

Conducting the guided discussion

A. Getting started

1. opening statement or HOOK
2. mention first topic to be discussed: ask good questions
3. if group is new and reluctant to talk, call on most talkative person first

B. Keeping the discussion moving

1. the leader's role

- a. to reach objective
- b. to keep discussion going
- c. to keep discussion off tangents
- d. to guide discussion while remaining out of the discussion as much as possible

2. dealing with problems

a. dominant individuals

- i. ask for specifics
- ii. pass questions back to group
- iii. set time limits
- iv. counsel privately
- v. address questions to others by name

b. silent members

- i. ask for an opinion
- ii. direct easy questions
- iii. don't embarrass
- iv. get others to draw them out
- v. appreciate every contribution they make

c. disinterest in the group

- i. introduce conflict through provocative questions, or playing the "devil's advocate"
- ii. inject humor
- iii. use sub-group discussion
- iv. Be flexible - willing to drop a topic and move to another

d. Tension and conflict

- i. Not always bad
- ii. Summarize for group areas of argument
- iii. Ask argumentative person to give specifics
- iv. Don't answer your own questions
- v. Don't be afraid of silence
- vi. Use humor

e. Drifting into irrelevant tangents

- i. Bring discussion back with a question
- ii. Point out to group that discussion is off-course and remind them of the topic being considered
- iii. Agree to discuss afterwards

f. Disagreement or wrong conclusion is reached by member

- i. If an obviously wrong conclusion is reached by someone, leader should not be the one to correct it
- ii. A student will take correction by other students more readily than he will from the leader
- iii. Ask group how they feel about the matter and thus allow them to correct the wrong conclusion
- iv. If you sense (by facial expression, etc.) that someone disagrees, ask him for an opinion
- v. Sometimes you may ask the person another question, having an answer which will enable him to discover his previous wrong conclusion
- vi. Suggest that if he has a difficulty, he might like to express it so the group might help him solve it

3. Techniques of questioning

- a. Be informal, implying student's ability to answer
- b. Give each person a chance to answer
- c. Strike a balance between listening to volunteers and stimulating shy persons
- d. Be patient: allow sufficient time for the group to answer questions

C. Reaching conclusions

1. At appropriate points and at the conclusion, summarize major conclusions reached by the group
2. Group should feel that the conclusions are theirs
3. Each person should reach conclusions satisfactory to him and not feel group is forcing conclusions on him
4. Don't give impression you are waiting for group to reach your conclusions. Don't say, "Yes, that's right. I agree. Let's move on."
5. Don't move to a new point until general agreement has been reached on current one.

D. Other practical considerations in leading discussions

1. Be ready for the meeting
 - a. Choose a convenient time and place
 - b. Arrange suitable seating facilities (circle, or semicircle)
 - c. Have Bibles for those who do not have them
 - d. Watch temperature and ventilation
2. Begin on time and end on time. Don't wait for stragglers
3. Read the passage to get the idea as a whole
4. Return to the beginning and progress point by point through the passage
5. Encourage group participation
6. Do not express any opinion or make a contribution which you could get from the group
7. People remember best what they find and express themselves
8. Do not let the discussion go off on a tangent
9. As far as is practical, observe the time relative to what you have in mind to cover
10. Make personal application -(what does this mean to us?)