

## Facilitating a Spiritual Conversation

## Goals of our Conversations

- Lots of on-topic sharing
- Plenty of time for Application

## Creating a Culture of Safety

- Good questions: open-ended questions which require elaboration instead of only “yes” or “no.” The best questions start with “what,” “how,” and “in what ways.”

## Creating a Culture of Safety

- Use language like might, maybe, perhaps, and what if. Instead of asking, “What did Jesus mean?” Ask, “What might Jesus mean?” This promotes safety for sharing. What might God be calling you to consider? What if the Way of Jesus means a world without strangers? What would be the implications if that were true?

## Flow

- Framing
- Icebreaker
- Observe
- Interpret
- Application

## Framing Comments

- Gives Introduction
- Sets the direction for the topic
- “Tonight, we’re in the midst of our conversation series called “Listening to God.” Last week we talked about the importance of expecting God to speak. Next week, we’ll talk about how we listen. But tonight, we’re going to talk about how God speaks. Let me say a prayer, and then we’ll dive in.”

## Icebreaker Questions

- Icebreaker questions need be light and easy to answer. The goal is to create opportunity for numerous people to chime in. Hopefully, this will “break the ice” so they are more likely to chime in again.
- Set a culture of participation in a non-threatening way: What intrigues you or frightens you about a study of the Holy Spirit?
- Stories / examples: Share about a time when you felt like an outsider. Share a time when you were worried about something which turned out to be no big deal. Share a funny thing you've heard a child pray for.
- Good things about other people: Who's someone you know that is a really great leader. What makes them so great? Tell us about someone you know who really embodies forgiveness.

## Observing the Scripture

- Read the same passage from different translations.
- Have the passage read 2-3 times with time in between for silent reflection.
- If your group already knows scripture well, state your topic and ask them to share passages which speak to it.

## Interpret Questions

- What does this passage teach us about God? What does this passage teach us about humanity?
- Look for the tensions: what makes this difficult?
- Compare/contrast: how is this similar to...how is this different than...
- How is this similar or different from what you've understood previously?
- According to this text, what does \_\_\_\_ look like in the Kingdom of God?

## Application Questions

- I / me / my
- What's been your experience with this? How has this been hard for you?
- If this were true, what about you would have to change?
- How might God be calling you to grow in this?
- What next step could you take this week in light of this?
- How can we help you take that step?

## End well

- Ideally, end with a way to respond to God (worship): song, prayer, communion, journaling, etc.

## Building Momentum

- Allow silence, people are thinking. The group will be comfortable with silence if they can tell you are comfortable with silence.
- “Thanks for sharing. Someone else, (repeat the original question).”
- Invite dissenting opinions. “Anyone else feel differently? Anyone else had a different experience? How would you respond to the same question?”
- Reflect on-topic questions back to the group: “That's a great question, how would you guys respond to that?”

## Building Momentum

- Use summarizing rather than asking questions with obvious answers. Instead of “Who were the Pharisees?” “Where were they standing?” “What story came right before this?” Give the group 3-4 sentences summarizing the context, then ask the interpretive question which is more worth our time. “Given this context, how were Jesus’ words shocking?”

## Guarding the Environment

- Off-topic question: “Interesting, but I really want to stick with \_\_\_\_\_. Let’s come back at the end if we have time.”
- Don’t allow people to “fix” each other—it’s not that simple. Our conversations are not about giving advice unless someone clearly asks for suggestions. Our conversation is about each person listening for the voice of God through scripture and the Spirit.
- You have to step up and address “fixing” and deflect off-topic questions to protect your group. Your group is counting on you!!

## Guarding the Environment

- Tommy / Tammy talk-a-lot
  - “Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t shared yet.”
  - “I want to let some others chime in now.”
  - “Help me connect what you just said to my question.”
  - Say something to them privately.
  - Let your co-leaders help. Let me know if I can help too.