

Six Tips for Using Small Group Discussion Questions

We are truly blessed at The Lakes Church to have a pastor that preaches messages from God's word that are encouraging, uplifting, clear, and understandable. We are blessed to receive that message, delivered together with songs and Scripture passages that usher us into the presence of the Creator.

That's the good news.

The not-as-good news: we only have roughly one hour per week to hear it. It's up to us to grasp and digest the truth that was delivered. For most of us, that's not enough time.

That's the major reason why we offer discussion questions for small groups. In a setting like a small group, where people can sit together and discuss the contents of that message, greater understandings, more detailed applications, and greater worship can occur.

So here are six tips that might help you to utilize the small group discussion questions more effectively:

- **Make sure you're prayed up**—Assuming you are spending time alone with the Lord each day (and you ARE, right?), develop a regular prayer rhythm for the people in your group. Ask the Lord to walk you through the truths He wants to work into the group. (For ideas on planning a prayer calendar for your group, check out this article)
- **Take your own sermon notes for Sunday**—Not only will you better remember and retain the vital truths from the message, you will provide for yourself an additional list of points from which you can come up with additional questions—questions that will fit where you see your group spiritually
- **Know your group**—Make it a goal to personally sit down with each person in your group and get to know them. Learn their life stories. Listen to how they came to know Christ. In the process, you will come to know where they are in their journey with the Lord, how they learn, what they are convinced is true, as well as the areas where they struggle. Knowing these things about your people is vital in determining the direction of your session and the questions you will ask
- **Use the published questions as a starting point**—The small group questions serve are not a form for you to fill out as a small group leader. You do not have to ask all of the questions! Some of those questions will open up discussions about topics and issues that are vital to your

group's spiritual growth. Some questions might be too obvious for your group; other questions might be too difficult. Don't hesitate to create your own questions (and don't hesitate to call for help or for suggestions).

- **Add your own questions**—If you took notes from Sunday's message, you already have a huge head start on coming up with your own questions. If you have taken the time to know your group, you are in the home stretch! Don't be afraid to bounce the ideas off of a trusted mentor small group leader to get feedback.
- **Anticipate potential rabbit trails**—You are not going to anticipate every possible rabbit trail that can come from a question. But, you can see the obvious ones. If you know your group, and if you have spent the time in prayer, you will position yourself to anticipate those trails, and will be able to address them either right then and there, or to determine if you need to schedule another session to address them. But rabbit trails *will* pop up from time to time.