

# 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
- The role of the facilitator
- Before the meeting checklist
- Starting the meeting: Checking in
- Ground rules
- Basic Facilitation Skills
  - Meeting flow
  - What to do when: facilitation tips
  - How to ask a question to move the meeting forward
- 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.](#)**



**Whether online or in-person, the facilitator helps to (or asks for help to):**

- Set meeting logistics, timing and send invitations (2 weeks ahead of first session, follow up weekly).
- Ensure technology is ready.
- Help create ground rules.
- Create a safe space.
- Keep the meeting on track and on time.
- Ensure conversation and sharing stays focused on the topic.
- Set the tone for curiosity, exploration, respect and kindness.
- Ask for help from the group as needed.







## Before the gathering consider who does the following

Create an email or other communication with timing, location, topic of gathering, what to bring, and prework. Weekly meeting day/time should be consistent.

**At least two weeks prior:** provide details on how to get the **Walker guide**. Ask them to read the introduction and Chapter 1

### Online gatherings such as Zoom:

- Schedule the event via Zoom.
- Create an event invite or email including the time, Zoom meeting number, ID number and meeting passcode. Send two weeks prior to first session.
- **In-person gatherings:**
  - Create an invite via outlook or send an email to participants.
  - Include location, time, ideas on what to bring if appropriate, and ask if they need a ride or other accommodation.
  - Determine if you want an agenda or if format is more open.
- Provide contact information so participants can ask questions before the gathering.
- A reminder email a day or two before the gathering is helpful.

# Potential Meeting Format



**You may vary as your group needs. 60 minutes is optimal, perhaps 90 minutes 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 context 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.**





## Prepare for the group

- **Pre-read the** Walker guide chapter and questions for the week

### **Before the meeting:**

- Breathe
- Pray
- Be present
- Be curious
- Focus on the purpose for the gathering
- Let God lead
- Know that you are giving a gift which most will accept, and some may not. That rarely happens but if it does, if someone cannot accept the gift, that is where they are
- Have fun



# Start the Gathering: Checking In



**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 check-in 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?” will allow for open discussion and expectation setting.
- **Use questions in the study guide**
- **Ask for 2 words** to describe how they are feeling
- **Ask how they have seen God** in their lives this week

**To ensure everyone checks in:** Go around the circle, ask people to volunteer (call on who isn't volunteering), have each person name someone to check in after them, or call on people as the facilitator



# Set Group Norms or Ground Rules



**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.

# Examples of Group Norms or Ground Rules



## **RESPECT OTHERS**

- Respect each other and the process.
- Don't shame or blame others.
- Assume each of us is coming from a good place (honest, genuine).

## **TAKE RISKS**

- No retribution, hostility, or harassment toward others for taking risks.
- Discussions stay here.
- Take risks, be authentic, and speak your truth.

## **BE OPEN**

- Be open to others' stories and realities.
- Be open to partially-formed ideas
- Learn from your mistakes.
- Be open to a change of heart and mind.

## **BE ACCOUNTABLE**

- Participate to the best of your ability.
- All of us are responsible for making sure all voices are heard.
- You are accountable for what you do and say
- Hold each other accountable in a civil way. Own your part of the problem or issue.
- Be aware that you may be misinformed or lacking information.

## **LISTEN ACTIVELY**

- Don't interrupt.
- Use clarifying not interrogating questions.
- Use "I" statements.
- Don't argue; talk about ideas in a civil way—be respectful of others' ideas.
- Keep side conversations to a minimum.



## 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 the group back to the purpose
- 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 members
- 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



# What Might Small Groups Need ?



- **If people often dominate the conversation:**

- If you know this often happens, 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?”

- **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 you all, do you want us to move more quickly?”
- Or ask them what they wish to focus on... “is there something else in the scripture you want to discuss?”
- Don’t be afraid to get them involved in how the meeting moves forward.



# What Might Small Groups Need ?



- **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 you know is usually responsive
  - Ask the question differently
  - Ask the group how they might ask the question differently
  - Revisit a past contribution that fits the topic, ask follow up questions
  - Answer a question yourself to get the ball rolling only after 7 seconds
- **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?”

# What Might Small Groups Need ?



## **As you are considering how to work with people's behaviors:**

- Ensure you are clear on your group's ultimate objective
  - Is your ultimate objective to get a group engaged with scripture so they can encounter Jesus
  - Is it caring 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 of the purpose as it will shift the outcome of the meetings.
  - Some people might benefit from one to one bible study or pastoral care. You might ask them privately if you can provide their name to those resources.

## Additional Facilitation Tips



- **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” or “What connection do you see from this in your relationship with God (or at work, or in relationships).” or “Is there anything in this that makes sense in your life?”
- **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 conversation. 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 prompting questions in mind



People usually remember an experience as positive or negative depending on how they felt when the experience ended. Help the reinforce or remind themselves of positive interactions.

Bring them 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**

# Additional Closing Questions



## Questions to close on a positive note:

- When did the group have a lot of energy? When was the energy lacking?
- 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 would you add?



**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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