

Using Discussion Questions in Our Small Group

How do discussion questions and discussion groups help our disciple-making?

1. People learn better when they are engaged personally with the Bible and with other people (versus only listening to someone talk about what they read and they learned).
 - One of the ways to begin to learn something (Learning Pyramid) is to read it, think about, explain it to someone else and discuss it with others. (Then do it in daily life!)
2. More and more people in our culture did not grow up in church and have not read the Bible (in a 2018 Barna survey, 29% of Americans said the Bible has strongly transformed their life).
3. What happens when you ask someone to read the Bible during the week and pick out 2 or 3 verses (from the passage you will be discussing next Sunday) that are meaningful to them?
 - you are giving them an additional time to read the Bible outside of class (develop a new habit?)
 - would being in a quiet place to read the Bible and ask God what He is saying to me be helpful?
 - would discussion on Sunday possibly be livelier when most of the class has studied the verses ahead of time?
 - would it be helpful for the teacher to know which verses are meaningful and some of the questions people are wondering about (or confused about) when they read the verses?
 - can the Holy Spirit use God's Word to transform us as we read and listen to His voice?
4. When someone leads a small discussion group (3-6 people?), you are developing more leaders in your class. You are also introducing additional personalities and spiritual gifts that people will relate to. We do want to choose growing Christians to lead discussion but use as many leaders as you can train.
5. Is it valuable for class members to hear multiple testimonies and stories about what God is doing and teaching others? Is it valuable for a class member to have the opportunity to share what they are learning and what God did this week in their life?
6. Some people are naturally reluctant to speak out in a large group. These people *may* feel safer and more comfortable in a group of three to six people. Even if every person wanted to talk, you do not have time for 20 people to answer every question and 20 people to all share a prayer request if you stay in a large group. With several small groups, several people can all be talking at the same time.
7. Would it be a good goal for us to pray for every person every week? Smaller groups help us do that.

Where do I get a sufficient number (10 – 14?) of discussion questions for this week's lesson?

1. Start with the ones in your literature book but only use the ones you think are helpful.
2. Give everyone in your class the opportunity to participate. Ask the class to read the verses during the week and email 1 or 2 discussion questions to you to help you prepare the lesson. (Of course, you will explain that not every question will be used, but it helps to have a lot of questions to choose from.)
3. Write some of your own questions. This helps you to improve your teaching skills.
4. There may be online resources, books or commentaries that are helpful for brainstorming questions.

Examples of Different Kinds of Discussion Questions

1. **Ask for more than one answer.** Instead of “how can we apply this verse?” try “what are five ways that we could apply this verse to our lives?”
2. Have class members **look up others verses in the Bible that address this same topic.**
“What else does the Bible say about personal evangelism?” (Then give them several verses to read)
3. Ask them to **share a personal testimony** about this verse. “Like the woman at the well, was there ever a time in your life when someone shared the gospel with you in a personal conversation?”
4. Ask “**Which person in these verses can you identify with and why?**”
“In this parable, which person - the father, the prodigal son or the older brother – can you identify with and why?”
5. **Ask for opposites.** “When we want to disciple someone, what are five things we could do?”
The opposite would be ... “What might be five things we should not do when we disciple someone?”
6. Ask them to **consider the point of view of others** when they read a Bible verse. “This Bible verse tells us to repent. Do you think the word repent sometimes means something different to a Christian and a person who does not have a relationship with Christ? How might they understand it differently?”
7. Ask them “**What other interpretations have you heard** about what this verse might mean?”
Example: “This verse says “husband of one wife” – what are some of the interpretations you have heard about this verse?”
8. **Ask what the characters in these verses might have been thinking?**
“When Jesus said to ‘take up your cross and follow me’, what do you think the disciples thought he meant?”
9. If a question might be a little too personal, **ask what someone else might think or do hypothetically.**
“In our culture today, marriages face many trials. What might be five pieces of advice you would give a young married couple today, to help them be successful?”
10. **Ask for understanding about the background** of the chapter. “What do we know about the writer of this letter?” “What do we know about the town of Samaria?” “Who were the Pharisees?”
11. **Ask about word meanings.** “How many words for *love* are there in Greek – which one is this?”
“Scripture tells us to *receive* Jesus and *believe* in Jesus. How are they different or the same to you?”
12. **Ask people to compare or rank.** “There are different kinds of prayer – petition, thankfulness, intercession and praise. Which kind do you find yourself praying most often?” “Jesus met both physical and spiritual needs. Which of these do you find yourself doing most often and why?”
13. **Compare past & present.** “Do you think it was easier to follow Jesus 2,000 years ago or today? Why?”
14. **Explain it in your own words.** “Hebrews 10 says not to forsake assembling...but exhorting one another. How would you explain the meaning of this verse to someone in your own words?”

