead of the session to be prepared to contribute for the Explore step.

On the other hand - let this exploration be a group effort. Balance listening, thinking, and speaking. Let questions pop! The goal is to share ideas freely without any voice dominating or any voice never being heard. Our goal is to know God more deeply and hearing the perspective of everyone is an excellent way to explore new facets of God. Remind people to take notes for use later.

This exploring environment requires respect for each other and respect for God's Word. We are calling each other out to live in God's truth, yet we are asking the group to point out or own blind spots to the meaning of His Word. Be curious, intellectually honest and willing to go deeper.

Taking notes, in a notebook you use for the group during both the Explore and the Apply steps will be useful for

prayers, and for the Plan step. These notes will also be helpful when you make contact with an individual in your group during the week. You can model this practice to your group and encourage them to try it.

These four generic questions may be all you need to get things started, but sometimes the best results come from good follow-up question tuned to draw out more from an initial response. You'll find a pdf for more specific Explore questions in your leader resources on Planning Center along with some suggestions for practicing the art of asking questions.

What does this passage show you about God?

What do you learn from this passage about how God relates to people?

What does God give or offer people?

What kind of response to God is the passage calling for?

Complaints about Bible studies I have heard often from groups in the past: These questions are not deep, these questions are unclear, these questions are not relevant. Tell your coach how you think these Explore questions will help a group understand God's Word. Pick a passage and walk through how these questions unpack the meaning. Then look through the extended Explore questions and pick one or two that push you deeper into the meaning of the passage. Practice using some follow-up questions: That's interesting. Could you explain that to me? - Can you give an example of that? - You used the word _____, what does that mean? - Where else in the Bible have you heard that? (You might even find this follow-up habit useful in other conversations.)

Apply: Honest and open sharing will be an open door for God's work in the group's relationship and in their individual lives. Many groups often do the Explore step really well, but as individuals it may be difficult to open the shell that protects the tender hurts of their lives. As a leader you may feel hesitant to press into this territory, but this is where God's grace can become a new reality for someone in your group. This is where we form an understanding of exactly what the Holy Spirit is nudging us toward. Your own transparency will encourage someone in your group to take the leap of faith required in personal application.

These generic questions may be all you need to nudge people to see the application of the passage, but often a follow-up question that presses for more specifics will be truly productive. You'll find a pdf of more finely tuned Apply questions among your leader resources in Planning Center along with some suggestions for practicing with your coach, but perhaps your best tool is "Can you be more specific about that?"

How is God speaking directly to you as a group? To each of you individually?

What is God's good news for you here?

What is God calling you to be in your relationships with one another, with others outside the group, and with God?

What is God calling you to know? What gracious promises is God asking you to believe and trust? What are you to understand about God and about yourselves? How will your new understandings change the way you live?

What is God calling you to do? How does God want you to act? In what specific ways is God calling you to obey and to love?

Keep your ear tuned for the pairing of the Explore and Apply steps. One without the other will get your group either stuck in a rut or into a dangerous spin-off.

If your group is using a published curriculum you can still use the Biblical Equipping model. Look through the printed session carefully. You'll spot Explore information and questions and Apply questions. Some studies may be stronger in one area or another. Some might even have prompts for a Plan time. With your Biblical Equipping eyes you can select the questions that will make your session effective, supply questions you think are missing and balance the Explore, Apply, and Plan steps for your session.

With your coach discuss your understanding of personal boundaries and transparency when it comes to an Apply discussion. Map out a policy of confidentiality for your group and how you could put it in place and practice it. Browse through the extended Apply questions to see how they drill into the generic questions listed above.

Plan: This is probably the step your group is least familiar with. They may have done it unconsciously at the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Making a concrete plan is a new thing. The point of making a plan is to not miss what has already happened during the session. This is where the notes you've taken during the session can come into play. If someone is having difficulty in being specific about their plan you can remind them about a point they made earlier in the discussion. It's going to take practice, but after a few weeks you'll see people readily identifying their plan. In those early stages, as a group leader you can offer help in clarifying and being specific about steps to be taken.

Depending on how well your group knows each other, they may or may not show this plan to others in the group. Meet them at their comfort level but encourage them to write down the plan for personal accountability. Next week's **Share** step will serve to keep them on track. As the group continues week by week to see the growth the Holy Spirit is bringing with this faithful follow through, the transparency of the group will also increase.

List key elements of the Plan step and tell your coach:

Which element is most accessible for your group.

Which element is a growth challenge for your group - or for you.

Share your Plan for improving your group's experience of Biblical Equipping Together.