

DIALOGICAL LEARNING IN ADULT SMALL GROUPS



This workshop is based on the concepts presented in the study book *How to Be the Best Christian Study Group Leader Ever in the Whole History of the Universe*, by Israel Galindo (Judson Press). Despite the loopy title from the overenthusiastic folks in the marketing department, the book presents an educationally solid approach to learning in small groups. The dialogical learning approach to adult small group study can revolutionize the way teachers of adult classes or study groups go about helping adults learn. For this workshop you will need to read and review the source book and will want to provide copies of the book to each participant.

This resource should serve only as a guide to planning your workshop. You will want to adapt the outline, learning activities, and timeframe to your audience and your context. However, because of the nature of this workshop we encourage you to resist the temptation to reduce the time commitment needed to provide an effective learning experience. It is usually better to challenge your participants to commit the time to engage in a meaningful learning experience than it is to accommodate their desire for something “short and convenient.”

PURPOSE

The purpose of this workshop is to introduce the dialogical learning approach to group study. Participants will learn the basic concepts of dialogical learning in small groups through study and by participating in a group dialogical learning experience.

By the end of this workshop participants will be able to:

- Identify and define three specific small group member roles.
- Apply good group participant behaviors during a dialogical learning Bible study.
- Prepare and use effective dialogical learning questions.
- Lead a small group study using the dialogical learning approach.

TIME FRAME: 2.5 to 3 hours with one 10 minute break

BASIC WORKSHOP OUTLINE (all times are approximate. Adjust as needed)

- I Introduction and Overview (*10-15 minutes*)
 - II Defining the Problem (*15 minutes*)
 - III Defining the Dialogical Learning Process (*5 minutes*)
 - IV Understanding Group Norms and Group Roles (*10-12 minutes*)
 - V Preparing dialogical questions (*15-20 minutes*)
- Break

VI Experiencing a dialogical learning study (20-30 minutes)

VII Debriefing (10 minutes)

VIII Application and Closure (7-10 minutes)

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- Bibles
- Copies of the study book *How To Be the Best Christian Study Group Leader*, by Israel Galindo (Judson Press, ISBN 978-0-8170-1500-8) for each participant
- nametags (optional)
- newsprint and markers, or paper and pencil
- Prepare presentation materials ahead of time on posterboard, flipchart, or PowerPoint®
- Copies of the handouts for participants.

CONDUCTING THE WORKSHOP

I Introduction and Overview (10-15 minutes)

Welcome the group. Distribute nametags and ask participants to introduce themselves by (1) sharing their name and what they like to be called, (2) their teaching experience, and (3) something definitive they can say about teaching adults in a small group setting. Thank the participants for their introductions, and distribute copies of the study book, *How To Be the Best Christian Study Group Leader*, by Israel Galindo.

Introduce the learning objectives for this workshop by displaying them on a flipchart, a chalk- or whiteboard, or on a Powerpoint® slide if you are using that medium. Read each objective and share how the participants will demonstrate that they have achieved each:

- Identify and define three specific small group member roles. [*How demonstrated: at the end of the dialogical learning study each participant will be asked to match three participants and their role behavior*].
- Apply good group participant behaviors during a dialogical learning Bible study [*How demonstrated: Participants will practice specific good group behaviors during the dialogical study*].
- Prepare and use effective dialogical learning questions [*How demonstrated: participants will write out and evaluate dialogical learning questions for a passage of Scripture*].
- Lead a small group study using the dialogical learning approach [*How demonstrated: participants will describe how they will lead their next small group study using the dialogical learning method*].

Explain to the participants that you have just modeled one of the important components of effective dialogical learning: the use of learning objectives. Ask participants to turn to page 55 in the *How To Be the Best Christian Study Group Leader* and have a member of the

group read the definition for dialogical learning in the first sentence. Explain that the goal of the workshop is to help participants be able to lead a dialogical learning study.

Ask the participants to pair up and look at the checklist on page 61. Direct the participants to determine if the learning objectives just presented meet the criteria of the checklist. Allow about a minute and a half for this activity, then, re-gather the participants.

