

LEADING A GROUP

Facilitating Good Discussion.

"Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger."

JAMES 1:19 · ESV

THE BIG IDEA

The best leaders talk the least.

New leaders often think a good discussion means they had all the right things to say. It's actually the opposite. The best facilitators talk the least — they ask, they wait, and they draw other people out. Your job isn't to deliver answers; it's to help the group discover them together.

That's good news, because it takes the pressure off you to perform. You don't have to be brilliant. You have to be curious, patient, and genuinely interested in what your people think. This guide is a handful of skills to help you do exactly that.

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THE CORE SKILL

Ask better questions.

01 Open, not closed.

Avoid questions with a yes/no or one-word answer. “What stood out to you?” beats “Did you like the passage?”

02 “What” and “how” over “why.”

“Why” can feel like an interrogation. “What makes you say that?” invites people in instead.

03 Follow up.

The gold is usually in the second question. “Say more about that.” “What do you mean?”

04 Make it personal.

Move from “What does this verse mean?” to “Where do you need this to be true this week?”

05 Let silence work.

Silence isn’t failure — it’s thinking. Count to ten before you rescue it. People will fill it.

READING THE ROOM

Handling the tricky parts.

The over-talker.

Affirm them, then open it up: “Love that — what does everyone else think?” Sit next to them, not across, so you don’t keep making eye contact that invites more.

The quiet one.

Don’t force it, but create lanes: “I’d love to hear from a couple folks we haven’t heard from.” Or ask them a low-stakes question directly and warmly.

The “wrong” answer.

Don’t shut it down. “Interesting — what makes you read it that way?” Then gently steer back to the text. Protect the person while you redirect the idea.

The rabbit trail.

Let a little wandering happen — it’s often where life is. But know when to say, “Let’s come back to the passage,” and do it kindly.

The awkward silence after a deep share.

Don’t rush past it. “Thank you for trusting us with that.” A moment of quiet honors what was said.

KEEP THESE CLOSE

Go-to questions for any night.

- What stood out to you in this passage — and why?
- What does this show us about God? About people?
- Is there anything here that's hard to accept or live out?
- Where do you need this to be true in your life this week?
- What's one thing you'll do differently because of this?

TAKE A MINUTE

Think about your next meeting: which one skill from this guide do you most want to practice?

YOU'VE GOT THIS

Ask, listen, repeat.

Great discussion is a skill, and it grows every week you lead. Stay curious, keep asking, and trust your group to do the talking. Need encouragement or a sounding board? We're here.

QUESTIONS

connect@valiantchurch.com

PAIR WITH

Small Group Leader Handbook

GATHER

Sundays · 10:00 AM
