

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!

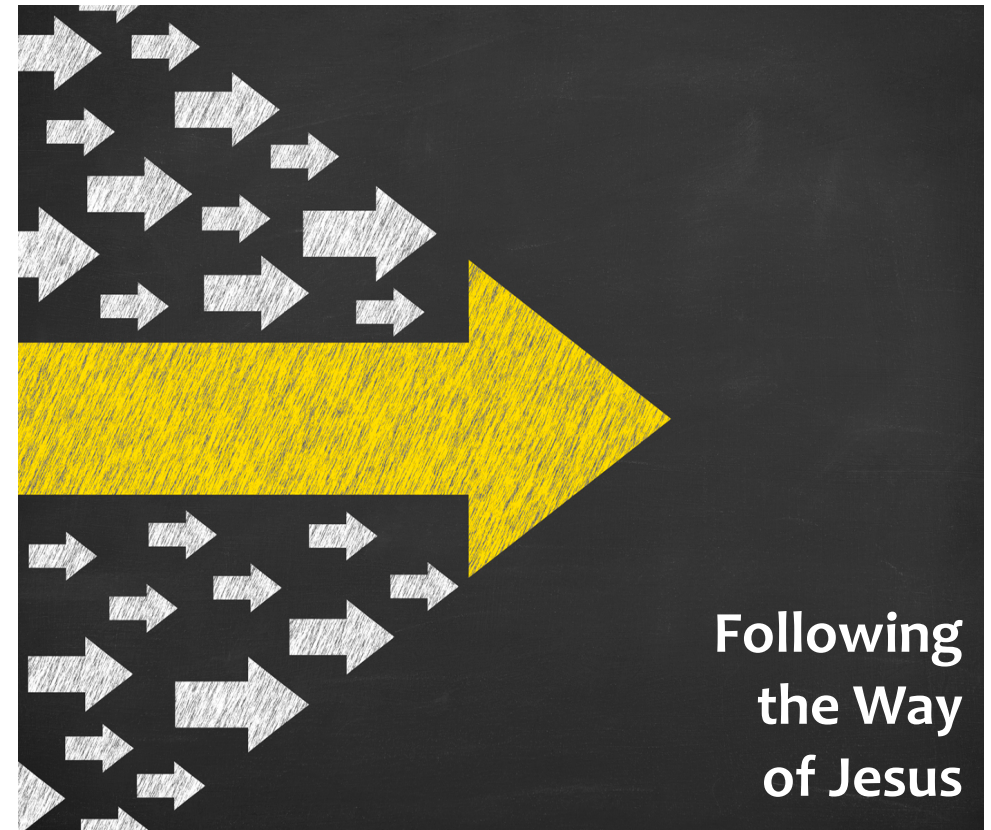
Remember, the focus is not on getting through the material and you may not cover all the questions. If the discussion is fruitful then allow group members the time they need to discuss, process, and grow with the information.

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

10. Following the Way of Jesus: The Way of Miracles

WAY IN

Ask the group if any of them have ever witnessed or experienced a miracle. Ask them to tell their story.

Read Matthew 17:14-23

Key Text: Matthew 17:19

Afterward the disciples asked Jesus privately, "Why couldn't we cast out that demon?"

DISCUSS

1. How many miraculous events can you think of surrounding the birth, life and death of Jesus?
 - How does Acts 2:22 account for this large number of miraculous events?
2. Why do you think the boy's father (Matthew 17) took his son to Jesus' disciples? What does this tell us about them?
 - Might people today bring friends or family to their

Christian friends for healing?
Why / why not?

3. How do you think the disciples felt when they couldn't help the boy (16)? How might they have explained their failure to themselves - or to the father?
 - How do we justify our inability to perform miracles in Jesus' name?

4. How would you describe Jesus' response to the situation that he walks into? (v. 17). How do you account for his reaction?

5. How does Jesus analyse the disciples' shortcomings? (v20,21). Look at these other verses that connect faith to miracles and consider together what they tell us about the quality of faith that Jesus is talking about. (Mark 2:4-5; Mark 5:24-34; Matthew 14:25-31. See too Hebrews 11:1).

- Once you've done that, discuss what gets in the way of our faith for miracles.

6. If faith is so important to our ability to perform miracles in Jesus' name:

- How do you know if you have 'too little' faith?
- How do you increase your faith?

WAY OUT

Pray for any that are known to the group, who need a miracle right now.

Pray for one another, for an increase in faith .

Pray that God might be pleased to release more of his miraculous power amongst us - especially for the miracle of salvation.

Commentary Notes: Matthew 17:19-21

17:19-21. The disciples might inquire privately to avoid further increasing their public shame. "Removing mountains" was apparently a Jewish figure of speech (attested among later rabbis for extraordinary mastery of the Torah) for that which was incomparably difficult. Mountains were thought to be the most stable of all things (cf. Ps 46:2; 125:1; Is 54:10); mustard seeds were used to define a proverbially small quantity. Jesus is thus telling the disciples that nothing God asks them to do will be impossible if they trust him; the issue is not how small their faith might be, but how large is the God in whom their faith rests. Most relevant here may be Zechariah 4:6-9; before God's servant, God would bring down all obstacles against the tasks God designates.

Keener, Craig S.. The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (pp. 88-89). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.