
SHEPHERD

— creating caring community —



Conference Plans

These conference plans were created for leading a conference with all Sunday School leaders of all age groupings.

The plans can be used as one three-hour conference with breaks or as three one-hour sessions (one hour for each chapter).

If you use the plans for three one-hour sessions, you may want to consider using the plans for a quarter, meeting with leaders one hour for three consecutive months.

Use the Reflection Questions (p. 61, *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*) to supplement the conference plans or as conversation starters in a small social setting (Tip: Provide a copy to one, two, or three leaders, encourage them to read chapter 1, 2, or 3, and then use the corresponding Reflective Questions as discussion starters over lunch or some other informal setting).

Created by G. Dwayne McCrary, Project Team Leader at LifeWay. Adjunct professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Sunday School teacher, husband, dad.

First Hour: Focus on Introduction and Chapter 1: System

Purpose

To lead Bible study leaders to affirm the importance of care groups, discover principles for creating care groups, and evaluate themselves in terms of being a teaching shepherd.

Pre-Conference (first hour)

- Review the Introduction and Chapter 1 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*.
- Provide copies of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community* (available at LifeWay.com/DavidFrancis).
- Arrange chairs in a circle.
- Provide name tags and markers.
- Review the PowerPoint presentation, adjusting slides as needed.
- Secure a marker board and/or large sheets of paper, and appropriate markers.
- For extra idea: Make copies of Spiritual Gifts List.

Plan

Arrival

- Prior to conferees arriving, write Psalm 78:72 on a large sheet of paper and display it on a focal wall. Place copies of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community* on each chair.
- As conferees arrive, call attention to Shepherds on page 4 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*. Direct them to select the statement that means the most to them. Encourage them to record part of the selected statement on their name tag and to share their selected statement with other conferees.
- After most have arrived, share the statement that means the most to you. Note that the Bible usually uses the term “shepherd” to explain a role carried by God or his leaders. Call attention to Psalm 78:72. Explain that as leaders of a Bible study group, everyone present functions as a shepherd in some way.
- State: *The purpose of this conference is to help us better understand our role as a shepherd. We will look at structures needed to be an effective shepherd, actions we need to take before, during and after times with our flocks, and some of the science (research) that will enable us to be better teaching shepherds.*

Examine

- Call attention to the first sentence under Caring for Every Person on page 7 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*. Allow conferees to rate their level of agreement with the statement, with five being total agreement and zero being no agreement. Call for them to indicate their level of agreement by raising their hands showing the number of fingers to indicate their level of agreement. Ask rhetorically: *Do you think the people in your group would*

answer the same way? What about the person who rarely attends, do you think they expect you to care for them?

- Explain that one reason groups have people on their ministry list who have never attended may be the result of “universal enrollment” (the practice of enrolling every church member in an ongoing Bible study group such as Sunday School). Highlight the 80 percent versus 20 percent statistic in the paragraph under Universal Enrollment on page 7 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community* to explain why enrolling people is so important. Emphasize your use of the term “ministry list.” Summarize Key Transition: From Class Roll to Ministry List (p. 8, *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*) to help the conferees understand the significance of using the term “ministry list” and why inactive members remain on ministry lists.
 - Extra idea: Allow a volunteer to share about a person who was inactive but became active as a result of a group continuing to minister to him or her even though they rarely attended the group.
- Place conferees into groups (an individual can be a group; if in a larger setting, create groups with four as a maximum size). Direct each group to review Care Groups: The Key to a Caring Community on pages 8-11 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*, looking for three principles shared by the author that they believe to be the most important. After allowing time for teams to work, call for volunteers to share the three principles they identified. Record the principles on a large sheet of paper or markerboard. Highlight the importance of care groups including every person on the ministry list and members in service. Lead the group to create a list of best practices for creating and maintaining care groups (note: churches use a variety of approaches when recruiting care group leaders—volunteer, rotation, enlisted. Each approach has pros and cons. Regardless of the selection approach, training must be provided for care leaders.)
 - Extra Idea: Invite leaders who work with preschoolers, kids, and students to share the importance of staying connected with adults and adult groups.
 - Extra idea: If leading the conference for multiple churches, emphasize that the person responsible for the ongoing Bible study ministry serves as care leader to the teachers. Allow a volunteer to explain the importance of this responsibility.
- Transition: Ask rhetorically: *What kind of person does it take to create this kind of caring community?*
- Summarize David Francis’s comments under The Optimum Spiritual Gift for Sunday School Teachers on page 12 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*. Emphasize the importance of every spiritual gift and the value shepherds bring to a Bible study group.
 - Extra Idea: Distribute copies of Spiritual Gifts List. Guide the conferees to discuss how each gift might be used to lead a Bible study group. Ask: *What strength might a person with that gift bring as the leader of a group? What challenges might that person need to overcome as a leader of a group?*

- Explain that David Francis provides some snapshots that define a shepherd beginning on page 12. Using the same groups used earlier, guide groups to review the content on pages 12 through 16 and create an evaluation tool for the shepherd (example: On a scale of 1 to 10, how well does the person know his or her flock/class?). After allowing time for the groups to work, call for two or three volunteers to share their evaluation tool. Challenge conferees to use the tool their group created as a means of evaluating their effectiveness as a shepherd. Encourage them to look for areas revealed in the evaluation in which they need to grow as a shepherd. Direct them to write on the bottom of page 17 in their copy of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community* one action they can take to grow as a shepherd.

