

THE GOD SESSIONS FACILITATOR'S TRAINING

We usually have a tight 75-minute training where we download the following content. We also give them a copy of this training to go over at home. We land our training time by getting them into small groups to pray.

HERE ARE SOME KEYS TO BEING A FACILITATOR:

1) NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF PRAYER

- Arrive prayed up. Come to the prayer meeting. Please be punctual. Expect spiritual attack on the day.
- Prayer puts us in a place where God can use us.
- Prayer invites God to move in the people.
- Prayer resists the strategies of the devil.
- We can't save people - only God can. That's why we pray.

2) MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT HEART

- Show sincere interest in and care for people.
 - Remember names ASAP.
 - Find out about people and remember what they have told you.
- Be real. The more open you are, the more open they will be.
- Don't come across like you have all the answers. Our aim is NOT to win arguments, but people.
- Remember that you have so much to learn about your own faith from everyone. Interestingly, people who don't believe what you believe can help you see your own faith in a new, and hopefully refreshing, light.

3) TAP INTO THE POWER OF WARMTH AND RELATIONSHIPS

Remember that Jesus said that our love (for the people, and for each other) will be the confirming sign to the lost that the Gospel is real. That means our relational capacity will either confirm or undermine the Gospel message we present. These are the kinds of prayers that show we understand the power of warmth and community:

- *Oh God, help me to find points of common interest with people.*
- *Oh God, fill my heart with a sincere interest in and care for this person.*
- *Oh God, let there be laughter at my table tonight.*
- *Oh God, let everyone feel welcome; let them feel they belong at my table tonight.*
- *Oh God, how can I connect socially with this person outside of God Sessions nights?*
- *Oh God, who are the other Christians I can connect this person socially with?*

4) ASK GOOD QUESTIONS AND REALLY LISTEN

- Ask the questions provided - see point 11 below. Think of your own questions. Anticipate the kind of questions that people may ask.
- Listen to what they feel and think and believe, and why they feel and think and believe it.

- Seek first to understand then to be understood.
 - Remember to ACT:
 - A**cknowledge their contribution, responding to their words as well as tears, sighs, laughter.
 - “That is a great question.”
 - “That is a very thoughtful insight.”
 - “I can see that you feel strongly about that.”
 - C**larify what is being said: “Is this what you are asking / saying?”
 - T**ake it to the group: “What do you guys think?”
- Generally speaking, only after you've ACT'd, are you qualified to give your opinion.

5) COMMUNICATE AND REMIND YOUR GROUP OF THE CONVERSATION GUIDELINES

Remind people of the 3 ground rules, especially to guide people who're making the group feel unsafe because of not following them...

Rule 1: FREEDOM TO SHARE AND ASK: Everyone should be allowed to share any thing, or ask any questions they want provided it is related to the subject at hand and the timing is right.

Rule 2: RESPECT: Everyone should try respect and learn from each other, even when you disagree with something someone says.

Rule 3: NO PULLING RANK WITH THE BIBLE: Just because something is written in the Bible, does not mean that people may not question or disagree with what it says.

Comment on rule 3: Of course Christians believe that what the Bible says is true, but it really seems to turn non-Christians off when we pull rank with the Bible, and send a message that it doesn't matter what you think because God has already spoken.

However, this does not mean that you can't quote the Bible - it's just that you don't state its teaching in an overbearing, end-of-discussion manner. You can keep on saying things like, 'For myself, I see no good reason to reject what the Bible says,' and 'In this church we have seen the positive impact the Bible makes on our lives and faith - so we're not going to stop believing its message'. But, as confident as you are about what you believe, express your confidence in a humble, non-pushy manner.

6) TRY DISCERN WHERE EACH PERSON IS AT SPIRITUALLY

As you spend time with people around the table, or as people share, try figure out where each person is at spiritually...

- Is this person hostile: not interested or open to being influenced. If so, ask questions to get at the reason for their hostility.
- Is this person disbelieving: slightly open, but plagued by doubts. If so, ask questions to get at the root of their doubts.
- Is this person indifferent: may be open to ideas, but not motivated to apply anything personally. If so, try to help them think about matters of ultimate importance.
- Is this person interested: a growing degree of openness; wants to know the truth and follow it. If so, find out what final barriers stand between them and committing to Christ.
- Is this person backslidden: they know the truth, but try to resist it. If so, find out

what happened that they fell away, and what stops them from 'coming home' to God.

- Is this person a nominal Christian, who thinks they are already saved? If so, try help them see the difference between nominal Christianity and real Christianity.
- Is this person a Christian who is doing this course to enhance their discipleship? If so, chat to them on the side asking them not to intimidate the non-Christians but to also build relationships and try their best to understand where people are at.

