

PLANNING YOUR SMALL GROUP

Starting your small group with a committed team and prayer-filled planning process will help things go smoothly and help members feel comfortable.

PREPARING

Consider the following questions as you begin planning your small group:

- Has your pastor asked you to start this group? What are his expectations and goals?
- Who will fill the roles on the previous page?
- When will your small group start? How long will it last? How many sessions? Will you meet weekly, every other week, monthly?
- What will be the focus of your group? Bible Study? Activity group (e.g. Christian Athletes)? Affinity group (young adults, single mothers, etc.)?
- Where will you meet?
- What resources or materials will you use?
- Are there pre-written discussion questions or do you need to write your own?
- How will you lead prayer? With pre-written prayers? Will you invite others to lead prayer?

Pray as you Plan:

- Pray for God to give you wisdom as a leader.
- Pray that God enkindle the hearts of people to join your small group.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your group.

Sample Small Group Session (90 min)

- Welcome/Hospitality (15 min)
- Opening Prayer (5 min)
- Content Study (20 min)
- Group Discussion (30 min)
- Vocal Closing Prayer (10 min)
- Fellowship (10 min)

MAKE AN INVITATION

Consider the following the suggestions as you gather members for your small group:

Build your team

- Who is already on your team? What roles will they play?
- Consider inviting existing small group members to help lead.
- Select and invite a co-leader (co-facilitator).
- Meet with your team to talk about the goals and format of your small group.

Invite members to your small group

- Is your small group intended for a particular group of people? Is there a parish leader who works with that group regularly who can share contact information or make an invitation on your behalf?
- How are people made aware of your small group? Is there any way your invitation can be more inclusive?
- After building a list of potential group members make a personal invitation.
- Answer any questions potential small group members may have; consider drafting a list of FAQs on hand, send to all group members before the first session.
- Keep track of those who are not available for this small group series to invite next time.
- Send a reminder the day before each small group session with important details.

HOST YOUR SMALL GROUP

Consider the below (and following sections) when planning to host your small group:

- Is our team all on the same page about how to provide hospitality in setting up the environment and interacting with small group members (see next section)?
- Have we prayed for the success of our group?
- Have we adequately prepared discussion questions, prayer, and other materials?

FOLLOW-UP

Consider the below (and following sections) when planning small group follow-up:

- Are we connecting with members between each session?
- How are we inviting members to participate in parish life after the small group?
- Are we inviting some members to consider leading a small group themselves?

OVERVIEW

Use this overview with your pastor and leadership team as you plan your small group. Assign roles, tasks, and establish a timeline to make sure that nothing is missed and no one is left out.

Remember to bring prayer into your planning meetings as well. Serving as a facilitator, host, or in some other leadership role can be very rewarding and an opportunity to grow spiritually.

PREPARING FOR YOUR SMALL GROUP

Build your team and ask the big questions like "Whom do we want to reach, and what do we want them to get from this small group experience? Establishing this "mission" will keep you focused as you pick materials and plan logistics.

MAKE AN INVITATION

Build a good contact list; make your invitations personal; and communicate clearly. The small group experience actually starts with that first contact with a leader so make it count!

HOST YOUR SMALL GROUP

There is a lot to do, so try to share responsibilities if possible. Have one person concerned with the environment and initial welcome, and another focused on moving the group into and through prayer and discussion.

FOLLOW-UP

The small group is meant to give people an experience of Christian community. That experience of community shouldn't end with the small group. Be sure everyone is personally invited deeper into parish life.