



FACILITATING BETTER DISCUSSION

Ask open ended questions. Ask questions like "How does that make you feel?" or "What would you do if...?"

Avoid "yes" or "no" questions. They tend to stop discussion rather than promote discussion.

Ask "Why" questions. These make people really evaluate their feelings and thoughts. For example, "Why do you think Jesus said that?"

Don't be afraid of silence. Let the group think through what has been said or viewed.

Be ready to share first. As the leader, be prepared to be the first person to share. Your openness will encourage others to open up as well.

Do your best not to interrupt. Interrupting people makes their future input less likely.

Practice the art of listening. Really listen to what others are saying, rather than thinking about what you are going to say next while they are still talking.

Thank people for sharing. This will encourage them to share again.

Be familiar with the discussion material beforehand, this is key to keeping the group focused during the discussion period and should be a part of leader preparation.

Be flexible. Sometimes other issues need to be discussed even though they are not scheduled.

Keep the discussion on topic when needed. Say something like, "Let's refocus for just a minute and talk about this week's topic."

Treat others with respect. Treat everyone's comments and questions with consistency. Keep in mind that there's no such thing as a "dumb" question or comment.

Don't think you have to be an expert. Remember, leading a Group does not require you to be a Bible scholar, theologian, counselor or any other kind of expert.

Be willing to say, "I don't know." No one expects you to know everything so be prepared to admit when you don't have an answer.

Look it up. When you don't know an answer to a question, tell the group that you will do a little research and attempt to bring an answer next week.

Ask for help. Don't hesitate to ask a pastor or church staff person for advice or insight.