

Tips on Leading Cabin Discussions/Devotions

Dayn Mansfield, Program Director
Thousand Pined, Crestline, CA

“Facilitators strike the match that ignites the group.”

Establish a goal: What do you want to accomplish? Is there a particular response? How can you incorporate what the speaker said? Is there a new way to look at something? Maybe simply close the day with the Lord?

1. Be conscious of the time: Has it been a long day? Start and end in a timely manner.
2. Be prepared: Make sure your “opinions” are those of scripture. Ask open-ended questions to encourage discussion. For example, “What did you like most about the chapel time tonight?”
3. Draw conclusions: Make your goal clear with a summary or final overview. Are you asking for a decision? Are you challenging your group to some action? Be clear.

Here are some additional general suggestions for leading good discussions.

The role of the leader needs to shift as the need arises:

Motivator: stimulate thinking

Enabler: keeping the discussion on track

Clarifier: explain what is being said--learn the art of “paraphrasing”

Affirmer: encourage and thank students for contributing

Challenger: ask students to justify or expand on their assertions

Redirector: draw others into the discussion

When you ask a question, give time for students to think

Be a “discussion” leader, not the answer person or final authority on all issues. Don’t answer your own questions

Pace yourself. Getting through all your questions isn’t nearly as important as permitting everyone to participate

Be willing to admit your own faults

Responding Properly When Communicating:

One author stated, “Communication is 10% information and 90% emotion.” Nothing kills communication quicker than failing to understand the ‘feelings’ behind what someone is saying. Here are four main “feeling stoppers.” Listen to yourself to avoid using these counter-productive phrases.

Cheering: “It could be worse.” “You’ll feel better tomorrow.” “Everything will be just fine.”

Reasoning: “We know that all things work together for good . . .”

Judgment: “As a Christian, you shouldn’t worry about these things.” “You shouldn’t let yourself get this way.”

Denial: “You’re not really afraid.” “I bet it’s not that bad.”

After a Group Discussion

Care for your group: i.e. Follow-up

- Those who were ignored or “silent” during the meeting
- Anyone attacked during the discussion
- Anyone who is hurting in a special way