

# Handling Challenging Discussion Issues

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A wise leader will think through how to handle difficult situations so if they arise, you'll know how you want to handle it. Below are common issues that might come up.

## A Newcomer to the Group

Decide when you want to introduce a newcomer. The best times are either at the beginning or the end of the group.

## A Long and Confusing Answer

Try to summarize the pertinent points of what was said, thank the individual, and then move on.

## A Controversial Conversation

If you need to stop a controversial answer or conversation, pray fast! Then change the subject as soon as possible. Your goal is not to let one person offend the whole group. One way to interrupt an answer is, "Suzie, may I interrupt you? Thank you for your answer, but we need to move on."

## A Too Personal Answer

One way to save the person from sharing something she may later regret is to say, "Suzie, since this is so personal for you, do you mind if you and I discuss this later?" After her agreement, ask, "Who will take the next question?"

Later, be sure to talk to Suzie or call her. Let her know that you care about her situation, but that you interrupted her because you didn't want her to share something private she would later regret. Help her see that you were looking out for her heart.

## When You Don't Know the Answer

If someone asks you a question that you don't know that answer to, admit it. But follow up by saying that you'll find the answer and get back with her. If the question is vital, open it to the group. They may be able to help discover the answer.

If it's a "sticky" question, you can respond with, "That's a good question. I don't know if there is a cut-and-dried answer in the Bible, but if you have time after group, I would love to talk to you about this."

## A Strange or Wrong Answer

If the answer is unbiblical, thank the person, and then try to get a biblical answer from another member of the group whom you trust to be doctrinally sound.

Hopefully, you have identified one or more "go-to girls" in your group. These are individuals whom you trust to have solid biblical answers. In a tough situation, you can call on them directly for an answer.

Every answer does not need to be answered correctly, but it is your job as the leader to make sure the last thing said on the matter is correct. Layer the truth over the wrong answer instead of telling the individual that she is wrong. You may also say, "Let's keep exploring. I don't believe we've arrived at the correct interpretation."

## An Overly Talkative or Aggressive Member

First, pray and ask God to give you the wisdom and love to handle this woman rightly. Try calling on her for only "cut-and-dried" answers.

If she's waving her hand, you could say, "Suzie, thank you for your enthusiasm. I might take you after I hear from some of the others." If she is on one side of the room, you could say, "I would like to hear from someone on this side of the room."

## Chatting Women

Try to get them to sit apart from one another. Ask one of them to help you with something while the group is filling up.

## No Correct Answer Is Given

Try saying, "That's one thought. Who has another?" Or "That's interesting. Who came up with something different?" If needed, ask your "go-to girls" directly or explain the answer yourself.

## No One Answers

Sometimes the group is feeling lazy, sometimes they just don't want to participate, and sometimes they're insecure. Try adding an element of humor. "Silence is golden, but who gagged the group?" Try to encourage discussion by saying, "This was a difficult question. Who will take a stab at it for me?"

## The Personal Question No One Wants to Answer

Before you ask the question, give the group your expectation. For example, “I would like to hear from three of you. Who will go first?” Maintain eye contact, one at a time, expectantly. It’s okay to have silence for a little while, to compel them to answer.

These are usually the most important of the questions because they contain personal application. If you can’t get the group to share, then you share from your heart in a vulnerable way. This often will spark several people to share as well.

While you can’t prepare for every type of difficulty, having a plan for the above situations will go a long way to making your group time go more smoothly. With just a little foresight, you can help there be less distraction for the women in your group (and less frustration for you as the leader!), letting your group focus on the main thing—studying the Word of God.