7) ADDRESS SOME POTENTIAL GROUP DYNAMIC DESTROYERS

- The biggest potential group dynamic destroyer is YOU:
 - Dominating the conversation. Resist the 'teacher' within. You may only speak when people feel like they've been heard.
 - Refusal to be real and authentic. Do your best to be you.
 - Using Christianese and hard to understand jargon. Refuse to use Christian jargon. If a Christian in the group does use a hard-to-understand Christian word, ask them to explain what that phrase means.
- But also address:
 - *The person who never says a word.* Try draw out contributions of all. Literally ask them by name: 'Is there anything you'd like to say?'
 - *The person who dominates.* Take focus off them. Direct questions at other people in the group.
 - *The person who dumps.* Take focus off them.
 - *Being sent on a tangent.* Say, 'That's an interesting thought / question, but I want us to stay on track with something else for now. Maybe we can talk about that later (or Maybe you and I can talk about that afterwards). In your group discussion time, first make space to reflect on the talk by asking the questions in point 11 below, then (and only then) make space to explore other questions not related to the talk.'
 - *An unhelpful Christian.* Although we don't want Christians in this course, sometimes it happens. They can be helpful or destructive. If they are an over-enthusiastic Christian. Take them aside and say, '*It is unhelpful if you come on too strong or convinced - it intimidates people and hinders the open discussion we need to help them along the journey.*'

8) DEAL WITH DIFFICULT QUESTIONS / INSIGHTS WELL

What are the questions or comments about Christianity you fear most?

Some keys to dealing with questions:

- ACT on it.
- Don't be defensive.
- Respond to questions with questions. 'What makes you say that?'
- Discern whether the objection or question is a smoke-screen question behind which the person can hide, or if the question is really genuine.
- Every night we will advertise some free booklets, which answer the questions that people most commonly ask. Most of the questions will be answered by these booklets. So give it to them, and grab one yourself - and say, 'This week, let's both read the booklet and next week chat about whether you feel it answered your question.'
- You can also point them to www.commongroundchurch.co.za where, if they click on 'Tough Qs' many answers will be provided.
- Get hold of the leaders of your church and ask for help if you feel the above

approaches don't work in answering a question.

- Clarify that it is quite possible to trust in Christ and to experience him personally without having all your questions answered - and that for most adults who do become Christians it doesn't happen once all their questions are answered anyway, but rather when they sense God opening their eyes to just how real He is.

10) DON'T FORGET TO FOLLOW-THROUGH:

Our hope is that each person will make a commitment to Christ. But it is **ABSOLUTELY IMPORTANT** that we do all we can to integrate them into our community (although they are free to go elsewhere) so they can start to grow spiritually! It is one thing getting people to commit to Christ, and it is another to get them rooted in a community where they are being disciplined. Here are some ideas:

- Develop your relationship with them. We suggest you invite just one or two to a meal, or organize an informal dinner for everyone in your group either near the end of the four week journey or immediately afterwards for your table. And then another one two or three weeks later.
- Introduce them to others with whom you think they will connect. Invite them to your small group.
- Meet with them regularly to help them in their faith. If there is a new believers group in your church, or some new believers material, make sure that they know about it.

11) GO THROUGH THE CONVERSATION GUIDE BEFOREHAND

These questions will be left up on the screen during the conversation time each night:

Week One: Is there more to life than this?

The intro night has no discussion questions since it is a social time during which people can decide if they want to sign up for the next four weeks.

Week Two: Is God real, and if he is, what's he like?

What have you grown up believing about God?
Are you open to rethinking your beliefs about God?
What part of this talk really got you thinking?
Have you ever experienced God?
What questions are you hoping to have answered in the coming weeks?

Week Three: Who is Jesus, and does it matter anyway?

Did you grow up with a positive or negative view of Jesus?
What did you learn about Jesus in this talk that you didn't know before?
What is your response to this message about Jesus?
What stops you from trusting Jesus with your own life?

Week Four: If I'm reasonably good, why do I need faith?

Are you open to seeing yourself as a sinful person?

Can you comprehend that Jesus, in an act of sacrificial love, died for you?

Does the Bible's teaching about salvation (ie the gifts of forgiveness, the Spirit, and eternal life) make sense to you?

Does anything hold you back from trusting in Christ for salvation?

Week Five: Where to from here?

Do you tend to live liberal or legal?

Anything stopping you from putting your trust in Christ, and living loved?

Where to from here? Interested in visiting on Sundays, or visiting a mid-week small group?

WRITE DOWN YOUR PRAYER FOR GOD SESSIONS....