



How to Tangent Proof Your Life Group!

Acts 2:42-47

The Fellowship of the Believers

42They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

What are five common mistakes to avoid when facilitating a Life Group discussion?

3 Myths about Small Group Discussion

There are three myths people frequently buy into when it comes to Life Groups:

Myth #1: Tell Us More vs. Look for More

Myth #2: More Questions vs. the Right Questions

Myth #3: What We Know vs. How We Change

Advantages of the Flow Question Method

Allows people to interact with God's word themselves and not through a "teacher."

Helps people see the relevance of Scripture in everyday life.

Provides group leaders with opportunities to listen to participants respond to God's word and shepherd and affirm them naturally.

Enables group members to experience the joy of learning together from God's word without being dependent on a "teacher" or a published curriculum. Curriculum tends to do the "thinking" for us.

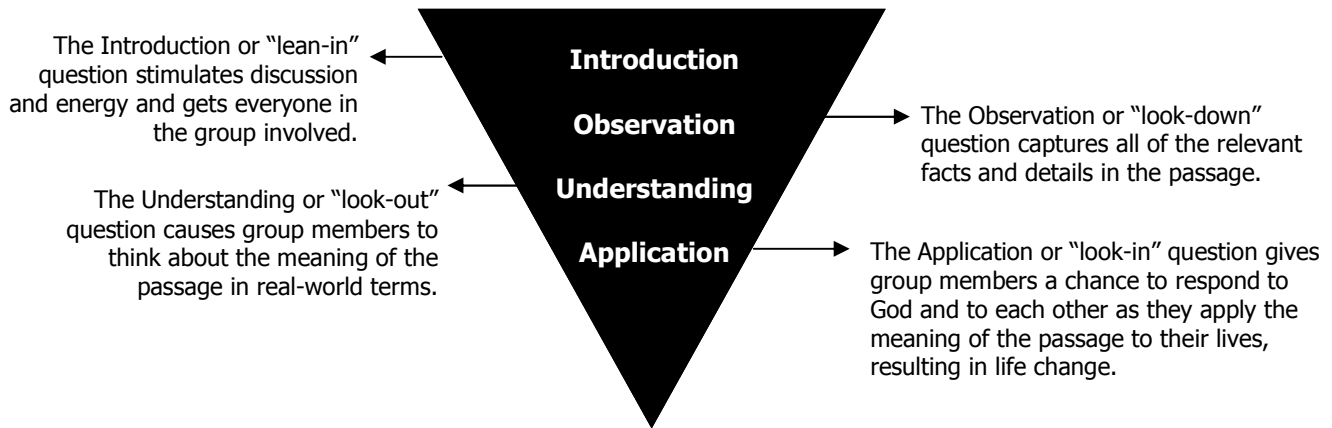
Allows group members to interact and learn from each other.

They never get old and are centered on God's word. They are always fresh as we encounter Scripture at different places in our life.

"Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us."

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Learning Starts with “V”



Flow Questions: An Overview

Here’s a high-level view of the four flow questions and their functions:

1. **Lean In.** The goal of this question is to get everyone in the group to “lean in” and get involved. It is normally easy to answer, fun and creates a sense of energy—so much so that you’ll see group members physically lean in as they engage in the discussion. This question also frequently provides an emotional link to the **Look In** question.
2. **Look Down.** This is an observation question. It is designed to help group members “look down” and see all of the relevant details and facts in the Bible passage being studied. This question establishes a solid foundation for the rest of the study. Regardless how much time someone has spent studying God’s word, everyone in the group can get involved simply by taking an observant look at what the Bible says.
3. **Look Out.** This question helps group members “look out” and see the principle of the Bible passage through the lens of the world today. It builds a bridge between the facts of the passage and our understanding of it as it relates to our lives and culture.
4. **Look In.** Here is where group members begin to “look in” and see what God might be nudging them to change in their lives. During this part of the study, group members move from “knowing” to “doing” what God’s word says. It’s the goal of all Bible study: life change.

