

Facilitation For Small Groups

As we study the Gospel of Luke

Facilitation Checklists and Tips





Opening Prayer





We are glad you are with us today

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Blair Pogue
- Kathy Hagen





- Opening prayer
- Welcome and introductions
- Why are we gathered today?
- Meeting format
- Starting the meeting: checking in
- Ground rules
- Facilitation skills
- Closing a meeting
- Closing prayer



Why gather together in small groups?

- Rediscover Jesus and his way/meet Jesus anew
- Read, listen to, and discuss scripture with others
- Grow spiritually in a safe, open community

When do we begin and who do we invite?

Undertake at any time, in many ways, and use to supplement existing formation and outreach opportunities.

Invite people inside and outside the church, meet in person or via online tools.

Suggested guide: **[Interpretation Study Guide written by Thomas W. Walker.](#)**





Timeframe may vary. Sixty minutes is optimal, ninety for the first meeting. A recommended format might include:

- Beginning prayer
- Introductions and check in
- Set expectations for the meeting, reminder of the content for the day
- Choose a time-keeper and note-taker as appropriate
- Discussion and sharing
- Wrap up including time and information for next meeting
- Closing prayer

Introductions and check-in may take longer when the group is new. More time is good if people are getting to know each other and building trusting relationships.



Check-in: intentional time to connect more deeply with each other and allow every voice to be heard.

How to do a check-in: As the gathering begins, invite people to take turns reflecting on a question for a specified time. Choose a time-keeper. People should not respond to each other's check in.

Examples of check in prompts:

- **First session, a prompt like:** “What would you like to learn from this study of Luke?”
- **Ask for two words** to describe how participants are feeling
- **Ask how they have seen God** in their lives this week



To ensure everyone checks in: Have each person name someone to check in after them, or call on people as the facilitator



Ground rules or norms are basic guidelines for how group members will behave toward and communicate with each other.

They are **set by the facilitator and group** in the first meeting and may be added to, revised and referred to for the life of the group. They allow the facilitator to **bring the gathering back** if it gets off track.

Ground rules usually focus on the following topics but are more descriptive and detailed:

- Respect each other
- Listen actively
- Take Risks
- Be open
- Be accountable
- Keep our focus on God





Ground rules for a faith-based community

- We begin and end our meetings in prayer to help orient ourselves to God.
- We listen to other's interpretations without judgement and maintain an atmosphere of openness and mutual respect
- We communicate our opinions using "I" statements
- We refrain from trying to change each other's opinions and other's opinions or beliefs.
- "We bear with one another in love" and speak "only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear." (Eph 4:2, 29)
- We always keep in mind the larger purpose of our activity: to glorify God and grow ever more fully into our calling as disciples of Christ.



Consider the cadence of the gathering like an airplane flight



Take Off

- Prayer
- Introductions
- Check in around the room
- Remind the group what the topic of the day is

In-flight

- Discussion begins
- Active listening
- Everyone sharing
- Questioning with respect

Landing

- Discussion winds down
- Everyone has been heard
- Bring group back to the purpose/focus
- Be positive
- Prayer



The facilitator:

Keeps the conversation flowing, watches for clues as to how the individual members are doing, enhances engagement and participation, keeps the focus on the topic, watches time.

Healthy group behavior:

- Animated, open discussion
- Actively listening, asking good questions
- People inviting others to tell them more
- Sitting forward, good eye contact
- Discussions of where they see God in this scripture
- Talking about what they are learning
- Focused on God

Behavior to notice

- Silence of some participants
- Some people talking over others
- Conversation veers off track or becomes focused on one person
- Body language: people withdrawing or seeming agitated
- Assumptions made of someone's intentions
- Not focused on God

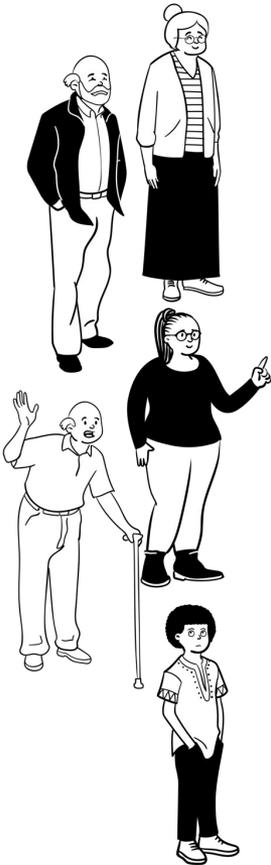


- **If conversation isn't starting:**
 - Sometimes people need to reflect, some silence can be fine – with context and purpose. Wait at least 7 seconds before asking another question.
 - Call on someone who is usually responsive
 - Ask question differently
 - Ask group how they might ask the question differently
 - Revisit a past contribution that fits topic, ask follow up questions
 - Answer a question yourself to get the ball rolling, but only if other actions aren't helping.





