

Leading a Small Group Discussion

1. Prepare

Work through the materials and think yourself into your group meeting.

2. Pray

Pray before your group meeting.

3. Don't talk too much

Your job is to get people thinking and talking and keep the discussion moving from member to member rather than talking to the members.

4. Be A Good Listener

So simple yet so hard to do. Don't just listen to what people are saying – actively listen. The best leaders listen with their eyes and ears.

4. Don't Answer Your Own Questions

The whole purpose of asking the question is to create an environment where group members feel safe to share. It's not about getting the right answer. When people are silent with some of these questions, embrace the silence: this might be where the introverts are thinking and the Holy Spirit is speaking!

5. Encourage Responses

If no one really speaks you could say something like, "Paul, you look like you were going to say something..."

6. Ask Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions help group members to say more than a simple yes or no. Use 'what?' or 'how?' questions to get people to open up.

7. Try To Involve Everyone

Your group might be too big if everyone isn't able to speak their thoughts. Groups of over eight members will have difficulty doing this. In those cases, it might be best to divide the group into smaller groups for some of the time.

8. Keep the Main Thing, the Main Thing!

Remember, the focus is not on getting through the material and you may not cover all the questions. If the discussion is fruitful then allow group members the time they need to discuss, process, and grow with the information.

9. Manage the Time

Keep an eye on the clock. Don't let things get bogged down in interesting but irrelevant discussion. Bring things back on track and take the initiative to move things on when it feels right.

10. Leave time for application.

Make sure people have time to think about the difference that this discussion will have in their daily 'frontline' lives.



1. The Revolution Begins (Mark 1:1-15)

WAY IN

Who is the wildest or most passionate preacher you have ever heard?

Key Text: Mark 1:1

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Read Mark 1:1-8 Introducing Jesus

DISCUSS

1. John the Baptist is the fulfilment of the prophecies quoted in verses 2,3. Why do you think Mark links those Old Testament passages with John?
2. John was clearly completely 'sold-out' to his task of announcing the coming of Jesus.
 - What do you think motivated him so strongly? (is the clue in vs7-8?).
 - What might have been the personal cost to John of being so outspoken?
3. Do you think we can learn anything from John about telling others about Jesus?

Read Mark 1:9-13

Hearing God

DISCUSS

1. Out of interest note the reference to God as a Trinity in verses 10,11. How are each of the members of the Trinity represented?
2. What do you think it meant to Jesus to hear John's description of him in verses 7,8, and how does that compare to what he heard in verse 11?
3. What effect does it have on people in the group to hear that they are God's children? (1 John 3:1)?
4. How do the incidents in verses 9-11 prepare Jesus for his time of testing in the wilderness?

Read Mark 1:14,15 Announcing the Kingdom

DISCUSS

1. The Kingdom of God is a way of saying 'God is on the move'. How do these passages support that definition: Luke 10:8,9; Luke 11:20; Luke 13:18-20?

2. Verse 15, is a short summary of the Good News (Gospel) that Jesus announced. How would you 'unpack' verse 15 to someone who was exploring the Christian faith? What evidence would you give for God being 'on the move'?

WAY OUT

What has each person heard in this session that they want to act on, or think about further.

Pray for one another.

Commentary Notes: James 5:7

The term "gospel" or "evangel" was not a word first coined among the Christians. On the contrary, the concept was significant both in pagan and Jewish culture. Among the Romans it meant "joyful tidings" and was associated with the cult of the emperor, whose birthday, attainment to majority and accession to power were celebrated as festival occasions for the whole world. The reports of such festivals were called "evangels" in the inscriptions and papyri of the Imperial Age. A calendar inscription from about 9 B.C., found in Priene in Asia Minor, says of the emperor Octavian (Augustus): "the birthday of the god was for the world the beginning of joyful tidings which have been proclaimed on his account" (Inscr. Priene, 105, 40). This inscription is remarkably similar to Mark's initial line and it clarifies the essential content of an evangel in the ancient world: an historical event which introduces a new situation for the world. In this perspective the Roman would understand Mark's proclamation of Jesus the Messiah. Beginning with the inauguration of Jesus' public ministry, **Mark announces Jesus' coming as an event that brings about a radically new state of affairs for mankind.**

There is, however, another aspect to the meaning of "gospel." Mark's own understanding of what constituted "joyful tidings" drew heavily on the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament, as the twofold citation of Ch. 1:2-3 makes clear. The explicit reference to Isaiah indicates that the gospel receives its proper interpretation only in the light of the coming salvation promised in the prophetic word. Especially in Isaiah the Hebrew terms signifying "good news" concern the announcement of future salvation, or of the time of salvation.

Lane, William L.. The Gospel of Mark (p. 43). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.. Kindle Edition.