

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!

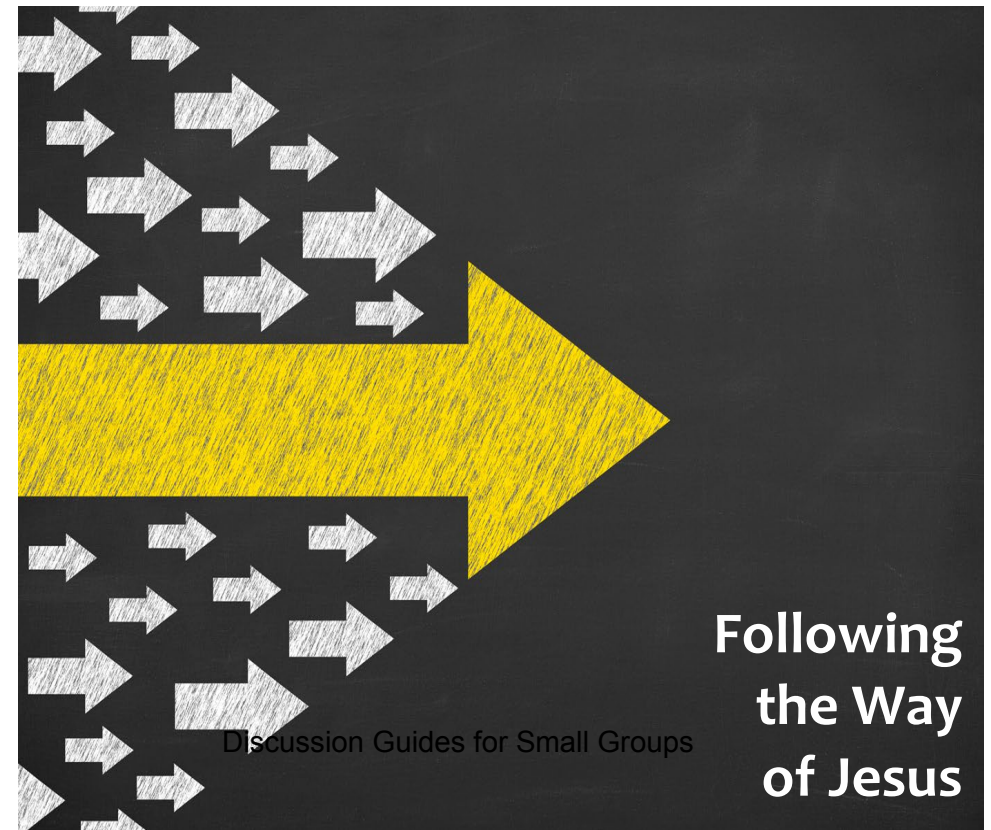
Remember, the focus is not on getting through the material and you may not cover all the questions. If the discussion is fruitful then allow group members the time they need to discuss, process, and grow with the information.

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.



The way of contentment

Key Text:

Matthew 6 vs 24-35

WAY IN

Worry is part of everyday life, what part does it play in your life?

What is your reaction when people say to you "do not worry"?

DISCUSS

Jesus mentions 3 things, our body, the clothes we put on it and what we eat and drink. These are basic needs, we need food and drink and clothes to survive and to keep our bodies working. Jesus seems to assume that as followers of him we will not struggle for the ordinary provisions of life and instructs us to live in that kind of world.

How have you known this provision in your life?

What does this mean for Christians in those parts of the world that are less developed than the UK?

In Verse 25 Jesus is challenging our values and priorities and says that worry distorts them.

In what ways can worry do this?

Think of some examples where this has been true in your life.

In Verse 26 Jesus is saying that worry is a failure to see things as they really are. God is both creator and sustainer.

In what ways has worry distorted your way of seeing?

In Verse 27 Jesus is saying that worry is a waste of

energy. A recent survey concluded that 40% of what the average person worries about will never happen, 30% is about things in the past that can't be changed, 12% is about criticism by others (most of which is untrue), 10% is about health (which can get worse because of stress) and 8% is about real problems that have to be faced.

How has worry affected your health?

Share examples of things that you have worried out needlessly.

In vs 28-30 Jesus is saying that worry ignores God's faithfulness. If we stop and think about our lives as followers of Jesus it should not be hard to find examples of when God's faithfulness to us has been shown. Worry makes us forgetful of those times.

What examples can you share of God's faithfulness in your life?

How would you react if Jesus said to you, just as he said to his disciples "O you of little faith"?

WAY OUT

Jesus is not saying we should be **careless** about money and things, sit back, do nothing and all will be well, even the birds of the air have to flap their wings to stay in the air! He is saying be **carefree**, live by the principles of the kingdom

and see that by doing that it re-shapes what we value most. As well as being content Jesus is calling us to Trust. God is, after all, Jehovah-Jireh (Genesis 22).

George Muller, local lad and founder of the orphanages in Ashley Down, Bristol once said. "**The beginning of worry is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of worry**"

Discuss this statement, what does it mean to you?

Share and pray for one another.

CONTEXT

This is part of the Sermon on the Mount and the "therefore" at the start of the passage links the "Do not worry" to the passage before which concerns chasing after treasure on earth rather than in heaven.

It is important to see the command of Jesus in the confines offered by the context, particularly when we seek to apply it in an age that is defined by mental health issues, particularly amongst the young, who struggle with anxiety, worry, panic attacks and stress.

Sometimes it is easy to overlook what Jesus is **not** saying just as much as what he **is** saying.

A word on modern mental health terminology:

Anxiety is part of our makeup, it alerts us that something needs attention. Low levels are Okay.

Worry is when anxiety triggers the thinking part of our brain.

Panic occurs when anxiety levels are so high they by-pass the brain and hi-jack our body and mind.

Stress is when life gets too much and can damage our health.