

Leader's Notes

Suggested Preparation for Leaders



Small Group Ministry. (Leader's Guide)

Just because we announce that there will be a small group in our Church, it does not mean the group will function effectively and all will go smoothly. Small groups, don't just happen. Small groups, home groups or cell groups, whatever name they are known by in your Church, require effective planning and careful organisation and management.

Every group requires T.I.M. to enable people to grow in their faith in Jesus Christ.

T.I.M. stands for:

T for task

I for Individual needs and

M for maintenance.

TASK:

People need to know the overview of the group. In this case to study the Eucharistic readings for Year B of the Australian Lectionary, over six sessions in the period of Lent and apply some or all of the four readings to their lives.

We need to be aware of the task for each group meeting. In other words this Lent, Week One we will be focussing on the fact that knowing Jesus creates the differences in our lives. There are areas covered in the material such as:

- ii) examine our lives in the light of the teachings of Jesus
- ii) what it means to be Covenant Christian (using Noah as a basis)
- iii) what is required to be a transformed person in Christ
- iv) what does it mean to be a baptised servant of Christ
- v) what does it mean to repent and believe in the Gospel in 2018.

Leadership:

Often in small groups the leadership rotates to a different person week by week. This can be a positive experience, but each leader needs to prepare prayerfully and carefully.

It is vital that each leader commends the meeting to God, prays for the group members and is familiar with the material. After leaders have read the material and the Scripture passages, I encourage them to just spend time waiting on God.

The ideal situation is to start your preparation at least six days before hand, basically to allow God time to guide and direct you.

It is vital that each leader for the study session reads the Scriptures several times. There may be a need to read a commentary to answer your own questions. (That does not mean there will not be questions that the designated leader or other members of the group can not answer, but all need to work on exploring.

Group leaders are not meant to be resource people. (Talk with your Parish Priest, Minister or others for answers or help with sticky questions) The leaders task is to facilitate the study and keep everyone involved and no one person is always speaking.

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS:

Each group member is important but different. People may join the group for all sorts of reasons. For an effective group it is important that each member knows each other and few general things about each person such as which worship service they attend, something about their family life and interests.

Often Lenten groups meet in a different home each week. It is very important that each member knows the address of each venue and how to get there. Also remember that a place (location) can look different of an evening. Some members may

not be keen to drive at night, so see if you can arrange transport. Refreshments provide a great opportunity for fellowship and to get to know each other. Plan carefully who will supply food and when. There may be people in your group who have particular dietary requirements. It is important to consider these folk. Also enquire at the start who has a birthday or anniversary during the study series as this helps to value that person.

Today people use a range of Bibles. This is can disconcerting for some as “their Bible” does not read the same way as someone else’s Bible. Suggestions for translations include New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) or New International Version (NIV) or a translation into a more contemporary language such as the Good News (GNB) or Contemporary English Version (CEV) so that the message is more accessible to the people.

In times past, a leader could assume a certain body of Biblical knowledge on the part of participants, but that is not the case today. You may have to go to the basics, such as “Book, Chapter and verse(s), (And how to find the book in the index etc) along with what is the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is important to be sensitive to individual levels of biblical knowledge, but also be prepared to extend people.

From time to time some group members may be quiet. Some need time to think through issues. However it is important that you check out to see that they are O.K, and not make assumptions.

Use the “PASS” method. If the leader asks particular people their views, every participant can simply say “Pass” if they prefer not to answer the question and the leader should respect that. Once the study is into its later weeks, participants will have had a time to be more comfortable with each other and are more likely to want to participate, rather than just listen.

MAINTENANCE:

Just as it is important to maintain a car, or equipment, it is important to maintain the life of your group.

Whilst most groups will prefer to use the one location for the duration of the studies, some groups may prefer to meet in a new location each week. It is important to check and see if everyone is on board and knows how to get there. People who cannot to find their way to a venue can be very disgruntled or side tracked at the group meeting. Likewise check with regard to food and refreshments and the various dietary requirements.

