

What Makes a Good Small Group Discussion

1. Preparation of study topic/chapter– by ALL in the group
2. Desire to be open to the Holy Spirit’s promptings and enlightenment while preparing. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit each time you prepare / study / read scripture.
3. Commit to always *gather together the helpers/facilitators* prior to the start of the meeting to pray together to put your discussion group in Jesus’ hands
4. Prayer *at the opening of the small group discussion* with the small group to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and enlightenment
5. Openness to hear (receive) and to share our insights
6. Patience to sit quietly to listen, and courage to speak when it is our turn
7. Opportunity for each person in the group to share
8. Keep the size of the discussion group to about 10 people
9. Establish the approach that will be used so all will have an opportunity to share – and the grace to ‘pass’ to the next person should the person whose turn it is - is not prepared to speak or desires not to speak
10. Speak loudly enough for all to hear
11. Honor all responses, even if they are different than what you would have given

12. If the group's discussion, or a person's response seems to merit it, invite others in the group to share any additional insights they may have regarding the immediate focus of the discussion.
13. If the group is silent regarding a question or topic, the facilitator of the small discussion group should be prepared – and step forward – to share her own personal insights.
14. *If an answer is really off the mark*, the facilitator may need to follow-up with an inquiry and/or offer her own personal insight to help steer the conversation back on track and then have the group move on to the next question.
15. *Should someone go off on a tangent*, the facilitator should verbally bring the group back by reminding all of the purpose of the discussion and then facilitate the wrap-up for the question that was supposed to have been addressed.
16. *Should someone begin to speak poorly of someone or some group* as part of her response to a question, steer the conversation away from any negative or uncharitable speech, gossip, or griping. If your gentle effort doesn't seem to be working, speak with authority by clearly stating that the group has come together that evening to discuss Scripture not the focus of the troubling conversation and then move the discussion/focus on to the next topic.
17. If questions, misunderstandings or disagreements arise, refer them to the Question Box for a designated person to research and discuss later.
18. Realize (and encourage your group to realize) that some questions about the Bible cannot be resolved, even by experts. Don't get stuck on issues for which there are no clear answers.

19. Give affirmation when you feel it is needed, useful, or warranted.
20. Allow and foster a sense of spontaneity in the discussion.
21. If you (as a facilitator) prepared something to give to those in your group that is focused on some part of the night's topic, present that handout or added information after that part of the topic has been addressed by the person whose turn it is to give their answer.
22. Be careful not to dominate the discussion. Try to link what you say to the comments of others so that the group remains on the topic.
23. When discussing your own personal thoughts or feelings, use "I" language. Be as personal and honest as appropriate and be very cautious about giving advice to others.
24. Close your discussion group with a prayer of gratefulness to the Lord. Perhaps each person in your group would like to join in this spontaneous prayer of gratefulness.

Rules for faith sharing

1. Be the first witness so that your learners can learn the process. Always begin with “I” – faith sharing is not about someone else or about a general gospel concept. It is about how you are affected by the words of Jesus in the gospel.
2. Don’t let anyone monopolize the sharing. Everyone needs to have a turn (whether in small or large groups). Never embarrass anyone if they don’t want to share. Gently coach them in private.
3. Timing is crucial. Don’t rush through the process so that learners will feel it isn’t really important. Nor should you allow sharing to go on so long that learners begin speaking about other things.

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