



# Facilitator for Small Group Manual

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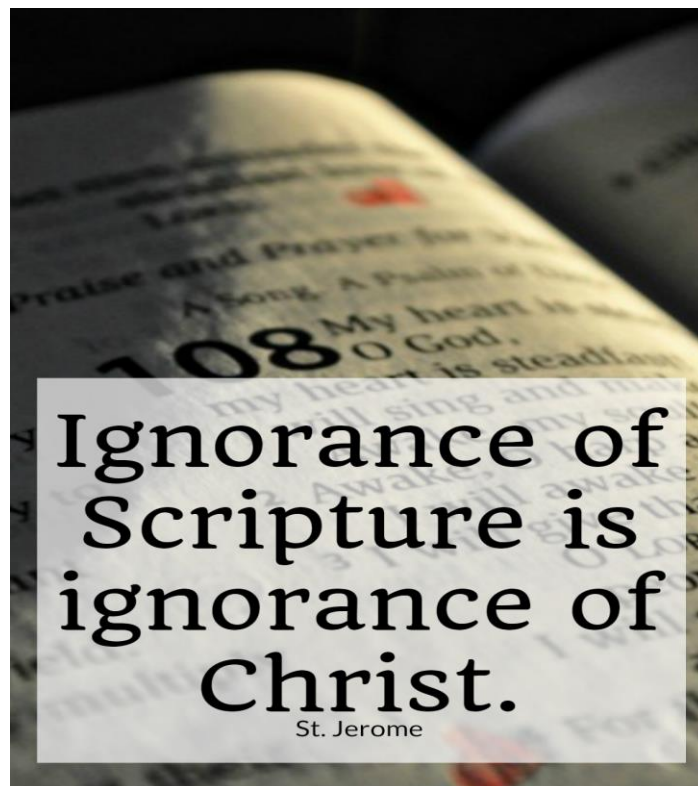
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## **Small Group Studies**

### **Purpose of Small Groups:**

- To develop strong Christian community within our parish, being Christ-like to one another and sharing the fullness of His life with others, which is where transformation happens.
- To evangelize, develop, equip, serve, and love the people within and without the church.
- To evangelize, develop, and equip new lay leaders to form, promote, and organize ongoing Small Group Studies
- Allow the Word of God to renew, sanctify, and perfect the temporal order on earth and in our hearts
- Provide a space and community where people can learn how to deepen their faith.
- To create a community of people that accompanies others down the road and provides nurturing relationships
- To gain strength for life storms
- To receive shared wisdom, experience accountability, and find acceptance and belonging as we grow into the person God calls us to be

### **Our beliefs:**

- We believe that an active faith life matters.
- We believe in doing things that are soul-giving to others and life-giving to us.
- We believe in appreciating and flourishing each person's personal walk with Jesus Christ.

### **Our foundation:**

- Sacraments
- Daily prayer
- God's Word, the Tradition & Magisterium of the Church
- Authenticity, intentionality, vulnerability

### **Living Out Our Faith**

What we are seeking to establish is nothing less or more than what is clearly taught in our Church tradition and our Bibles. Jesus tells his disciples that "If you continue in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." Jesus calls us to continue learning who He says He is, and that knowledge will be the thing to which we cling. The "word" of Jesus are the Sacred Scriptures, teachings that Sacred Tradition has handed down to us, and in Jesus Christ Himself (particularly in the Sacraments).

## **“The Marian Dimension of the Church precedes the Petrine”**

Yes, we are asking you to share your faith with others, but we first want you to be filled with Faith. This is Church teaching too! Like Mary, we want to be filled with the Holy Spirit through our own walk with the Lord and then like Peter we can go out to our friends and family and share. Before we can go out, we must first receive; or another way of saying this; you can't give what you don't have.

### **To be a small group facilitator one must:**

- Be a fully-initiated member in good standing of the Catholic Church
- Be open to an ongoing, growing personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- Receive the sacraments regularly
- Must regard the Bible, Tradition and Magisterium as the authoritative guides for their faith.
- Must be a Biblical example of a godly lifestyle and stewardship of time and finances
- Attend leadership workshops, training or conference calls as needed
- Understand servanthood, submission, Bible study and discussion in small groups
- Communicate the message of Christ in word and action to small group members
- Demonstrate a commitment to ministry, ability to communicate and love of others

### **Small Group Values to Encourage:**

- **Prayer** – a strong, powerful value in small groups. It encourages each one to be humble, feel valued knowing that God wants to and will move to answer the prayer concerns of your group.
- **Be joyful** - in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer (Romans 12:12).
- **Do not be anxious about anything**, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God (Philippians 4:6).
- **God hears you** - The Lord is far from the wicked but he hears the prayers of the righteous (Proverbs 15:29).
- **Openness** – authentic relationships begin with being honest and transparent with each other and by having an open mind that expects others to join the group (the empty chair in the room).
- **Honesty** – speaking the truth in love, so that “we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ” (Ephesians 4:15)
- **Safety and Confidentiality** – guard your honest, open relationships (express the expectations of the group in your covenant). What is discussed in your group should remain confidential in your group. Remember confidentiality promotes openness.

