

How to Lead a Bible Discussion (Discussion Centered Learning)

I. The Three Types of Discussion Questions

The three questions below illustrate three different types (kinds) of questions. Analyze each to see if you can discern the three types of questions? (*They are based on Romans 1:16*).

ESV **Romans 1:16** . . . I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

1. "What does this verse reveal about the gospel?"
2. "Why is salvation first for the Jew, and then for the Gentile?"
3. "Based on 1:16, what attitude should we have toward the gospel?"

How would you categorize each of the questions below (based on Romans 1:16)?

1. Of what was Paul "not ashamed"?
2. What does the word "gospel" mean?
3. What is the gospel message?
4. According to this verse, why was Paul not ashamed of the gospel?
5. From what do we need "salvation"?
6. What did Paul mean by "everyone"?
7. Why is salvation first to the Jew?
8. What is a "Greek"?
9. What would it mean for us to be "ashamed" of the gospel today?
10. What should our hope of salvation be grounded in?

II. Asking Good Questions

1. Why is it important for the teacher to first study the text before leading a discussion?
2. How is adopting the motto: "Never tell when you can ask" consistent with the Socratic Method?
3. Why might it be a good discipline to write out all of your questions in advance of the meeting?

4. **After your questions are written out, why is it helpful to imagine how people will respond and then revise your questions if necessary?**

5. **Why is it critical to arrange your questions in a logical sequence?**

6. **Although your questions will be written out in advance, why should you know them well enough to ask them in a conversational tone, using your natural voice inflection & everyday vocabulary?**

7. **Many discussion leaders will launch the discussion of each new paragraph of Scripture with a good observation question (asked just *prior* to having someone read the text). What purpose is served by asking an observation question first?**

8. **Once you have asked a question, look at the group and wait for an answer. What is the purpose of quietly waiting for a response?**

9. **What purpose do the following questions serve?**
 - What else do you see in this verse?*
 - Would anyone like to add anything to that?*
 - Would you explain your answer more fully?*
 - Why do you say that?*

10. **Why is it important to periodically summarize the group's ideas, reviewing what has been said?**

11. Why is it important to give careful attention to application questions?

12. Why should you beware of calling on a particular person to answer interpretive and application questions? Examples: *Bill, are you saved? Jane, what does the word 'gospel' mean?*

13. Why is it necessary to cultivate the ability to ask the right questions?

III. Pitfalls to Avoid

1. What is wrong with this question that is based on Romans 1:16? *Was Paul ashamed of the gospel?*

2. What is the problem with these questions that are based on Romans 1:16? *Why is the power of God? Why is there shame and power in the verse?*

3. Why is this not a good question that is based on Romans 1:16? *Who got salvation first and who is salvation for? It is too complex, coming two questions into one.*

4. What weakness can be found in this question? *What aspects of the atonement are evident in Romans 1:16 that are consistent with the Reformers' concept of soteriology?*

5. What problem is inherent in this sentence? *According to Romans 1:16, salvation is for everyone who believes. What relationship is there between salvation and speaking in tongues?*

6. What might happen if you major on the minors when you teach?

7. Why should the teacher show enthusiasm and avoid being a dullard?

IV. Common Problems

1. How might a teacher handle someone who talks too much?

2. How could a teacher respond to an invitation to run down a rabbit trail?

3. How can wrong answers be tactfully handled?

4. What should you do if someone asks you a question that you don't know the answer to?

5. How does Socratic teaching help overcome a lack of critical thinking skills?

6. What words of wisdom does Romans 12:17 and 2 Timothy 2:23-26 offer?

V. Philosophy of Teaching

1. You, as teacher, must take the responsibility to make sure _____ takes place!

2. Teach to meet _____ in the lives of the people you are teaching.

3. You must have a clear _____ in mind when teaching. To help you focus, always be able to boil your lesson down to an irreducible _____. Be able to state in a sentence or two the main point of the Biblical text being studied.

4. What application does Ezra 7:10 suggest for us as teachers?

5. In general, what can we learn about teaching from 1 Timothy 1:3-6?

6. The ability to teach God's Truth is a spiritual gift, and along with all the gifts is necessary for _____ the church.

7. Why will church teachers incur a stricter judgment (James 3:1)?

8. What limitation regarding teaching the church is found in 1 Timothy 2:11-15?

VI. Teaching Tools

1. Books, How to Teach

- Contact Walk Thru the Bible Ministries (770-458-9300) and get a copy of their audio series by Bruce Wilkinson, *The Seven Laws of The Learner*.
- An excellent book now out of print, *How To Lead Small Group Bible Studies*, by NavPress, is worth buying if you can find it anywhere.
- Anything on teaching by the late Howard Hendricks.

2. Books, Bible Study

- An exhaustive concordance for whatever version of the Bible you prefer. Just be sure that it is coded to Strong's numbering system!
- Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*, Joseph Thayer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977). Get a version that is numerically coded to Strong's numbering system.
- New Bible Dictionary*, Wood & Miller, eds. (InterVarsity Press: ISBN 0830814396)
- A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature*, Baurer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979). Note: a basic knowledge of Greek is needed to use this work.
- The New International Dictionary of NT Theology*, Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971)
- How to Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, Fee & Stuart, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982)

Homework: Take your favorite Bible verse (not book, not chapter, not even paragraph, but one single verse) and prepare to lead the group in a discussion of that one verse. Keep it short. Work up just a few good questions (maybe two observation, two or three interpretation, and two application), think of how to guide the discussion, how to handle any issues that come up and how to end the study. Aim for 5-10 minutes maximum. The entire group will offer any suggestions for improvement after you are done. This is supposed to be fun, not terrifying!