

Leading A Discussion: Start With Good Questions

SMALL GROUPS ARE A MINISTRY – NOT A MEETING

One of the key components of a healthy small group is the discussion of biblical truth.

A leader that can facilitate a good discussion has a great chance to create a community where people can **Worship, Grow, Serve, Go.**

facilitator (\fe-si-le-ta-ter\) one that facilitates; especially one that helps to bring about an outcome (as learning, productivity, or communication) by providing indirect or unobtrusive assistance, guidance, or supervision.

A small group leader might be described as someone who can help direct or guide a group as they consider a question. The focus of a small group leader is to help those in the group discover biblical truths, apply them, and walk closer with Jesus to the glory of God.

discussion (\di-sku-shen\) consideration of a question in open and informal debate something.

Small group leaders do not have to be a gifted teachers in order to lead effective small group discussions. A discussion, by nature, is a group participation event. It is highly preferred that leaders guide the group in a process of discovery rather than teach the content.

Good Discussion = Good Questions

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- **Kick-off Question** – Launches the discussion. A question that anyone can answer helps create a sense of belonging. These questions are sometimes called icebreakers.
- **Observation Questions/Discovery Questions** – Ask “What do I see?”
- **Interpretation questions** – Ask “What does it mean?” These can help people grow as they encounter the text and hopefully encounter Christ.
- **Application Questions** – Ask “How do I apply it to my life?” These are the questions that can lead to life change as your group members partner with the Holy Spirit and experience transformation.

15 Suggestions For Leading Great Discussions

1. Be a Launcher of Discussion. Ask group members simple questions about what they have observed or discovered. Use questions starting with "what" or "how."

2. Be a Guider of Discussion. To get other members' responses and to keep things moving ask questions that start with "who." Example: "Who else has a comment about that?" Be mindful that the group can easily get off of the material at this time, so redirect when necessary.

3. Be a Summarizer of the Discussion. During the lesson and at the end, summarize the key points. This is a great way to reinforce key concepts and to transition to a new topic.

4. Encourage personal application. Help others apply what they have learned. This is where "how" questions can help stimulate members to remember what they have learned about biblical truths and how they might apply them to their daily lives. Ask questions like:

- "Can you relate . . . ?"
- "What would be a modern-day example of...?" or "What would you have done?"
- "How could you apply this principle in your everyday life?" or "How would you like to be more like this person in Scripture?"
- "What are you going to do differently because of this lesson?"

5. Write out the questions. When doing the lessons, good questions start with good preparation. It's likely others will have similar questions.

6. Ask open-ended questions. Open-ended questions often begin with "How?" or "Why?" and cannot be answered with "Yes" or "No."

7. Be patient. When you ask a question, look around the group until someone answers it. Somebody usually speaks. Do not be afraid of silence.

8. Admit when you don't know an answer. Sometimes leaders lack clarity or knowledge on a topic. Promise to seek out the information requested, and report back as soon as possible.

9. Be flexible with the group discussion. If discussion over a certain aspect of the study, or something stemming from the materials arises and seems important, let the group talk it out. Do not think you have to cover all the material in each session to have a meaningful, complete community group meeting.

10. Be genuinely interested in responses. Lift others up and encourage them, regardless of their questions or responses.

11. Build your next question off the previous response. This is a helpful technique for engaging the group and keeping a comfortable flow of conversation.

12. Don't be afraid of silence. It often means people are processing important concepts, and allowing the Holy Spirit to teach them something new. When you ask a question, look around the group until someone answers. Be patient; someone will usually answer it.

13. Be open in sharing your observations. As a member of the group, include your input, but be careful not to dominate discussion. It is not your role to give your answer on each question.

14. Be transparent. Be open about your own spiritual walk and struggles. This will encourage others to be transparent and authentic, taking the relationships to a deeper level. (Seek permission from your spouse before sharing personal trials that involve both of you.)

15. Prioritize the questions. It is often impossible to cover all the material in a lesson. Plan the most important questions, and use additional ones if time permits. Allow time for a conclusion and prayer.