



# Leading Group Discussions

Troubleshooting | Practical Guidance For Leadership Challenges

## Introduction

It can be quite challenging to lead a study into the Bible with someone else. We are most accustomed to one-way discussions where we tell someone(s) what the Bible means or "what God says". Listed below are some helpful tips toward a more meaningful group engagement.

## Have Clear Objectives

It is vital that we have clearly established objectives for our discussions with others about the Bible. Here are three basic but essential objectives that should guide our preparation.

1. **Biblical Understanding.** We cannot make it applicable if we are unfaithful in helping them understand the fundamental storyline/proposition of the passage.
2. **Worldview Tension.** We must draw tension between their natural worldview presuppositions versus those of the Biblical worldview.
3. **Personal Application.** We must provide an environment where people are engaging the truth at a personal level for life change.

## Be Prepared

These practical steps will help you as you prepare to lead others.

1. **Study the passage thoroughly.** Use the principles of faithful Bible interpretation to immerse yourself in the passage to be as familiar with the passage as possible. You can only lead others to engage the passage to the depth that you have personally gone.
2. **Be committed to personal growth.** Be more focused initially on your own need and dependency to know and live in the truth than in the desire to help others.
3. **Engage the teaching.** Be a student of the teaching yourself. Seek to understand what and how the passage has been taught and reconcile it with your own study.
4. **Identify the applicational intent of the teaching.** Identify and focus on the major application that was taught and make this the primary aim of your group discussion.

5. **Consider other applications within the passage.** Consider the people in your MC and pray for wisdom in determining whether any of the supporting ideas also need addressed or applied. If so, prepare for some discussion in those as well.

## Ask Good Questions

These practical steps will help you as you prepare to lead others.

1. **Determine the best principle(s) to focus on.** Beginning with the teaching principle and then other supporting
2. **Give time to consider.** Hand out questions as everyone arrives. Encourage them to read and begin to think about them.
3. **Only ask a few questions.** Too many questions can confuse, so we need to think more critically about a couple questions that leads them to meaningfully consider the core issues.
4. **Be clear and to the point.** Don't be overly wordy but be concise. Test your clarity by reading it out loud and asking someone else to read it for clarity. Be humble enough to correct it if someone else doesn't seem to grasp what the intention of your question is.
5. **No "yes" or "no" answers.** Resolve to never ask questions that have obvious answers and do not require thought and a considered response.

### \*Recommended Resource

*The Art Of Asking Better Questions, J.R. Briggs*

## Engage The Group

These practical steps will help you as you prepare to lead others.

1. **Go small, then big.** The best way to engage a larger group is first to make smaller groups. Have smaller groups discuss questions first, then reassemble for guided conclusions.
2. **Encourage engagement.** Be explicit about your desire for people to engage. Don't shame or pressure them, but emphasize the safety and value of sharing one's thoughts even if they might be wrong.
3. **Never shame or make a joke of someone's input.** Particularly with those who are more shy and reserved, never make a joke or side handed comment concerning their input.
4. **Affirm then correct - when needed.** If untruth is shared, correct it by first affirming the speaker, then carefully redirecting to "adjust" the error that was presented.
5. **Ask everyone for input.** Unless there are obvious/serious not to, ask everyone to participate. Don't overdo it or make it uncomfortable with long pauses, but always give everyone a personal invitation to engage.

## **Provide And Exhort Personal Engagement**

You must remember that group discussions are one small part of MC life. Prepare well and invest in them, but real life change happens at the personal level. Your MC must be a context where real life discipleship is happening and these discussions can bridge into meaningful life change.