

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!

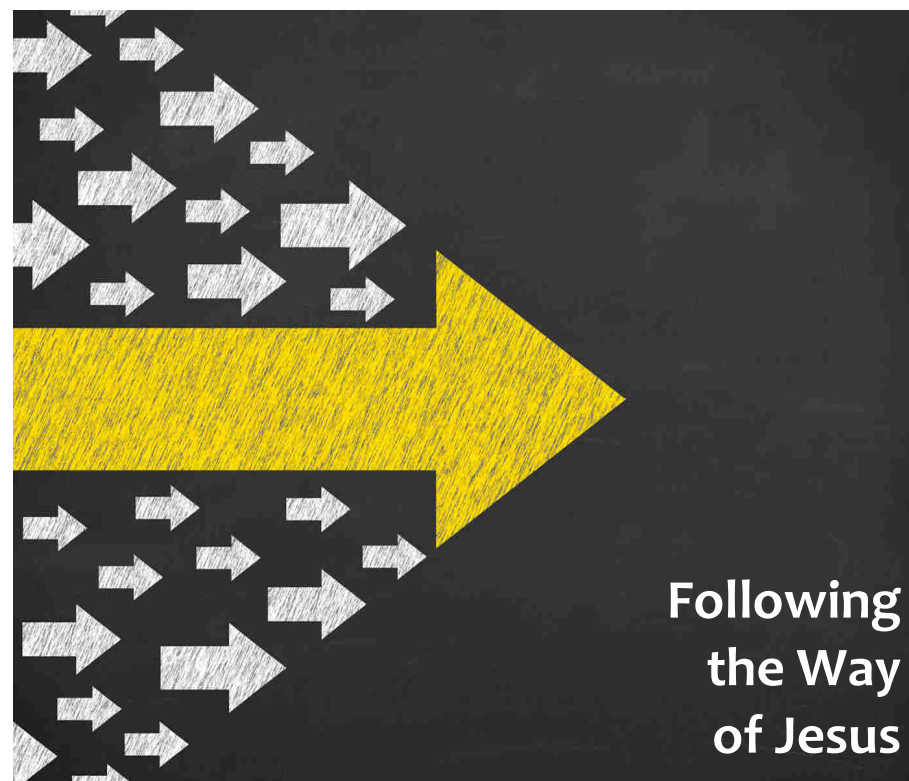
Remember, the focus is not on getting through the material and you may not cover all the questions. If the discussion is fruitful then allow group members the time they need to discuss, process, and grow with the information.

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.



Following
the Way
of Jesus

Discussion Guides for Small Groups

Christ in our past, present and future

Key Text:

2 Corinthians 1 vs 1-22

WAY IN

Paul opens his letter with a clear sense of who he is and where his priorities lie, he is an Apostle by the will of God, and he then looks back at his life journey.

DISCUSS

We can look to the past in many ways, wistfully wishing the good old days were here again, regretfully for things we have done or have been done to us or positively for clues to the future. When you look back on life so far what are your main thoughts?

Paul looks back on his sufferings (2 Cor 6, Acts 21, Galatians 2) and tells the story of how God has changed his life. In what ways has God changed you?

When Paul looks back on his sufferings he doesn't ask "why" but chooses an attitude of thankfulness as he finds comfort in God. How do you experience God's comfort? How much can we choose to be "thankful" or "happy"?

In vs 8&9 Paul is outside his comfort zone. When we are taken outside our comfort zone we learn, grow and expand our comfort zone. "First times" are key, the first time we pray, share about Jesus, speak in tongues etc. Look back to when you did something outside your comfort zone, what was it? How did you grow? How did God show up?

When you look back, what was it that gave your energy? That zest for life? That sense of moving in God's will?

When the Bible talks of the idea of calling it talks about being fruitful disciples and followers of Jesus in our life. But within that overall mantle our priorities can vary according to the season in our life. We always balance work, recreation, family, friendships and physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. What season are you in?

Read Mark 1 vs35-39. Notice how Jesus did not respond to the demands on his time in the way that may have been expected. He knew where his priorities lay.

If you had a watering can full of the Holy Spirit and looked at all the opportunities you have, where would you sprinkle that can.

Three things can stop us stepping into the future with Jesus.

- (1) Being a follower of Jesus is hard! (2 Cor 11, 2 Cor 1 vs 4). When life gets tough, we can harden our hearts and give up on Jesus or we can soften our hearts and receive his comfort. How have you known his comfort?
- (2) *We can be concerned about what others think (2 Cor 1 vs 15-17). If we are truly following the way of Jesus it doesn't really matter what others think of us. Our priority is to stay true to God's call on life, not to please other people, a fear of upsetting people can hold us back from being faithful followers of Jesus. What would it look like if we weren't worried about what people think of us, but we were faithful to Jesus in all things?*
- (3) How much do we believe in God's promises? (2 Cor 1 vs 20-22). We are sealed by God's Holy Spirit. How many times has your heart been set on fire recalling the promises that God has made to each one of us?

WAY OUT

How easy is it to be stuck in the past and never move on?

How easy is it to get stuck in the present, never making a decision?

How easy is it to step into the future and all that God has for you there?

Read and reflect on Hebrews 12 vs 2 – what has this meant for you, practically?

Pray for the issues that you have each raised.

CONTEXT

This is a new year message, a teaser for Digging Deeper in February and part of the Following the Way of Jesus series.

Paul had promised to make a second visit to the Church in Corinth but chose not to as the first visit was a painful experience to him and the church, and the church does not seem to have changed as a result. Instead he writes this second letter.

This change did not go down well with the Church at Corinth – this is the background to the letter and important for the text in italics.