

Six Ways to Have Better Discussions

1. **Know your material ahead of time** and tweak questions to best meet your group members where they are at. This is difficult as first, but as your group is together longer you will know your members better and this will enable you to better tailor the questions to fit them. Also, knowing material ahead of time helps you to gauge how long to spend on certain sections and where you may get bogged down or derailed...not that a rabbit trail here and there is a bad thing.
2. **Learn to restate the question.** Sometimes a group gets stuck trying to discuss a question because it doesn't really connect. That's ok. Restate the question in a different light and this may spur the conversation on.
3. **Become comfortable with silence.** It takes time to think of a response to a question, but when there is silence, we often feel like our people are discontent or don't like the question. This is probably not the case. Just give them time...sometimes 30 seconds, or even a minute or two. It's ok, let them think.
4. **Affirm when your members take steps in sharing.** Celebrating your members successes will embolden them to take more steps. So thank them, affirm things that you want to see more of (processing feelings, recognizing spiritual steps that need to be taken, etc).
5. **See yourself as a shepherd, not a teacher.** Small group is not Sunday morning and you are not preaching. Instead small group is an active learning environment. So allow everyone to speak and allow others to respond to one another. You do not need to follow up every comment. Instead you get to guide the conversation...get ready to see God do some fun and challenging things in those conversations.
6. **Change it up every now and then.** One great way to keep discussion fresh and build into potential leaders at the same time is to tap someone in the group to lead the discussion for an evening. This will not only give you a break for a session, but it will give you the ability to think about your own leadership as you watch someone else. Use it as a time to build into a member and grow yourself.