- **Affirmation** – encourage and love one another as Christ loves you; help each other grow and mature spiritually; build each other up in the faith.
- **Availability and Accountability** – be available to your group members; be willing to commit your time and resources, appropriately, as evidence of your commitment to serve one another. (Proverbs 11:14) Leaders must serve others, (Matthew 20:26-28)
- **Evangelization** – expands the community of believers. Share your faith and invite others into the group or other areas of the church. Availability and Accountability – be available to your group members, be willing to commit your time and resources appropriately, as evidenced of your commitment to serve one another (Proverbs 11:14) Leaders must serve others (Matthew 20:26-28)

## **What are the Basic Responsibilities of a Small Group Leader?**

### **Small Group Core Values: Serve, guide, engage, flourish**

#### **1. Serve:**

As St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians: “For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Galatians 5:13-15). It’s important to remember in service that God doesn’t ask us to become doormats. If your service is hurting your relationship with God, it isn’t service. If your service is hurting your relationship with people, it isn’t service. When we serve, we unite our souls to the heart of God; however, we can make service an idol and we must be aware that serving for the sake of involvement is not after God’s heart.

#### **2. Guide:**

The word that you may see more often in the Bible is the word shepherd, but this is not a word that we are familiar with in our culture. The Apostle Paul said, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (I Corinthians 11:1). As you begin to spend a little more time in your personal walk of faith with the help of your church staff, you will just naturally exemplify more of the characteristics of Christ that have been longing to be set free through your daily interactions.

***We want to emphasize that this means that you are willing to be authentic about your ups and downs, victories and struggles in learning to walk with the Lord. This does not mean that you are responsible to become some kind of 21<sup>st</sup> century spiritual giant. It simply means that you are clear from the very beginning that this role that you have embraced is not about you, or even the parish, it is about following Christ.***

### 3. Engage

We are asking you to engage in willing participation with our parish priests and the staff and other small group leaders during this exciting season. You are not directing this group on your own, but you're a member of a larger team of people, the Bible calls them the Body of Christ, that has a clear order and purpose.

In addition to those in leadership, engaging with your group members is the most crucial part of hosting a small group. Knowing how they're doing and what they're going through can help you ensure that they're getting nourished in what's happening in their faith. Furthermore, everyone wants to feel seen and belong—it's one of the desires that God placed on our hearts to bring us near to Him—so staying connected to your members helps meet that need.

### 4. Flourish

About creating disciples, Jesus had this to say: "By this My Father is glorified: that you bear much fruit and so become my disciples" (John 15:16). One of the central identifiers of a disciple is that they bear fruit—that the people around them are being guided closer and closer to God. Flourish asks that you stay full of God. Through Scripture study, the Sacraments, and daily prayer. This is what it means to be connected to the vine and bear fruit: that we receive our nourishment from someone else.

#### Limitations of Small Group:

We won't sugarcoat this: you will be making sacrifices. There is a time commitment, there is a need to speak with people, your group must understand the layout of the evening. However, we aren't asking anything too drastic, nor demanding. To begin, let's talk about what you **won't** be doing.

#### 1. **You won't need to necessarily host every meeting in your own living space –**

Our parish has beautiful Bible study rooms that are available for you with couches, chairs, coffee tables, and a conference table. Some members in your group may be open to a "rotating schedule" of hosting, where some people take "shifts" throughout the sessions. Additionally, some groups will meet on a church campus, but ideally, your group will meet in someone's home or a comfortable space.

#### 2. **You won't be teaching anything.**

Our ministry has absolutely no need to instruct anyone on theology, the Catechism, or history of the church. This ministry is about relationships with each other and God. However, I know that questions are a part of an active faith life, so having the Catechism and the footnotes will be helpful for a quick answer. If you find your group members asking questions about theology or doctrine more than sharing their faith, direct them to call the office because we aren't a catechetical ministry. We have plenty of programs involving instruction.

**3. You won't become a counselor or take on more than you are willing and able.**

Once again, members of the full-time staff in our parish will be there for you should anything of a more personal or spiritual nature arise where you feel unequipped to intervene. We've got your back! If you're ever placed in a situation with which you are uncomfortable about someone maybe "over-sharing" please tell us.

**4. You won't have to become a spokesperson for the Catholic Church or our particular parish.**

In other words, when it comes to things that are happening at the parish or diocese, you are not the person with the answers to those questions. You can always direct people to contact one of the staff members or offer to make that connection if the person is unwilling to do so. (However, if they're unwilling to do so and refuse your assistance, then their concern should no longer be an issue.) These are not gossip pods; if someone has a concern, please direct them to someone who can address it.

**5. You won't have to suddenly become a living saint who never needs anything.**

Okay, we're all human here. Let's be frank: it's hard to deal with other people! They can be selfish, rude, and opinionated; however, none of us are perfect. You will probably be grumpy sometimes and unwilling to go out every week. When you start to feel overwhelmed or under-appreciated, please reach out to the team.

**6. You won't be single-handedly responsible for your group-member's faith.**

Of course, you may be leading prayer or discussion but you won't suddenly become the end-all-be-all of a person's faith. If you have someone who is looking for a Spiritual Director or counselor of any kind, send them our way and we'll help them. If you're ever made to feel uncomfortable or placed in a situation where you're unsure of what to do, please let us know.

## **Key points**

1. What we are seeking to establish is nothing less or more than what is clearly taught in our Church tradition and our Bibles.
2. The parish priest and Nature of Fire staff are your resources.
3. Your role is best described as a *facilitator* or *spiritual friend* not a teacher.
4. It is not your responsibility to "save," "convert," or otherwise take responsibility for someone else's faith.
5. The Holy Spirit is on your side.

