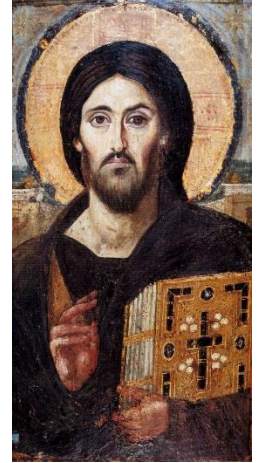


Facilitator's Guide



1. One of the first things a facilitator should do is **show appreciation for the uniqueness of each person that is present**. (Note: The small group will follow your lead in expressing appreciation to others). **Each individual has something unique to contribute**, which no one else can. When someone believes in you, appreciates you, loves you, they foster and bring out of you the very uniqueness that God has placed in you. A facilitator is to believe in, appreciate and love each person.
2. The purpose of the teaching and group discussion is to help people **to encounter Jesus** and grow in their relationship with Him in order to be a more committed disciple. It is very important that we **pray for the group, so that they will respond to God's grace**.
3. The Facilitator needs to **come prepared**, having watched the DVD and/or read the chapter in the book and looked over the discussion questions. This preparation will allow the Facilitator to draw out the needed discussion for a fuller understanding of the content (not so the Facilitator looks intelligent). It is helpful to keep in mind that the Facilitator is not the teacher, but the person who arranges for a fruitful session, being most interested in what participants will discover in their study.
4. **Facilitators are there to gently guide the discussion and move people along, encouraging and affirming them in their responses**. Be faithful in praying to the Holy Spirit. Believe with all of your heart that God is working through you. Pray to Him that He will use you to stimulate holy conversation pleasing to Him. You will receive many blessings from this apostolate and will find that your whole life takes on a different perspective. That's why Adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is so important. **Seek to grow in our relationship with Jesus so that you will be His witness and better equipped to serve Him!**
5. Your group should **develop a genuine warmth**, where each person feels totally accepted and loved. However, the group is not a place to have discussions dwelling on a particular person's problems. **You are there to be a moderator, a type of mentor who serves in an other-oriented role by offering encouragement and support. The facilitator is not to be a teacher or a counselor or spiritual director.**
6. **Encourage everyone to participate**. Seek to know the personalities of the people in your group. Those who hold back, or answer very briefly, ask simple questions like "Would you like to say more about that?" Never force or embarrass someone. Some participants will come out of their shell once they trust the group. The discussions are fruitful when everyone has put some effort into it and not just relied on others.
7. **Never criticize the Church** or a particular priest. If this is done, encourage the person to pray for the priest's soul and move on. St. John Vianney, the patron saint of Parish Priests had this to say, "There is no such thing as a bad priest. Only priests whose people have not prayed enough for them."
8. Do not allow anyone in your group to speak unkindly about their spouse. If they are having a problem they can talk about their issues privately but do not let them have a soapbox where they can waste precious time complaining. **This time is for building up participant's relationship with God and His Church.**



9. If you find that you are not being effective, **get help**. Don't struggle with an issue so that your group gets frustrated. If someone is dominating the discussion they need to be taken aside and asked to allow others the freedom to express their views too.

10. You represent the parish, so act accordingly. If someone has a suggestion take it seriously even though you might not agree with them. **Welcome all comments to improve the program.**



11. **You are not here to dominate with your views** but to serve those in your group. Certainly you may comment on the question but please do not think that you as a facilitator have the right to dominate the conversation. Encouraging others and being interested in what they are learning is part of the apostolate!

12. Do not pretend to be anything that you are not. **Be yourself. Being honest can help others see that we all struggle.** By all means foster "Catholic" things. The Sacraments, especially seeking to attend Mass during the week – if possible – and frequent Confession, may be encouraged. But understand that each person is at a different point on the road. Be compassionate and encourage those struggling with problems in raising children and other obstacles that overwhelm them.

13. **Open each discussion with prayer and end with prayer.** Consider praying a decade of the Rosary at the beginning of the session. When you end your session, ask everyone to pray for each other.

14. Stress to participants that **what they say in the group stays in the group.** No one is to go out and gossip about another person's problems. Be respectful of every member in your group.

15. No one should be made to feel stupid. **No question is too simple to ask.** Anything related to the content of the session can be asked and if you're not certain of the answer assure the group that you will have the answer for the next session. Then, be sure to have the answer. Don't pretend you know the answer and fudge it. If you don't know, ask. We are all on the same road but in different locations, so help the other person along or be helped along yourself.

16. Move your group along with the discussion questions and do not expect each person to give an answer to every question. This would take too long. Accept 2 or 3 answers and move on. Some questions will generate more discussion than others. Be aware of this and plan accordingly. **Don't be too controlling but don't let things drag on.** Be friendly but firm in wanting to complete the questions.

17. Encourage participants to **choose one point that stood out for them** from the session. Each day during prayer, reflect on the point and ask God for the grace to apply it to their lives.

18. As you grow comfortable with your group carefully choose a person who will be able to take over just in case you can't come one week. This will help them feel confident and you will be **helping and encouraging others to enter this apostolate.** Many times it's not the talkers that would make good facilitators but the thoughtful ones who love to listen and speak after having reflected on what has been said. Choose wisely! (Based upon the Facilitator's Guide from The Taste Program <http://www.tasteprogram.com/>)

