



LEADING CHRISTLIFE SMALL GROUPS

SMALL GROUP ROLES

Small Group Coordinator

The key responsibility is recruiting and training small group leaders. With the Main Leader they assign participants and leaders into groups. They conduct a weekly meeting with the small group leaders prior to the start of each evening session to pray for the session and the participants, to review last week's meeting, and to go over to tonight's session.

Small Group Facilitator

The key responsibility of the facilitator is to lead discussion in the small groups and to create a welcoming atmosphere where guests feel free to share what they think and feel about the teaching and to ask honest questions about the Christian faith.

Qualifications? A Catholic growing in relationship with the Lord who is good with people, sensitive and non-judgmental, and understands the work of the Holy Spirit.

Small Group Helper

The key responsibility of the helper is to assist the small group facilitator in creating a welcoming atmosphere by helping the discussion stay on course and being an active participant.

Qualifications? A growing Catholic who is good with people, understands where participants are coming from, and is non-judgmental.

FACILITATING SMALL GROUPS

Before facilitating a small group, it is ideal to receive training at a ChristLife conference or a training day. Here are some guidelines that are helpful to think and pray about:

Confidentiality. We want to respect the privacy of our group members by keeping what was shared in the discussion confidential. We want guests to feel open to sharing their honest thoughts and feelings about each teaching in an atmosphere of mutual respect and love. We never want to gossip about an individual in our group, even if they are difficult to relate to.

Avoid teaching and preaching. This is not a time for you (or others in the group) to teach or to fix someone else. Help the small group members to maintain focus on the discussion topic for each session.

End with prayer. End each session with a brief prayer committing the time together to God. As the facilitator, you are the designated leader of prayer for the first few sessions. As Discovering Christ progresses, be open to your helper or another person you feel capable leading the closing prayer. This will help each one to grow in self-confidence and ability to pray aloud with others.

End on time. Please be respectful of everyone and end the session on time. Many people are working or have childcare obligations. You want to assure everyone that you will be prompt beginning and ending each session. Ask someone in the group to help you with the responsibility for keeping time and staying on task. If people want to continue talking when the session is over, encourage them to do so in another location.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GROUND RULES

Review the following small group discussion ground rules with your group during the first session and during any session with a new guest:

- Everything is confidential. What is shared within the group stays in the group.
- Show respect for one another (no criticism or judgment).
- Be courteous; only one person may talk at a time.
- No one is required to talk, but encourage participation.
- Be brief in your responses and allow ample time for everyone to share.

SMALL GROUP SITUATIONS

1. IF THE GROUP CANNOT GET STARTED

- a. Rephrase the question.
- b. Go around the group and ask if anyone has a response.
- c. Go back to your basic questions: What do you think? How do you feel?
- d. Skip whatever is halting the discussion and move on.

2. IF SOMEONE DOMINATES THE DISCUSSION

- a. Learn the art of interruption:
 - i. “Excuse me, Dave, before you continue may I ask if anyone has a comment?”
 - ii. “That’s a good point. Let’s move on to someone else?”
 - iii. “We haven’t heard from this side of the room. Let’s hear from someone else.”
 - iv. “Martha, since we have only a few minutes left, could you summarize your remark so we can also hear from others?”
- b. Review the ground rules.
- c. When all else fails, pull the person aside after the meeting and explain the dilemma to them directly. Invite them into the mission of the course.

3. IF THE GROUP STRAYS OFF THE TOPIC

- a. “This is an important topic, but we don’t have time to talk about it here.”
- b. State the problem: “I think we’ve gotten off track.”
- c. “That’s interesting. But how does it relate to the topic?”

4. THE DISCUSSION BECOMES HEATED

- a. “We have two views here. Does anyone else have a view to share?”
- b. Move on to another topic, work on a settlement at another time.

5. IF SOME MEMBERS NEED TO BE DRAWN OUT

- a. "Does anyone from this side of the room (or who hasn't had the opportunity), care to comment?"
- b. Connect to a person's interest. "Mike, from your experience with _____, would you care to comment?"
- c. Be direct. "John, what do you think?"
- d. **IMPORTANT:** Some people (especially introverts) may need a few moments of silence to process and then feel free to share.
- e. Affirm quieter members and their contribution.

6. IF THE SHARING IS TOO IMPERSONAL

- a. "It might be well to get everyone to tell how this will affect him or her personally. Will you begin, John?"
- b. "Could you explain a bit more about what that's like?"
- c. Go back to your starter questions: "What do you think? How do you feel?"
- d. Briefly share on a personal level: "_____ struck me, what do you think?"
- e. Ask your helper to comment.

7. IF THE SHARING BECOMES TOO PERSONAL

- a. Be interested and sympathize, but steer the conversation back to the topic or toward others.
- b. Talk to them aside and clarify the appropriate level of sharing: "Please don't feel like you have to share to that level of detail."
- c. The Leader or Helper of the same gender: talk to them one-on-one and offer to meet, talk or pray with them during the week.

8. WHEN CLOSURE IS NEEDED

- a. "I've just received the 5 minute warning, we can take a just few more comments before we close."
- b. "We are just about out of time. Is there a final comment?"
- c. Summarize some key points made during the discussion.

9. WHEN YOU ARE NOT SURE HOW TO RESPOND

- a. Do not be afraid of admitting ignorance. If you do not know the answer, say "I am not sure how to answer that, let me do some research this week and let you know next week."
- b. Avoid dominating the group by teaching, preaching, or controlling the discussion.
- c. Bring the focus back to the topic. Do not let the group wander without direction.
- d. For a situation you do not know how to handle or serious situations (i.e. abuse, suicide) contact your Small Group Coordinator for help and/or discerning the severity of the situation and if reporting the incident is appropriate.