

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: 3. New Testament Prophecy

WAY IN

Ask each person how they respond to the idea that we should eagerly desire the gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy? (1 Corinthians 14:1)

Read: 1 Corinthians 14

Key Text: 1 Corinthians 14:1

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.

DISCUSS

1. Paul says that he would like everyone to prophesy (v5)
 - What reasons does he give in this passage for saying this?
 - In your experience has prophecy been important in your Christian journey?
2. What guidelines does he give in this passage regarding prophecy? (See particularly vv 3, 4, 5, 11, 26, 31; and also 1 Corinthians 13:1-3; Acts 15:32)
 - In what ways are these helpful for those who are given a prophecy to speak out?

- In what ways are these helpful for those who believe God is speaking to them through a prophecy someone else brings?
3. In verses 22-25 (a complicated passage, so don't spend too much time trying to sort it out!) Paul sees prophecy as having value for unbelievers and believers.
 - What is the result of hearing a prophecy for unbelievers?
 - Is there anyone in the group who has experienced the effect of prophecy on an unbeliever?
 - How would you feel about giving a prophecy to an unbeliever?
 - The phrase 'the secrets of their hearts are laid bare' is a bit of a scary idea, but read John 4:7-19 and remember the guidelines for prophecy and then discuss what you think this phrase might mean, both for unbelievers and for believers.
 4. Verse 29-33 deal with issues around the giving of prophecies in corporate worship: people speaking a word as if it is a prophecy but it isn't inspired or revealed by God; and the thought that the person who speaks the prophecy is in some way taken over by God (as seems to have happened in pagan 'prophecy').

- Rather than discussing how we can 'test' or 'weigh' a prophecy (we will come back to this in a future week) consider how Paul's teaching in these verses can encourage us to step out and give a prophecy if we believe we have been so inspired by God
5. What stops you from speaking out when you have that feeling that God wants to speak to someone else through you?

WAY OUT

Spend some time in silence, and if you feel God is inspiring you to speak a word from him to another person in the group, take the courage to speak it out.

Commentary Notes: 1 Corinthians 14

Paul shares with the Corinthians a vision for community worship as the setting in which God will speak and act powerfully through spontaneous supernatural revelations. How, then, can he seek to create order in the community's worship without squelching the Spirit? His solution, set forth at some length in chapter 14, is to insist that love (chapter 13) requires the gifts to be used for building up the community (14:12, 26). Consequently, intelligible speech is necessary in the assembly for the common good; unintelligible tongues must be either interpreted or reserved for private prayer. In preference to tongues, Paul advocates prophecy as the highest gift, because the prophet speaks inspired intelligible messages from God directly to the congregation, thereby building up the church.

The overriding concern of this chapter is that the members of the church worship collaboratively in a way that builds up the community through the participation of each member. Worship, Paul emphatically insists, is not just a time for private spiritual blessings; it is a time for the members of the community to share with each other God's gifts so that all may learn and be encouraged.

First Corinthians Richard B Hays (p 234 & 249 Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching Westminster John Knox Press)