

## 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!

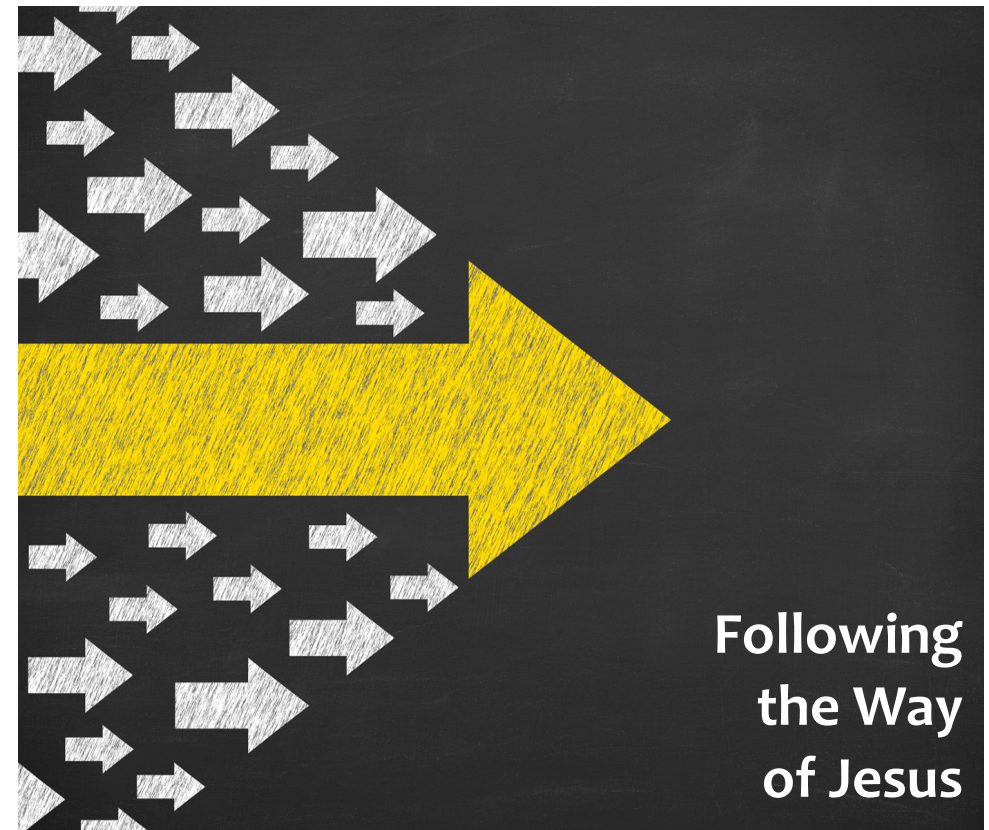
Remember, the focus is not on getting through the material and you may not cover all the questions. If the discussion is fruitful then allow group members the time they need to discuss, process, and grow with the information.

### 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

## 5. Following the Way of Jesus: The Way of Forgiveness

## WAY IN

Which is harder: *asking* for forgiveness from someone you have wronged; *receiving* forgiveness from someone you have wronged; or *offering* forgiveness to someone you have wronged?

## Read Matthew 18:21-35

### Key Text: Matthew 18:21,22

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me?

Up to seven times?”

22 Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

## DISCUSS

1. Why do you think Peter asked the question in verse 21? What view of forgiveness does his question suggest?
2. What is the point of Jesus’ reply in verse 22?

3. The man’s debt is vast (24). What does Jesus intend to suggest about our standing before God, by choosing such a staggering amount of debt?

4. The man in the story is moved by the realisation of his state before the King (26). How real to you is your indebtedness before God? Can you remember a time when you marvelled at God’s forgiveness?

5. The second half of the story (28-33) turns to the man’s willingness to forgive someone who is in debt to him. Why do you think he refuses to forgive this person (28)?

What point is Jesus making here about our willingness to forgive others?

6. Imagine you were advising a Christian friend who had been wronged about forgiveness? What advice would you give them based on this story and the key text?

7. Why is forgiveness such a big deal for Jesus (see v35)? Why does he insist on it so powerfully?

## WAY OUT

Is there anyone experiencing a ‘forgiveness issue’ at the moment?

How can you support one another?

Pray for one another.

### Commentary Notes: Matthew 18:21-22

With “Lord” Peter acknowledges Jesus’ lordship. Peter’s question introduces an emphasis on the need for a person sinned against to forgive the person who sinned against him. Presupposed is repentance on the part of the person who sinned (see 18:23–35). Because the number seven connotes completeness (there are seven days in a full week, for example), “Up to seven times?” seems to project a wholly sufficient number of forgivenesses. But out of Lamech’s formula of seventy-sevenfold revenge in Genesis 4:24 Jesus constructs a formula of four hundred and ninetyfold forgiveness: “up to seventy times seven times!” (compare the requirement that you forgive others their trespasses to have God forgive you your own trespasses [6:14–15]). Several features put great emphasis on this formula of what amounts to limitless forgiveness: (1) abruptness due to the lack of a conjunction such as “And” or “But” preceding “Jesus says to him”; (2) the present tense in “Jesus says to him”; (3) “I don’t tell you up to seven times”; (4) the introduction of “up to seventy times seven times” with “rather”; (5) the connotation of completeness in the number “seven”; and (6) the enhancement of that connotation with the multiple, “seventy.” Jesus has answered Peter’s question concerning how many times a disciple ought to forgive his fellow disciple. Now the slate is clean for Jesus to talk about how much a disciple ought to forgive, which he goes on to do in 18:23–27:

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