

A Charitable Discourse (Small-Group Version)

Talking About the Things That Divide Us

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Welcome

I'm excited that you've chosen to use the DVD and book *A Charitable Discourse: Talking About the Things That Divide Us* in a group setting. Whether this discussion group is part of an established small group, a Sunday school class, or a new book group, it's my hope and prayer that the following guide will help you craft meaningful discussions aimed at gaining a better understanding of the issues that often divide Christians and churches. Below you'll find a guide that will help you make your group as effective as possible.

AT THE FIRST MEETING

Begin by getting to know each other. The first group meeting might be a dinner or social time in which you begin to set up group expectations and specifics like meeting time and meeting place. Also work on establishing group goals, such as:

- To encourage consistent and passionate participation from group members
- To gain new understanding of the issues that divide Christians and churches
- To create a safe group environment where members can relax and openly share thoughts and ideas, even on controversial topics
- To pray together as a community in Jesus Christ

PRIOR TO MEETING

Each session corresponds to one or more chapters in Dr. Dan Boone's book *A Charitable Discourse: Talking About the Things That Divide Us*. Whenever possible, group members should complete the corresponding reading prior to the meeting time to help foster the best possible discussion.

DURING THE MEETING

Most group sessions will have the following four components:

- Social time (catching up on each other's lives)
- Prayer time (sharing prayer requests and praises)
- Curriculum time (watching the DVD or going through the book)
- Discussion time (reading and answering the discussion questions)

Your group might like to begin with social time or end with it. They might also like to add some worship time into the group meeting. As a group, you can discuss what format is most comfortable for you, and then settle into a routine so that group members will know what to expect. Finally, plan to begin and end on time, so that group members feel their time is respected.

AFTER THE MEETING

Complete your reading for the next group session and pray! Take time to pray for group members and their requests. Pray also for God to speak to you through your reading and through the DVD the next time the group is together.

How to Use This Group Guide

Each of the six sessions has been divided into six parts. These six parts have been crafted and ordered to help your group move from initial observations about the topic to deep, meaningful discussions.

1. Topic Summary

The first will be an overview of the reading for that session. It will summarize the corresponding chapter(s) of Dr. Dan Boone's book *A Charitable Discourse: Talking About the Things That Divide Us*. Whenever possible, read the full chapter in the book to gain a deeper insight on the topic being discussed for that session.

2. Introductory Questions

The second part is a few discussion questions that will begin to get the group members talking about the topic at hand. This will help bring out initial options.

3. Video Segment

Third, the group will watch the video session for that topic together.

4. Related Scripture

The next portion of the session includes scripture that will help shed light on the topic for that session. It will give the group members biblical background.

5. Digging Deeper Questions

The fifth part of the session involves more complicated discussion questions that aim at bringing about deep and challenging dialogue between the group members.

6. Call to Action

Finally, the session will conclude with suggestions for living out or following up on the topic that was discussed. This may include a call to action, a group prayer, a memory verse, and so forth.