II Defining the Problem (15 minutes)

Distribute the True-False Quiz handout [Handout #1] to the participants and give them a couple of minutes to complete it. Allow them to work in pairs if they choose. Call time when you see that most have completed the quiz and then give them the correct answer to each question (all of the items are FALSE). You can be playful about this exercise by teasing and drawing out this activity.

Ask the participants to share how they feel after taking the quiz and seeing how poorly they scored. Explain that the purpose of the exercise is to highlight two things: (1) just because they may be experienced teachers does not mean that they don't have things to learn, and (2) you want to shake them out of the complacency of the Null-Expectancy Factor.

Share information on the concept of the Null-Expectancy Factor on pages 3-7 in *How to Be the Best Christian Study Group Leader*, in your own words. Explain that using the dialogical learning method in adult small groups is one way to overcome the Null-Expectancy Factor in the participant's teaching experience.

Direct participants to examine the list on page 10 in the study book *How To Be the Best Christian Study Group*. [Option: you may recreate the list as a poster or on a PowerPoint® slide to use as a focal point]. Engage the participants in reflecting on their personal teaching experience with small group. Ask: “Which of these would you most like to be able to do?” “In what ways do you think being able to do these things will make for a better learning experience for your students?” [Be sure to follow the technique for asking questions found on pages 50-54 of the study book. Remember that part of your teaching role in this workshop is to provide a good model for dialogical learning leadership].

III Defining the dialogical learning process (5 minutes)

Tell the participants that before we learn how to use the dialogical learning approach we need to understand what it is. Direct participants to the Introduction, page x, in the study book and ask someone to read the second full paragraph in the middle of the page. Point to the definition of dialogical learning on a focal flipchart, poster, or PowerPoint® slide, read it, then have the group say it in unison: “*Dialogical learning is a structured, intentional process that leads to insights and deep understanding and, ultimately, application in the life of the learner.*” [You may use Handout 2 as a template for a poster or a slide].

Direct the participants' attention to the chart on page 8 of the study book. Using the material from the study book (pages 7 to 9 and other parts you find appropriate), use the chart to compare and contrast the instructional approach to teaching adults with the

dialogical learning approach they are about to learn. Allow for and encourage questions about the dialogical learning process in contrast with the ways most participants likely are teaching. Encourage discussion about the value that participants perceive about using the dialogical learning approach in their teaching.

Tell the participants that the biggest challenge to switching to a dialogical learning approach to adult small group learning will be changing their understanding of their teaching role. Ask participants to turn to the chart on page 30 in the study book, “The Teaching Role in Dialogical Learning.” Lead the participants to recite in unison the statements in the chart [you may list the statement on a flip chart or on a PowerPoint® slide to provide a focal point and to refer to as needed].

Next, direct participants to page 94 of the study book. Encourage the participants by pointing out that there really are only three roles of the dialogical learning group facilitator: (1) clarifying learning objectives, (2) providing dialogical questions, and (3) managing the group process. Explicate these three points based on your reading and understanding of the concepts in the study book.

IV Understanding Group Norms and Group Roles (10-12 minutes)

Explain to the participants that effective group leaders understand how groups form and how they function. Reproduce the diagram on page 31 of the study book on a flipchart, poster, or as a PowerPoint® slide. Direct the students to the diagram in their books so they can refer to it as needed.

Using the material on pages 30 to 34 in the study book prepare a mini-lecture to explain the process depicted on the chart. Below is a sample outline for a mini-lecture you can use to plan your presentation:

Mini-lecture: How Groups Work

1. How groups form.
2. The phases on group formation.
 - a. The Invitation and Orientation phase.
 - b. The Norming and Forming phase.
 - c. The Trust and Differentiation phase.
 - d. The Closure and Dissolution phase.
3. How numbers affect group dynamics.
 - a. Review the Group Math Chart (p. 35)
 - b. Application: ask the group to:
 - i. Identify where they think they are in the group formation phase.
 - ii. Identify where they are in the Group Math category.
4. Close by soliciting clarification questions.

