

**DISCUSSION**  
**MORE THAN JUST POOLING IGNORANCE &**  
**BIBLICALLY UNSUBSTANTIATED BIAS**

1. Strengths

Just hearing someone else say something may help understanding  
We learn that some quieter members are quite knowledgeable  
Everyone listens with a different pair of ears, and everyone expresses himself with different words  
A great discussion = everyone feels his point of view has been expressed [by himself or others].  
A gentle way to defuse issues where the divisive parts are more semantic than substantive, i.e. finding common ground though terminology still differs.  
Collision often produces light.  
Openness among class members develops cohesion.  
Learning is always better when emotions are involved.  
Some students learn best by expressing themselves and having their ideas challenged by those more knowledgeable. Iron sharpens iron.

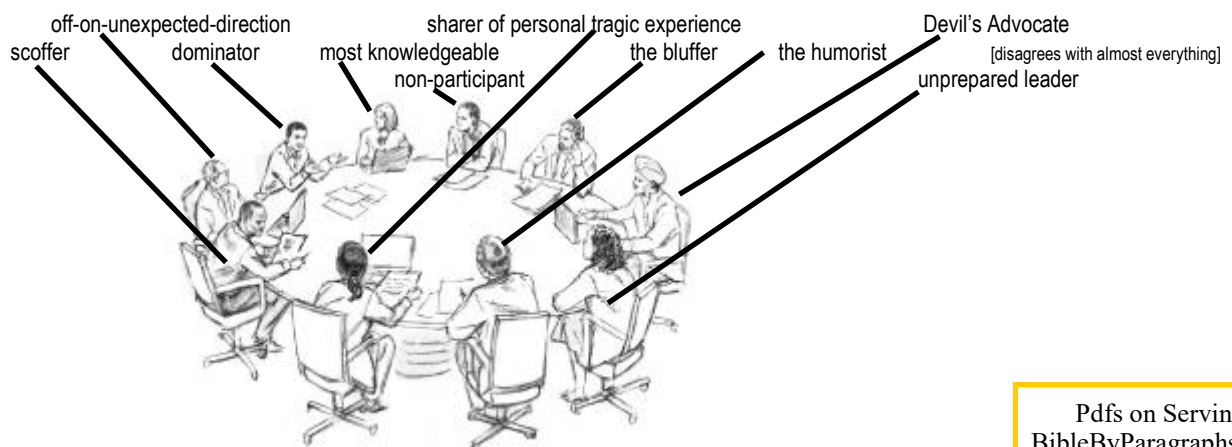
2. Weaknesses - THIS METHOD IS MOST LOVED BUT ABUSED BY  
**POORLY PREPARED TEACHERS**  
and loved most by talkative students

This has the longest list of weaknesses.  
This is the lazy teacher's favorite method of leading. He has no idea that a first rate discussion still does require much preparation by the leader.  
Is it just pooled ignorance?  
The loudest most authoritative-sounding voice dominates.  
Knowledgeable participants may need to be instructed on how much to contribute without dominating.  
Gentle leaders may not know how to correct those who give misled [heretical] answers.  
Many leaders do not know how to keep the group "on task."  
Most passionate participants are often unaware of how opinionated they sound.  
Some class members can't handle a bit of silence [i.e. think time].  
Bad leaders can wreck a great discussion.  
Leaders must come to the table knowing the issues as well as several possible directions the conversation may go and how to keep from fascinating but unprofitable rabbit trails.  
Leader answers too many questions.  
May degenerate into a "talk-fest."  
Some participants just like to hear themselves speak. We've all heard a rant on someone's favorite topic even when everyone in the room agrees with him.

**Do's and Don'ts**

- Keep eye contact while speaking.
- Allow others to speak
- Speak clearly
- Make sure to bring the discussion on track
- Positive attitude
- Speak sensibly
- Listen carefully to others
- No need to go into much detail

HINDRANCES of discussion groups



## 3. Tips

The teacher always must be among the most knowledgeable people in the room about the topic to be discussed.

Sit in a circle. Each gets to look in the eyes of those who may disagree, because our eyes, facial expressions, and body language also communicate.

The Golden Rule of Participation: after you make a comment 2 other people must speak before you may speak again.

Encourage participants to begin lots of comments with, "It's my understanding. . . ." or "In my opinion. . ." or "This Bible verse says, 'blah-blah-blah' and that seems to disagree with the statement you just made."

No one speaks more than 3 or 4 sentences. Make your point succinctly then allow others to give another viewpoint. *No long stories, examples, speeches, or illustrations.*

No sarcasm.

No arrogance.

No stifling others' responses.

Obey the leader's suggestions and requests.

Leaders must not let the "dominator" ask for special permission to "add one more thing" without waiting his turn.

Leader graciously appreciates every person.

Leader asks the reticent to add a thought or to "agree" with something which was said already.

Leader must act impartial but will summarize the discussion at the end focusing on Scripture presented.

## 4. Leader must know what he would do in several scenarios.

## Examples

"We'll take two more brief comments, then move on to verse 12."

"Joe, you will be the last comment we'll take."

"Joe, would you be the first to answer my question?"

"I don't know enough about that to add anything. Does someone else have a thought?"

"Who would be willing to look that up next week and give us a two-minute report?"

Sometimes leaders must redirect the question to another individual or to the rest of the group.

Say something like, "Does anyone else have a different perspective or anything to add?"

\* In the case of an off-the-wall response, say something like, "That's interesting. How did you come to that conclusion?"

Lead them to the truth gently.

\* Does anybody know a Bible verse that addresses *[or differs with]* what Joe just said?"

\* At times it will be necessary to briefly correct the answer if the group is unable to: "I can understand why you might think that, but. . . ."

If a serious *[almost hostile]* disagreement arises, "Jim & Joe, I wonder if you would join me after class *[or at breakfast tomorrow, or at my house]* to continue this discussion. I'd like to hear what both of you have to say about the last point mentioned, but we won't be able to continue further in class today. Turn to page. . . ."