

GROUP LIFE LEADERS

LEADING A GREAT DISCUSSION THROUGH ANY STUDY GUIDE

Whether you are a new leader or leading for years, we all face challenges as we lead our group through a discussion. Knowing how to get the most out of a given study guide can be challenging. These tips elevate your conversations and encourage spiritual growth in your small group.

Remember YOU Are Leading. Any guide you use is just a guide. The guide doesn't lead the conversation—you do. We encourage you to take ownership. Bring your creativity, personality and experience to make it a great conversation. This might mean spending a few minutes editing the discussion guide to fit your group better. How can you do that? Try some of the following ideas.

TIPS FOR LEADING DISCUSSIONS

Don't Ask Every Question on the Guide

Some of you might think this sounds crazy! But the truth is most groups won't have great conversations around every question in a reasonable timeframe. When leaders ask many questions, it often leads to surface-level discussions. Camping out on 4-6 great questions is always better than rushing through 10-12. Before the group meeting, identify the right 4-6 questions to focus on.

Personalize It

Once you have identified the right 4-6 questions, personalize them to fit your group. Adjust them if you think it will lead to better conversation. If you are unsure how to do this, just try some stuff out. Over time you will find a good rhythm.

Ask Short Follow-Up Questions

People tend to stay on the surface when they first answer a question. They might dip their toe into being personal and vulnerable but rarely jump in with both feet. You can draw them out as a leader by showing interest in learning more. Here are some examples:

- "That's interesting. Could you say more?" or simply, "Tell me more."
- "What makes you think/feel that way?"
- "You mentioned _____. Do you think that is connected to _____ in your life?"
- "How has that influenced you?"
- "Why do you think that is?"

BONUS: Consider using these in regular life. You will be surprised at how well these work in creating better conversation.

End with Tangible Next Steps

Each person should walk out of a small group discussion with one tangible next step. The step might be reading the Bible three times this week, talking to that coworker about Jesus, praying for that person, resting in God's goodness, beginning to forgive or other things. Whatever it is, everyone should have a small (or large) step they want to take because of this discussion. BONUS: Consider asking about the steps people were going to take the next time you meet.

Avoid Negative Talk about the Guide or Questions

Often when we feel uncomfortable while leading, we can fall into a habit of criticizing the quality of the guide. Unfortunately, this sabotages the conversation by putting a negative view in everyone's mind. If there is a question you don't find helpful, simply skip it or reword it. Remember, the guide isn't leading the conversation—you are.

REACH OUT TO STAFF CONTACT

We hope you find these tips helpful as you make the most of any discussion guide. Please contact your staff for more specific tips for your group. They are there to help and eager to assist you.