Break

- As conferees break, direct them to talk to another conferee about different ways a shepherd may need to lead a flock of sheep (in front of, behind, in middle of, in spite of, etc).

Second Hour: Focus on Chapter 2: Sequence

Purpose

To lead Bible study leaders to identify actions required of an effective teaching shepherd before, during, and after a group time, prioritize the actions identified, and commit to incorporating selected actions into their process.

Pre-Conference (second hour)

- Review Chapter 2 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*.
- Provide copies of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community* (available at LifeWay.com/DavidFrancis).
- Review the PowerPoint presentation, adjusting slides as needed.
- Secure a marker board and/or large sheets of paper, and appropriate markers.
- Preenlist a person to present a monologue based on A Lesson Learned on page 19 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*.

Plan

Convene/Arrival

- As conferees reconvene, call on a preenlisted person to present a monologue based on A Lesson Learned on page 19 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*.
- Suggest that a person's understanding of the role of a group leader grows over time. Ask: *How has your understanding of what it takes to lead a Bible study group changed or grown since you first started?* Direct conferees to share their response with the person on their right or left.
- Remind conferees of your request to talk to another conferee during the break time about different ways a shepherd may need to lead a flock of sheep (in front of, behind, in middle of, in spite of, etc). Invite volunteers to share some of the things they heard during the break time. As volunteers share, write before, during, and after on three large sheets of paper. Compare before to walking in front of the sheep, during to walking with the sheep, and after with walking behind the sheep.
- Explain that the focus of this portion of the conference is on defining actions required to be an effective shepherd. Comment that the actions will be organized around the before, during, and after sequence.

Examine

- Create three teams or sets of teams (an individual can be a team). Designate each team or set of teams as the Before team(s), During teams (s), and After team(s). Lead each team to locate the first page in Chapter 2 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community* of their assigned section (Before p. 20, During p. 26, and After p. 33). Instruct each team to review their assigned section, paying particular attention to the sub-titles of each sub-section, and rank each sub-section by

importance using the sub-section titles. Refer them to the comments under each section to better understand the action identified in the sub-title.

- Note: If multiple teams are working on the same section, you may want to allow time for those groups to consult each other near the end of the team time so they can compare rankings.
- After allowing groups to work, call the conferees back together. Invite the Before team to present their ranking of the sub-titles in their section. Encourage a representative to record their rankings on the large sheet of paper on which you wrote Before earlier. Allow the other conferees to ask questions for clarification and insight. Direct the representative to explain their rationale for ranking the sub-titles as they did. Clarify as needed.
- Highlight the importance of scheduling margins (p. 22) so one can do the things one must do Before the group time. Invite volunteers to share tips for preparing early and scheduling time for contacting group members.
- Invite the During team to present their ranking of the sub-titles in their section. Encourage a representative to record their rankings on the large sheet of paper on which you wrote During earlier. Allow the other conferees to ask questions for clarification and insight. Direct the representative to explain their rationale for ranking the sub-titles as they did. Clarify as needed.
- Highlight the list of ways shepherds manage their groups meeting place (pp. 27-28). Review the list, reminding the conferees that some of the actions listed can be assigned to various group members.
- Highlight the importance of using a variety of teaching methods (p. 29), calling attention to the list of learning approaches listed. Call out each learning approach on the list, inviting conferees to stand for their preferred learning approach or approaches. Point out the number of approaches represented by the conferees. Challenge conferees to find ways to incorporate each learning approach in their group time in the next four weeks.
 - Extra idea: Allow conferees to congregate with others who lead groups of the same age-grouping. Direct them to share with each other ways they use each approach in their group.
- Invite the After team to present their ranking of the sub-titles in their section. Encourage a representative to record their rankings on the large sheet of paper on which you wrote After earlier. Allow the other conferees to ask questions for clarification and insight. Direct the representative to explain their rationale for ranking the sub-titles as they did. Clarify as needed.
- Highlight sub-titles that overlap between After and Before. Help the conferees understand that what is done after the group time is part of the actions done to prepare (Before) the next group time.
- Call attention to the evaluation questions on page 33 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*. Invite conferees to propose additional evaluation questions they use. Lead them to discuss the value of regularly evaluating the group experience. Ask: *How can evaluating the group time make you a better shepherd? What might keep a person from evaluating the group time? How might you involve group members in the evaluation process?*

Conclude

- Highlight the two sections about Ezra (p. 25) and Amos (p. 37). Assign half of the group to review the information about Ezra and the other to review the information about Amos. Call for volunteers to share one key insight from what they reviewed.
- Challenge conferees to put into practice one additional action before, during, and after as they shepherd their group.