Explain that understanding how a group functions involves understanding how the individual roles of its members affect the learning process. Briefly review the three categories of group roles found on pages 36 to 42: (1) Group Task Function Roles, (2)

Group Maintenance Roles, and (3) Unhealthy Group Roles. (Review only the *categories* and resist any temptation to cover any of the individual roles listed under the categories).

Invite the group members to form dyads or triads (pairs or groups of three) and give them the following directions: *Share with your partner(s) which roles you typically assume when you are a part of a formal study or work group. Do you adopt that role consistently? What does it look like when you play that role? Do you play more than one role? How does that happen?* [You may, if you wish, copy and distribute Handout #3 for this activity].

Allow a few minutes for participants to share, then re-gather the group and summarize: *So far we have (1) defined the problem many of us face in trying to teach adult (the Null-Expectancy Factor), (2) defined dialogical learning, (3) examined how a group forms, and (4) identified the group roles we play in small groups. Now let's turn to one of the most important components of dialogical learning: preparing dialogical questions.*

IF IT IS NECESSARY ALLOW FOR A FIVE MINUTE STRETCH BREAK HERE.

V Preparing dialogical questions (15-20 minutes)

In preparation for this portion of the workshop you should study pages 45 to 50 of the study book. Be sure you have acquired a sufficient understanding of the concepts in these pages in order to be able to help the participants learn them.

Review with the group the definition of dialogical learning (found on page 44. If you have posted or reproduced Handout #2 you can lead the group to read it in unison as a way to reinforce the concept). Explain: *At the heart of dialogical learning is the design of effective dialogical questions. Effective dialogical questions are those that help the learner achieve insight, understanding, and application.*

Reproduce and display on a focal point the chart "Questions and Domains" on page 46 of the study book. Direct the participants to that page for reference as you lead them in studying this material. Using the text on pages 45 to 50 in the study book review the concepts related to: (1) the three categories of questions, and (2) the types of questions in each category.

To help the participants develop understanding and apply what they have learned ask them to form groups of two or three and to work together to practice creating dialogical questions. Distribute Bibles and direct the participants to John 3:1-16. (You may choose a Bible passage from the upcoming week's Bible study lessons based on your church's curricular resource materials as an alternative). Distribute Handout #4 and instruct the group to follow the directions on the handout. While the groups work on this task visit around to each group to provide help and support and to clarify any questions they may have. Direct them to the study book for in-depth descriptions and examples of dialogical questions that appear on pages 45-49. Conclude this portion of the workshop by allowing participants to share their dialogical questions. They can do this in the large group after

they re-gather, or you can direct groups to swap their handouts with another group for review and assessment of the work.

INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO TAKE A 10 MINUTE BREAK.

VI Experiencing a dialogical learning study (20 to 30 minutes)

This part of the workshop consists of experiential learning through participation in a simulated dialogical learning session. In preparation for this step refer to Chapter 9 of the study book, “A Dialogical Learning Topical Study Illustrated.” Be intentional in assuming the role of a dialogical learning facilitator during this step. You will serve as a model for the participants and your actions will serve as part of the application step.

Once the participants have gathered from their break provide an orientation to the dialogical learning simulation. You can use the chapter introduction on page 105 to introduce the study. If you have a large group of participants in the workshop (between 15 and upward) direct them to “Appendix C: Group Math,” on page 120. Review the information about group dynamics and work with the group to determine how to best organize the members into smaller study groups for the simulation (groups of 4 or 5 is recommended). For this step you will allow members to naturally develop their own “group role.” Observe the group dynamics so that you can offer observations during the debriefing step.

Follow the dialogical lesson plan in Chapter 9. You will need to compact the time for this simulated experience. You may do so by choosing only one or two scripture passages to study in step 2 (p. 106), and choosing only two questions for step 4 and one application question in step 5.

