

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!

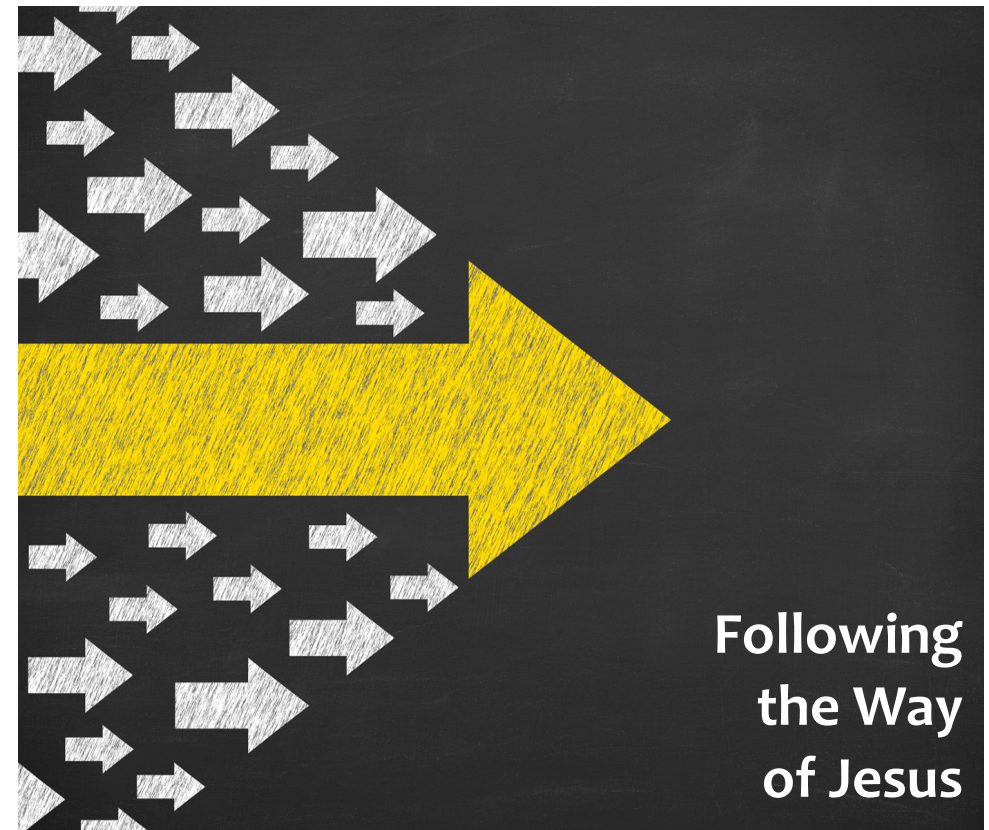
Remember, the focus is not on getting through the material and you may not cover all the questions. If the discussion is fruitful then allow group members the time they need to discuss, process, and grow with the information.

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

6. Following the Way of Jesus:

The Way of Love

Key Text:

Matthew 10:37 'Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.'

WAY IN

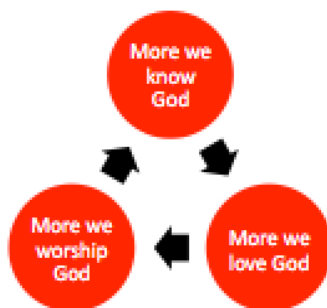
Describe a time this week when you knew you loved God and why. Or a time when you found it hard to love God and why.

DISCUSS

1. Read Matthew 10:34-39. Why do you think Jesus uses such shocking language to describe how we must love him? When following Jesus command in Matthew 28:18-20, how important do you think it would be to include this when teaching new disciples to obey what Jesus has commanded.
2. Read Mark 12: 29-31. Why do you think that the commandment to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength comes first? Is it easier to love God or to love our neighbour? You may like to read some of 1 John

4:7-21 and discuss why John says, 'Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar.' (verse 20).

3. Can you think of examples of ways in which loving others flows from our love for God and is enabled by it?
4. Jesus' command to love others extended to our enemies (Matthew 5:43-45) and he seemed to have delighted to eat with 'tax collectors and sinners' (e.g. Matthew 9:10-11). What might that look like for us in 21st Century Britain?
5. What are the advantages of worshipping God with other people?
6. What truth do you think there is in this diagram? Share ways you have found which help you to know, love and worship God more? You may like to look at the TBC Growing in Grace leaflets to give you more ideas.



WAY OUT

Choose one way that others have suggested or you have seen on the Growing in Grace leaflets to try this week to help you to know, love and worship God more this week and agree to share with each other next time you meet how you got on with it. Pray for each other.

Commentary Notes

Matthew 10:37

The love that Jesus demands is something very deep and strong – like the closest family bonds of affection that we have, but greater than that and more than that. Jesus' demand to be loved like this implies that we must have a new nature – a new heart. How else can we love someone we have never seen more affectionately than we love our dear children? Loving like this is not in our fallen human nature, Jesus made this plain when he said to those who did not love him, "If God were your Father, you would love me" (John 8:42). In other words, "The reason you do not love me is that you are not in the family of God. You don't have the family nature – the family spirit, the family heart, preferences, tendencies, inclinations. God is not your Father."

Jesus came as God's unique, divine Son (Matt. 11:27) so that fallen sinners like us could become non-divine sons of God with hearts and ways like his. "To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, [Jesus] gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). That's why Jesus could say, "Love your enemies ... and you will be sons of the Most High" (Luke 6:35). Through the new birth and faith, Jesus gives us the rights and the inclinations of the children of God. At the centre of those inclinations is love for Jesus, God's Son.

Mark 12:29-31

Jesus came to restore human beings to the kind of relationship with God and each other that we were created for. The most important thing he has to say about that restored relationship with God is that we were meant to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. Jesus assumes that loving God means loving him for who he really is, and so his vision of who God is permeates all that he says. God is Creator. He created human beings (Matt. 19:4) and all the universe (Mark 13:19). He sustains all he made, governing its smallest details of birds and lilies (Matt. 10:29). He is a God of wisdom (Luke 11:49) and righteousness (Matt. 6:33) and power (Matt. 22:29) and wrath (John 3:36) and compassion (Luke 15:20). He ... can be known as a Father who loves us as his children (John 1:12; 16:27). Jesus demands of us, "Love this God, Love him with all that you are for all that he is."