

## Interactive Bible Discussion Guidelines

- I. What AREN'T we trying to do in this time?
  - A. NOT presenting a teaching or a sermon
    1. Facilitator is not “the expert”
    2. He or she is prepared, but has the attitude of a mutual learner
    3. “Let’s find out together what this means for our lives.”
  - B. NOT “pooling our ignorance”
    1. Advantage to studying the same passage as was preached on Sunday: A gifted teacher already has examined the passage and taught on it, so people should have a running start on understanding what it means.
    2. Facilitators have spent some time examining the passage and thinking through the questions to be asked and the direction of the interactive discussion.
- II. Suggestions for leading an interactive bible discussion:
  - A. Questions to be asked
    1. Opener -
      - a. Orients people to some aspect of the text to be discussed
      - b. Not the same as the icebreaker question that starts the meeting
    2. Observation - “What does the text say?”
    3. Interpretation - “What does this text mean?”
    4. Application - “What does this text mean to us/me?”
  - B. Role of the leader
    1. Organization
    2. Time watcher
    3. Gate keeper
      - a. Opening the gate for discussion to some people, while limiting others.
      - b. Everybody should have an opportunity to participate.
    4. Summarize periodically
    5. Initiate (prime the pump).
  - C. Using the provided discussion questions provided in the bulletin and online:
    1. It is a guide, not a script!
      - a. Feel free to rephrase questions
      - b. Feel free to add your own questions
      - c. Feel very free not to ask all the questions

2. Goal is to discuss the text and make application
  - a. You don't have to "make it through" all the questions to do this!
  - b. People may get there just by you asking what new insights they gained on Sunday
3. Honor time commitments
  - a. Leave time for unhurried prayer and ministry.
  - b. End when you say you will.
  - c. Those to whom this matters will often vote with their feet; don't judge whether or not you can go later by whether or not people are complaining

### **More Helpful Hints for Leading a Discussion Time**

1. Your attitude as the leader is a key issue. Humility, respect for the Word, genuine love, openness and concern for others in the meeting - these are all easily picked up on. Whether you are peaceful or anxious, joyful or downcast, etc. - these attitudes will be discerned and are often contagious.
2. As you begin the study time, start by reading (or having someone read) the entire text to be considered.
3. When there is not clarity with the first approach to the question, simply ask the same thing in another way. To do this effectively, you will have to think through the discussion yourself ahead of time.
4. Avoid answering your own questions. The group will quickly learn not to participate if they know you will do most of the talking.
5. Don't be afraid of silence. Often this is when the most fruitful thinking/meditation takes place. You may want to mention this now and then, i.e., that silence is OK. Sometimes, though, silence can indicate that the question was unclear or perhaps irrelevant. This needs to be discerned.
6. After an initial answer to your question, ask others for additional insights. "Does anyone else have a comment on this?" "What do you think about what he just said?" etc.
7. Genuinely affirm people's contributions, tactfully as they are speaking (eye contact, etc.) and after they are finished ("Good observation," "Excellent point," "I've never thought of it that way before," etc.)