



SMALL GROUP TIPS AND TRICKS

FACILITATING BETTER 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.

- Ask open ended questions. Ask questions like "How does that make you feel?" or "What would you do if...?"
- Avoid "yes" or "no" questions. They tend to stop discussion rather than promote discussion.
- Ask "Why" questions. These make people really evaluate their feelings and thoughts. For example, "Why do you think Jesus said that?"
- Don't be afraid of silence. Let the group think through what has been said or viewed.
- 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.
- Do your best not to interrupt. Interrupting people makes their future input less likely.
- Practice the art of listening. Really listen to what others are saying, rather than thinking about what you are you are going to say next while they are still talking.
- Thank people for sharing. This will encourage them to share again.



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FACILITATING BETTER DISCUSSION (continued)

- Pre-view 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.
- Be flexible. Sometimes other issues need to be discussed even though they are not scheduled.
- Keep the discussion on topic when needed. Say something like, "Let's refocus for just a minute and talk about this week's topic."
- 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.
- Don't think you have to be an expert. Remember, leading a Group does not require you to be a Bible scholar, theologian, counselor or any other kind of expert.
- 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.
- 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.
- Ask for help. Don't hesitate to ask another group leader or a staff person for advice or insight.