

TAKING TO HEART THE HEART OF THE MATTER



A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS BASED ON *THE HEART OF THE MATTER* BY FRANK HAMRICK

This guide is designed to facilitate group discussion among educators who are seeking to develop or reinforce a God-focus in their school. A school pursuing such a focus endeavors to teach God-exalting truths, which, by the work of the Spirit of God, will produce students who honor and obey God because they know and love Him. As you engage in the following group discussion, may you be reminded of the glory of God, finding both encouragement and edification for His name's sake.

DISCUSSING THE INTRODUCTION

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. What are some of the key differences between behavior modification and heart transformation? (pp. 4–5)
2. What attitudes reflect the mindset of behavior modification? What about heart modification? (p. 5)
3. Considering the subtle difference in the two sets of goals described in the introduction, how could your school's goals be affected by including a God-focus? (pp. 6–7)
4. Why do you think many Christian school graduates possess academic knowledge but lack passion for God? (p. 7)

AGREE OR DISAGREE:

React to the following statements, discussing whether you agree or disagree with them and why. Endeavor to defend your reasoning biblically.

1. "Christian school teachers are not behaviorists, but cardiologists... They are not so much teachers as disciplers." (p. 5)
2. "God's business is single – to glorify His name." (p. 5)
3. "The heart of the matter is a matter of the heart." (p. 8)

GROUP ACTIVITY:

Think through the culture of your school. Have each group member identify one element of your school that may be geared toward behavioral modification rather than heart transformation. Along with identifying that element, have them suggest a way to change it to be geared toward the heart.

DISCUSSING CHAPTER I: WHAT A GOD-FOCUSED MINISTRY IS NOT



GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. In your opinion, why is it essential to understand what a God-Focus is not?
2. Why is it easy to associate academic success with spiritual maturity? (p. 9)
3. How can extra curricular activities distract from a God-focus? How can they promote a God-focus? Do you think a connection exists between distraction from a God-focus and spiritual idolatry? (pp. 10–11)

AGREE OR DISAGREE:

React to the following statements, discussing whether you agree or disagree with them and why. Endeavor to defend your reasoning biblically.

1. “Academic success is not equivalent to spiritual maturity.” (p. 9)
2. “When evangelism becomes the purpose of a school rather than the natural product of a passion for God, it degenerates into unbiblical attitudes and methods.” (p. 12)
3. “Too often we think that if we can get our students to do right and keep them from doing wrong, then they are just fine in their relationship with God.” (p. 13)
4. “True character is not learned; it is produced.” (p. 16)

GROUP ACTIVITY:

Have every teacher or staff member spend a period of time alone, prayerfully evaluating their own priorities and motivations in light of this chapter. During this time, have them write one way in which they were convicted about a missed focus. It could be a classroom policy, personal character trait, unbiblical response, emphasis, or mindset. After the time of personal reflection, gather together and share testimonies of God’s convicting work in hearts and minds. Spend time praying together for God’s forgiveness and His grace to change.

DISCUSSING CHAPTER 2: WHAT A GOD-FOCUS IS



GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. What are your initial responses to the definition of a God-focused ministry (p. 17)?
2. How can you as teachers and staff members shift students' focuses from material things to God's majesty? (p. 19)
3. How can you bring students face to face with the God of the Bible? (p. 21)
4. In what ways can you teach your students the praises of the Lord, the strength of the Lord, and the works of the Lord? (p. 23)

AGREE OR DISAGREE:

React to the following statements, discussing whether you agree or disagree with them and why. Endeavor to defend your reasoning biblically.

1. "...if their hearts were in awe of God and in love with the Lord, that would 'keep them' throughout their lives." (p. 18)
2. "God's design for youth ministry is founded on theology." (p. 20)
3. "Whether we teach math, science, language arts, sports, music, or history; above all else we must be theologians because our primary responsibility is to bring students face to face with the God of the Bible." (p. 21)
4. "One of the great dangers of our society is that there is simply too much to love. We leave little room for God." (p. 22)

GROUP ACTIVITY:

On page 17, the author asks how we should give students this "life-changing, obedience-governing love for God." Divide into groups by department, grade level, or area of service. Then answer the following two questions practically and specifically about your classroom, school, or area of responsibility.

1. What are you presently doing to give students a life-changing, obedience-governing love for God?
2. What can you do or change to give students a life-changing, obedience-governing love for God?

After each group has determined its answers, choose a spokesperson from the group to share one answer from each of the questions with everyone.

