

# HANDLING ISSUES WITH TRUTH & GRACE

Leading a small group can be filled with the joy of seeing God change people's lives, as well as the mess that comes from our brokenness. However, we believe that as you consistently depend on God's wisdom through prayer, you can work through many issues while still being full of truth and grace! Below are some common issues and tips for how to embrace the tension of loving people well.

## Quiet Member

- Ask clear and concise questions.
- Direct an easy question to the quiet member by name.
- Enlist the help of others to draw her out.
- Express appreciation for contributions she makes.
- Allow time for silence before asking another question too quickly.
- Never force a member to participate.
- Be patient, gentle, and affirming.

## Overly Talkative/Dominant Member

- Direct questions to people by name.
- Sit at a 90 degree angle and avoid eye contact.
- Say, "Thank you, I think someone else might like to share, too."
- Talk to them privately about the need for silence after some questions for thought and reflection; help them see the group's purpose.
- Ask for her help in drawing the silent ones out.
- Suggest she ask, "What does anyone else think?"

## Member Monopolizes Group With Problem(s)

- Gently move the conversation to another member or topic.
- Help the group see its purpose (not a therapy group).
- If appropriate, stop and pray for individual, then carry on with a different topic.
- Talk to the person privately, suggesting resources for help.

## Superficial Sharing From Member

- Be open in your own sharing.
- Break down in pairs for sharing, application, or prayer.
- Meet outside the group to find out interests, opinions, and ideas.
- Remind the group that the Bible is written to individuals and ask, "How will you know if Scripture is convicting you?"; "What should we do about this?"; "How should we live in light of this?"; or, "What might we do this week to apply this?"

## Controversial Question Is Raised

- Set some ground rules before the discussion.
- Share our understanding that Christians hold different views on the topic.
- Convey that all viewpoints must be supported by Scripture.
- Explain that this question won't be settled once and for all today.
- Focus on what the divergent beliefs hold in common.

## "Incorrect" Answer Is Given

- Remember that sometimes the person is more important than the answer.
- Determine whether the response is truly wrong or just an opinion that differs from the leaders.
- Affirm the person's willingness to share, then continue the questioning process; see if you can bring the person around to the "correct" answer.
- Ask, "What does someone else think?"; "Does someone else have experiences along that line?"

### Disagreeing Member

- Try to find the cause (e.g., is she sheltering a deep hurt?).
- Give feedback to the person who disagrees: "What exactly causes your hesitation?"
- Challenge the group with the choice of holding back (no risk) or going ahead (with risk but also growth) by asking, "How can we get around this objection?"

### Member Is Argumentative & Obstinate

- Keep your composure; don't take things personally.
- Examine what is being said and try to find the good in it (bring them alongside you).
- Tell her that you will discuss it with her after the group time.
- Meet with her privately to see if this is a personal problem,
- Communicating that her ideas are important, but that the behavior can't continue.

### Group Member "Rubs" You The Wrong Way

- Pray for this person.
- Ask God to change your heart for the person and let you see them through His eyes.
- Step back and let the Holy Spirit work in both of you, love them as an act of faith and obedience.

### Discussion Gets "Off Track"

- Acknowledge it, and gently bring the group back to the topic: "That's a great topic, but let's table it for the time being." Then bring the group back to the topic by reviewing and summarizing where the discussion got lost.
- Use a key word (e.g., rabbit trail) to remind the group they're on a tangent and gently pull the group back to the topic.

### Conflict Avoidance To Keep Peace

- Recognize that the person doesn't have a Biblical view of community and is avoiding conflict.
- Talk to the person privately and help her see that she is avoiding honest interaction leading to resolution.
- Reassure the person that it's okay for people to disagree on some issues.

### Difficult Question Is Raised

- Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know."
- Offer to find an answer and report on it next time, or through email in between meetings.
- Open the question up to the group.
- Assign members the task of researching the question, and give guidance for references to use.

### Apathy, Confusion, or Complaints of Wasting Time

- Display enthusiasm and energy.
- Be diligent to include every person as a vital member of the group.

### Personality Clash Between Members

- Emphasize points of agreement.
- Help each side to clearly understand the other.
- Talk individually and corporately about maintaining unity.

### Members Regularly Come Late

- Agree as a group on a set time.
- Begin each meeting promptly.
- Discuss time with the group.
- If one particular member is coming late, have a 1-on-1 conversation after the group ends.