

Pointers (for facilitators / study leaders) on:

How to have more meaningful and interesting bible studies in your Small Groups!

- 1. Pray.** Whether the group is doing guided study or inductive bible study, we are to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to facilitate the discussions. Spirit led discussions can transform lives.
 - ✝ So before the discussion begins, take some time to pray by yourself and as a group. You might want to ask “someone else” to pray for the bible study – but do give that “someone else” ample time to prepare.
 - ✝ Prayer has been noted by some as a form of inaction; but this cannot be further from the truth since prayer most of all, help us to actively align ourselves to what God has done, is doing and going to do.
- 2. Focus.** Try to get the group focus on the topic and related questions; but don't be too rigid either. The rule of thumb is that when the dialogue is drifting from the main subject on hand to things like the soccer match last night; pull them back!
- 3. Create.** We will have quiet persons who seem to have many things to say but just won't say it. Try to create opportunities for each participant to contribute. Ask something like: “What do you feel about this?” or “What is your take on this?” Try not to say: “You seem so quiet! Please say something...”
- 4. Listen.** It has been said that those who live urban lives are really bad listeners. Unfortunately, when the discussion leader is a bad listener, the others follow suit and group dynamics will collapse. So listen well. Hear and try to understand what others are really saying.

5. **Affirm.** Some discussion leaders behave as if they belonged to the “tombstone sect”. By all means smile! Have a bit of fun, relax and affirm the participants for their contributions. 😊
6. **Manage.** Do not allow any persons to dominate the floor by their aggressiveness. Politely request such persons to hold their thoughts and allow others to speak. Try not to take sides with the ideas of one faction in the group; even if these ideas resonate a lot with you. Try not to be made the “expert”; your role is to facilitate a discussion and not generate it into a monologue. Time-check!
7. **Silence.** Try not to be afraid of pauses or silences since many people need time to think and reflect. If you find it difficult to wait; count to ten silently after asking a question.
8. **Prioritize.** We have the tendency to rush through bible study questions for the sake of finishing the task on hand. But do note that we are not in a championship series for the most hardworking facilitator! Pick out and prioritize on questions that you think would stimulate discussions e.g. applicatory questions. A good bible study session is one which the participants felt ministered by the Word. So it is important to allow time for participants to digest and reflect on what they have learnt. Encourage or even challenge participants to share how the study relates to their current spiritual journey!
9. **Summarize.** Good to summarize the consolidated ideas once in a while so that participants can visualize where the discussion is heading to.
10. **Conflict.** Try not to avoid conflict, but keep it narrowly focused on the issue at hand. Since everyone’s opinion is important in a dialogue, participants should feel comfortable saying what they really think—even if it’s unpopular. As you listen to the conflict, listen for what process question or comment that will steer the discussion back to the topic.

Some ideas for bible study

- ✚ Agree on objectives for SG bible study before it even begins! Three major objectives the group can agree on:
 - To create meaningful discussions so that everyone can grow as a group
 - To learn and understand more about the Word of God
 - To encourage one another to apply what they have learnt of the Word to their daily living.

 - ✚ Go to a different place for example, the botanic gardens or a café that is friendly to Christian Small Groups.

 - ✚ Use props to illustrate certain teachings for example, a real mustard seed (Luke 17:6) can be shown to illustrate how small it really is.

 - ✚ Acting out the text – instead of just reading the assigned text for study, you can choose to act it out as a group. This might be possible with stories / events in the Gospels or Acts of the Apostles. After that, spend some time asking each participant how they felt while acting out.

 - ✚ Split into smaller groups to discuss assigned questions and then coming back as a bigger group to share findings.

 - ✚ Use a flip-chart to record responses to discussion questions. In this way, participants can visualize and encouraged to be more interactive.

 - ✚ Open the study with a related movie-clip so that participants can start the study with a powerful / gripping introduction to the study. This can encourage more discussions.
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Note: Resource Team will use the above pointers to help SGs with their current study or a potential study.

Good resources to guide a study leader / facilitator:

1. *Bible Dictionaries – explanation of customs, traditions found in the Bible, words etc.*
2. *Free commentary from Bob Utley – www.freebiblecommentary.org*
3. *NIV Application Commentaries*
4. *ESV Study Bible – for explanation, cross references, journaling*
5. *Concordance – List references to the use of a word*
6. *Different translations of the Bible*
7. *Bible atlas – can be found in any good translation*