

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.



Discussion Guide for Small Groups

The Prophets: 2. Jesus as a prophet

WAY IN

- There are many titles given to Jesus. I wonder how many the group can name a title and what it means to you? How does thinking about Jesus as a prophet make you think and feel?

READ

- Malachi 2:17-3:2 and 4:5-6; Mark 6:14-16

KEY TEXT

- Hebrews 1: 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

DISCUSS

1. Jesus opened his public ministry with a prophet's call experience, Read (Luke 4:18 - 20 & Isaiah 61:1)

Explore what these scriptures tell us about the nature of Jesus' prophetic call. What was he about?

What do these scriptures lead us to think about our calling?

2. Symbolically acting out Malachi 3:1-2, Jesus drove merchants from the outer court of the temple. Quoting from the prophets (Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11)

Do actions speak louder than words?

What is the relationship with actions and words in the ministry of Jesus. E.g. read Mark 4: 35 - 41.

Do we find it easier to act or to speak for God? Why might this be the case?

3. Jesus the prophet challenged the status quo. E.g. read Matthew 23:27-36.

Consider when it might be appropriate to speak truth to power?

Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple he was near to the time of crucifixion. What does this tell us about his attitude toward those he spoke to and therefore ours?

4. Jesus proclaimed the coming or nearness of the kingdom of God/heaven, e.g. Matt 4: 17.

Read Gen 2: 4 - 25; Isaiah 11:1-10; Rev 21: 1 - 5 and consider what was lost, hoped for and regained?

What are some of the images of the kingdom that appear from these readings?

Can you recall any of the pictures (verbally sometimes with action) Jesus painted in the gospels?

5. On the day of Pentecost, Peter realised that Jesus'

death and resurrection was the ultimate prophetic action, revealing God's intention to restore Israel and open the floodgate of prophecy predicted by Joel (Acts 2:16-17)

If to prophesy is the birth right of all believers what might be some of the reasons we struggle with the notion?

WAY OUT

Pray for one another and ask God to give you words of encouragement, edification and blessing.

Consider what possible blockers there may be for you to enter more fully into what God has for you.

Commentary. Mark 6: 14 - 16 Everybody must have heard about the young prophet who was going about doing extraordinary things. Rumours were running round: maybe this was Elijah, who according to Jewish tradition would return to get things ready for the final judgment. (In scripture, he hadn't really died, but was instead scooped up to heaven direct, so it was appropriate that he might come back, and Malachi 4.5 had said he would do just that.) Or maybe it was one of the other great prophets of old. Jesus was behaving as a prophet; he spoke of himself as a prophet; it wasn't surprising that they thought of him like that. Herod, though, had a more precise suggestion, which is all the more interesting in the light of subsequent events. He proposed that Jesus might be John the Baptist, back from the dead: that would explain, he thought, why he had these remarkable powers. If he'd been down to death and back again anything might be possible; John hadn't performed powerful healings, so it wasn't a matter of things returning to the way they had been before, but rather of something new and dramatic which needed accounting for. Maybe, then, thought Herod, he'd come back from the dead. Herod probably didn't have a well-worked-out theory about resurrection. It was an idea around at the time, but he was using it without any precision. It shows, though, both that Jesus was indeed doing remarkable things, forcing people to unlikely explanations, and that, as we might expect with the kingdom of God, the kingdoms of the world were forced to take notice of it and, it seems, to take evasive action. It puts the question to us, if we desire or design to be kingdom-agents in our own world, on this further side of Jesus' actual resurrection: what should we be doing, that the powers of the world would hear about it and scratch their heads in puzzlement? And are we prepared for the result? Wright, Tom. Mark for Everyone (New Testament for Everyone) (pp. 71-72). SPCK.