

How To Lead A Discussion

How To Prepare And Teach A Bible Study

Session 5

Schedule Update

- March 22 *No Class* (Steve speaking in Indiana)
- March 29 *No Class* (Spring Break Vacation)
- April 5 How To Teach Children (Mei-Mei Lee)
- April 12 How To Share A Devotional Or Sermon

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“You start a question and it’s like starting a stone. You sit quietly on the top of the hill; and away the stone goes, starting others.”

”

Robert Louis Stevenson

“

“Jesus came not to answer questions, but to ask them; not to settle men’s souls, but to provoke them.”

”

H. H. Horne

(Jesus: The Master Teacher, 1920)

A Discussion Leader Is Like A ...

- **Orchestra Conductor**
- **Volleyball Coach**
- **Airplane Pilot**
- **Workout Instructor**

How To Come Up With Discussion Questions

The Benefit Of Discussions

- Enables the student to discover the answer
- Greater transformation comes from self-discovery (versus being told what to do)
- The burden of being perceived as an authority figure is removed from the group leader by being more of a facilitator.
- How the students answer enables the facilitator to assess the learning level (Bible knowledge) of the group.
- Discussion deepens one's reading ability and content comprehension
- Discussions can bring mutual understanding through dialogue with opposing parties

The Goal Of Discussions

- Encourage the spiritual maturity of everyone in the group
- **Hebrews 10:24-25** ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
- **1 Thessalonians 5:11** Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

The Goal Of Discussions

- Help people apply Biblical principles to situations in their daily lives outside of church
- **Ephesians 4:15-16** ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.
- **Philippians 2:12-13** ¹² Therefore, my beloved, ~~as~~ as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

The Goal Of Discussions

- Encourage the spiritual maturity of everyone in the group
- Help people apply Biblical principles to situations in their daily lives outside of church
- Provide a safe place where people can ask questions and share transparently, including their own personal struggles

The Type Of Questions

- “*Connection Questions*—Intro and Icebreakers
- *Dissection Questions*—Observation and interpretation questions about the Scripture passage
- *Reflection Questions*—Questions that relate to our experiences and help us apply Scripture to our daily lives
- *Inspection Questions*—Application questions that focus on self-awareness and personal transformation”

Know what makes a good question

- Clarity
- Relevance
- Stimulating

“Writing Questions That Spark Discussion”

By Rick Lowry

1. *Good Questions Create a Conversation*
2. *Good Questions Focus on One Thing*
3. *Good Questions Can Be Understood By Everyone*
4. *Good Questions Say What They Mean*
5. *Good Questions Are Open-Ended*
6. *Good Questions Involve Emotions*
7. *Good Questions Deal with People's Interests*
8. *Good Questions Are Sometimes Answers to Other Questions*

Ask open-ended questions

- Avoid questions that can be easily answered “Yes or No,” “True or False,” or multiple choice.
- Don’t ask simplistic questions (e.g. Why did Jesus die on the cross?)
- Aim for questions that require thought
- Aim for questions that elicit emotions

Ask open-ended questions

- “What have we learned?”
- “How do we know this is true?”
- “Why is this important?”
- “Who does this apply to?”

Find the median between too broad and too narrow of a question.

- Gross: “Some discussion questions can be too broad to empower your group. The group can’t discern where to begin. On the other hand, some discussion questions can be too narrow to instigate discussion, inviting snap judgments and quick answers instead. Remember: questions are meant to fuel the discussion, so ask questions that give your group a clear start on a long journey.” (p. 62)

How To Lead A Discussion

The Keys To A Good Discussion Leader

- Good Listener
- Spiritual Discernment
- Sympathy/Empathy
- Logical
- Patient
- Prepared
- Wonder
- Humility
- Safe

Know Your Role As The Facilitator

- Launching
- Guiding
- Summarizing
- “Never tell what we can ask” (Navpress)

Remember The Purpose Of A Discussion

- Discussions are like a funnel that narrows down to one concept.
- Remember that the Bible only has one interpretation that matters: God's.
- We need to use discussion and discovery to determine God's meaning of the verse.
- A verse can have one interpretation but many applications.

