

FAITH STUDY LEADERS TOOLKIT

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Being a Faith Study leader of a small group is a tremendous privilege and responsibility. More so at the start of an evangelistic effort built on trust and relationships. People need companions on the journey, and by taking up leadership of a small group you are accepting the opportunity to journey with your group members.

Because the *Catholic Christian Outreach* Faith Studies are led in a small group context, as a leader you are invited to think about and to pray for each individual. Consider Jesus' model of ministry. He had hundreds of followers, but from among them he chose 12 to be his apostles, and from among them he had three he spent extra time with: Peter, James, and John. He likely invested even extra time in Peter, knowing he would lead the early Church. As you lead, be mindful of who in your group might have what it takes to lead others. Invest in those who, like you, are Faithful, Available, Contagious, and Teachable (FACT).

Our goal is to reach the world with the message of the Gospel, but the most effective way to accomplish this is through spiritual multiplication, one person at a time. You are being invited not simply to lead a small group, but to invest in the lives of others and help them become missionary disciples who can reach others, forming them as missionary disciples. (For more on this, see the toolkit on **Spiritual Multiplication**)

Ideally a small group Faith Study leader:

- Is a practising Catholic – attends Mass every Sunday, goes to confession regularly, has a daily prayer life, and supports all the teachings of the Catholic Church
- Has completed at least the first two levels of the *Catholic Christian Outreach* Faith Studies (*Discovery and Source*)
- Has a passion for evangelization and helping others grow in their relationship with Jesus
- Is Faithful, Available, Contagious, and Teachable (FACT)

Key Roles and Responsibilities of a Faith Study Leader:

- Facilitate small groups of Faith Studies participants in your assigned level
- Pray for the participants in your Faith Studies group
- Prepare well for each session
- Arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the start of each Faith Study
- Be welcoming and attentive to the participants
- Keep the group on task and on time, while allowing open discussion
- Track attendance of the participants each week
- Take time to do the one-on-one follow-up with your participants following the 5th lesson of the Faith Study
- Be available to your participants who may need to do make-up lessons or require additional follow-up outside of the regular Faith Study times

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- Commit to leading the full term of the study (six weeks for *Discovery*, *Source*, and *Growth*; eight weeks for *Obedience*; 10 weeks for *Commission*), but if you are unable to lead your group for a particular week, give appropriate notice to the parish coordinator to allow time to find a substitute leader
- Inform the parish coordinator if there are any concerns about any of your participants
- Attend formation workshops for Faith Studies leaders
- Assist with weekend promotions for the Faith Studies
- You are a facilitator, not a teacher. Seating in circles or around a table is better than a lecture style set-up.
- Encourage participants not to overthink the answers. Sometimes the answer may seem too simple, or people don't want to give "wrong" answers, but encourage them to speak and dialogue together.
- Allow time for people to think, don't fear silence, and be prepared to rephrase questions.
- Be sure not to shut down answers with "No," "You're wrong," etc. Feel free to ask further questions: "That is an interesting perspective, why do you see it that way?" "What other ways are there?" "Does anyone see it another way?"

Practical Tips for leading your small group

- Don't underestimate the power of prayer. Pray for your participants intentionally and by name. The decisions that they are facing in *Discovery* are potentially life changing, and there is an enemy who will do everything in his power to keep them away from Jesus, so go to battle for them in prayer!
- Prepare. The Leader's Guide is a great tool. Take time before each lesson to read through the notes and practise anything you might need to explain clearly. Remember that the answers provided may give more information than required, so use as needed.
- Be prepared to share your own stories and faith journey.
- Honour their time. Stick to an hour if that's what is decided. Start and end in a timely fashion. If you find that a lesson is going long, you might ask if participants can stay longer to finish, or you may wish to pause at a natural break and resume the next week.
- As a leader, you often set the tone. Be welcoming, greet people by name, and take a genuine interest in their lives.
- Let participants know you are listening to them and hearing their answers. You may wish to respond verbally, thanking them for sharing, or non-verbally, making eye contact and nodding as they share.
- If someone is speaking a lot, don't be afraid to ask to hear from others. Similarly, if someone is often quiet, don't be afraid to ask them directly what they think. Sometimes asking the quieter people to read aloud can make them more comfortable in sharing.
- Be mindful of the time. Manage it so you wrap up on time. Keep discussions moving and on topic. If something off topic comes up, you might say something like, "That's a great question, but because it isn't relevant to today's topic could we talk about it another time?" We want participants to know we are willing to discuss issues with them.

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Your Leaders Guide provides an outline of how the lesson should run.

- Opening prayer. This is a great place to be intentional in preparing participants' hearts for what is to come in the lesson. Be intentional and specific.
- Sharing. This is key in Lesson 1 to ensure everyone feels comfortable, but it also is a good place for fellowship and relationships to form. Checking in and discussing the previous week's challenge gives a good start.
- Announcements. Are there any parish activities you want to remind them of?
- Recap of the previous week's lesson. Remind them where we have come from. This situates the participants in the bigger picture
- Overview this week's topic. Let them know where we are going. This should be very brief.
- Lead the lesson.
- Closing comments. Summarize the lesson and give concrete ways to implement the challenge.
- Closing prayer. Depending on how much time is left you could invite participants to offer intentions, including any that may have come up during the lesson. Close with a common prayer that all can participate in.

One final word of encouragement as you undertake this leadership opportunity: remember that to be successful in evangelization means *taking the initiative to share Christ, motivated in love, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results to God.* You have an important role to play, but you are not responsible for transforming hearts. That's the role of the Spirit.