Introduction Question

Raises the energy level in the room, grabs the attention of participants and creates needed momentum to dive into the observation question. Causes the group to "lean in".

Provides safety in answering the question and sets the tone for the rest of the study. This question can be answered easily and is not threatening.

If possible, should create the **same emotion** as the application question.
3 levels of introduction questions on the "group safety" continuum:

- Lean-in:** feels safe to jump into the conversation.
- Neutral:** no response. Who cares? Not engaging.
- Lean-out:** feels too threatening. People are hesitant to play.

If a participant talks the first time, he/she is more likely to jump in a second or third time.

This question should use 20% of the group's time. Save room for more important questions.

This is both the most and least important question to the success of the group.

Leads to deeper relationships and knowledge of those participating in the small group.

Observation Question

The observation question should cause group members to physically look down and examine the passage.

The test for an effective observation question is this: Does it lead the group to discover all of the relevant facts/details that naturally emerge from the passage?

Is designed to lead to many observations and discoveries.

Must be answerable by anyone solely based on their observation of the passage without requiring any prior knowledge or reference to other related texts.

Ask participants what verse they saw their observation in. This serves as a reminder to the group to stay directly in the text and it keeps people from talking in generalizations.

Model the more difficult observations: It encourages the group to really dig into the passage; leaves easier answers for group participants.

Have in your mind a rough estimate of how many observations are in the passage; encourage the group to find them all; don't be afraid of silence.

Understanding Question

Understanding questions should cause group members to *look up* from the passage and reflect on the meaning of the passage in life today. It makes the group look out.

- *Why is it difficult for people today to live this way?*
- *What are some ways you see people disregarding the truths in this passage? How are they following this passage?*
- *Who do you know that is an example of the main truth of this passage and how has their life benefited from it?*
- *Describe the life of someone who ignores the truth of this passage.*

Serves as a bridge between the observation and application questions by focusing on the “big idea” of a passage.

Avoid the trap of adding an understanding question that requires “deeper” knowledge beyond that which is immediately obvious in the text.

Answers not focused on ourselves, but on “people,” will lead to more authentic dialogue.

Help people see the effect and end result of those who pay attention to and those who ignore the importance of God’s word in our culture.

Application Question

Should cause group members to look in their own lives and see how the passage impacts the way they live.

Look for the “question” behind the “question.”

Write down people’s answers: this allows for follow-up and accountability.

Model honesty in your answers: this shows the group the level of depth you’re looking for in their answers.

Affirm people’s levels of vulnerability. Allow other members to affirm individuals also.

Look for the truth and the lie; move people off the lie to the truth (e.g., “I want to be more understanding of my wife this week because I’m never understanding.”)

Help people re-examine the passage to see how it applies to their life, circumstances and needs.

This question should naturally lead to prayer and encourage behavioral change.

Tips for Leading Flow Questions

- Write group members' observations on a white board and verbally repeat what they said.
- Pull group members back to the original passage whenever tangential issues come up (e.g., "What verse did you see that in?").
- Don't allow group members to share more than one story. Beware of the "dominator."
- Model the kind of sharing you want (especially with the introduction question) by talking about what you've learned personally and the challenges in your life before asking others to participate.
- Always keep to the obvious and central focus of the text (do not let the group get sidetracked on other issues).
- Don't fall into the trap of "teaching." When we've written questions that are not engaging, you'll have a tendency to rescue the group through teaching. When we teach, group members become "students" and the group loses the power of listening to one another as they mutually share their insights and lives.
- Employ the power of affirmation.
- Take time to shepherd and follow up with people outside the group.
- Look for the "question behind the question."
- Create an environment that is comfortable for the members of the group.
- Learn the different personality types in your group (i.e., dominator, quiet, tangent).
- Put people in twos or threes to share and pray.