

Leading a Small Group Discussion

1. Prepare

Work through the materials and think yourself into your group meeting.

2. Pray

Pray before your group meeting.

3. Don't talk too much

Your job is to get people thinking and talking and keep the discussion moving from member to member rather than talking to the members.

4. Be A Good Listener

So simple yet so hard to do. Don't just listen to what people are saying – actively listen. The best leaders listen with their eyes and ears.

4. Don't Answer Your Own Questions

The whole purpose of asking the question is to create an environment where group members feel safe to share. It's not about getting the right answer. When people are silent with some of these questions, embrace the silence: this might be where the introverts are thinking and the Holy Spirit is speaking!

5. Encourage Responses

If no one really speaks you could say something like, "Paul, you look like you were going to say something..."

6. Ask Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions help group members to say more than a simple yes or no. Use 'what?' or 'how?' questions to get people to open up.

7. Try To Involve Everyone

Your group might be too big if everyone isn't able to speak their thoughts. Groups of over eight members will have difficulty doing this. In those cases, it might be best to divide the group into smaller groups for some of the time.

8. Keep the Main Thing, the Main Thing!

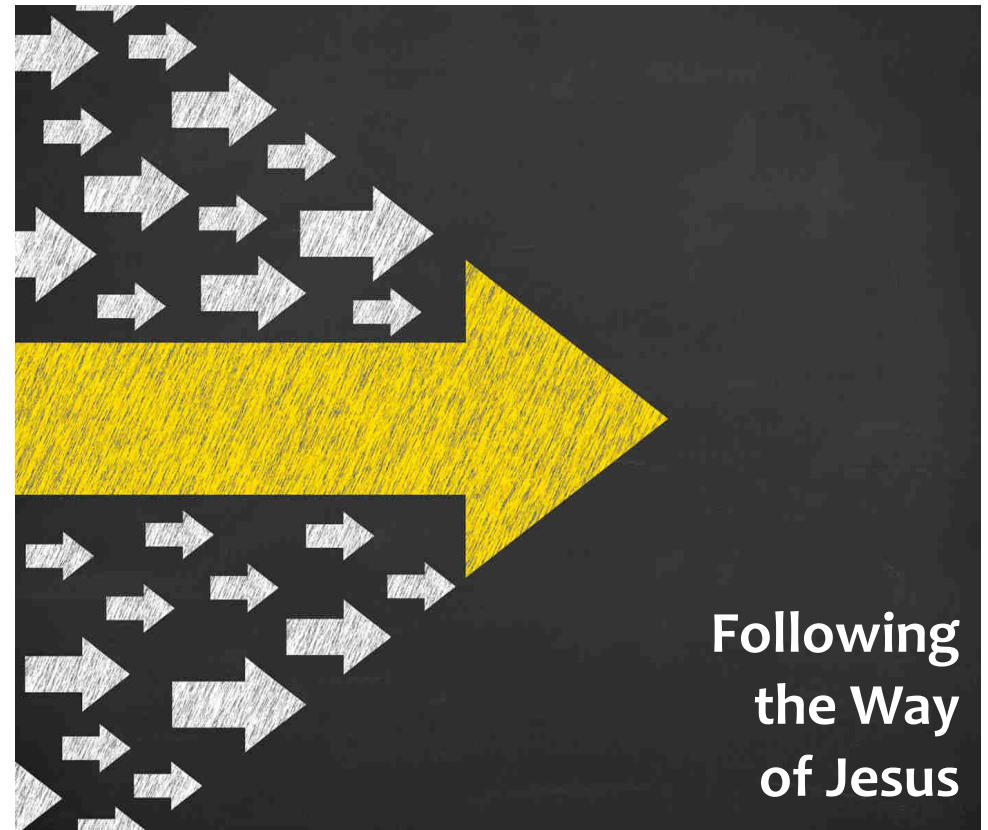
Remember, the focus is not on getting through the material and you may not cover all the questions. If the discussion is fruitful then allow group members the time they need to discuss, process, and grow with the information.

9. Manage the Time

Keep an eye on the clock. Don't let things get bogged down in interesting but irrelevant discussion. Bring things back on track and take the initiative to move things on when it feels right.

10. Leave time for application.

Make sure people have time to think about the difference that this discussion will have in their daily 'frontline' lives.



Discussion Guides for Small Groups

1. Following the Way of Jesus

Key Text:

“I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.** And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

(Matthew 28:18-20 NLT).

WAY IN

1. The word disciple is based on the idea of being a ‘learner’. Can people in the group think of a time they learned a new skill? What was involved? What similarities are there between learning their new skill and learning to follow Jesus?

DISCUSS

1. What do people understand by the word ‘disciple’? If they thought of themselves as ‘followers/disciples of Jesus’, does that feel different to ‘being a Christian’?

2. Read Luke 14:25-35. What do these verses tell us about what it means to (a) be a disciple and (b) to make disciples?

3. In the key text Jesus commands his disciples to make more disciples. Why is this Jesus’ priority do you think? (He could have commanded them to ‘evangelise’, ‘heal the sick’ or ‘plant churches’ for example).

4. Notice that Jesus’ disciples were to teach new disciples to ‘obey’ the things that Jesus had taught them. It is not enough to teach someone what the commands of Jesus are - we need to be taught how to *obey* them. (see Matthew 7:21). How do you teach someone obedience do you think? How have members in the group learned it over the years?

5. What extra insights does Matthew 12:46-50 give us about being a disciple of Jesus, and how do Jesus’ words there connect with our key text?

6. Imagine that your small group were the group that Jesus addresses in this passage. You are the ones commanded to ‘make disciples’. How would you go about it?

WAY OUT

1. As the group thinks about where they will be ‘going’ this coming week, what challenges do they face as disciples of Jesus? Are there any specific commands that they are finding it hard to obey?

After a time of sharing, pray for one another.

CONTEXT (for leaders)

Matthew 28:19-20. “Making *disciples” was the sort of thing *rabbis would do, but Jesus’ followers are to make disciples for Jesus, not for themselves. The passage suggests that making disciples involves three elements:

- (1) **Going**, presumably to “the nations” who are being disciplined. Many Jews outside Palestine sought converts among the “nations” (which can also be translated as “Gentiles” or “pagans”). But only a few converts ever studied under rabbis, so the idea of making Gentiles full disciples—followers of Jesus who would learn from and serve him—goes beyond this Jewish tradition. Isaiah predicted that Israel would be a witness to (or against) the nations in the end time (e.g., 42:6; 43:10; 44:8).
- (2) **(Baptizing** them. Because *baptism was an act of conversion (used for Gentiles converting to Judaism), it means initiating people to the faith. Jewish people recognized God as “Father” and his *Spirit as divine (sometimes as an aspect of God), but would find shocking “the Son” named between them.
- (3) **Teaching** them Jesus’ commandments recorded in Matthew. Rabbis made disciples by teaching them.

Keener, Craig S.. The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (p. 125).
InterVarsity Press.