## **Addressing Objections**

### **But I'm...**

#### **1. Over-committed**

- Being involved in other ministries doesn't exclude you from the others. This isn't "something else to do," this is a way of deepening your faith.

#### **2. Busy**

- Busy-ness is probably the most distracting aspect of our lives right now: instead of carving out time for God, we fit God into the margins of our lives. This ministry does the opposite.

#### **3. Not holy**

- Do you love God? Are you trying to love Him more? Well, good, you're doing something right on your path to holiness. None of us are saints yet but if you're trying, He's happy.

#### **4. Not smart**

- This isn't about knowledge, it's about personal faith. St. Paul tells us that "His power is made perfect in weakness," so I'm gonna ask all of you to allow God to be perfectly powerful in you. We're trying to let God be big instead of relying on ourselves; if you don't know the answer to a question, God does and you can try to catch up with him later.

#### **5. Not a good leader**

- Well thank God we're looking for someone who's a better servant than leader! Welcome, friend.

#### **6. Missing the point**

- Someone asked me once, "Well, why do we have to read the Bible? We go to Mass, isn't that enough?" Short answer, for sure, Mass is more than enough to sustain you. However, God doesn't want stagnation, He wants vibrancy. God doesn't want the bare minimum, He wants devotion. This is one more way to be devoted to God.
- For this reason, the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God's Word and Christ's Body (CCC 103)

#### **7. Working**

- Thankfully, you are able to decide when and where you group meets. When you say to God, "Even though I'm busy and I want to go home and rest, I'm doing this Bible study as an act of love to You," He rejoices. God sees how hard you work and how tired you are, the fact that you're still serving is a beautiful show of love to Him.

#### **8. Not qualified**

- None of us are. But God is, so let Him take care of that one.

#### **9. Not outgoing**

- Being quiet or introverted isn't a bad thing...in fact, God loves to work through quiet people. Even if you are shy or introverted or content in silence, God will work through that to bring others to you; we need just as much love and shepherding as the extroverts do.



## **10. Scared**

- Me too, friend. It's really overwhelming to live the faith and it's certainly not easy; however, there is no joy or contentment or peace or satisfaction that can compare to the knowledge that you're drawing nearer to God.

## **But why...**

### **1. Should I care?**

- a. "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (Pope St. Paul VI)
- b. "Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he is deluding himself. Each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason to boast with regard to himself alone, and not with regard to someone else; for each will bear his own load. One who is being instructed in the word should share all good things with his instructor. Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up. So then, while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all..." (Galatians 6:2-7;9-10).

### **2. All the formality; shouldn't this just happen normally?**

- a. "The master then ordered the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedgerows and make people come in that my home may be filled' (Luke 14:23).
- b. "To convert somebody go and take them by the hand and guide them" (Saint Thomas Aquinas).
- c. The answer is both yes and no. Fortunately, God doesn't need us to make something majestic happen. Also fortunately, God wants us to make His majesty known. It is a gift that we are so loved by God that He asks us to represent and show our love for Him, but it's also a cross that we can only carry with Jesus' help.

### **3. Is this my responsibility?**

- a. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35)
- b. "Be generous in answering Jesus' call inviting you to put out into the deep and become His witnesses, discovering the trust He puts in you to devise a future together with Him. Above all, to fulfill this mission the Church is entrusting to you requires that you

cultivate a genuine life of prayer nourished by the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Confession” (Pope St. John Paul II)

#### **4. Are others going to care?**

- a. Then the LORD will guide you always/and satisfy your thirst in parched places,/will give strength to your bones/And you shall be like a watered garden,/ like a flowing spring whose waters never fail./Your people shall rebuild the ancient ruins;/the foundations from ages past you shall raise up;/"Repaire of the breach," they shall call you,/"Restorer of ruined dwellings" (Isaiah 58:11-12).
- b. "Who except God can give you peace? Has the world ever been able to satisfy the heart?" (St. Gerard Majella)
- c. They might not at first but trust me, they will. God has written His law on our hearts and when we answer His call, He satisfies that longing.

### **But how...**

#### **1. Can I help others to care?**

- a. This will start to happen naturally, and the best thing you can do is pray for them! By making your life a witness, people will start to naturally flock to you; when they start to question or delve deeper into faith, the Holy Spirit will take over.

#### **2. Can this happen organically?**

- a. When you give God the reins, the buggy goes.

#### **3. Am I supposed to do this in spite of xxxxxxxxx?**

- a. Any sin, reoccurring temptation, lack of discipline, whatever it is, pales in comparison to God's majesty. Think of all of the people God used for His glory with terrible pasts. Think of all the people God used for His glory that struggled with daily sin. Think of all the people God used for His glory who weren't by any means perfect (hint, it's all of them except the Blessed Mother).

### **But who...**

#### **1. Should I be asking?**

- a. Ask your friends, family, loved ones, random people in church. Some of the most beautiful conversions happen because one person listened to the Holy Spirit's urging. It's incredible to see exactly how powerful and full of wisdom He is.

#### **2. Is going to care?**

- a. Interesting question! We can't make people care, *but we can show them why*. You might get some rejections, but you'll also get some "yes"es. Those people who say yes make all the rest of it worth it.

