



Walk in Love 2

Marking Time

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

©2015, ChurchNext

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?*

Marking Time

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

Looking for a concise, accessible explanation of Episcopal faith and beliefs?

The Revs. Scott Gunn and Melody Shobe have given us an incredible resource. In this course these veteran Episcopal clerics unpack the basic beliefs and practices of their tradition. This is the second of five courses and explains how Episcopalians mark time. Here are the titles of their four video presentations:

1. The Daily Office
2. The Liturgical Year
3. Holy Week and Easter
4. The Burial Office

This course is based on the companion book *Walk in Love* and completion of all five courses makes students eligible for a ChurchNext Certificate in Episcopal Basics.

Discussion Questions

Lesson One: The Daily Office

1. In praying the Daily Office, we participate in an ancient tradition and join with Christians all around the world who are praying the same form. How might this experience expand our horizons of prayer beyond ourselves and deepen our relationships with God and with one another?
2. Read *A Prayer of St. Chrysostom* and compare the two versions on pages 59 and 102 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. What does this prayer say to you? Which version do you prefer and why?
3. Think about your own habit of daily prayer. Are there ways to improve or expand this practice?

Lesson Two: The Liturgical Year

1. What might it look like to orient all of our time and our lives around the birth and resurrection of Jesus instead of around other things? How might our day-to-day lives change?
2. What is your favorite liturgical season and why?
3. How can all the possibilities of observance -- seasons, feasts, fasts, and days of special devotion -- deepen our relationship with God?

Discussion Questions

Lesson Three: Holy Week and Easter

1. Is there a service during Holy Week that is difficult for you? Why is it difficult? What might this discomfort say to you about your life of faith?
2. Jesus commands us to wash one another's feet and to remember him with bread and wine -- in the same passage. Why do you think we partake of Holy Eucharist weekly but foot washing only occasionally?
3. Which moment from the liturgies of Holy Week is most powerful and important to you, personally? Why is that moment particularly important?

Lesson Four: The Burial Office

1. If we focus only on the Christian hope of resurrection, then we deny the reality of grief when we lose the ones we love. If we focus only on grief, then we ignore the promise of the Christian hope of eternal life. How does the burial liturgy balance hope and grief? How do we do this in our own lives?
2. Heaven as described in the Bible is strikingly different from the idea of heaven often portrayed in popular culture. How does the Bible's description of Heaven challenge, comfort, or unsettle you?
3. Have you planned your own funeral? If you have, what is it like? If you haven't, why not?

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)