

Overview:

Small Group discussions are excellent an opportunity for a group to discuss and take ownership of biblical principles. A discussion that is well planned and led can be very helpful and practical for those attending, and will help bring people closer to God in practice, and not just in theory.

Outline

- I. Preparing the discussion questions
 - A. Define main point. This is key to success.
 - B. If DQs are related to sermon, make generic enough that people that didn't hear it can participate
 - C. Start off with an ice breaker to get everyone talking
 1. Can be unrelated to topic just to break the ice
 2. Can lead into topic
 - D. Don't have closed ended questions
 1. No "yes"/"no" answers
 2. Leave room for different opinions
 - E. Design questions to produce discussion.
 1. Stay away from fruitless controversies
 - a) If the Bible isn't clear on something, maybe it is not a real big deal to God.
 - b) Emphasize what the Bible emphasizes.
 2. Keep it simple.
 - a) If you have to use the Greek to get a point across, you're probably getting too deep.
 - b) New people should not feel like they are not smart enough to participate.
 3. Keep it practical
 - F. Have 4-7 questions total
 - G. End with a question that wraps it up. Try to get them to personalize the main point that you want them to get. At times, have everyone answer this.
- II. Prep for meeting
 - A. Work through questions
 1. apprentice and wives too
 - B. Have "extra" questions ready
 - C. Turn off phone
 - D. Ps and Ts
 - E. Arrange chairs in circle relatively closely
- III. Leading the discussion
 - A. Encourage participation
 1. Let several people answer
 2. Have people take turns reading passages or questions.
 - B. Try to not be the answer man
 1. Let others give answers
 2. Don't end every question with your thoughts
 3. If someone directs a question at you, throw it back at the group
 - C. Set the mood
 1. Be warm, friendly, easy going, etc...
 2. Give eye contact
 3. Give feedback - "That's a good thought"
 4. Participate - write down people's answers
 5. Call people by name
- IV. Handling problems
 - A. What if no one answers?
 1. Don't be afraid of silence - some is okay
 2. Direct questions
 - a) Ask a quiet person to answer an easy question
 - b) Ask someone if they have a thought when they seem concerned or contemplative
 - c) Let them know if you think a question is hard and they may need to think for a minute.
 3. Reword question
 - B. What if someone gives a "wrong" answer?
 1. Be very gracious towards them
 - a) "That's interesting"
 - b) "Okay, does anyone else have a thought?"
 2. Let them discover the answers rather than telling them the answers
 - a) Wait and see if apprentice or someone else corrects it
 - b) Ask them more questions to steer them in the right direction like, "Well, that's a good thought, but what do you guys think about this verse..."
 - C. Correct if necessary
 - a) Let it slide if not important
 - b) Say, "Here's another thought" and then share a

verse or thought that clarifies the issue.

- D. What if you get side-tracked?
1. Is the direction we are headed more important than the main point I wanted them to get?
 2. Is this a frequent problem?
- E. What if someone is talking too much?
1. Change your non-verbal feedback
 - a) Look away
 - b) Glance at the clock
 2. Cut them off as politely as possible with something like, "Those are some really good thoughts, but we probably need to press on and start on the next question."
 3. Discuss your vision for the discussion time with them outside of team if it is a continual problem
 4. Remember: Discussion is the key, feel free to leave questions hanging a little.
- V. The role of the apprentice
- A. Throw out answers during long pauses
 - B. Help keep the discussion on track
 - C. Steer answers toward sound truth

D. Conclusion:

E. Small Group discussions are times of sharing where people have an opportunity to openly discuss a topic in a comfortable setting. They should be well led to create a good environment, and to direct people to a certain course of action or understanding.

Reference

Terry Bartley, *Discussion Groups: A Practical Guide to Successful Small Group Discussions*, Great Commission International, 1985

LTC Manual appendix:

Small Groups:

- *Sample ice breakers*
- *Sample discussion questions*