VIII Debriefing (10 minutes)

Invite the participants to re-gather for a time of debriefing. Encourage participants to share their reflection on their experience by asking one or two opening questions, then open up the floor for comments. You may ask one or more of the following to get things going:

- How different was this experience from what your class usually does?
- Do you think you can change your teaching style to become a more dialogical teacher? What would be your biggest challenge in doing so?
- What observations can you make about group dynamics during the study?
- Can you identify at least three group roles that members in your group adopted? Which did you adopt?
- How comfortable did you feel in responding to the questions and sharing your thoughts?
- Did your group get “stuck” at some point? When? How did it get unstuck?

Allow as much time as needed for the group to debrief. They may have some practical questions at this point. It is more important to allow them to ask the questions than to have

the “right answer.” Remember that the participants in the workshops are your resource, so feel free to redirect the questions to the group by asking, “Does anyone have a thought about that?” “Does anyone have an answer to that question?” “Has anyone had experience with that?” “How would you respond to that question?”

VIII Application and Closure (7-10 minutes)

Invite participants to apply what they have learned about dialogical learning by commenting on and evaluating your facilitation of the dialogical learning simulation. Ask them to identify those actions that helped the dialogical learning process. Ask them to identify things you could have done better to facilitate the dialogical learning process. (Remember that this step is not about you or your competence as a teacher, it is merely an opportunity for the participants to apply what they have learned through evaluation. If you want to be playful you can intentionally throw in some blatantly unhelpful behaviors for the group to identify.).

For the final application step, ask participants to share how they will apply the dialogical learning approach when they teach an adult small group study (if you have a large group ask participants to share their response with the person seated next to them). Close the session with words of encouragement and a challenge to the teachers to adapt the dialogical learning approach in their teaching adults in small groups. End the session in prayer.

For Further Help

For the reasons why the answer to each question is “False,” see Israel Galindo, *Myths: Fact and Fiction About Teaching and Learning* (Educational Consultants, 2004). ISBN 0-9715765-4-8. Available from Educational Consultants, www.galindoconsultants.com.

NM 503 Written by Israel Galindo. Copyright © 2007, National Ministries, American Baptist Churches, USA.

Workshops for Church Life and Leadership are supported by the America for Christ offering.

True or False?

A General Knowledge Quiz

- | True | False | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. There are fifty states in the United States of America. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Hair and fingernails continue to grow after death. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Noah took two of every living creature into the ark. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. America was named after Amerigo Vespucci. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Charles Lindburgh was the first to make a transatlantic flight. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. The sap of a tree travels up and down, depending on the season. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Woodstock, N.Y. was the site of a famous concert in 1969. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. The Grimm brothers wrote fairy tales. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Sardine is a species of fish. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. The doctrine of Immaculate Conception refers to Jesus' birth. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. Robert Fulton invented the steamboat. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. Autumn leaves turn color in the fall. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. Witches were burned at the stake in Salem, Massachusetts. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. Atlas was condemned to hold the world on his shoulder. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 16. During prohibition, it was illegal to buy, possess, or drink alcohol. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 17. The Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 18. George Washington was the first U.S. president. |

SCORING (based on the number of correct responses):

