

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR GREAT DISCUSSION

BEFORE YOU START

Reflect: Leading discussion in a small group is a lot easier if you have applied the material being discussed to your own life. Take some time to reflect and gather your thoughts. If members seem reluctant to participate sharing your own experience may help open them up.

Ask Good Questions: One of the best ways to facilitate good discussion is to have great questions! You may have been given questions already. Great! Get to know them beforehand in case you need to clarify for someone or pick key questions when you run short of time. If you are writing your own questions consider some of the below to get you started: ¹

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| 1. Launching Question Start Discussion. Ex. "What stood out to you in this reading or talk?" | 2. Observation Questions Recall the reading or talk. Ex. "What story did the author/ speaker use to open up this reading or talk?" |
| 3. Understanding Questions Deepen understanding of the reading or talk. Ex. "How would you state the theme of this reading or talk?" | 4. Application Questions Apply the material to our lives. Ex. "How do you see yourself in the story/ talk we just read/heard?" |

BEGIN DISCUSSION

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| Introductions: Introduce yourself to the group then have them introduce themselves either at the beginning as an icebreaker or as they contribute if you're limited on time. | Ground rules: Give a brief overview of small group dynamics encouraging people to listen actively, share freely and respect others without judgement. You may have an expanded |
| Try this model to move through each question: Acknowledge everyone who speaks Clarify what is being said Turn the conversation back to the group Summarize what has been said ² | Tips and Tricks: -Encourage the quieter members to contribute. -Don't be afraid of silence: Some people may need time to think before responding. -Let others share before contributing yourself |

Keep Perspective: Consider the level of personal disclosure appropriate for the group. The goal of a small group is not to make people cry but to encounter Christ in honest reflection and prayer. *If people do share intimate information, remember that all sharing should be kept confidential unless someone poses a danger to themselves or others in which case report to an appropriate authority.*

¹ Adapted from Rich Cleveland, *A Facilitator's Guide* (Colorado Springs: Emmaus Journey, 2007)

² This method is from Focus on the Family's Truth Project



MORE PRACTICAL TIPS FOR GREAT DISCUSSION*

1. Be sure there is sufficient lighting and the room is comfortable.
2. Remove physical and visual distractions (i.e. pets, turn TV off, etc.).
3. Arrange the seating so that everyone can see each other. Have everyone seated on the same level. A circular arrangement works well.
4. Try to plan ahead to prevent interruptions from young children, pets, telephone, etc.
5. Begin and end ON TIME.
6. Be dependable. Demonstrate integrity. If you say you will discuss something later, make sure you do. Little things build trust.
7. Don't be afraid of silence. Give people time to answer. If they have a puzzled expression, restate your question (don't answer it yourself).
8. Inject humor! Laughter disarms people and builds bridges. Meaningful discussion often follows laughter.
9. Before your first (or next) discussion, share with all participants how they can contribute to a healthy learning process.
 - a. By being willing to change their beliefs and opinions
 - b. By being open to new perspectives
 - c. By resisting the temptation to argue merely for the sake of argument.
10. Incorporate emotion. Life and truth are not solely cognitive; introduce the affective dimension to your discussion.
11. Take notes on personal issues that are revealed in discussion, and bring them up again at appropriate times.

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