Break

- As conferees break, direct them to share with another conferee a song title or song lyrics that express how they feel about being a teaching shepherd.

Third Hour: Focus on Chapter 3: Science

Purpose

To lead Bible study leaders to examine current research about learning, to propose ramifications for that research in their context, and to commit to incorporate one action discovered in the research or proposed as a ramification of that research.

Pre-Conference (third hour)

- Review Chapter 3 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*.
- Provide copies of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community* (available at LifeWay.com/DavidFrancis).
- Review the PowerPoint presentation, adjusting slides as needed.
- Secure a marker board and/or large sheets of paper, and appropriate markers.
- Prepare mini-lecture using the content found under The Teaching Shepherd as Guide to Construction of Understanding (pp. 40-43, *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*).

Plan

Convene/Arrival

- Invite conferees to share song titles or song lyrics that express how they feel about being a teaching shepherd. Highlight titles and lyrics that point to the need for improving as a teacher or challenges faced in the role of teacher.
- Using the information on page 39 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*, explain that modern technology is allowing researchers to make all kinds of discoveries that impact our understanding of learning.
- Call attention to the five dimensions listed on the bottom of page 39 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*. Comment that these five dimensions will serve as a framework for this portion of the conference.

Explore

- Present a mini-lecture using the content found under The Teaching Shepherd as Guide to Construction of Understanding (pp. 40-43, *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*). Emphasize the importance of beginning with the familiar and building from that starting point. Summarize by calling attention to the quote of Judy Willis on page 42. Ask: *What is required for you to build off what the people in your group already know? How might a teaching shepherd discover what a student already knows? What assumptions can be made about the knowledge of a person at different stages in life?* Write Guide to Construction of Understanding on a large sheet of paper.
- Direct conferees to locate The Teaching Shepherd as Encourager of High Achievement on page 43 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*. Lead them to read the section and create a

summary sentence for what they read. Allow them to work with a partner to create a summary sentence. After allowing time for them to create a sentence, invite volunteers to share their summary sentences. Ask: *Why would it be important for you as the teaching shepherd to remember that every person is capable of learning?* Add Encourager of High Achievement on the large sheet of paper.

- Direct conferees to locate the notes page in the back of their copy of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*. Guide them to record their response to the following questions: *How will you decide what actions to take as a result of this conference? Which of the following will most impact your decision of what actions to take: your experience, insight gained (content), desire to improve in a certain area, or the needs of your group?* Explain that they will not be asked to share their answers. Explain that the purpose of this exercise is to help them think about how they think (metacognition). Use information from The Teaching Shepherd as Reflective Practitioner for Person Improvement (pp. 45-48, *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*) for additional insight. Emphasize the importance of reflection in the learning process. Challenge conferees to use the Reflection Questions on page 61 following the conference to review and process the ideas shared. Add Reflective Practitioner for Person Improvement to the large sheet of paper.
- Guide conferees to find another person who teaches a different age-grouping. Direct pairs to review What Researchers Say on page 49 of *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*. Point them to the information on pages 49-50 to gain a greater understanding. Instruct pairs to share ways in which they can do the six actions called for by the experts. Encourage conferees to look at the ways these actions are done with a different age-group as a potential way of doing that same action in their age-group. Add Team Builder through Active Learning to the large sheet of paper.
- Remind conferees of the evaluation questions provided in the previous chapter (p. 33). Explain that teaching shepherds must also help the group members evaluate their progress. Use the information on page 53 to describe how Jesus helped His disciples evaluate their progress and comprehension. Direct conferees to scan the ideas presented to encourage evaluation and engagement on pages 53 through 56. Encourage them to place a mark by actions they need to consider incorporating into their group time. Add Evaluator of Progress to the large sheet of paper.
- Use the example of Jesus walking with the two disciples on the Emmaus Road (p. 57, *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*) to summarize the key concepts in chapter 3. Challenge conferees to continue to grow in their teaching skills, looking to Jesus for examples and insight.

Conclude

- Remind conferees of Psalm 78:72 (p. 5, *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*). Ask rhetorically: *What would it take for the same thing to be said about you?* Challenge conferees to identify three actions they will take in the next month that will help them shepherd more effectively. Direct them to record those actions on the Notes and Reflections page (p. 64).
- Lead the group in prayer, asking God to help each conferee to shepherd with a pure heart and skillful hands.