

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

The Prophets: 1. Introduction

WAY IN

Ask each person what is the first thing that comes into their mind when they hear the word 'prophecy'.

Read: Jeremiah 1

Key Text: Jeremiah 1:9.

The the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I have put my words in your mouth"

DISCUSS

1. Jeremiah was one of several hesitant prophets.

- What was his reason for wanting to avoid his calling to prophesy? (v6)
- What reasons do **Gideon** (Judges 6:14,15), and **Moses** give for wanting to avoid God's call (Exodus 4:8-10)

If God were to want to use members of your group to speak his word to someone else (i.e. to prophesy), what might some of their reactions be? Why might we hold back from wanting to be used by God to speak his words to others?

2. What resource does God give Jeremiah, to give him

confidence as a prophet (v8; 18-19)?

- And how about Moses (Exodus 3:11,12a)?
- How about Abraham (Genesis 26:24)?
- And Zerubbabel (Haggai 2:4)?

How does God's *presence* give us the capacity to do things that he wants us to do?

How do we remain aware of God's presence when faced with challenging tasks?

Can anyone give a story - maybe from their frontline - when God asked them to do something, and their sense of his presence helped them?

3. Prophecy is 'speaking out what is on God's heart for a particular person or group'. It is 'having Gods words in your mouth, for another person' (Jer 1: 9). What does 2 Peter 1:20,21 add to this definition of prophecy?

Using these verses (and any others you want to use), agree on a group definition for prophecy.

4. Speaking out God's prophetic word is one challenge, but perhaps the bigger challenge is 'hearing' or 'sensing' what God wants us to say in the first place. How does God 'speak' to Jeremiah (11, 13)?

God nudges Jeremiah to become more aware of what is right in front of him and gives new significance to what is already there. Does anyone have experience of God 'speaking' in this way to them? How else does God speak?

5. What if Jeremiah had refused to speak? What might the significance be for a local church or individuals if prophetic words are not shared?

WAY OUT

Spend some time in quiet. Believe that God is with you. Believe that God might want to speak through you to others in the room. If anyone senses God nudging them to share a word, or picture or Scripture for someone else, encourage them to share it.

Pray for one another especially for any who wish to receive the spiritual gift of prophecy.

Commentary Notes: Jeremiah 1

THE CALL OF Jeremiah to a prophetic ministry has similarities to other accounts of persons called into God's service. These similarities are no doubt intentional and communicate a pattern to both ancient and modern readers. God prevails on Moses in spite of the latter's objections (Ex. 3:1–15), assuring Moses that he will be with him. Ezekiel swallows a scroll given him through divine revelation (Ezek. 2:1–3:11), clearly a sign that the prophetic words to come forth from his mouth have divine origin. Elements of this commissioning pattern can be seen in the New Testament as well. The risen Christ declares to his first followers that they are to teach his word to other disciples and that he will be with them until the end of the age (Matt. 28:18–20). The apostle Paul perceives his own life in light of God's call and even more particularly describes God as One who has set him apart from his mother's womb in order to preach Christ among the Gentiles (i.e., non-Jewish nations; see Gal. 1:13–17). There are clear parallels between Paul's autobiographical description and the prophetic model of Jeremiah, set apart from his mother's womb to be a prophet to the nations. John the seer is told by the risen Christ to write a prophecy in a book and not to fear the persecution to come (Rev. 1:9–19). The human fears and frailties common to those who are called are not ultimately barriers to their service because God has declared he will be with them.

Dearman, J. Andrew. Jeremiah, Lamentations (The NIV Application Commentary) (p. 51). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.