### **3. Can help me?**

- a. First and foremost, you have an advocate in the Holy Spirit and he's never gonna let you down. Secondly, I am always in your corner. Even if you're wrong, I will defend you and try to help. I'm very stubborn, so it's very effective to have me in your corner.

### **4. Am I to ask others to go deeper in their faith?**

- a. My friend, we are all only saved by the redemption of Christ. The more you broadcast your need for Him and ask others to journey with you, the more they will too.

## **But what...**

### **1. Will we do to make people feel welcome?**

- a. Ask them! If people like it warm and cozy, turn up the heat. If people like to snuggle with something cuddly, give them some blankets. If people want music in the background, throw on some worship. The other part is to make sure they know it's available to them: bathroom, water, food, etc...

### **2. Is our end-goal?**

- a. To love people into a better relationship with Jesus. If one person deepens their faith because of this ministry, we can all pack it in and go home for a good day's work (but we have to come back the next day to work on another!)

### **3. Can this ministry do to get more people into the church?**

- a. If you want to help with evangelization efforts, please let me know. Also, I need people to help with evangelization, so seriously, let me know.

### **4. Should I emphasize about small groups to others?**

- a. We just want to love you better so that you can love Jesus more. That's it.

## **How to Be an Effective Spirit-Led Small Group Facilitator:**

- Faith and obedience are prerequisites for spiritual leadership
- Lead with your heart (connect); show that you care.
- Lead with compassion (fellowship); concern for the people/ the lost.
- Lead with motivation (growth); the care of others has been entrusted to us.
- Learn skills and biblical processes
- Connect with the Parish ministry leadership and be a person who can be coached
- Recruit your replacement (an apprentice) and have a willing spirit to coach and mentor your replacement. Identify this person at the beginning of your group preferably before your group meets so they can work with you from beginning to end.
- Accept leadership responsibility for your group. When a spiritual minded leader facilitates a small group of people in Jesus name, the Lord Jesus will manifest himself in their midst. The “fullness of Christ” will occur (Ephesians 4:13).
- Set a goal or goals for your group. What are the expected outcomes, commitments or expectations for your group?
- Effective small groups are powerful, life changing, and result in spiritual growth.

## **Guidelines for Hosting & Facilitating a Small Group**

### **PRAY**

- **Pray weekly for group members.** Each week spend time in prayer for your group.
- **Pray before each class.** Here are some prayer points: Holy Spirit to breath on each session; God’s wisdom and discernment for you as a facilitator; good attendance; increased participation; lively discussions; completed assignments each week; good bonding in group.
- **Remember God is in charge.** Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding but in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path (Proverbs 3:5-6).

### **Be Prepared**

- **Review and prepare your assignments each week.** This way you will glean something from the lessons and be familiar with the lesson when it is discussed in class.

- **Select the questions that will be discussed in advance of the session.** The goal is to generate as much discussion as possible and for the group members to benefit from the discussion. Be sure to not hurry through the discussion as this will limit the group receiving maximum benefit from the topic. Keep watch over your time and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

### **Pay Attention to Details**

- **Check Environment & Equipment.** If your group is using a TV/VCR, the host should have equipment that works well, has been set up in advance, and can clearly be seen by all group members. Eliminate distractions, ask that phones be silenced. Eliminate excess noise and other distractions.

## **Ways We Can Take Ownership of our Bible Study**

- From Romans 12:6-8, 1 Peter 4:7-11, and 1 Corinthians 12, here is a partial list of “ministries” or “tasks” that every group member might consider to become the “owner” of our group.
  - Prophesying (speaking forth God’s word)
  - Prayer requests/needs/answers
  - Hospitality/hosting
  - Refreshments
  - Serving others in the group/outside the group
  - Encouraging/Evangelizing - weekly or daily verse/quote or keeping others notified of happenings in parishes
  - Helping – attending to details to prepare for group meeting, clean-up and follow-up
  - Visitation – going to group members when in need
  - Teaching – facilitating the sharing of insights from God’s Word
  - Outreach – touching lives outside of your group
  - Leadership – suggesting ways the group can grow
  - Showing Mercy – being kind to those with special needs
  - Music – provide live or recorded songs of praise
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_

Group members should support their leaders. Asking your members to take a role will really help you with leading more effectively. If one person is in charge of communication, one in charge of praying before, one in charge of praying after, one in charge of hosting, it’ll be a lot less work for you. Now I’m not saying that you should hand out a sign-up sheet, but asking your members to help you will allow show your humility (and also, that you’re a regular person who also needs help).

