



HOW TO RUN A SMALL GROUP

YOUR ROLE AS A SMALL GROUP LEADER:

God has a role for each of His children in His church. Small Group Leaders work alongside the clergy and staff of Saint Mary Catholic Church to help care for the people of God. The primary role of a Small Group Leader is to help group members move one step forward in their walk with God.

Everyone in your group will be at different places in their spiritual lives, and each person will have different next steps to take. Here are a few “next steps” you might help people take:

- Start attending Sunday Mass regularly
- Start reading the Bible regularly
- Start praying regularly
- Invite a friend or neighbor to church or a small group
- Learn to articulate their faith journey
- Sign up to help with Hospitality or another ministry at Saint Mary

HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL SMALL GROUP LEADER:

1. Pray daily for each member of your group, remembering their circumstances and needs.
2. Consider partnering with a co-leader to help share the responsibility of caring for and leading your group.
3. Stay in touch with group members between weekly meetings through phone, email, text group or individual, social media, or face-to-face. Encourage group members to connect with each other throughout the week as well.
4. Make sure your group meetings are pleasant and engaging. Have fun through laughter and by creating an enjoyable and participative environment.
5. Respect people’s time by beginning and ending your group meetings on time.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER:

Prayer is an essential part of your Small Group. The strength and effectiveness of a Christian community flows from prayer. Prayer helps us to remain in Christ and bear good fruit.

I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. John 15:5

HOW TO PRAY FOR YOUR GROUP:

- Pray for any requests group members share.
- Ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit in your group.
- Pray that God will open people's hearts to hear His truth.
- Pray for wisdom and strength to lead your group well.

HOW TO CREATE GOOD GROUP DYNAMICS:

Set expectations

A key to helping people feel comfortable in your group is to let them know what to expect. Take time to explain how the group will flow from week to week. This can include things like how discussion or group activities will happen, how group members can share prayer requests, or how they can best engage in the group.

Follow the 70-30 rule

Give the members of your group room to speak up instead of doing all the talking yourself. About 70% of talking should come from members and 30% from the leader. (How to gauge it? That means about a 2:1 or 3:1 talking ratio.) Asking questions and allowing your group members to answer can help take some of the load off of you if you feel you are doing all the work!

Keep discussion positive

If conversation takes a negative or destructive turn, guide it back to a healthy place. If someone needs to talk about a sensitive or complex issue, you can follow up with them after the group or call Julie Anne Walker at the parish office (850.243.3742, ext. 204) to help you discern how to respond well.

Keep the conversation relevant to everyone

Remember: people in your group will be at different places in their spiritual journey. Be thoughtful when you talk about spiritual concepts or church terms that might be unfamiliar to new Christians or new church-goers.

Help everyone learn each other's names!

Pay attention to your group members and make sure that they get to know one another's names. It should become a group of brothers and sisters in Christ!

PREPARING FOR YOUR GROUP MEETINGS:

- Send a message to group members reminding them about the upcoming meeting.
- Set up a welcoming environment.
- Consider having name tags available to help everyone learn names.
- Have a Bible ready with passages bookmarked.
- Have pens available for your group.

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

Here are a couple of OPTIONAL conversation starters to help get people talking as your group gets to know each other:

Fun:

- What are your hobbies?
- What are your plans for upcoming holidays?
- What was your most memorable meal?
- Favorites: Pancakes or waffles? Beach or mountains? Cake or ice cream?

Faith:

- How have you experience God's goodness today?
- What is your favorite prayer?
- Who has been an inspiration in your faith journey?
- What is your favorite Bible story?

**THANK YOU FOR BEING AN IMPORTANT PART OF SMALL
GROUPS AT SAINT MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH!**