

PREPARING & LEADING SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDIES

STEP 1: PERSONAL STUDY

You, as the leader, need to personally study the material/passage just like the members of your group. Don't bypass this step, especially if you've not led a discussion on the material/passage before.

STEP 2: THEME

Upon completion of your study, it's time to synthesize your findings. This is simply a process by which you take all the facts and conclusions from your study and draw them into **one** concise statement. This statement should clearly communicate the main thought of the material/passage. This is your theme for the study. (Example: Suppose the topic is the "Lordship of Christ". The theme might be: "Because Jesus is Lord of ALL, we should allow Him to rule every part of our lives.")

STEP 3: OBJECTIVE

After coming up with the theme, you now are ready to focus on your group members. Obviously, one of the purposes of the group discussion is to affect the lives of the group. Your desire is that they leave the discussion motivated to live differently. State your objective in terms of what you desire the discussion to accomplish in the lives of the participants. Let's refer back to our previous example of "the Lordship of Christ." Your objective might be for the group to desire to make Jesus Lord and name several ways to accomplish that.

STEP 4: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Now comes the most difficult part. The key to any good discussion is quality questions. The difficulty lies in coming up with the type of questions, which stimulate discussion.

The first thing to remember is that the aim of the questions is to **lead** or **guide** the participants to your predetermined objective. Sure, you could walk into the group, have them read some verses, and then tell them right out what they should get out of the study and how their lives should be changed. However, when that's over, about all you've accomplished is to shove **your** convictions down their throat after which they probably won't possess those convictions on their own. Therefore, if you can **lead** your group members by your questions to **discover** the truth **on their own**, they are more likely to believe it and develop a conviction about it. When the meeting is over, hopefully your series of questions has stimulated a discussion, which has accomplished your predetermined objective.

With that in mind, let's now discuss the questions themselves. There are three types of questions to use. All three should be incorporated in any discussion.

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The reason for this is that they all build upon one another. Here are the three types of questions: **discovery, understanding, and application.**

Discovery. You will want to begin your discussion with this type. Specifically defined, they are broad, open-ended, thought-provoking, information gathering questions. The answers to these should be broad in their scope. (There is no room for "yes/no" questions.) Also, the direction of these questions doesn't have to directly focus on the predetermined objective. They simply gather information which is somewhat secondary to the theme of the topic/passage. (Example: Using the topic "the Lordship of Christ", here is an example of a discovery question for that topic" Let's name some synonyms for the word 'Lord?'" A person would not even have had to do the preparation of the study to give good answers on that one. Here's another: "From the verses you have studied, what things is Jesus the Lord of already?")

Understanding. This is a more narrowly focused question. You are now moving closer toward your predetermined objective by narrowing down the scope of the answer. This type of question brings relevance to the facts gathered by the discovery question. To use our previous example, here's a good understanding question: "With all these synonyms in mind, what implications would it have on your life if you were to truly make Jesus the Lord of your life? Here's another: "Now let's consider this: why would you want to make Jesus the Lord of your life?"

Application. These are the most direct questions since they are your last stage of questioning. They should challenge the group members to make all the previous findings a reality in their lives. The answers here should be very practical and measurable. These should be something you can ask about the next day to see if they are actually doing them.

In summary, your three stages of questioning (discovery, understanding, and application) should lead the group to your predetermined objective without you having to tell them out right. Remember, when they come to the conclusions themselves, they are much more likely to develop a personal conviction about it. The diagram illustrates how the three stages of questioning become more narrowly focused as you go as they head toward your predetermined objective.

PHASES

Now, there is one last thing to incorporate into your questions. We will call it your phases of questioning. During each stage of questions there needs to be three phases: **launch, guide and summarize.** This is very simple. Here is how each phase works.

