

### 3. Leading

#### A. Discussion in the Word.

- The good news is that you don't have to re-preach the message! You don't have to be a content expert that is able to answer every question. Your role is to facilitate discussion. There may be questions that you do not know the answer to. It's great to say, "let me look into that" or "Let's ask Pastor Ron about that from his message." Don't succumb to the pressure to know all the answers. None of us do!



#### Using the Discussion Guide:

- Make sure you have read the passage and the discussion guide!
- The discussion guide roughly follows the outline of the passage. There are far more questions than you will get through in an evening! The goal is for you to pick some questions you think will be meaningful to your group before you meet. Perhaps highlight several from each section on the guide. Don't try to get to all of them. If a couple of questions promote good depth of biblical conversation with great follow up questions, it is a successful discussion.
- Usually there are a few questions that bring in another verse or passage. Include these! This will allow for deepening of study and those that were there on Sunday can see how other passages connect. This can keep community group from just being the sermon summarized.
- A good discussion needs structure. Know where you are going. An easy way to do this is to read the text and follow the flow of the outline. Not everyone will have been there on Sunday. This also reinforces what was taught on Sunday.

#### Leading an Engaging Discussion:

- The key to leading an engaging discussion is learning how to **ask good questions**. For instance, a yes or no question will produce a yes or no answer and very little discussion. An open-ended question or one that asks the question why, or what do you think will often lead to vibrant discussion.
- There are three types of questions that make a good discussion.

##### 1. Get to know you / opener

The opener question is important even though it may seem unimportant. It gets people talking, getting to know each other and interested in the subject in a non-threatening way. If the one in the guide doesn't work, you can come up with your own.

##### 2. Digging into the Word

These questions seek to understand the text better, and also bring in other passages and thoughts not shared on Sunday. The members of your group may have questions that came to mind from Sunday.

##### 3. Application

These questions and discussion points explore how the application points from Sunday work themselves out in our lives. These also may include sharing and prayer for each other to put these applications into practice.

- **Follow up questions are essential.** It is usually the second question that digs deeper and spurs discussion. Follow up questions are often not in the discussion guide. Watch people and see where people are passionate in their answers, then dig a little deeper there. Follow up questions often are “why?” or “how does that work out?” questions. Keep asking yourself what difference it makes and then you will go down the path to better follow up questions. Follow up questions are not usually confrontational, but rather dig deeper into what has just been said. Also watch for when the well is dry and move on. ☺
- Asking good questions takes practice – don’t be discouraged if you ask some that no one responds to! People may be thinking and reflecting. They also may not understand the question. Rewording it often helps generate a response. Some weeks, people are just tired and don’t have much to say. Don’t take that personally, but seek for other ways to draw them out.
- Be gentle and understanding when someone answers a question in a way that makes no sense. Often I have found that clarification helps to clear things up. Ask follow up questions like “Can you explain what you mean a little more?” Make sure you understand them before concluding they are in error. If someone is in error, you may want to start by asking the group what others think about the question. Then go back to God’s Word and gently point out what it says. The key is to lead people to God’s Word so that they come to understand truth and their own conclusions rather than simply adopting someone else’s conclusion.
- Don’t feel the need to break the silence. It will be tempting to answer the question or go into teaching mode. Let silence go for a little bit. Then try restating the question rather than answering it. You can also ask if they know what the question is asking. The key is to not be anxious about silence. People will feel your discomfort.
- It may be helpful to afterwards ask an individual or two what questions they found the most helpful to discuss. As you hear their responses, you are training your mind the direction of questions that are beneficial for your group.
- Here is an interesting article on why Jesus never answered questions.  
<http://michaelkelleyministries.com/2012/01/why-didnt-jesus-ever-answer-questions/>

#### **Avoiding Pitfalls:**

- Be sure that everyone has a chance to share and one member does not dominate discussion. You can do this by asking a follow-up question like, “are there any other ideas?” If the person continues to dominate, talk to them privately before the next meeting and share the goal of discussion and how they can help by allowing others to participate. Be sure to make eye-contact with those not participating so they feel invited to contribute.

#### **B. Prayer Time**

- You will want to allow 15 to 20 minutes for prayer within the group. This usually is at the end, but some groups have enjoyed beginning their time with this. That is up to you. Depending on the size of the group, you may want to pray together or split into smaller groups.
- Allow an open time for prayer requests, but keep it focused and moving. It is important for people to share, but if it turns into a life story every week, you will need to move the time along. You can say something like, “We need to have enough time for all the requests, but maybe we can talk afterwards.”
- Then have a time of prayer open to anyone. Please do not force people to pray that may not want to. Encourage people to pick one or two requests to pray for.
- Sometimes prayer requests can expand far beyond the group. If this is happening frequently or consuming a lot of time, you will want to re-focus this time on how we can pray for each other personally.
- Be thinking of ways the group can be the answer to prayer! Also be sure to celebrate answered prayer and thank God and give Him the glory.