



Our Lady of Good Counsel
"I THIRST FOR YOU"

A GUIDE TO
**Discipleship
Groups**



A GUIDE TO DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

This guide outlines the purpose and structure of small groups for discipleship. Jesus began the first discipleship group when He called twelve uneducated, working men to follow Him. His methods were simple and ones we can use today. Like the disciples, if we open our hearts to learn from the Master, we too can be transformed.

In His small group model, Jesus shows us how to:

Love one another

Pray

Live Scripture

Discuss everything

Share in Life

Encountering Jesus and the transforming power of His love moved the disciples so much they left their old ways of life to follow Him. To live the radicalness of the Gospel they needed each other and so do we! We need to walk alongside each other on the journey of discipleship. Small groups become the place to develop relationships with God and each other, growing in faith and sharing life.

Thank you for your willingness to live as Jesus taught, intentional in discipleship and made new by the love of Jesus!

SECTION ONE: WHAT WE KNOW TO BE TRUE

We are made to know God.

*And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. **John 17: 3***

On the one hand, faith is a profoundly personal contact with God, which touches me in my innermost being and places me in front of the living God in absolute immediacy in such a way that I can speak with Him, love Him, and enter into communion with Him.

Pope Benedict XVI

We are made for unity.

But God has so composed the body...that there may be no division, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

1 Corinthians 12:24-27

*“There will be no unity until it is based on unity of the spirit.” **John Paul II***

We are stronger in community.

*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. **Hebrews 10: 24 -25***

*Christian Community is the place where we keep the flame of hope alive among us and take it seriously so that it can grow and become stronger in us. **Henri Nouwen***

We belong to a family.

*I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. **Ephesians 3:14***

*Families and parishes are the two places where we encounter, in every age, that communion of love which has its ultimate source in God. Just as our families are domestic churches, our parishes are called to be welcoming families. **Pope Francis***

SECTION TWO: OVERVIEW

Why Discipleship Groups?

Intimacy with God • Find Authentic Friendship • Live Discipleship

Characteristics of Groups



SECTION THREE:

EXPECTATIONS FOR A HEALTHY GROUP

All members agree to:

Trust & Vulnerability

Confidentiality

Mutual Respect

Openness to Grow

Commitment

What a healthy group looks like:

Everyone has a chance to speak and freedom to not speak.

Encouraging and supporting one another to grow.

Unholy discussions, judgments and gossip have no place.

Regularly attend group meetings.

Listening and loving one another despite differences is normal.

SECTION FOUR:

SETTING UP A GROUP

1. What does it take to be a group leader?

- Disciple of Jesus. Yes, Lord I believe. Help my unbelief
- Rely on the Holy Spirit. God doesn't call the equipped. He equips the called.
- Willing to walk alongside others on their faith journey.
- Openness to vulnerability with others.
- Desire to lead.

2. Can I form my own group with my friends?

- YES, you can form your own group with anyone willing to grow with others! Just register yourself as a leader and put the names of your group members on the registration form.

3. Are these in person or online groups?

- Either/or. You along with your group members can decide how and when you meet. You can meet in people's homes, backyards or on a web conference. There are resources through OLG C Discipleship groups to help you.

4. How often do we have to meet?

- At least once a month. Given the demands of family and work life, you and your group can decide how often you'd like to meet. Get in a regular rhythm, i.e. every Tuesday, 1st Friday of the month, Saturday morning, etc.

5. How long is a group meeting?

- Online and in-person meetings as well as the study you are doing may make this different. At least one hour.

6. What faith topics are we supposed to study?

- OLG C has a variety of faith topics. You and your group can decide where your focus will be. There are resources on the OLG C website.

7. Who do I turn to if I need help?

- Reach out to the Evangelization and Discipleship Office Anthony Feola at feolaa@olgcp parish.net or Karen Ervin at ervink@olgcp parish.net.

SECTION FIVE:

NUTS AND BOLTS OF GROUP MEETINGS

Goals for the First Few Meetings

Building intimacy with group members

Learning personal stories and backgrounds

Setting the stage for the prayer life of the group

Forming habits: expectations, rhythm, trust

Structure of Group Meetings

1. **Opening Prayer**
2. **Ice-breaker:** quick sharing to break into hearts and build relationships (see Appendix).
3. **Follow-up:** how did people do with the homework (if there is any)?
4. **Faith Content:** Scripture, transformational teaching, video, prayer, book study, etc.
5. **Deeper Dive:** discussion on the content.
6. **For Next Time:** decide what members should focus on before the next meeting.
7. **Closing Prayer:** include time to hear prayer intentions for the week.

