

LEADING DISCUSSIONS

Leading discussions based upon the Bible, Sunday's sermons, or a book on Christian living is one of the most challenging aspects of Life Group leading. Even seasoned veterans need to seek to grow in this area constantly.

The focus of the content portion is transformation, not merely information. There will certainly be knowledge gained in Life Group, but the goal is not merely information transfer: it is greater maturity in Christ. Life Group meetings should be dialogue-oriented, not leader monologue. As the discussion leader, you set the tone for a group discussion that is aimed at knowing Christ more deeply, loving Him more completely and worshipping Him more fully.

SEVEN TIPS FOR LEADING EFFECTIVE GROUP DISCUSSIONS:

1. **Pray – On your own and with the group as you begin.** Ask God to allow fruitful discussion to happen. We have not because we ask not. Ask God every week to help your group have productive, mutually edifying discussions. Trust that He hears you and will work for good in your group (1 John 5:14-15).
2. **Come prepared.** There is no substitute for hard work and dedication in preparation for each meeting. Study the material. Give yourself time to think through the night in general and specific discussion questions in particular. Think through what potential questions or concerns might come up.
3. **Lead with humble confidence (Isaiah 41:10).** Be assured – God will help you lead your Life Group! God has called you to this ministry, and He is with you.
4. **Embrace the awkward.** Awkward silence is a part of group dynamics. Remember, the people in your group are likely more nervous than you are about talking. Be willing to ask a question and sit in silence. Many times, people are thinking about your question and need some time to think. Resist the urge to fill that silence with your words. If your group knows you will fill the silence, they will let you.
5. **Talk 1-on-1 with group participants and ask for help/encourage people to speak.** If you have a group with people who struggle to talk, even after long pauses of silence, pull specific people or couples aside and ask them to participate more. Sometimes people need a nudge to join in the conversation.
6. **Call on specific people to answer questions.** Tell the group beforehand you will do this so they are not taken off guard. Be sure to know who the people are that really would not appreciate that. Give people time to get comfortable with sharing and gently challenge them to grow over time.

7. **Ask good questions.** Asking good questions is more than half the battle of generating fruitful discussion. Asking thought-provoking, open-ended questions inspires excellent participation and discussion.

ON ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

- **Ask open-ended questions as much as possible.** Closed questions can be answered with a simple Yes or No. They start with “Is, Are, Did, Do, or Will?” Open-ended questions cannot be answered with a Yes or No; instead, they require the person to self-disclose information. They begin with “Who? What? Where? When? Why? & How?”
- **Examples of open-ended questions** (some of these apply best to 1-on-1 conversations, but may be adapted to fit group settings):
 - What stuck out to you most this week? Why was it meaningful to you?
 - What should you do based upon this truth?
 - Where do you see God in this situation? What is God up to?
 - How do you think God looks at you?
 - What do you think God thinks about what you are doing?
 - What impact did your action have on your wife (or husband or child)?
 - What were you hoping to accomplish by that?
 - What was going on in your mind?
 - What are some of the biggest concerns you have in this situation?
 - How would you like people to pray for you right now?
- If you write questions to go with one of our recommended books, please send those to garrettw@redeemerrockford.church for use by others.

FAQ

Question: What if I get a question that I cannot answer?

Answer: This is a common fear in Life Group leading. Do not be afraid to say, "I don't know" if you encounter a question that you do not know how to answer. After the group, seek an answer from a fellow LG leader, pastor, or elder, and come back the next week ready to discuss. People will respect you for your honesty, and it will help create a culture where it is okay to not have all the answers.