It important to ask at the start of each session, “Are there any points of clarification or questions from last week?”

During the sessions note any comments that cannot be answered on the spot and promise to find the answer. These questions may need following up with your Parish Priest.

As each session progresses, check to see if everyone is on board with the content and the progress of the group.

Just as each person is different, so to is each study group. Please do not compare your group with other groups as the group you belong to has its own characteristics and very quickly develops its own style and way of approaching the subject.

Maintenance also involves making sure you are sticking to the task and that individual needs are being cared for within the group.

Don't forget to make up the sign for the “EMPTY CHAIR” . This is to be included on an empty chair every meeting as a reminder of the group members individual task of helping to grow the group.

Sharing the responsibility (A Suggestion)

Whilst the following is not perfect for every group, it is a very good model to follow where possible, and helps share the responsibilities.

LEADER – Their task is to conduct the meeting and undertake sufficient preparation to ensure it runs smoothly. Remember the leader is not meant to be the theological expert. Their task is to see the meetings run smoothly and EVERYONE gets a chance for input. They need to make sure one or a small number don't hog the discussions.

HOST – This person organises the fellowship (food). They are not expected to provide the food, but rather ensure each member takes a turn to bring food. The host arranges the tea/coffee

PASTORAL -

A very important role is the pastoral leader. Their task is to follow up anyone who is not at the study to see they are OK and let them know they were missed. They also arrange a card and maybe a cake if the group members birthday or anniversary happens during the week following their birthday. (Or before if you are not superstitious) If there is an illness, they can arrange a visit and let the other group members know of this. NOTE: It is important to notify the Parish Priest/Minister about this.

Conclusion:

Be enthusiastic by the study, enjoy the people and allow yourself to be challenged, so that you will grow closer to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Wishing you a holy and enriching Lent.

+ Bill.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THOSE WISHING THE GROUP TO CONTINUE AFTER LENT.

This could take the form of meeting...

(a) Weekly, fortnightly, monthly etc.

(b) Maybe for 6 weeks each term or fortnightly over 12 weeks each term. Time the meetings to suit the group.

MODEL IN THE THREE LEADERSHIP ROLES

Leader (Or facilitator)

Pastoral Leader - The care person and link with Priest

Host - Arranges, co-ordinates supper. This could mean being host in another persons house (Assuming they will let them into the kitchen). The supper is always a shared effort.

CLERGY ROLE IN THESE GROUPS

Priest could attend on a night that best suits the group. This will be an opportunity for the priest to come at cuppa time (or for the whole night) and chat with the group informally. Also any member of the group would have the chance to talk with the priest or make a time to visit them.

ROLES

Leader

- * Prepares adequately for the studies.
- Run night/Day session
- * Not meant to be the theological expert
- * Refer back to your priest/Minister your curly questions
- * Invite your Priest/Minister to attend group to talk about these questions
- * ENSURE THAT no one person overshadows or takes over the discussion and that all present get a chance to comment. Some people need to be encouraged to make a comment. Some need to be lovingly sat on. Others need the "Way out" of being able to 'pass' without feeling second rate group members.

Host

- * Organise supper in own house or suitable location.
- * Welcome people as they come
- * Supper not to be over kill, but can be something better than just biscuits
- * Each member of the group to bring supper in turn
- * Host to organise the supper roster etc

Pastoral Leader

- * Keeps a note of birthdays, anniversaries etc
- * Arrange cake or similar if birthday/anniversary actually happens during that week. Otherwise just have all members sign a card.
- * Follow up those not present that week and who did not apologise
- * Sickness notified to all the group so they can follow up and show a concern.
- * Notify your priest/minister if group feels this is necessary
- * If a sickness, consider if there might be a care need to show a care concern in a practical way - Eg: casserole, transport, odd jobs etc
- * Arrange a social function for the group once per school term and invite anyone from the parish who would like to join in. This could be useful to find new members to join the group.
- Maybe an informal service of Holy Communion could be arranged at the home group location.

