

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!

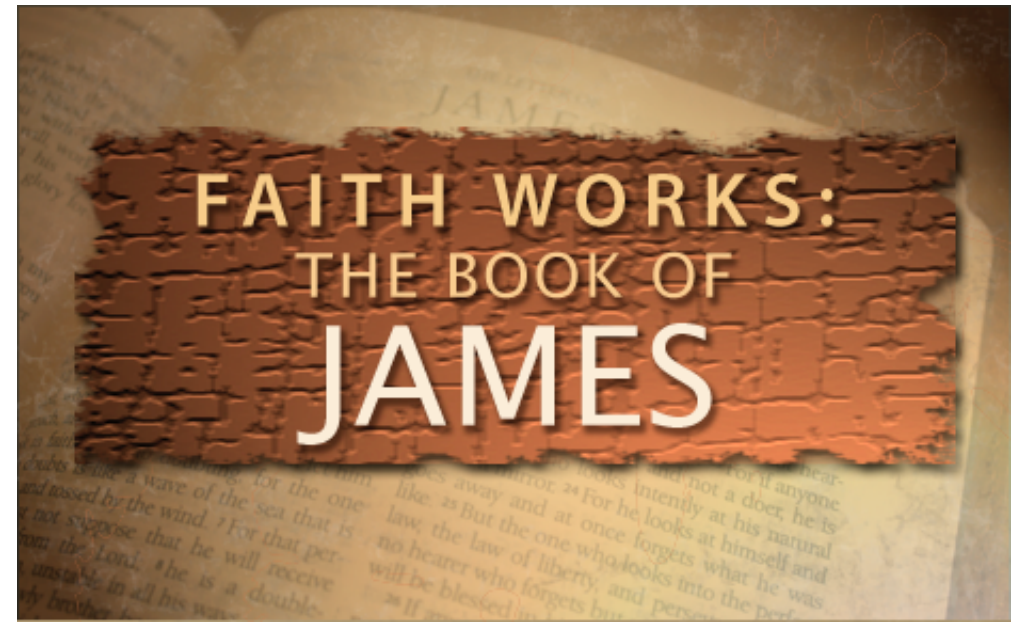
Remember, the focus is not on getting through the material and you may not cover all the questions. If the discussion is fruitful then allow group members the time they need to discuss, process, and grow with the information.

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.



1. Patience (James 5:7-12)

WAY IN

Would you describe yourself as a patient person or an impatient person? Can you think of a recent incident to back-up your claim?

Read James 5:7-12

Key Text: James 5:7

Be patient then brothers, until the Lord's coming

DISCUSS

Introductory note: The kind of patience talked about here is not about putting up with the petty things that irritate us in daily life. It is being patient with God, accepting his timetable of events and not trying to take things into our own hands in the meantime.

1. How do you think the 'Lord's coming' helps us to be patient (v7a, 8)?
2. What can we learn about patience from the farmer (v7)?

3. What is the link between patience and perseverance (11)?
4. Verse 11 contains the only direct reference to Job in the New Testament. In what way does Job's statement in Job 1:20-22 speak about his patience?
5. How does God's character help us to be patient (11c)?
6. Imagine you were advising a Christian friend in the following circumstances: what would patience look like for them, and how would they develop it? (Depending on time just choose one or two situations).
 - Someone who had been praying for a close relative to become a Christian, but had seen no answer to her prayer.
 - Someone who was finding their work unfulfilling and stressful.
 - Someone who felt trapped in a difficult marriage?

- Someone struggling to make ends meet in a church full of wealthy people.

WAY OUT

Is there anyone who feels they need more patience at the moment? Pray for them.

Commentary Notes: James 5:7

This call for patience flows directly from what James has just been teaching in the previous section: "Be patient, then..." James says (v 7). Patience is the application of what he has just said. Why? Because the cries of injustice do reach God's ears (v 4), and because there is a coming "day of slaughter" (v 5). The rationale is clear. In times of injustice it is easy to wonder if God has noticed, whether he cares, and why he is not working to intervene. James has just shown us that he has, he does, and he will. Christians do not need to take matters into their own hands. Justice will be done; even now it is being anticipated. These things are certain. James' readers need not fear for one moment that the unjust will get away with it. This is why James ties his command to the coming return of Jesus: "Be patient, then ... until the Lord's coming" (v 7). For this is the event that will bring the promised justice. The coming of Jesus will not merely be an in-house event for his own people, by which they are able to join him for eternity. It will be a global and cataclysmic event. It will herald the judgment of all sin and the righting of all wrongs. It is the return of Jesus which will bring about the "day of slaughter" that James has just been promising. In other words, this is not a call to patience without an end in sight. It is patience for a particular, defined period of time.

Allberry, Sam. James For You: Showing you how real faith looks in real life (God's Word For You) (p. 134). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.