

## Tips for leading group discussions

### **Be authentic**

This is the most important part! The leader sets the tone for discussion. No leader knows it all. It's more important to be real, accepting, and engaged than to be perfect. When you ask questions, be willing to set the example by sharing your own thoughts. Then step out of the way and listen.

### **Take some time to prepare**

It won't take much time because you're leading discussion, not teaching a lesson, but take some time to look over the verses ahead of time. Pray. Find answers to any questions you have. Then relax and enjoy the discussion.

### **Give questions time**

It's tempting to move on when there's a lull in conversation, but people may just be thinking and processing. Be comfortable with silence! Even short silences in a group can feel like a long time. After someone answers, you can simply say, "That's great. Does anyone have anything else?"

### **Follow the list**

When starting, don't be afraid to simply follow the questions as they're written. They were prepared that way for a reason! As you get more comfortable leading, feel free to stray from the list as you guide discussion.

### **Ask open-ended questions**

Sometimes, you'll want to ask your own questions! When you do, make sure they're open-ended. Avoid leading questions like "Do you agree with this?" which lead to a yes or no answer or "School Quiz" questions like "What two things does Jesus say we should do?" Instead, ask questions like "What do you think was going through their mind here?" (focused on processing the passage) or even better, "What does this

mean for us?" (focused on internalizing the passage to life).

### **Listen more than you talk**

It's tempting to fill silence with your own thoughts or to reflect on each person's comments. This just leads to a teaching session instead of a discussion. When group members have questions, redirect them to the group. The role of the discussion leader is primarily to nurture conversation and deflect it back to the group.

### **Affirm answers**

Most of the time, when people are sharing or asking a question, they're revealing a part of themselves. Affirm their contributions with some sort of verbal feedback and eye contact. Just make it simple and non-cheesy - anything from "great thoughts" to "thanks for sharing" to "good question - what does everyone think about that?"

### **Ask follow up questions**

When someone raises interesting points or asks questions while they're talking, don't just let those topics slip by. Follow up with the group. Help people come to a deeper understanding of the scripture or question at hand.

### **Always end with application**

If you're following the Discovery Questions, these come naturally at the end. Don't skip them! One of the advantages of this format is that it encourages people to look at the passage, look at God through the passage, and then apply it to life. This process is important as we move past simple knowledge and into application.

### **Most importantly - Just be you and enjoy the conversation**

At Glenkirk, we define a small group as a group of friends who consistently get together and are intentional about having spiritual conversations and following Christ. Remember - you don't have to be the "answer gal" or "answer guy." Look at scripture together. Seek together. Learn together. And encourage each other to apply it together. Enjoy the journey.