## **Enlist Enjoyable Discussion**

- **Your primary responsibility during the small group time** is to facilitate an interesting and enjoyable discussion of the assigned questions in the lesson. It is important to begin and end promptly. Do not wait for latecomers.
- **You must listen carefully to each answer.** Respond at the end of each answer offered with a brief response. For example, “Thank you for that well thought out response” or some general response that is natural, genuine and appreciative.
- **Keep the group discussion going.** Some responses may be vague and require a follow up question to get more details and clarification. Once an answer has been shared, ask for another answer. Good questions include, “Does anyone have another perspective on this question?” “Can someone else bless us with their answer?” or “Who else is courageous enough to share their answer?” Graciously and immediately stop any discussion that is embarrassing or reveals too much information for a group setting.
- **Do not be discouraged or alarmed if the group is presented with unexpected challenges.** Remain prayerful and submitted to the Holy Spirit. He will provide you with wisdom to handle the challenge. If people are hesitant to share their answers after you have encouraged them, you may want to call on someone you know who won’t be embarrassed or someone who you can clearly see has a written answer. Don’t allow the same person to answer all of the questions.
- **Some questions may solicit a personal opinion or response.** There may not be a right or wrong answer. Be sure to not condemn the respondent with comments (i.e., “No, that’s not right.”) or expressions that indicate your disapproval of their answer.
- **Your discussion group should be relaxed, not tense; friendly, not hostile; not overly formal;** informal but not lax; free, not inhibited; opposing views can be expressed without condemnation or correction (unless biblically erroneous); balanced participation; and members should do most of the talking while the facilitator listens.
- **Is anyone hungry?** Food is a great catalyst for community building; however food should never become the focus of the gathering. Decide as a group if you would like to serve light snacks and how the group will contribute to preparation and supply. Remember, food is optional.

## **Keys to Successful Sharing**

- Set an example of appropriate openness
- Stress sharing that is personally relevant; Avoid gossip
- Be Patient
- Practice acceptance and affirmation
- Avoid having people try to problem solve other people's problems (i.e., advice giving)
- Keep Confidentiality
- Do not do all the talking
- Be comfortable with silence
- Be a good listener
- Avoid being judgmental and instruct others not to be judgmental
- Ask open-ended questions
- Be sure everyone understands the purpose
- Make sure all cell phones are turned off or put on vibrate before the meeting starts

## **Types of Questions:**

### **Practicing Good Questions**

What do questions do:

- Help us understand something that we haven't before or never would have
- Dig deep; pique curiosity, growth, development
- Questions offer a person the opportunity to open up without thinking of it themselves

### **1. Launching (1 per session)**

- a. Ice breaker, warms everyone up
  - i. Make sure it connects to the Scripture
  - ii. Eg What's the worst storm you've ever been in? What's a pet peeve of yours?

### **2. Observation (3-5 per session)**

- a. Help realize the small details in the passage
  - i. Found in the text
  - ii. Springboard for a deeper conversation
- b. Examples:
  - i. What did Peter say?
  - ii. Who is in the Church when Jesus gets there?

### **3. Understanding (3-5 per session)**

- a. Helps the understanding of the scripture
- b. The best answers aren't found in the text but what the text says to us**
- c. These are inferred
  - i. It might take a while to grasp, that's okay

- d. Breaks down what is going on in the scene
  - i. Deeper than observation
- e. Examples
  - i. How do you think Peter felt after this?
  - ii. Why do you think seeing the gamblers is what pushed Jesus over the edge?

#### 4. **Application** (2-4 per session)

- a. This is where Scripture comes into our life
  - i. What does this mean to you, as an individual?
- b. These lead to revelation, encouragement, and growth**
- c. Makes Scripture personal
- d. Where God's wisdom becomes apparent
- e. Causes a want to change
  - i. Hearts connect to minds and inspire action
- f. Examples:
  - i. When is a time that you felt like the storm was drowning you?
  - ii. When did you first recognize hypocrisy in the church and what did you do?

#### 5. **When to use formal questions**

- a. If a group isn't sharing and one person talks the whole time
- b. After someone has answered
  - i. Don't just let the thought go, ask the person to explore a little more
- c. If you're uncomfortable with a "keep it loose and casual," this can be a great way to help you feel prepared even if you don't use them

#### 6. **Follow-Up Questions**

- a. Follow-up questions provide the opportunity for the discussion to go somewhere instead of circling the same ideas. Even if you don't write questions for your study, being intentional in your follow-up provides the same structure. So many people want to share but don't know how or don't get the opportunity, so follow-up allows us to really "dive-in."
  - i. The goal is to figure out the "sticking point."
    - 1. God is trying to speak to that person through the sticking point
    - 2. The "why" of it
    - 3. Sometimes people don't know why
  - ii. Opening up the question to the others can help the person figure it out
  - iii. Challenge the person to think below the surface level.
    - 1. This is life-changing, not just hanging around chatting
    - 2. Scripture is alive
      - a. It speaks to everyone differently so to really appreciate it, we need to go deeper
    - 3. People want to be known



iv. Encouragement

1. Sometimes people freeze at a question
2. “What you’re saying is good—keep going!”
3. This helps people feel valued and to open up
4. Others then feel more appreciated and willing to share

v. Examples

1. Why does that stand out to you?
2. What about that stands out to you?
3. Has that ever happened to you before?

## **People in the group**

### **Chatty Kathy**

- How do I find a chatty Kathy?
  - Person who goes off-topic
  - Person who over-shares
  - Person who controls the conversation
- What does someone who talks too much do to the group?
  - Changes the tone
  - Makes it harder for others to share
  - Puts the leader in a tough position
    - Am I dictator who stops people from talking or am I a doormat?
- Why do they talk so much?
  - NOT trying to dominate the conversation
  - NOT about you or your leadership
  - NOT because they want to lead
- What to do during?
  - Put the chatty person right beside you
    - Tap their leg or shoulder when they chat
  - Develop some trademark slogans to help reign in
    - “That’s an excellent point! (Other person) what do you think?”
    - “I love that point, what do you all (gesture at everyone else) think?”
    - “I like that point! It really relates to (scripture you’re reading)”
- What to do after?
  - Talk to the person about more leadership
    - Ask them to be your “right hand man” as an encourager
  - Ask them what their favorite part of the group is
    - Develop that—turn their passion to something other than talking
- How to pray for the person?
  - Pray that the Holy Spirit gives you insight to the person and how to love them better

