



Guidelines for Facilitating

As a facilitator your role is “to make it easier: help bring about - *facilitate* growth”, according to Merriam Webster’s Dictionary. We want to help bring about the group’s discussion on the topic while counting on the Holy Spirit to lead them where they need to go. This is not a teaching session.

To be a great facilitator...

- 1) **Ask questions:** help your group to think through the topic
 - a. When asking a question, turn toward the whole group and repeat the question to them so that they engage with each other. If the group gets stuck, ask a question that may give them some traction (you may have to repeat their question and then rephrase THEIR question).
 - b. You may have to lead them back to the focus, however, try to do this with a question: How did Diane state that in the video? OR Where did you experience that in the journal this week? (NOT: Remember that Mike said...)
- 2) **Listen:** to the Holy Spirit AND the people speaking
 - a. There may be similar needs, thoughts, feelings expressed by everyone - how are they related? What may be the Holy Spirit highlighting that we all should be aware of?
 - b. Sometimes what is shared is the surface of something more significant - consider how the Spirit may prompt you to probe a little deeper or may make you aware of something to follow-up on later.
- 3) **Watch:** body language communicates a lot
 - a. Look for “soft eyes” or “bright eyes” - some people may have something to share but are hesitant or not able to “break in” to the discussion. Slightly widened or a softened gaze that appears to be taking in more than the immediate view, usually indicates someone has something to contribute. A hardened stare usually indicates difficulty understanding or desire to challenge.
 - b. Open posture is receptive, crossed arms/legs can indicate defensiveness. Leaning-in can mean a desire to engage the conversation, leaning back with an open posture can indicate comfort, leaning back with crossed arms/legs usually means disengaged or disbelief.
- 4) **Pause/Silence:** Allow a pause in the conversation Be comfortable with silence.
 - a. Don’t feel the need to jump right in. Let the group know that pausing is good and that you will let silences happen as everyone processes.
 - b. Pausing allows the person sharing an opportunity to finish. It also allows the group an opportunity to reflect on what was just shared before responding or moving on.
 - c. Silence to the point of awkwardness is sometimes ok because it’s in the silence that the Holy Spirit will prompt someone to speak what the group needs to hear in the moment, wrestle with difficult truth, or make a resolution for change. You can help this by how you validate moments of silence.
- 5) **Be encouraging:** this too can be done with a question
 - a. Yes! That is some good stuff right there. Did you catch what she said? Now how do you develop that at your church or in your life?
 - b. That’s a great statement- can you back that up with scripture text or bible story?
- 6) **Discourage cross-talk:** The #1 killer of great groups.

- a. Only one person in the group should be talking at a time.
- b. No side conversations.
- c. If you notice it, gently say to the those doing it, “Hey Bob is sharing something great right now that I think we all need hear”.
- d. If someone persists don’t be afraid to politely ask them to refrain from side conversations so that they and the entire group might get the most out of the time you have together.

7) **Guide and Explore: DO NOT TEACH**

- a. Our goal is to let God through the Holy Spirit help participants take ownership of His mission to make disciples. Facilitators need to be open handed, curious, and supportive of each participant’s journey. Remember we are trusting God to lead/guide them, we are just facilitating.
- b. Be self-aware of how you are personally affecting the environment through your words, actions and non-verbal communication.
- c. Guiding participants in brevity/respect for others, as well as time and topic is appropriate. Use affirming ways of acknowledging/re-directing, and follow the Holy Spirit’s lead.