



HELPING THE SHY GROUP MEMBER GROUPWORDS

I am basically a “shy” person. I always have been a bit timid and it has taken God a long time to help me feel comfortable being in front of people. Maybe this is why I notice the quieter members in a Small Group. I think that I know how they might be feeling having been on both sides of the fence myself.

And so, consider the following principles as you lead your group:

1. Accept shy members as they are. Allow them to be spectators. Feel free to test the waters from time to time, but never force anyone out into the open. That is their choice to make, not yours.
2. Give shy members special attention both before and after meetings. Often quieter people are ignored during this time because it is unstructured and requires them to be an initiator, which may be very difficult for them. By initiating the conversation, yourself you may win their trust. By learning to be comfortable talking with you, in a one-to-one conversation, they eventually may feel free to talk to you while others are present and thus begin to participate in the group.
3. Affirm every contribution from a shy member, no matter how small. If they read a passage of scripture, thank them. If they offer an answer, immediately acknowledge it, and try to use their thoughts to make your next point. This will not only encourage them, but it will also make the whole group (they will be watching) more willing to contribute.
4. Learn to ask the right kind of question. Avoid “trick” questions that would embarrass someone who walks into your trick. Even if someone with a very strong ego steps in and enjoys a good laugh at himself, the shy group member has been watching and has probably put another brick on their defensive wall. Straightforward questions encourage straightforward answers.
5. Let quiet members know that they are important. If they contribute during the Small Group, or even if they offer a quiet comment after the “official” meeting, a note or email from you thanking them will open the door of participation even wider.

Remember, there are all kinds of people and personalities represented in the group. Some couldn't wait to get there so they could talk. But others thought long and hard before they courageously made the decision to attend. As you lead this diverse group, remember that one size does not fit all.