## Silent Steven

- How do I find a silent Steven?
  - Person who never responds verbally or nonverbally
  - Person who talks to one or two people but not the group
  - Person who shares only when asked or very rarely elsewhere
- Why don't they talk?
  - NOT because you're a bad leader
  - NOT because of the chatty people
  - NOT because they aren't prepared/don't know what they're talking about
    - It's just against their nature or isn't something they normally do
- What do I do during?
  - Ask them simple, maybe more direct questions
  - Be encouraging but don't put "all eyes on them"
  - Make sure you ask their opinion, and don't guilt them if they don't have any
- What do I do after?
  - Tell them you enjoyed their conversation
  - Try to spend time with them/connect with them after the study or during the week
  - Ask friends (if they have any in the group) what their interests are
- How do I pray for the person?
  - Pray for the Holy Spirit to work in their heart to be vulnerable
- "But we shouldn't force anyone to talk!"
  - As a super introvert, I can confirm that I only share when it's totally silent and I don't have to worry about cutting anyone off.
  - As a super introvert, I can confirm that I sometimes don't share when I want to because I feel like if I do, the ground will swallow me.

To remember:

1. Pray for Holy Spirit to guard your heart and see/hear as Christ
2. Keep going! It will get better

## Derailing Dennis

- How do I find a derailing Dennis?
  - Person who shifts the momentum of the whole Bible study
  - Person who doesn't discuss the Bible
  - Person who doesn't redirect easily
- What effect does this person have?
  - Can chase people away from group
  - Can close the door to the Holy Spirit
  - Makes people uncomfortable
- Why do they talk so much?
  - Uncomfortable with Scripture, wants to stay in comfort zone
  - Some people are naturally more dominant or chatty than others
  - Earnestly struggling with something and seeking validation or support
- What to do during?
  - Put the person right beside you, same as Chatty Kathy
  - Develop some trademark slogans to help reign in
    - We can discuss that later, let's get back to \_\_\_\_\_
    - I totally understand your struggle and I want you to know that I would love to hear more about it, but right now we're looking at \_\_\_\_\_
    - Why don't we set up a separate date/time to discuss that topic because we don't have a ton of time right now and we have a lot to cover!
- What to do after?
  - Talk to the person about the topic
    - Offer a different perspective and maybe some opinions of group members/yourself
  - Offer to pray with them right then and there
  - Be vulnerable about yourself as a leader
  - Be aware of cultural differences and be sensitive, but don't lose sight of the group's interests
- How to pray for the person?
  - Rely on the Blessed Mother!

## Theology Tammy

- How do I find a Theology Tammy?
  - Person who brings up random theological questions or concerns
  - Person who won't share any emotion or opinion, sticks to the facts
  - Person who reads footnotes more than the scripture
- Why all the theology?
  - Don't want to "get personal"
  - Genuinely interested in the topic
  - Seeking guidance with an issue in their life but don't want to open up about the issue
- What do I do during?
  - Ask how that relates to their life
  - Write down the question they asked and have a theology night
  - Don't invalidate the curiosity, but don't allow it to be distracting
- What do I do after?
  - Tell them you enjoyed their conversation
  - Explain the notebook to them
  - Ask if they'd be interested in leading a group in the future
    - Support their passion but in an appropriate way!
- Hard and fast rules
  - Do not attempt to answer any theological questions on the fly
    - No "taking a stab at it"
  - Check the footnotes because they sometimes answer the question
  - Discern if the question is valid, be prudent about your response (handout)
  - Valid resources
    - Catechism
    - Parish Priest or theologian
    - Check multiple sources
    - Send questions to Bonnie for help

## Gossiping Georgie

- How do I find a gossiping Georgie?
  - Person who only talks about people or small matters
  - Person who wants to go to the group as a means of venting frustration
  - Someone who makes snide comments or underscores people or the parish
- What effect does this person have?
  - Draw others into sin
  - Breaks down community
  - Makes people uncomfortable
- Why are they gossiping?
  - Uncomfortable with Scripture, wants to stay in comfort zone
  - Earnestly struggling with something and seeking validation or support
  - May not know they're gossiping!
- What to do during?
  - Stop it immediately but don't address it
    - "In the scripture we read..."
  - Remind everyone that scripture draws us closer to God who draws us into a deeper awareness and knowledge of Him
  - Emphasize the importance of building up and helping change what we don't like, not tearing down what we don't
- What to do after?
  - Talk to the person about the topic
    - DO NOT GOSSIP
    - Ask why it's so important to them
  - Offer to set them up with people who will help change the situation
  - Offer to pray with them right then and there
  - Share resources with them about saints and the effects of slander
- How to pray for the person?
  - Rely on the Blessed Mother!

