



FACILITATING GREAT GROUP DISCUSSIONS

One of your most important jobs as a Small Group Leader is to facilitate your group discussion. Remember, you aren't there to teach. A great Small Group is characterized by everyone in the group participating. In fact, the less you say as the leader, the better your Small Group will be. Try to aim for a 80/20 ratio, where at least 80% of the talking is done by the group and only 20% is done by you. Here are some practical tips to help you facilitate great group discussions.

THE LEADER'S JOB IS TO FACILITATE THE DISCUSSION

- Encourage people to think individually and to interact with each other.
- Ask questions to stimulate discussion and don't be afraid of silence (waiting on people to respond).
- Keep the discussion on track and flowing smoothly.
- Keep the group focused, but also be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's direction.
- Clarify questions and comments so that each person has maximum opportunity to understand and apply what is being said.
- Respond positively to people's answers.
- Ask individuals to elaborate.
- Don't be afraid to call on someone who has not talked much.
- Remember to actively listen to what people are saying.

THINGS TO AVOID WHEN FACILITATING A DISCUSSION

- Be careful not to become the answer person with the tendency to respond to every question or comment.
- Refrain from serving as the final word or authority on a point of discussion.
- Stay patient with people as they give answers.
- Don't interrupt moments of silence. Sometimes silence is the sign of a great question. Give people time to think and respond.

HOW TO RESPOND TO "WRONG" ANSWERS

- First, consider the answer. It may have merit even if you've not considered it before.
- Don't label the answer as "wrong." Instead, affirm the person who responded by saying something like, "That's an interesting take," or "You're on the right track..."
- Ask the person who gave the answer to support it, "Why do you think...?"
- Ask the group to assess the answer, "What do you all think about...?" or, "Does anyone else have a thought about...?"
- Remember that most "wrong" answers are harmless and will be forgotten when other group members offer their thoughts.