

How to Lead a Book Discussion Group

To help your group get the most out of the discussion guides in the Teachable Books program, we offer the following suggestions for the leader and group members:

Suggestions for the Leader

1. If possible, read the entire book before the first session. Highlight points you'd like to emphasize in discussions.
2. Read and consider discussion questions in advance. Note that the first question is often a general question designed to get discussion going. Feel free to change the order of the listed questions and to create your own questions.
3. Consult with the group in advance to decide how many weeks you'll be discussing the book. Once you've decided, make a plan showing which chapters you'll be discussing each week.
4. Distribute the book to group members before your first meeting, and request that they come having read at least the introduction and Chapter One. You'll probably want to distribute copies of the discussion guide as well.
5. Begin sessions on time. The group will appreciate your promptness.
6. You may want to begin the first session with introductions and a brief get-acquainted time. Start each chapter discussion by reading aloud the summary.
7. Remind group members that all questions are valid as part of the learning process. Encourage participation by saying that there are no "wrong" answers and that all ideas will be appreciated. Invite group members to share thoughts, personal stories, and ideas as their comfort level allows.
8. Some questions may be more difficult to answer than others. If you ask a question and no one responds, begin the discussion by venturing an answer yourself. Then ask for comments and other answers. Remember that most questions have multiple answers.
9. Ask the question "Why?" or "Why do you believe that?" to help continue a discussion and give it greater depth.

10. Give everyone a chance to talk. Keep the conversation moving. Occasionally you may want to direct a question to a group member who has been quiet. If the conversation gets off track, move ahead by asking the next question in your discussion guide.
11. Remember that, as a leader, you do not have to know all the answers. Some answers may come from group members. Other answers may even require some research. Your job is to keep the discussion moving and to encourage participation.
12. Following the discussion, close with a brief prayer. If your group desires, pause for individual prayer petitions.
13. Be grateful and supportive. Thank group members for their ideas and participation.
14. You are not expected to be a “perfect” leader. Just do the best you can by focusing on the participants and the lesson. God will help you lead this group.
15. Enjoy your time together.

Suggestions for Group Members

1. What you receive from this study will be in direct proportion to your involvement. Be an active participant!
2. Please make a point to attend all sessions and to arrive on time so that you and other group members can receive the greatest benefit.
3. Read the chapter and review the discussion questions prior to the meeting. You may want to jot down your own questions as you read, along with answers to some of the discussion questions.
4. Be supportive and appreciative of your group leader as well as other members of your group. You are on a journey together.
5. Your participation is encouraged. Feel free to share your thoughts about the material being discussed.
6. Pray for your group and your leader.