## **Host without hosting**

Some of us aren't able to host a group in our homes: we may be a caretaker, live far away, or have a house that's hard to get to. However, regardless of your home situation, it's possible to make any place homey. These are a few practical tips to facilitate a comfortable environment for all members of the group:

- Temperature: if you meet somewhere cold, feel free to bring extra sweaters and blankets.
- Private: meeting in public is tricky and heavily discouraged. However, if it can't be avoided then try to find somewhere private in the public setting. A back corner, a small table outside, anywhere that people will be more willing to open up.
- Conversation: make sure that the conversation is airy and people are able to speak up. If someone feels pressured or like they don't have any opportunity, the group might start to dissipate.
- Refreshments: making sure people have what they need to feel comfortable like tea, coffee, and water. You don't have to break the bank and you can set up a rotation or everyone can bring a dollar to pay the person back so that it's an evenly distributed cost.
- Notebooks and pens: people may want to write things down, so giving them the opportunity to do so will help them feel valued and comfortable around you. It also gives people a way to maintain some anonymity, because they can write things down.
- Sunny personality: be yourself, my friend. A personal invitation means more to people than you'd ever know and when you don't give up on a person, they're grateful and more receptive to love.

## **Small Group Leaders Checklist**

### **Before Study Planning**

- Select Study
- Decide on audience – any, women, men, couples, seniors, young adults, teens etc.
- Select day of the week/time of day
- Select location: for on-parish sites, email Beth Mayer – [beth@corpuschristipgh.org](mailto:beth@corpuschristipgh.org) for availability and options.
- Completely fill out registration information form which will be posted on the website, including any cost to participants.
- Purchase or obtain from Small Group Library DVDs or other Leader materials
- Obtain list of registered participants from Beth Mayer a week prior to the start of your study and contact them about the start of the study.

- Create one page listing of session dates, topic and locations to hand out – Study Schedule
- BE PREPARED!!

### **1st Day**

- Allow time to greet all, check registrations, provide table assignment, and hand out Study Schedule
- Greet all in open forum and explain session formats
- Begin in Prayer
- Set aside 20 minutes for each participant to introduce themselves
- Begin and end session ON TIME!!
- HAVE FUN!
- End in Prayer

### **2 Days Before Recurring Sessions**

- Send an email reminder to all attendees as to the content to be covered and confirm location

### **After the Meeting**

#### **Spiritual Friendships**

I mean this seriously: I want you to be a good friend to people.

- Pray with/for them
  - This is the most intimate you can be with and for another person
- Talk realistically about their problems and yours
  - If one person is doing all of the talking, it's a therapy session. You aren't a therapist. Don't be one. If you feel like you are, let me know.
- Go with them to things they want/like to do
  - Now, don't drop everything in your life to be a friend to this person. But try to go to mass with them or get coffee, if you can. It's all about the relationships, it's not about the studying.
- Invite them places where you can both go together
  - As an introvert, I very much appreciate the need to for alone time and PLEASE take care of yourself! But if you don't mind some company, invite them on a walk.
- I'm not asking you to chop off your leg and continue walking as though everything is fine. I live 30 minutes away from our parish and all the people in my Bible study are parents, so I don't get to see them as often as I like. However, I send them funny videos and ask each one how they're doing. If you are completely unable to spend time with someone outside of work, technology is a great way to stay in touch.



## **Resources**

### **St. John Chrysostom's prayer before reading scripture:**

"O Lord Jesus Christ, open Thou the eyes of my heart, that I may hear Thy word and understand and do Thy will, for I am a sojourner upon the earth. Hide not Thy commandments from me, but open mine eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of Thy law. Speak unto me the hidden and secret things of Thy wisdom. On Thee do I set my hope, O my God, that Thou shalt enlighten my mind and understanding with the light of Thy knowledge, not only to cherish those things which are written, but to do them; that in reading the lives and sayings of the saints I may not sin, but that such may serve for my restoration, enlightenment and sanctification, for the salvation of my soul, and the inheritance of life everlasting. For Thou art the enlightenment of those who lie in darkness, and from Thee cometh every good deed and every gift. Amen."

## **Ice Breakers**

### **1. Best/Worst**

Have each person share their best and worst moments from the previous week. Try to steer the group away from school items. This icebreaker is an easy one to use at first and gives you good feedback concerning their life at the moment. Some veteran groups do this several times a year... the answers become more honest as you go.

### **2. Most Unique**

Go around the room and have each person share something that makes them different from anyone in the group, like, "I've never left the state I was born in" or "I am one of 10 kids."

### **3. Two Truths and a Lie**

Have each person make three statements about themselves: two true statements and one lie. For example, "I've never broken a bone. I have 5 sisters. I was born in Yugoslavia." The group tries to guess which statement is the lie.

### **4. Did You Know?**

This is great for a group that doesn't know each other well. Find interesting facts about individual group members before the group meets. Try to discover information that sets each person apart from the

others, such as “I have a tugboat named after me” or, “I once wrecked the same quarter panel of my car four times” or, “I have a twin.”

Then make a sheet with one fact from each person and a blank beside this fact. Give everyone in the group a sheet and 5-7 minutes to find who goes in each blank. When they find the right person they must also learn one other fact about that person. At the end, introduce everyone in the group in the order on the list.

## **5. Chart Your Life**

Thinking back as far as you can, draw a line graph to represent your life. Consider the high points, the low points, moments of inspiration, moments of despair, leveling off times, and where you are now. The line will probably be a mixture of straight, slanted, jagged and curved lines. After you’ve drawn it, share what it means to you with the group.

