

Facilitating Better Group Discussion

While curriculum is a great place to start with group discussions, it is also helpful to know these tips in order to keep a good discussion going as well as to handle awkward or difficult questions that may arise:

1. **Ask open-ended questions.** Ask questions like “How does that make you feel?” or “what would you do if . . .?”
2. **Avoid “Yes or No” questions.** They tend to stop discussion rather than promote discussion.
3. **Ask “Why” questions.** These make people really evaluate their feelings and thoughts. For example, “Why do you think Jesus said that?”
4. **Don’t be afraid of silence.** Let them think through what has been said or viewed.
5. **Be ready to share first.** As the leader, be prepared to be the first person to share. Your openness will encourage others to open up as well.
6. **Do your best not to interrupt.** Interrupting people makes their future input less likely.
7. **Practice the art of listening.** Really listen to what others are saying, rather than thinking about what you are going to say next while they are still talking.
8. **Thank people for sharing.** This will encourage them to share again.
9. **Preview the video or printed materials beforehand.** Being familiar with the discussion material beforehand is a key to keeping the group focused during the discussion period and should be a part of leader preparation.
10. **Be flexible:** Sometimes other issues need to be discussed even though they are not scheduled.
11. **Keep the discussion on topic** when needed. Say something like, “Let’s refocus for just a minute and talk about this week’s topic.”
12. **Treat others with respect.** Treat everyone’s comments and questions with consistency. Keep in mind that there’s no such thing as a “dumb” question or comment.
13. **Don’t think you have to be an expert.** Remember, leading a Small Group does not require you to be a Bible scholar, theologian, counselor or any other kind of expert.
14. **Be willing to say, “I don’t know.”** No one expects you to know everything, so be prepared to admit when you don’t have an answer.
15. **Look it up.** When you don’t know an answer to a question, tell the group that you will do a little research and attempt to bring an answer next week.

16. **Ask for help.** Don't hesitate to ask a Small Group coach or a staff person for advice or insight.

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