

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!

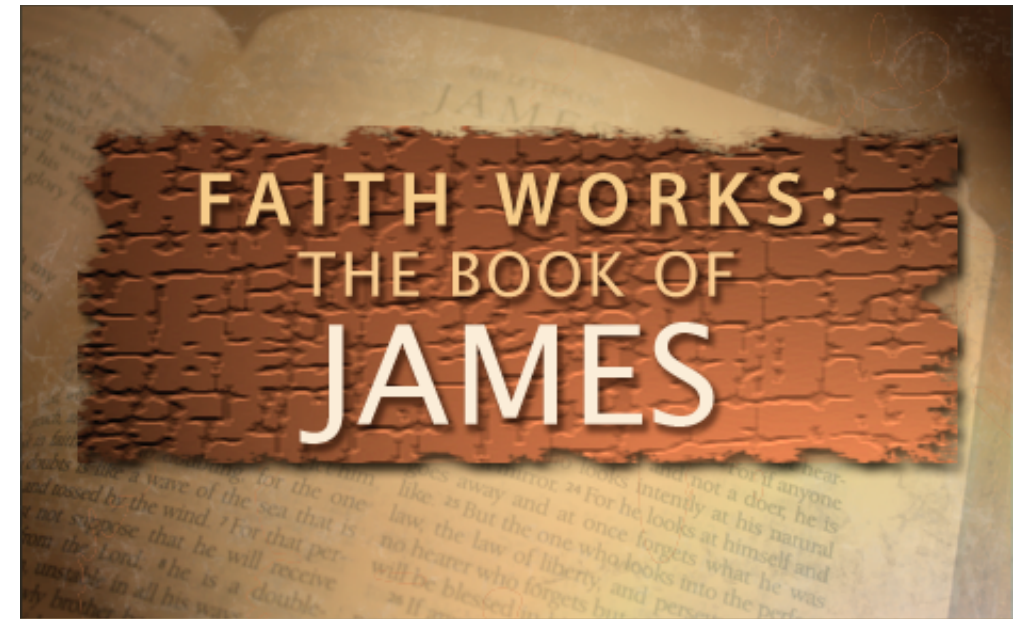
Remember, the focus is not on getting through the material and you may not cover all the questions. If the discussion is fruitful then allow group members the time they need to discuss, process, and grow with the information.

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

James - Pride & Perseverance

WAY IN

Which food do you find it hardest to resist?

Read James 1:9-18

Key Text: James 1:12

Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

DISCUSS

1. It seems that James' readers were suffering at the hands of the rich and powerful. In verses 9-11 James speaks of poverty and riches in a way which would have been counter-cultural then and remains so now. What might James mean here by 'being raised up' and 'being brought low'?
2. Think of other passages throughout the Bible that have similar teaching to verses 9-11 e.g. Jeremiah 9:23-24; Luke 1: 51-53; 6:20-21; 12:13-21. How is this a challenge to us today, both personally and

as a church community? How is it a comfort?

3. In verse 2 James spoke of trials, to be considered as joy. Some translations use the word 'trial' and some 'temptation' in verse 12 because the Greek word for both is the same, but again the importance of endurance or perseverance is mentioned, with the promise of the 'crown of life'. How does this promise relate to both our life on earth now and our hope of life after death? (John 10:10 and Revelation 2:10 might help your thinking.) What does this mean to you? How might these thoughts encourage us during times of trial or temptation?
4. In verse 13 he says that no one should blame God for temptations. How do you understand the difference between a trial and a temptation? When might a trial become a temptation? Try and come up with concrete examples.
5. Read Genesis 3:1-8 and compare with the process of temptation that James describes in verses 14 & 15. How is this opposite to the effect of trials if they are viewed through God's eyes?

6. James gives a number of reasons how we can know that temptation doesn't come from God. What are they? Imagine a friend asks for your advice because they are facing temptation. How would you encourage them using James' teaching?

WAY OUT

In verse 16 James urges his readers not to be deceived. Pray for one another that God will give us the wisdom mentioned in verse 5 to recognise temptation when it comes our way and for the strength not to be lured or enticed by the temptation. You might also like to pray for people you know who have given into trials and temptations and have stopped following Jesus.

Commentary Notes:

Becoming a Christian does nothing whatever to remove a person from the sphere of temptation. It is no good looking on earth for a situation that only exists in heaven! Just as Christ's coming into the world did not banish temptation universally, so His coming into the human heart does not banish it personally. Temptation is one of the universal and inevitable facts of life. It is the testimony of the ages that for the Christian temptation is not removed. One of the loveliest descriptions of what God has done in saving the Christian is in Paul's words that He has 'delivered us from the Kingdom of darkness, and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son' (Colossians 1:13 RSV). In the irresistible and sovereign grace of God we were plucked out of 'the snare of the devil', having been 'taken captive by him at his will' (2 Timothy 2:26), and brought into the family, fellowship and kingdom of God's own people. But mark this! Although we have been taken for ever out of Satan's grip and possession, we have not yet been removed from his interest and attention!

Not Hearers Only volume 1 – John Blanchard