## **6. You Write the Question**

Give each person a 3x5 card. You pick the topic and let them write the questions. For example, you choose “friendship” as a topic, and they each write out a question for anyone in the group to answer about friendship. For example, “What do you value most in a friend?” or, “Who was your best friend growing up and why?” Then pile all the cards face down in the middle of the group and let people draw. Topic ideas: jobs, life goals, funny stories, hobbies, family, fears, dating issues, significant relationships, relationship with God, etc.

## **7. Make Believe**

If you could go anywhere in the world now, where would you go and why? If you could talk to anyone in the world, who would it be? Why? If you could talk to any person who has died, who would you talk to and why? If you could wish one thing to come true about your upcoming summer, what would it be?

## **8. Deserted Island**

Ask “You’ve been exiled to a deserted island for a year. You are told you may take three things you want, apart from the essentials. What would you take and why?”

## **9. Heroes**

Ask each member to name three people, past or present, they admire. Why? Or, ask them if they could interview anyone in history, who would that be and why? What one or two questions would you want to ask?

## **Pray Without Ceasing**

This is how you make your life a prayer. We often talk about the need to take time to sit and pray, but we rarely talk about the importance of a prayerful heart: one that is constantly connected to God. Fortunately, He inspired St. Paul to live his life this way and then tell us about it. Some practical ways to do this:

1. Take a moment to quiet your heart
  - a. If you notice yourself aside from God, take a deep breath & invite God back into your heart
  - b. Pick one of the attributes listed above and focus on it
2. Recite rote prayers
  - a. Hail, Mary, Come, Holy Spirit, Our Father, Glory Be
3. Examen
  - a. Ask God where He is
  - b. Ask God what you did well and aside from Him in your day
  - c. Pay attention to emotions and sensations
  - d. Make promises and look forward to tomorrow
  - e. (There's an app that helps)

## **Lectio Divina**

- Latin for "divine reading"
  - Taking the Bible from a book to a living text that transforms lives
  - Dissection of Sacred Scripture
- Let go of what you think you know, allow Jesus to tell you
  - This is how God mentors you, so now you get to share that with others

**Preparatio** (this word is a joke; this isn't an actual word)

- Give this a quick blessing or prayer beforehand
  - Saint Michael, Come Holy Spirit, Hail Mary, etc...
- Read through the passage silently
  - Underline or highlight certain words or phrases
- Find a place where you can hear God the most
  - Music or silent? Alone or with someone nearby? Light or dim?
- Be comfortable
  - Avoid napsio (also a joke word)! Something this meditative can make you very sleepy.

**Lectio (read)**

- Oral reading of the word
  - 5-10 minutes at least, this is where the Spirit tells us which parts of the passage are important
- As Catholics, we know the power in speaking words aloud
  - Allow the words to rest on your lips: don't just mumble, begin to savor them

- Spirit will take control, don't test or rush him

### **Meditatio (meditate)**

- Start to write down any questions you have about the Scripture
  - Ask why they're important, God loves when you ask Him stuff
- This is where God is beginning to place His will on your heart
  - Listen to your gut
    - Voices, visions, impression, memories, smells, it doesn't matter. Whatever happens in this stage, know that God has a role in it. You might get an overwhelming feeling of love/joy, or you might hear a voice say, "You are my beloved." God will not give you too much nor too little. Don't question the validity of your experience—it'll make sense later.
- Follow the Holy Spirit

### **Oratio (respond)**

- Praying with what the word places on your heart
  - This is why we write down what we learned in the first step
- Find out what God is saying to you
  - Write down everything
- Pray whatever you find
  - It doesn't matter how dumb it seems, God will never turn down a chance to speak to His beloved (you)

### **Contemplatio (rest)**

- Trust
  - Allow His word to enter into your soul and change you from the inside out
  - Trust God and release control
  - You're giving control to the creator of the universe
- Do
  - If God asks anything, do it; follow Him down the rabbit hole
  - Listen for that still, small voice...sometimes you can't learn anything in a hurricane—God will give you what you need
- Rest
  - Put the pen down and rest in God
  - If it helps, try to immerse yourself in scripture
    - If you're reading about the Road to Emmaus, imagine the road under your feet; imagine feeling thirsty, imagine the wind. Really put yourself in the scripture.

### **Actio (Act)**

- Allow this word to transform your worldly life
  - God gave you this treasure for your life and His glory
- Often we read Scripture and then forget about it because we don't act
  - This is the difference between growing in faith and becoming complacent
- "What does this mean to me? What can I do to live out what God told me?"

- It's best to keep a journal and make that an accountability partner of sorts

## **ACTS**

- This is a simple way to format prayers
- You can fill in these sections any way you want

### **Adoration (Give praise to God)**

- Not thanksgiving
- With adoration, you praise God for who He is
  - He doesn't need to be reminded, but we need to remember who He is

### **Contrition (Confess your sins)**

- Ask for forgiveness
- Recall specific sins and ask for forgiveness for all of them
  - Reflect on the consequences of your sins—not just eternally, but to you, the person committed against, and the world

### **Thanksgiving (Thank God for blessings)**

- Thank God for what he's done so be specific here as well
- Be attentive to the work that God is doing in your life
  - Gives benefit to God for all things

### **Supplication (Prayer requests)**

- Asking for material and spiritual gifts humbly
- Ask for others as well
  - St. James says that we don't receive when we ask wrongly, so really discern what you're asking God and why