Agenda for the First Meeting

1. **Introduce yourself:** be personable and real.
2. **Pray:** you lead it and keep it short.
3. **Introductions:**
 - Share 1: Name, family, work, how many years at the parish.
 - Share 2: Why are you joining a small group? What are you hoping to get out of it?
4. **Explain the purpose of the small group:**
 - Authentic Community: build friendships, support for one another, grow in faith
 - Faith Component: Walking with Purpose women's study, book study, rosary group, bible study, CONNECT, etc.
 - Remind of expectations for a healthy group (see Section 3).
5. **Explain your role:** facilitate discussion, walk alongside group members on the journey of faith.
6. **Explain the meeting format:** every week will have prayer, ice breaker question, follow-up (if needed), faith content, deeper dive discussion, for next time, and closing prayer.
7. **Deeper Dive** (if there's time): what has been the hardest challenge for you during the pandemic?
8. **Homework:** this will depend on your type of group.
9. **Prayer Intentions:** what do we all need prayer for in the week ahead?
10. **Closing Prayer:** do it yourself or ask for a volunteer.

APPENDIX:

BUILDING THE PRAYER LIFE OF THE GROUP

The first few meetings should be “introductory meetings” where you are establishing relationships and building the prayer life of the group, below are some suggested agendas:

Sample Meeting A

1. **Opening Prayer**
2. **Ice-breaker:** What was your childhood like? How did you learn to pray as a child?
3. **Faith Content:** Video on Prayer, **Fr. Mike Schmitz Praying Ain't Easy** (10 min)
4. **Deeper Dive Discussion:** What really struck you in the video? How do you pray? What is the point of it?
5. **For Next Time:** Develop a new strategy to grow in prayer and try it.
6. **Prayer Intentions:** What can we lift each other up for in prayer this week?
7. **Closing Prayer**

Sample Meeting B

1. **Opening Prayer**
2. **Ice-breaker:**
 - Share 1: What was the high/low in your life from the last meeting?
 - Share 2: How did it go trying your new prayer strategy from last week.
3. **Faith Content:** Video on Prayer, **Fr. Mike Schmitz Tips for Praying** (10 min)
4. **Deeper Dive:** What really struck you in the video? In reflecting on your own prayer life, what works or doesn't work? What can you do differently?
5. **For Next Time:** How can we support each other in growing in a personal prayer life?
6. **Prayer Intentions:** What can we lift each other up for in prayer this week?
7. **Closing Prayer**

Other Prayer Resources

Improving Prayer

Matt Fradd and
Fr. Mike Schmitz
(10 min)

Dryness in Prayer

Fr. Mike Schmitz
(10 min)

Praying Constantly

Fr. Mike Schmitz
(5min)

On Prayer

Bishop Barron
(13min)

APPENDIX:

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

Personal Stories

- What's your family history? Parents. Siblings. Faith tradition.
- If you had to describe the home you grew up in what would be the four defining characteristics of it?
- What's your career and how did you choose it?
- What are four main things that fill your time each day? What don't you have time for but would like to be able to do?
- What do you do for fun...hobbies?
- What is a goal you are proud to have achieved in your life?
- What's most important to you in this life?
- What's one of your biggest fears?
- How do you navigate conflict with your spouse/friends? What brings peace?
- What's the best piece of advice you every received?
- What's a bad habit in your life you've overcome and how did you overcome it?
- In what ways have your parents impacted you?
- What have you learned about loving people who are difficult to love?
- If you could rewind your life, what would you do differently?
- What's the greatest blessing in your life?
- Have you every walked with someone through a season of great suffering? How did you love them best?
- What's a defining moment in your life where you had to overcome great challenge?
- What's your experience with failure and what did you learn from it?
- Who's your role model or hero in life?
- What's the secret to having a healthy relationship with family or friends.
- How do you find balance in your life?
- What one word best describes you?
- What was your biggest challenge this past week?
- What was your high/low this past week?
- What is the greatest area where you've had growth in your life.

Basics of Faith Journey

- Tell us about your relationship with God the Father. Who is the 1st person of the Trinity to you?
- Tell us about your relationship with Jesus. Who is the 2nd person of the Trinity to you?
- Tell us about your relationship with the Holy Spirit. Who is the 3rd person of the Trinity to you?
- What role does prayer have in your life?
- When and how do you read Scripture?
- What's been your "best Lent ever"?
- How do you pray best?
- What role does church play in your life.
- How do you praise God?
- What's the hardest thing for you about being in a relationship with God?
- When have you ever stepped out in faith?
- What's your first memory of God?

Deeper Into Faith

- What's your favorite Scripture passage and why?
- What's your encounter story with God? How do you know He is God?
- Is there a time in your life when you knew you were saved by God?
- How has your faith been stretched and tested?
- Have there ever been times when struggled with disappointment or doubt in God?
- What does it mean that Jesus died for you?
- Have you every encountered Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and known He was truly present?
- What are your thoughts about heaven and eternity?
- How have you seen yourself grow in virtue?
- What role do the sacraments and the Mass play in your life?