What a Discussion is Not

- A lecture
- A chat
- A therapy session
- A debate
- Mob rule

Launch: Draw Interest In To The Topic

- Launching questions are generally open ended questions that have many potential answers that will stimulate discussion.
- For those who prepared beforehand: Allow those who have prepared to share what they've learned.
- For those coming in cold: Use hook questions that relates the topic of the text to their personal lives.

Guide: Keep The Discussion Moving

- Guiding questions get the participants to comprehend, identify through illustrations and seeking openness and vulnerability.
- When someone asks “What does it mean?” Don’t answer, as the group leader. Volley it within the group.
- Don’t be too impatient with silence. Allow the group to think.
- But sense when the silence goes too long and ask a prompting question.

Guide: Keep The Discussion Moving

- “Who else has something to say about this?”
- “What else do you see in this verse?”
- “Does anyone have anything to add to this?”

Summarize

- **Review what the group discussed, not your own agenda. Avoid preaching.**
- Summarizing questions draws up the fishing net to see what the group has concluded.
- “So what have we learned?”
- “Can some of you summarize what the passage means in one sentence?”

Apply: Gather group ideas on how to apply the passage.

- Application questions is where the “rubber meets the road”
- What we’ve learned about God and how that relates to us
- What to do in obedience to Scripture
- How to formulate ethics from God’s laws and righteous principles
- We don’t want the group to leave just smarter, but wiser.

Apply: Gather group ideas on how to apply the passage.

- “How does this truth impact our lives here and now?”
- “How does this change your perspective on this issue?”
- “How have you applied this truth before?”
- “What can you do this week to glorify God through this lesson?”
- “How has Christ modeled this?”
- “How would you reply to someone who disagrees with this principle?”
- “How could we use what we learned to help someone else grow spiritually?”
- “What is the motivation for my application?”
- “What hinders me from obedience?”

Manage Group Dynamics

- Know your group
- Manage moments of silence
- Manage moments of too much talking

Manage Challenging Participants

- **The Onlooker** – silent spectator, passenger not a crew member
- **The Monopolizer** – chatty, takes over conversation, tenacious about being right
- **The Belittler** – Mr. Gloom, minimizes contributions of others, finds other people's opinions wrong
- **The Wisecrack** – Feels called to a ministry of humor. Indifferent to subject but ready with a clever remark.

Manage Challenging Participants

- **Hitchhiker** – Never had a original thought. Unwilling to commit. Sits on sidelines until group reaches conclusion, then joins bandwagon.
- **The Pleader** – Chronically afflicted with obsessions. Pleads certain causes. Shares burdens frequently. One track mind.
- **The Sulker** – Lives in resentment. Group disagrees with his view so he sulks.

Employ Mature Participants

- **The Proposer** – Initiates ideas and actions. Keeps things moving.
- **The Encourager** – Brings other into the discussion. Encourages others to contribute. Values suggestions and comments. Stimulates others to greater activity by approval and recognition.
- **The Clarifier** – Has ability to step in when confusion, chaos, and conflict occur. He defines the problem concisely and points out the issues clearly.
- **The Analyzer** – Examines issues closely. Weights suggestions carefully. Never accepts anything without first thinking it through.

Employ Mature Participants

- **The Explorer** – Always moves into new and different areas. Probes. Not satisfied with obvious or traditional viewpoints.
- **The Mediator** – Promotes harmony between members – especially those who have trouble agreeing. Seeks conclusions acceptable to all.
- **The Synthesizer** – Puts the pieces together from different ideas and viewpoints.

Tips

- Sitting in a circle helps everyone to be seen, heard and valued equally
- The raising of hands limits free flowing discussions and establishes an authority/submission relationship
- Don't limit movement as stretching, getting snacks, using the restroom helps people stay engaged longer
- Eliminate distractions
- Take breaks if sitting too long, discussion stalls or things get too heated