

How to Lead a Successful Discussion

“If one gives an answer before he hears,
it is his folly and shame.”
Proverbs 18:13

Why have a discussion?

Instead of just presenting the information in the Bible study to everyone in the life group, having a discussion about the material requires the people in your group to really think about the topics and turn them around in their mind.

By sharing their own ideas, they take ownership of the topics and are more likely to understand, remember, and apply the information.

It lets everyone have a chance to feel heard.

1. Choose the space.

If you want them to feel comfortable enough to share their own ideas, struggles, and God-moments, make sure the location of your life group is quiet and set apart enough that there's no through-traffic.

2. Ask guiding questions.

A guiding question is more specific and forces them to think along a certain train of thought. Guiding questions help them consider truths without you having to “shove it down their throat.” For example...

Generic:

What do you think?

What stands out to you?

Because you know where the lesson needs to go, you can direct people there with the questions. Generic questions can be good for an introduction, but the more specific your question, the more you can guide the people in your life group toward specific application and life change.

Most of the time you'll have to plan these out beforehand, not in the spur of the moment.

Guiding Questions:

How do we apply this? or

What does Paul mean when he says...? or

What does this passage mean for today?

Why do you think Paul said _____?

3. Troubleshooting common issues in discussions:

- If your group is quiet...
 - When one person shares, if no one adds on to the discussion, practice reflective listening. Then as much as you can, ask a guiding question based on what they said. (**Reflective Listening is when you summarize what they said to make sure you understand them. This also helps them feel heard because they know you were listening. They can clarify if they need to, but then you can ask a question to redirect if need be based on what they said.**)
 - Build community in your group to make people feel more comfortable sharing.
 - If someone is not talking, you can ask their opinion. Only do this if you have already built up a personal relationship with them through discipleship.
- You set the tone. You control the atmosphere.

- If you need people to focus, you can't let yourself get distracted.
- If you want people to share from personal experience, you need to be transparent first.
- If someone is talking too much, you need to be prepared to interject so others have a chance to talk. Be prepared to find a break in their conversation, summarize what they said, and immediately direct the conversation to someone else so they can share. (If this problem persists, be prepared to gently talk to them about it during a one-on-one.)

4. Know the Scripture.

If people present ideas that seem unbiblical, ask them to explain and clarify before you present the truth (They may simply not have the right words the first time, when in reality, they understand the idea. Give them a chance to explain before you assume they're wrong).

-Always lead them to scripture for clarification.

-If you know the truth, don't be afraid to share it. Say it with kindness, but loving them well means not hiding truth.

-If you're unsure of an answer, tell them you'll look into it and actually get back to them. This is a great time to check in with your resource leader.