

LAMPLIGHTERS INTERNATIONAL – DISCIPLE-MAKER TIP #18

TITLE: "CLOCK MANAGEMENT"

If you are an avid football fan you hear a lot about the clock management skills of the coaches. They are trained to manage the game clock so their team can run the clock down and the other team doesn't have time to score. Occasionally a coach will blow it by calling an untimely "time out" or by letting the game clock run out before his team can run the last play. Or, he may make the mistake of leaving too much time and the other team drives the ball down the field and wins the game.

As a discipleship Bible Study leader, you must *learn* to manage the game (Bible Study) clock properly. This is easier said than done. Below are some tips for effective clock management:

1. After you have completed your personal lesson preparation and checked the answer key, write (in pencil) the exact time you think the group should spend on each question. For example, let's say the Bible Study starts at 7:00 am. Question #1 is simple and should take a maximum of two minutes so write 7:00 am in the left margin next to Q#1. Next to Q#2 (a question of medium difficulty) write 7:02. Perhaps you estimate the group will need 5 minutes for Q#2 so in the margin next to Q#3 write 7:07, which is the time you should begin Q#3. Work through the entire lesson, allocating the time you think the group needs to answer every question appropriately. You may need to rework your time allocations. Do you see now why you should use a pencil?
2. Before the Bible Study starts, locate the wall clock (if there is one) and sit directly opposite it. Even sitting at a modest angle can be a distraction if you look up at the clock while someone is speaking. If there is not a wall clock, remove your wrist watch and set it in front of you.
3. Start the Bible Study on time every time. This lets the class members know that you are serious, sets the tone for the Bible Study, and lets latecomers know that you are not waiting for them to begin.
4. Work through the lesson, keeping pace with the times you have written in the left margin of your study. Be prepared, if necessary, to change the pace of the Bible Study to complete the entire lesson.
5. Move through the shorter, factual questions quickly. If the question is, "What is the name of God's Son?" and someone answers, "Jesus", you don't need to ask if anyone else has another answer. By doing this you save precious minutes for the group to wrestle with the discussion questions.

A good discipleship Bible Study leader doesn't rush through the lesson, rejoicing that he (or she) has finished ten minutes early. On the other hand, he doesn't let the clock run out before all the questions are answered. Clock management is important in the NFL, but it is even more important when you are a discipleship Bible Study leader who is helping others learn God's Word.