



## SMALL GROUPS

# FACILITATOR GUIDE

### SAMPLE MEETING STRUCTURE

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(approximately 90 minutes)

#### *Welcome (10 minutes)*

Welcome and engage in conversation. If your group would like to share a meal together, consider adding 30 minutes to your socializing time at the beginning of your session.

#### *Opening Prayer (5 minutes)*

Lead the group in a simple opening prayer or have members take turns leading, inviting them to do so ahead of time.

#### *Content and Discussion (1 hour)*

Read through the selected Bible passage, or the faith study content. Using questions from the study or others you have prepared, facilitate a discussion around the content.

#### *Closing Prayer (10 minutes)*

Members share their prayer intentions. Lead the group in a closing prayer or have members take turns leading, inviting them to do so ahead of time.

#### *Reminders/Other Business (5-10 minutes)*

Confirm the next meeting time and any other practical things the group might need to discuss.

### HOW TO BE A GREAT GROUP LEADER

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#### *PRAY*

Pray for each member of your group, for your leadership, and before each meeting that God will guide you.

#### *PREPARE THE PARTICIPANTS*

Before you begin your faith study, prepare the participants by clearly communicating the goals and vision of the group and reviewing the format. Share the *Participant Guide* with them and agree to those group expectations.



## DEMONSTRATE HOSPITALITY

### IN-PERSON:

- ◇ Decide the best place for your group to meet (someone's home, a coffee shop, restaurant, park, parish, etc.), a place the group can comfortably sit, see and hear one another, and have enough privacy for the conversation.
- ◇ Set up the environment to be welcoming, organized, comfortable, and clean.
- ◇ Make sure your participants know where the bathrooms are located, and that they are clean.
- ◇ Consider a simple setting like a candle or centerpiece.
- ◇ Have snacks and water or other drinks available if not meeting in a venue where food is readily available—consider having group members rotate providing snacks if appropriate.
- ◇ Consider sharing a meal together each week, having members contribute to each meal or rotate meal preparation responsibilities.
- ◇ Be mindful of allergies (food, pets, etc.) and other health concerns.
- ◇ If you are meeting at a parish, be sure that you are on the parish calendar in a room reserved for you, and be sure that the doors will be unlocked for participants to easily find their way in.

### ONLINE:

- ◇ Decide the best online tool for your group to use (Zoom, Facebook Messenger, Google Meet, Skype).
- ◇ Make sure what people will see behind you is clean and presentable. If possible, set the tone in the background with decorations, candles, images, etc.
- ◇ Set a welcoming tone, greeting each member as they enter the meeting.
- ◇ Remind members about online best practices and provide any help with how to use their controls. (See Participant Guide)
- ◇ At the end, thank everyone for coming and say goodbye to each member as they leave. Be the last one to leave the online gathering.

## KNOW YOUR ROLE

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As a small group leader, you take on the following tasks:

### *Facilitate*

- ◇ You are not the teacher, but you facilitate the discussion, and create an environment for encounter with Christ through the Word, discussion, and prayer.
- ◇ Listen carefully; do not interrupt.



- ◇ You do not need all the answers but are willing to help each other find answers.
- ◇ Your role is not to be used as a platform to encourage dissent from the Church. Turn to trusted sources for help in understanding Church teachings with which you may struggle.

### *Encourage*

- ◇ Give positive and genuine affirmation for everyone's contributions.
- ◇ Maintain a positive attitude. Ask God to help you to be joyful.

### *Direct the Conversation*

- ◇ Avoid unhelpful tangents.
- ◇ Encourage participation from everyone.
- ◇ Ask open-ended questions.
- ◇ Do not dominate the conversation.
- ◇ Prevent others from dominating.
- ◇ Re-phrase comments for clarity. For example, "What I hear you saying is . . ."
- ◇ Allow for periods of silence as a normal part of small group discussion.
- ◇ Maintain healthy boundaries in group sharing.
- ◇ Pace the conversation, and keep it pleasing to the Holy Spirit (avoid gossip, excessive complaining, etc.).
- ◇ Start and end on time.

### *Prepare*

- ◇ Review and pray with discussion material in advance.
- ◇ Prepare in advance questions to encourage conversation.
  - ◇ *Launching Questions* – What are your initial thoughts? What stands out to you?
  - ◇ *Observation Questions* – What does this content/passage reveal to you? What details do you observe about the content/passage that was shared?
  - ◇ *Understanding Questions* – Why is this content/passage important? Do you understand what it means?
  - ◇ *Application Questions* – How does this content apply to you? What will you do now?
- ◇ Come prepared with 2 or 3 key things you are ready to share with your group, when needed.



## BE PREPARED FOR TEMPTATIONS & CHALLENGES

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- ◇ Expect to at times experience spiritual resistance through frustrations, temptations, and challenging situations when doing something for Jesus. Spiritual warfare can occur when people are growing in their faith. Pray and rely on Jesus and His Spirit to lead, guide and steady you.
- ◇ If there are any pastoral situations that arise in your small group, contact a priest or parish staff member for assistance and guidance.
- ◇ If a small group is organized through a parish and consists of any members who are vulnerable adults or people under 18 years old, the group leader is required to undergo a background check, participate in the Protecting God's Children training program, and abide by the Archdiocese of Detroit's Safe Environments Policy and Volunteer Code of Conduct.
- ◇ Small groups are sometimes the only safe and intimate environments where members of your community can disclose the more painful aspects of their lives. For this reason, it's possible for a small group leader to become aware of activities that are illegal or harmful such as substance abuse, neglect or abuse of a child or adult, suicidal ideation or mental health problems, and domestic issues. Small group leaders should be aware of any legal or moral obligation to report these activities and to connect their small group members to priests and parish staff who can provide helpful resources. Government agencies, such as the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services, and the Archdiocese of Detroit Department of Human Resources are available to help parish staff members identify such resources when needed. Helpful information can be found at <http://protect.aod.org>.