

Community Group Discussion Guide

Whether this is your first time leading a group, or you are a seasoned veteran, here are a few tips for leading a fruitful discussion:

1. Prepare

- **Watch/Listen to the Sermon** (www.crossbridge.cc/media)
 - At Crossbridge, the majority of Community Groups discuss the sermon from Sunday. In order to best prepare, make sure you watch it in person or online.
- **Take Notes**
 - Write out the general concept of the sermon in order to get the main idea.
 - Note what is thought provoking, confusing or difficult to process. If you feel that way, others in your group do, too!
- **Preview Questions**
 - Every week, CG leaders receive an email with a list of questions that correspond with the upcoming sermon.
 - Use the questions to better understand the sermon and prepare for the discussion.
 - Edit/Add to the questions and make them your own.
 - Most likely you will not have time for all of the questions, so choose ones you think will work best in your group.
- **Bring Questions and Notes with You**
 - Print out a copy of the questions for yourself or multiple copies if the group wants to follow along with you.
 - Encourage group members to bring their own notes/questions they have from the sermon.

2. Discussion Format

- **Start with an ice breaker.** ([See Ice Breakers Resource](#))
 - Ice breakers have an amazing ability to soften a room and allow people to get comfortable sharing. You also learn a lot as people share personal stories from their lives.
- **Open the discussion (Pick 1 or 2 questions)**
 - As you reflect on the sermon, what one principle or insight stands out as being helpful, insightful or difficult to grasp?
 - What is one thing from the sermon you hope we will discuss as a group?
 - Was there any one thing you most agreed or disagreed with? What was it and why?
- **Dig Deeper (Pick 1 or 2 questions)**
 - Reflecting on the sermon passage, what strikes you the most? Why?
 - What is most challenging in these verses?
 - If these verses were being written in our culture today, how would it change? Paraphrase the context and language, not the meaning.
- **Focus on Application**
 - When and where do you struggle with [the issue raised in the sermon].
 - If you incorporated this truth into your life, what would look different next week?
 - Describe your life one year from now if you consistently applied this truth.
 - How can we pray for you regarding this issue?
- **End with Prayer**
 - [See Effective Prayer Strategies](#)

3. Discussion Tips

- **Be Comfortable With Silence**
 - Don't be the first to answer your own question. Allow time for people to process the question and think of an answer. Count to 30 if you have to!
- **Ask Follow-up Questions**
 - After someone answers a question, try to draw out more thoughts from him/her or someone else.
 - Use statements like "Tell me more", "What do you mean?", "Anything else?", "Someone else?"
- **Give Affirmation**
 - Complete someone's thoughts with phrases like "Great question!", "Thanks for sharing!", "I love that", "Very helpful." The more you affirm someone's thoughts, the more likely everyone will keep sharing.
- **Redirect or Correct (if needed)**
 - If one person is leading the discussion off topic, gently redirect. Saying something like, "That is a really interesting take on that, but let's not lose sight of our main point..."
 - If a statement is made that is not biblical or you strongly disagree, don't be afraid to voice it. If you suspect it will create undue tension within the group, suggest you talk to that person later. Saying something like, "I appreciate your thoughts on that, but I am not sure I agree. But I don't want to take away from our discussion. Can we talk about this later?"
- **Try to involve everyone**
 - The more people involved in the discussion the better. Use phrases like "Anyone who hasn't shared yet?", "How about someone on this side of the room?", "Guys, any thoughts from you?"
- **Make sure all discussion leads to application. Here are some suggestions:**
 - When and where do you struggle most with _____?
 - If you were to incorporate this truth into your own life, how would next week be different?
 - Describe your life a year from now if you applied this truth.
 - How can we pray for you regarding this issue/truth?
- **Begin and end on time**
 - Plan how long you want to discuss each question. It is better to leave people wanting more with a short discussion than to drag on too long.
 - Be respectful of the ending time. If you are nearing the end, but want to go longer, ask the group if they want more time, but also give people permission to leave.
- **Don't focus on getting through all of the material**
 - The goal of discussion is to help everyone apply their faith. Use the questions to lead to application and don't feel the need to answer all of them.
- **Get Feedback**
 - After your first few times facilitating, ask your leaders for honest feedback. It's the best way to keep improving.

Other Helpful Facilitation Resources:

Blog Posts:

- Take the Awkward out of Awkward Silences <http://bit.ly/AwkwardSilencesInGroup>
- The 2 Best Words to Boost Discussion: <http://bit.ly/BoostingDiscussions>
- When Discussion Gets off Topic: <http://bit.ly/OffTopicDiscussions>
- Leading Good Discussion Checklist: <http://bit.ly/LeadingGoodCGDiscussion>
- 10 Ways to Squash Group Discussion: <http://bit.ly/SquashingDiscussions>

Breakout Audio and Notes:

- Asking Great Questions <http://bit.ly/AskingGreatQuestionsBreakout>
- Leading Life Changing Discussions <http://bit.ly/LifeChangingDiscussion>

Videos:

- Leading Great Discussions <https://vimeo.com/28415071> (2:37)
- Improving Your Facilitation Skills <https://vimeo.com/28373960> (2:24)
- Dealing with Dominators <https://vimeo.com/29912415> (2:26)