- **If people dominate the conversation:**



- If you have people who tend to do this start a question by saying “I wonder if we can get 3-4 varied viewpoints on this.”
- Give those who are frequently dominating a role to play such as time-keeper or note-taker to keep them involved and aware of people’s contributions.
- If that is not possible, acknowledge what they are saying and say, “I wonder if someone who hasn’t spoken has something they’d like to share?”
- If someone looks like they’d like to share but haven’t had a chance, say “Ann, do you have something you’d like to share?”
- Redirect the discussion to another person or another topic.

What Might Small Groups Need ?



- **If people look restless or bored:**
 - Speed the pace by asking questions or moving to the next topic, or take a break.
 - Do a process check: “How is this conversation working for all of you? Do you want us to move more quickly?”
 - Ask them what they wish to focus on...”is there something else in the scripture passage you want to discuss?”
 - Don’t be afraid to get them involved in how the meeting moves forward.
- **If people are shy and not speaking up:**
 - Acknowledge them and invite them to speak “I’d be very interested to hear your thoughts on...” and give them time to answer
 - Provide prompts for them to answer like “is there a time when you experienced this?” “Have you seen this in the past?”



If the conversation stalls or people aren't speaking up:

- Have some questions ready to use such as:
 - You mentioned XXX, please talk more about that.
 - I'd like to hear more, can you describe that another way?
 - How might that be seen differently?
 - How might you react if you were in the shoes of one of the people in this story?



These questions may help if the group is quiet, the question is difficult, or the conversation is not moving forward:

Discussion Question Options:

- I wonder what captures your imagination in this story?
- I wonder who you are in this story?
- I wonder what this story might look like in your life?
- I wonder what this story might look like in your faith community?

What Might Small Groups Need ?



As you consider how to work with people's behaviors, make sure you are clear on your group's ultimate objective:

- To get a group engaged with scripture so they can encounter Jesus?
- To care for each person in the group, including anyone who is frequently struggling with staying on track or focused, and therefore dominates the group?
- Neither objective is right or wrong, but the full group needs to be in agreement on the group's purpose as it will shift the outcome of the meetings.
- Some people might benefit from one-on-one Bible study or pastoral care. You might invite them to talk to the clergy or say, "may I mention what you said to me to our clergy?"



- **People are often more engaged in a conversation when they know how it relates to their lives.** Questions such as: “Describe where you see this in your own life or work right now?” are helpful.
- **If possible, avoid putting people** on the spot by saying things like, “Bob you’ve been really quiet the whole time.” Instead, invite them in.
- **Don’t be afraid of or shy away from disagreements.** They are inevitable in an authentic conversations. Welcome them respectfully.
- **When not handled respectfully, disagreements can result in conflict.** Use the group norms if you have one focused on respect and understanding, not convincing.
- **Prepare a few starting points just in case.** Groups won’t always need prompting to begin a conversation, but as you read the material before the meeting, have some questions in mind



People usually remember an experience as positive or negative depending on how they felt when the experience ended.

Bring group back to where they might have experienced God in this gathering.

Before the closing prayer, ask members to share. Examples include:

- What new thing did they learn?
- Where did they see God at work in this gathering?
- What one thing stood out for them?
- How did the conversation help them understand the scripture studied differently?
- What surprised them?
- Use questions from the study guide to help bring forward closing thoughts.
- Facilitator: Tell them something positive you learned.

Close with thanksgivings and a prayer



Questions to close on a positive note:

- When did you feel close to God? When did you feel far away from God?
- When did you meet Jesus in your session today?
- When did you see light from the Holy Spirit?
- What did you notice about our time together?
- What did you hear that you want to learn more about?
- What assumptions did you make about the Gospel of Luke that might have changed or at least require more thought?
- [If short on time] Describe our time together in one word.



**What questions or
insights do you
have?**



Upcoming Facilitation Trainings:

Thursday, September 7 at 7 pm: Live repeat of intro. Session: “How to Facilitate a Small Group.”

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The Be Still Prayer:

Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am

Be still and know

Be still

Be