



***Walk in Love 5: The Trinitarian Life
With Scott Gunn and Melody Shobe
Facilitators Guide***

Tips for Leading Small Groups

Welcome

A Blessed Ministry

So you've been asked to lead the group...

Thank you for taking on the role of facilitator for this course. We hope this class will help you and your small group in your journey of faith. Your role as a small group leader is very important – but it's also something you don't do alone. You have the blessing and privilege of working alongside the Holy Spirit to help people grow. This is not to be underestimated. You will find that the Spirit wants us to draw near to God more than we do – and in taking on the responsibility to lead, you open yourself up to growth as well, often in unexpected ways.

And you don't have to be an expert. It doesn't take an advanced degree or an ordination certificate to run a successful small group. Willingness to lead and learn is all that's required.

We at ChurchNext are delighted to share this Facilitator's Guide with you; we've designed it for clergy and laypeople. We've written it to help familiarize you with the topic and to give you some ideas as to how you would like your small group to gather.

In the pages that follow we will offer you some pointers regarding group facilitation and conversation-starting. Feel free to make them your own. These are suggestions and are meant to be molded, adapted, or tossed out, depending on your context.

Thanks for learning with us,

The ChurchNext Team

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Facilitating

Begin your meeting by welcoming participants. Try to create an environment of warmth and hospitality. Successful small groups offer safe spaces for authenticity and depth, where people are not uncomfortable exploring personal convictions and intimate ideas. After all, we all long for genuine connection and camaraderie in our spiritual journeys. The entire group benefits when honesty and candor are welcome.

You may want to approach your meeting by dividing your time together into three equal or unequal segments. The first should be spent connecting – greeting, catching up. You may want to offer refreshments. The second segment should be devoted to covering the material in the course, and the third should include a time of prayer.

Lead the class as a sojourner, not an expert. Facilitators lead by example. So when you are open, enthusiastic, and interested in learning, your group will join you.

A typical meeting outline may include: Welcoming, Music, Prayer, Course Material and Discussion, Closing Prayer. We've included some prayers at the end of this guide.

Depending on the topic, your learning goals, and the comfort level of your group, you may want to make the following materials available:

- Copies of the Participant Guides
- Bibles
- Prayer Books
- Paper or notebooks
- Pens or pencils
- Prayers
- Song sheets, Hymnals, music, and music player
- Refreshments

Asking Questions

Perhaps the most important role a facilitator plays is in posing questions and facilitating conversations. Here are some tips:

The key role in leading your small group is to help members engage in meaningful dialogue with one another. It will allow them to uncover deeper truths for themselves and others.

You can use a variety of questions to spark discussion (we've included some at the end of this guide), but we can't encourage you enough to come up with your own. Open-ended questions are best, but yes/no questions followed up with a simple "Why" can yield great reflection. Questions can be categorized like this:

Launching Questions – These are designed to get the discussion going by focusing on the topic. Launching Questions should allow everyone in the group to share personal experiences and connect them with the topic, i.e., *What one thing was the instructor trying to get across? Name an experience that came to mind as you heard the lecture.*

Observation Questions – These are questions which arise from consideration of the subject – how, why, and what do you think? They seek to make meaning of the lesson, i.e., *Why do you think this point is important? What did the lecturer mean by raising that point?*

Reflection Questions – These are transition questions that take us from the information presented to our own lives, i.e., *What does this have to do with me? How does the lecturer's main point resonate with me?*

Application Questions – These are questions that ask us to consider the course material in light of our day-to-day lives, i.e., *What is this new material asking of me? In what ways is my life changed because of what I'm learning?*

The Trinitarian Life

This step is designed to give you some background on the course.

What makes Episcopalians unique among other Christians?

The basics may be similar, scripture, tradition, practice, etc., but there are certain nuances that make Anglican Christians different. Episcopal priests Scott Gunn and Melody Shobe unpack them in these four insightful video presentations:

- 1) Grateful Enjoyment (God the Father and Creation Care)
- 2) Wonderfully Restored (God the Son and Incarnation)
- 3) Strengthened for Your Service (God the Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts)
- 4) Proclaim to All People (Spiritual Practices, Knowing Your Story, Telling Your Story)

This course is ideal for those who are new to the Episcopal faith as well as veterans looking to brush up on their knowledge.

Discussion Questions

Lesson One: Grateful Enjoyment

1. The Bible says that God has made us rulers of creation. Yet we also recognize that creation is a gift from God that we are asked to care for -- to be stewards of -- so that those who come after us can enjoy it as well. How do you understand the differences between ownership (dominion) and stewardship?
2. Does it change the way you think about your actions if you see care of creation as a spiritual practice instead of environmentalism, which is purely goal-oriented? How so? Or, why not?
3. What are some specific actions you can take to be a better steward of God's creation? What are some things your church community can do?

Lesson Two: Wonderfully Restored

1. How do you experience Christ's presence in the sacraments? How do you experience Christ's presence in the people you encounter? How are these two things related?
2. Incarnation is a messy business. The incarnate Jesus cried and bled and got dusty and tired, just like all of us. How does Jesus' incarnation challenge you to get your hands dirty in ministry?
3. Our culture tends to treat the poor and marginalized as people to avoid and diminish, and yet the teaching of the church says just the opposite. How does the church's understanding shape your life as a Christian and a citizen?

Discussion Questions

Lesson Three: Strengthened For Your Service

1. We are accustomed to praying to God the Father or God the Son. Do you often invoke the Holy Spirit in your prayers? Why or why not?
2. Some people say "The Holy Spirit was here" when we are pleased with the outcome or a situation. How can we tell our own emotions or feelings apart from the presence of God's Spirit? When might they be the same or different?
3. What spiritual gifts do you think God has given you? Are there any that you wish you had? (If you have no idea what your spiritual gifts are, start thinking about it by reading 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4. What spiritual gifts in these passages resonate with you?)

Lesson Four: Proclaim to All People

1. Who was the first person to share the good news of Jesus Christ with you? How did they do this? What was it like for you?
2. Have you ever shared the Good News of God in Christ with someone else? How did you do it? What was it like?
3. What are some barriers to sharing the good news? How can we overcome those barriers?

Prayers

Finally, you will find that opening and closing your time together in prayer is an effective way of inviting the Holy Spirit into your midst as well as building connection and an atmosphere of openness. While spontaneous prayers are often the most touching and effective, written prayers offer a richness of their own. Here are some:

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. (For Self-Dedication, BCP 832)

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (For the Human Family, p 815 BCP)

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us to do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (For Guidance, p 832 BCP)

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (For Quiet Confidence, p 832 BCP)

O Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen. (In the Evening, BCP p 833)