DISCUSSING CHAPTER 3: THE FOURFOLD EMPHASIS OF A GOD-FOCUS



GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. How does focusing on God in the Bible change how you read and understand the Bible? (pp. 26–27)
2. According to this chapter, what three elements should form the core of your curriculum? How can you begin implementing these in your school or classroom? (pp. 27–30)
3. What should be the role of discipleship in a Christian school? What is the role of discipleship in your school? (p. 32)
4. What makes it so easy for performance based activities to be done simply for competition? What is the danger in this practice? (p. 34)
5. What spiritual disciplines are you actively developing in your school, department, or classroom? What can you do to incorporate them further? (p. 35)

AGREE OR DISAGREE:

React to the following statements, discussing whether you agree or disagree with them and why. Endeavor to defend your reasoning biblically.

1. “...we can study the Bible and miss God!” (p. 25)
2. “There is no knowing that does not begin with knowing God.” (p. 26)
3. “The Christian life is not about imitating another person. It is not about following a moralistic teaching. It is not even about having character. It is not about following a set of rules. Rather, it is about reacting to a right knowledge of God.”(p. 30)
4. “...controlling external behavior is much easier than producing love-based obedience.” (p. 33)

GROUP ACTIVITY:

On page 27, the author gives three questions that you can ask about a passage of Scripture to help you see God in the Bible. Using the handout on the following page, have every teacher individually read Isaiah 6, looking for the answers to the three questions and recording them on the sheet. Once everyone has finished, come back together. Allow time for your staff to share some of their findings. Rejoice together in the discoveries made about God from the Word.

Passage:

Date:

Focus on God

What does God do in this passage?

Who does God tell us He is in this passage? (Attributes or Character)

What does this passage teach us about how God works in our lives or the world around us?

DISCUSSING CHAPTER 4: THE EFFECTS OF A GOD-FOCUS



GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. How could believing that “all sin is a violation of the character of God” change the way you deal with sin in your school or classroom? (p. 40)
2. How can a person’s view of salvation affect their view of God? How can a person’s view of God affect their understanding of salvation? (pp. 41-43)
3. Why are we tempted to view sanctification as a work of human effort rather than a work of God’s grace? (p. 45)
4. Before you read pages 44–46, did you believe that meditation on God in the Word was the means to greater Christlikeness? If not, why not? If so, why?

AGREE OR DISAGREE:

React to the following statements, discussing whether you agree or disagree with them and why. Endeavor to defend your reasoning biblically.

1. “If your students do not know the attributes of God, they do not know what sin is.” (p. 40)
2. “The emphasis of the salvation issue must not be centered on whether or not teens have ‘believed,’ but on whether or not God has done a work of grace in their hearts.” (p. 44)
3. “Teens may turn from idols and still not turn to God. But they can never turn to God without turning from idols!” (p. 44)
4. “When a person is filled with love and awe for what His God has done for him, service will be voluntary, faithfully performed, and joyfully pursued.” (p. 47)

GROUP ACTIVITY:

As a group, compile a list of spiritual prayer requests for the faculty, staff, and students of your school. For example, ask God to help students view sin as a violation of His character. Ask God that the faculty would remember that sanctification is just as much a work of grace as salvation. Spend time praying either as a whole or in small groups that God would give grace to make the effects of a God-focus evident among your faculty, staff, and students. After prayer, brainstorm about service activities that your school could accomplish. This planning is an act of faith that God is going to work in students’ lives to bring them to a point where they faithfully, willingly, and joyfully express their love and devotion to God through service to their fellow students or community.

DISCUSSING CHAPTER 5: WHAT MUST I DO NEXT?



GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. In what way does a God-focused classroom begin with the teacher? Is having a short-termed emphasis on a God-focus enough? Why or why not?
2. Does teaching from a God-focus pertain only to Bible? How can a God-focus be incorporated into other subjects as well?
3. What first steps do you need to take personally as a result of the new knowledge you've gained from this study? What about your department or school?

AGREE OR DISAGREE:

React to the following statements, discussing whether you agree or disagree with them and why. Endeavor to defend your reasoning biblically.

1. "Being God-focused is what you do daily, not what you do once a week or for a set number of days that you determine to be God-focused." (p. 49)
2. "If you would be an instrument of heart change—a cardiologist—start with your own heart. Then, you can begin to affect the hearts of your students." (p. 50)
3. "We cheapen God and prayer when we glibly say a few words and then rush into the lesson." (p. 51)
4. "Give your students a heart for God. Obedience, not merely behavior, will follow." (p. 53)

GROUP ACTIVITY:

Have each staff member spend time evaluating his/her personal God-focus. Afterwards, give those who are willing the chance to share what they've learned or realized about themselves. Then discuss the suggestions presented in this chapter and how they could be implemented at the classroom and faculty/staff levels of your school.