

## 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!

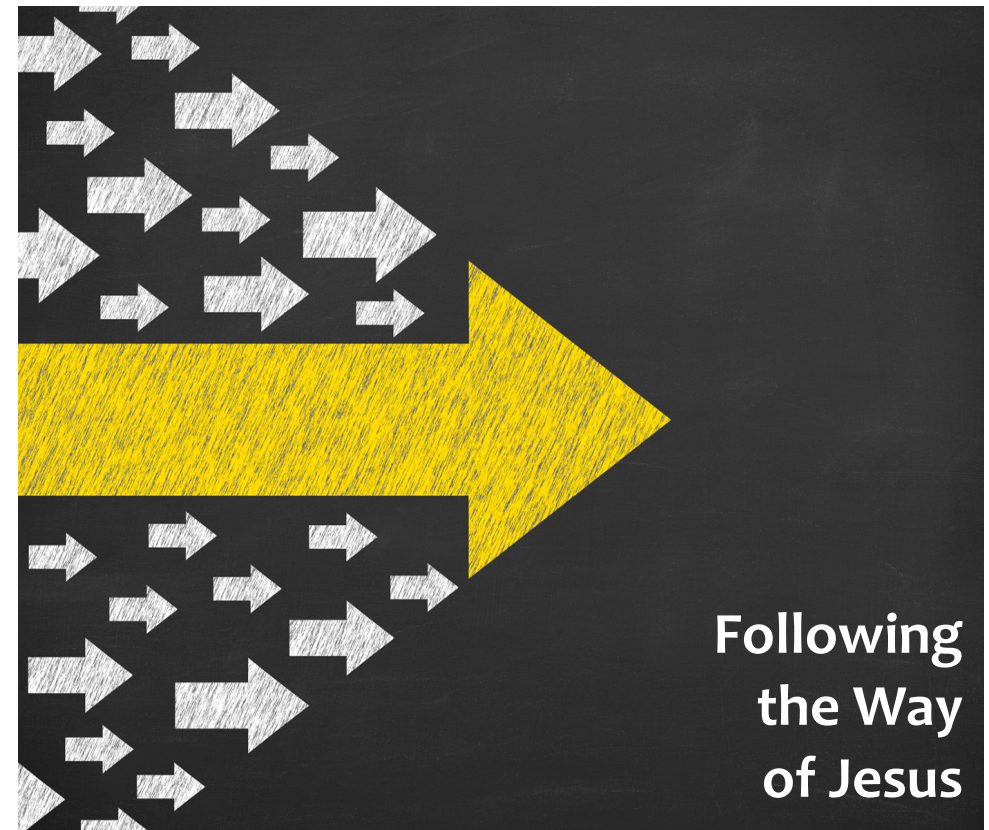
Remember, the focus is not on getting through the material and you may not cover all the questions. If the discussion is fruitful then allow group members the time they need to discuss, process, and grow with the information.

### 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

## 4. Following the Way of Jesus: The Way of Friendship

### Key Text:

Matthew 11: 25 – 30

25 At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. 28 Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

### WAY IN

As a group consider some of the different titles for God and/or Jesus? Then reflect on what sort of response the different titles for God or Jesus generates within: how do they make you feel and think about God/ Jesus? How does the idea of friendship with God make you think and feel?

### DISCUSS

1. Jesus reveals God (v 27). What does the reading tell us about the revelation that Jesus gives? What picture does it paint of God the Father?
2. One of the profound ways in which Jesus connected with people and therefore revealed who God is was by calling people into friendship. (Read John 15: 14; Luke 7: 34). How would you define friendship and how might friendship with God differ from our human friendships?
3. Read again the reading and reflect of the nature of the Father Son relationship into which we are invited. What are the key features?
4. Friendship with God is the gift offered to us by Jesus (see John 17:2,3). Consider how this friendship is nurtured?
5. Consider how being ‘anchored’ in friendship with God can free us from the burden of living under the weight of trying to live up to the mark? (v29, v30)

6. If being a disciple means learning to obey Jesus, how does knowing Jesus as a friend serve as the source for this faith obedience? Which comes first friendship or obedience?

### WAY OUT

How can you develop a deeper friendship with Jesus? This week rethink engaging in spiritual disciplines such as prayer, bible reading etc as meeting with a friend rather than another ought. Does this make a difference?

### Commentary Notes

Jesus’ yoke and burden consist in the obligations he has commanded his disciples to take on themselves (as in chapters 5–7, for example). The comfortableness of his yoke and the lightness of his burden contrast with the heavy burdens the scholars and Pharisees have put on their followers according to chapter 23 (see especially verses 1–4). But in what do this comfortableness and lightness consist? In an interpretation of the Law less stringent than that of the scholars and Pharisees? Hardly! According to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus interpreted the Law more stringently than they did (see especially 5:17–48).

In contrast, the comfortableness of Jesus’ yoke and the lightness of his burden consist in his meekness (= gentleness, considerateness) and humility of heart. These characteristics make his demands, more stringent though they are, easier to bear than the lesser demands of the scholars and Pharisees, whose overweening desire for recognition made them treat common folk like camels or donkeys to be overloaded rather than as yokefellows with whom to share in pulling. The relief Jesus promises doesn’t wait for the consummation. It begins immediately on coming to him. “Learn from me” means to learn from Jesus’ words and example, “learn” being the verbal form of “disciple” in Matthew’s original Greek. God’s and Jesus’ recognition of each other as Father and Son makes learning from Jesus an education of the highest possible order. Since soul and body are distinguished from each other in 10:28 (compare 6:25), “your souls” probably means “your inner selves.”

Gundry, Robert H.. Commentary on Matthew (Commentary on the New Testament Book #1) . Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.