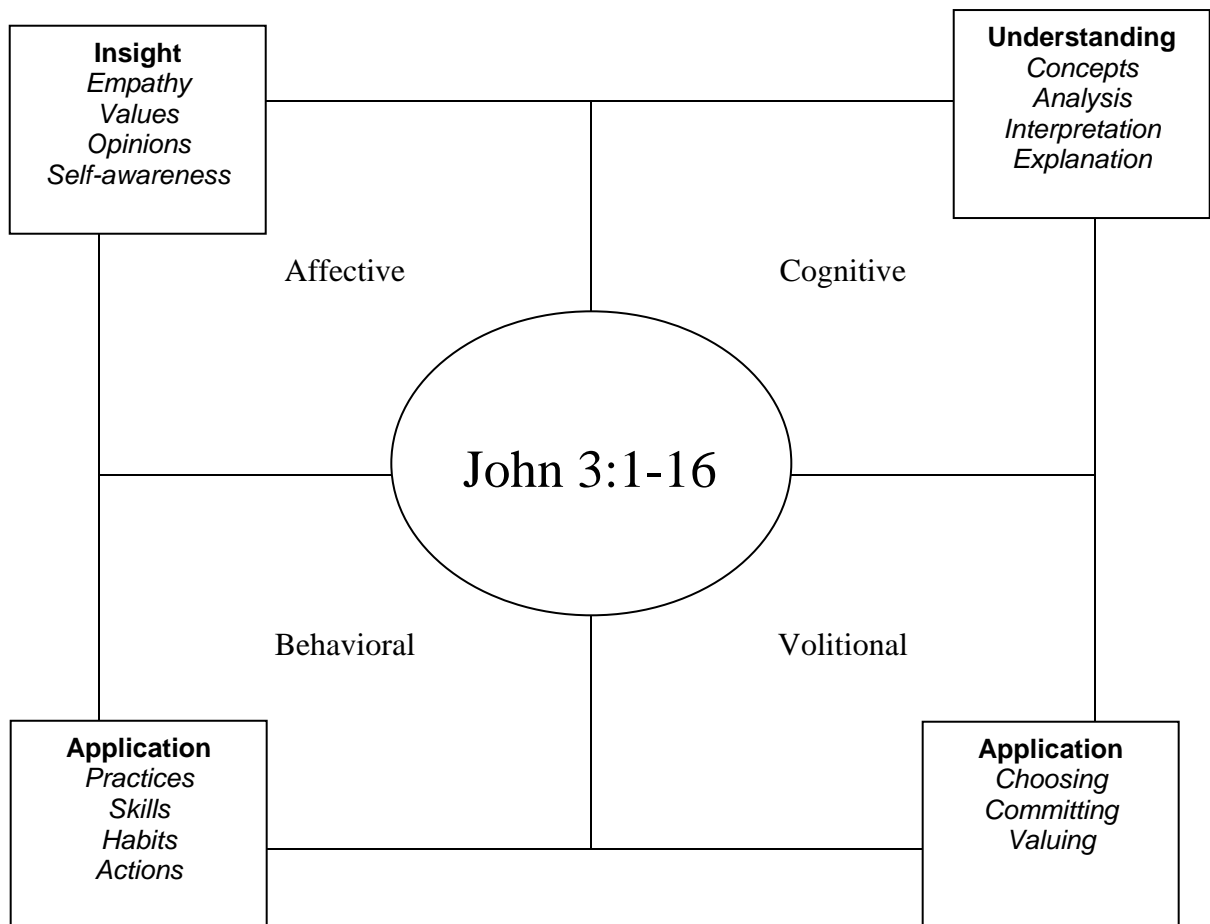
- | | |
|-------|---|
| 10 + | You should be teaching this workshop. |
| 5 – 9 | This is above-average. You probably read a lot, wear glasses, and watch Jeopardy religiously. |
| 3 – 4 | This is pretty good for this quiz. Pat yourself on the back. |
| 1—2 | You probably guessed on a couple of these (hey, it's a 50/50 chance, right?) |
| 0 | You don't know as much as you thought. Pay close attention during the workshop! |

*“Dialogical learning is
a structured, intentional process
that leads to insights
and deep understanding
and, ultimately, application
in the life of the learner.”*

Creating Dialogical Questions

Before your group starts work select a timekeeper-prompter to help your group process. This person will keep track of time, help the group stay on-task, and ask prompting questions to help the group achieve its goal.

DIRECTIONS: After reading the passage decide on what you want your students to learn from this Bible text. Write ONE or more dialogical learning question for TWO of the domains on the chart. Refer to pages 45-50 as needed to help you complete this exercise. (Remember that not every concept, Bible passage, or content requires that *each* of the domains be addressed. Choose the domain (affective, cognitive, behavioral, volitional) that you feel is most appropriate to what you want the student to learn).



EVALUATION

Thank you for participating in this workshop. To help us improve on the presentation, please take the time this questionnaire for your workshop leader.

What have you learned from today's time together?

What part of the workshop are you most eager to share when you get home?

What helped you the most?

What was not as helpful for you?

How could the workshop have been improved?

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