

House Church

Discussion Guide*

Family Gatherings for House Churches incorporate rhythms (meal, worship, scripture, and prayer) that are intended to build relationships, grow disciples, and to turn our focus towards God.

It is through the discussion of the scriptures where we are able to engage past presuppositions, invite others into a new understanding of God, and challenge the whole group to grow deeper in their own personal relationship with Jesus. At the same time, a great discussion can lead toward deeper relationships with one another.

Whether you anchor your time together around scripture, a Sunday sermon, or just responding to a need in the group. Knowing how to ask intentional questions will help your group in three ways:

1. To build community
2. To learn through explaining things themselves
3. To synthesize what they've learned

Below you'll find four tips to help you write questions that accomplish these goals:

1. Ask Open-Ended Questions

Strong open-ended questions guide our thoughts without expecting specific answers. Asking an open-ended question is like fencing in a pasture—a farmer wants his cattle to have plenty of grass on which to feed, but he doesn't want any of them going too far off on their own. The right discussion question will push your House Church in a helpful direction without giving them too much room to follow unhelpful tangents.

Bad Examples:

1. What's one thing that you found really helpful from Sunday's message? (Too broad.)

2. What are some practicals that stood out to you from Sunday's message?
(Expects regurgitation of what's been discussed, doesn't push students for original thoughts)

Good Examples:

How do you think Sunday's message challenged you to live differently? (Helps individuals apply information to their own context)

How can you incorporate some of the practicals talked about on Sunday in your own life? (Pushes individuals to consider specific benefits of application in their own life)

2. Think about Community

Even if you write the perfect open-ended question (broad enough to be challenging without being so broad it's unhelpful), expect to see a wide array of answers. Those in your House Church will combine what they have heard with their own experience to bring something original into the conversation. That's discussion's superpower—each perspective can be shaped and help shape others, and each benefits from the experience of others.

As you write discussion questions, consider asking yourself: "Does this question help the House Church to add their own experience to this discussion?" Try following that up with: "Does this question motivate them to give a thoughtful response?"

3. More Questions = More Participation

Offering more than one question to answer—providing some that are very accessible, others that are more challenging—will draw in more to participate. Some questions may be easier to answer for a portion of your House Church than for others. So asking questions that may engage different thought patterns could get everyone to have at least one response throughout the day. For your House Church, easily accessible questions will become a training ground for healthy discussion.

Easily accessible:

Does anyone have an experience of forgiving someone, how did that go? (Simply focuses on personal experience while drawing out information and insight about the topic.)

4. Ask for transformation, not information.

There will be many moments when you are listening to a sermon or reading through scripture and God meets you powerfully. The response can range from conviction to inspiration, they are all needed and valid. Allow yourself to be transformed by the content first. Then ask the questions out of that. If you are brought to a place of conviction of sin, share that personally and ask a question that may guide people into an introspective place too. If you are caught by a fresh vision of God's kingdom, ask a question that challenges places of comfort. You get to guide others through your own transformation and that will oftentimes help others to grow as well.

Helpful discussion questions take time to write. The process isn't easy, though it gets easier with practice. This is an important skill to develop as a leader because it is not the answers that often change us to become like Jesus. Rather, it is a thoughtful question that lead to lasting change.