

A photograph of a man sitting in a group, reading a Bible. He is wearing a dark t-shirt and blue jeans. He is holding a white mug of coffee in his left hand and the Bible in his right hand. The background shows other people sitting in a room, suggesting a church or community gathering. The lighting is warm and natural.

LIFE-GIVING LIFE GROUP CONVOS

LIFE-GIVING LIFE GROUP CONVERSATIONS

If you have been asked to lead the conversation time in your life group, this doc will set you up to succeed and create the space for truly life-giving conversations to be had!

A couple of comments before we start. We assume you will be making use of the weekly life group guide if one has been provided. This doc is also not intended to be exhaustive but rather empowering as you take your first steps in facilitating a life-giving life group conversation.

Here are some foundational building blocks to keep in mind as you prepare. And remember the goal of a life group conversation:

To have a conversation that connects the truth of the Bible to people's everyday lives in a way that encourages life change.

Here are 3 big ideas to keep in mind throughout the process:

- 1. PREPARATION:** Prepare well and everyone wins
- 2. PARTICIPATION:** Great questions lead to greater participation
- 3. TRANSFORMATION:** Participation leads to transformation

WHAT DOES GOOD PREPARATION LOOK LIKE?

There is no substitute for thoughtful, intentional preparation. When you prepare well it sends a message that you care. It lets people know that you are trusting God to do something in their lives through this conversation.

Here are some handles for what good preparation looks like:

i. Prayerfulness:

Be prayerful for both yourself and the group. Consider praying for individuals within the group as well as specific prayers for what you are trusting God to do through the conversation.

ii. Clarity on the big idea for the discussion:

Every group guide will have a goal - make sure you have a clear idea of what the goal is. Then make sure everything you do is moving people toward that goal. Let the goal guide your prayers and preparation.

iii. Introduction:

A strong start is your best friend when it comes to an engaging life group conversation. Your enthusiasm, tone and energy from the start is contagious. Keep your introduction short, sharp and engaging.

A good introduction draws people into the conversation through making them feel like they want or need to be part of the conversation. Think about answering these questions: Why should people engage in this discussion? What has God done in your life through this topic? What do you believe God wants to do in the lives of those having the conversation? Is there a creative way to introduce the topic, perhaps a story or illustration of some kind?

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iv. Using the group guide:

The group guide helps cut down your preparation time BUT you still need to prepare well—I would say you need at least an hour. This will include your prayer and conversation question preparation.

- The group guide is just that, a guide. It's not a straight-jacket.

The general rules are: don't change the goal for the discussion and if you can improve the discussion questions then do it. Other than that—feel free to make any changes that you feel will work for the group.

Here are some additional guidelines:

- As far as possible try and ask open-ended questions—this means any question that can be answered with a “yes” or “no” are no good.
- Rewrite the guide questions in your own words. This will help your ownership levels and people will know you have prepared well.
- Think about some possible answers to your questions too.

SOME BASIC FACILITATION SKILLS

Remember you are not the teacher or preacher—that happens on Sunday. You are there to facilitate contribution in a conversation. Don't dominate the discussion.

i. When you ask a question, be patient

If the silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother others. If no one responds, ask someone you know well to give it a first go.

ii. Remember to A.C.T.

Acknowledge the contribution

Affirm people's contribution, “Thank you for sharing” or “That's a great thought”.

Clarify what is said

Make sure everyone understands what has been shared.

Take it to the group

“Do the rest of you agree?” Does anyone think differently to this?”

iii. Draw people out:

Gently and thoughtfully consider how you can include quieter people into the conversation. Perhaps use names or encourage them by letting them know you are interested in what they are thinking.

iv. Deal with domination gently

When someone dominates, it kills contribution. Remember, this includes you or other leaders in the group too. Think of ways to deal with domination. Consider saying something like, "Thanks John, you're on fire tonight. I'm keen to hear from others what they think."

v. Gently bring the conversation back if it goes off course

Remember the goal for the discussion.

Bring things back if they go off course. There are times when it is okay to allow a discussion to go off track—these are rare exceptions.

INVITE FEEDBACK

The secret to growing your facilitation skill is to ask for feedback. Ask your Life Group Leader and perhaps a good friend to help you with feedback. Initially just ask for positive feedback. When you're up for it though, ask people for 1 or 2 ideas that they may have about how you could improve.

Remember, there is so much to learn and grow into so don't be too hard on yourself as you take your first steps in this area. And enjoy yourself—your group is made up of friends. Your goal is to serve them, not impress them. You've got this!