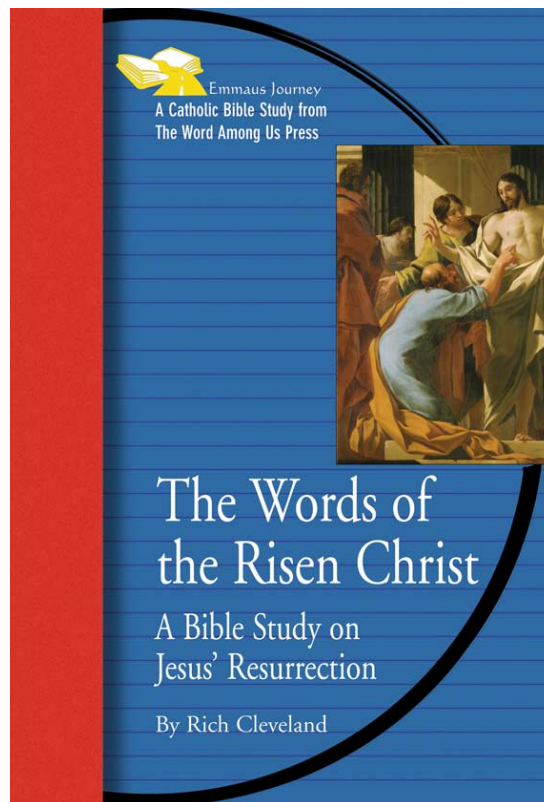




A Small-Group Facilitator' Guide *for* The Words of the Risen Christ



This small-group facilitator's guide provides suggestions for leading each aspect of this bible study. In addition it provides helpful small-group dynamics principles which will enhance your group.

Emmaus Journey is committed to encouraging among Catholics, enthusiasm for, and commitment to daily scripture reading and reflection and regular participation in scripture based small groups.

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Leading *The Words of the Risen Christ*

This study, *The Words of the Risen Christ*, will be relatively easy to lead, inasmuch as the material is fairly comprehensive, and could technically be led simply by proceeding from question to question. However, because the teachings involved in reflecting on Jesus last words to his disciples and to us are very important, it will be helpful to enhance the material by asking probing questions at the right time.

The material can be broken down into four segments for the sake of the discussion. Normally it would be best to plan on a ninety minute discussion; however it could be compacted into sixty minutes if necessary or expanded to two hours. Because the various parts of each session are interspersed you will need to keep the discussion moving at a pace that will insure that you complete the study without cutting the discussion short. The six segments are:

1. The introductory reflection
2. Questions on Scripture passages
3. Quotation from the Church's wisdom
4. Practical implication of the truth
5. Praying in response to what has been learned
6. Closing in prayer together

Normally a session would consist of having participants read aloud the introductory material and taking time to discuss the points that are covered there. This can usually be done by simply asking, "What did you get from this introductory material?" or "What impressed you from reading the introductory material?" This material, though succinct, is full of pertinent points and is valuable for setting the stage for the discussion.

The session continues by having the question you are to discuss read aloud, along with the Scripture passage. It is important for people to turn to the passage in their Bible and follow along because you are in fact going to be discussing the content of the verses. After the above has been completed one or more persons should be asked to share their answers. At this point you simply need to decide whether the discussion has been adequate or whether you should use additional questions which you have prepared to drive the discussion to a deeper or more comprehensive level.

The quotes are interspersed to shed light on the material studied and to reflect insight from the Church and respected Catholic leaders. These should also be read aloud and the participants given the opportunity to comment or ask questions.

As the facilitator it is your responsibility to set the pace regarding preparation, attitude, and application. You can do this by being open and honest as you share, and by usually going first to demonstrate what you expect of others.

As we have observed various groups and facilitators, two situations have recurred frequently. The first has to do with the preparation of members of the group. Quite frequently people read the passage provided for a question and write down their reflections on the passage without actually answering the question provided in the lesson. As you know, the Scriptures are filled with an abundance of information, so a host of ideas can come out of a passage. However, as a community, the group is supposed to be reflecting on and answering a specific question on the same passage. So please encourage the participants to make sure they read and understand what the question is asking, before they record their answer.

A second observation is for those who facilitate a group. Frequently, in their desire to be thorough many facilitators feel the need to discuss every question in each lesson. In a ninety minute session, if the discussion is lively, there is no way that every question can be answered

thoroughly within that time frame. Consequently, a facilitator should have decided ahead of time which questions are essential to answer to adequately cover the material. With one eye on the clock, as the discussion progresses, the facilitator should move the group through the material and if necessary omit some of the material that is less pertinent. Keep in mind however, that members of the groups should have an opportunity at the end of the evening to share anything that was particularly important to them which you may not have discussed.

Lastly, in this study the final step of the study is to bring closure through group prayer. This prayer is done together as a group, sometimes in unison and sometimes using different techniques. We will give some suggestions within this facilitators' guide for doing this. Please don't make this final prayer perfunctory, but take time to genuinely pray the prayer together.

Specific Suggestions for Handling Each Chapter

The following information provides some specific ideas on how to handle each section. For a trained facilitator this information will have marginal value, though there will be some suggestions which will be helpful or which will stimulate some ideas of your own. For the person who is new at facilitating a group these suggestions will be helpful ideas that you can immediately incorporate into your plan for leading. In the process you will also find that your creativity will come alive and you will need to rely on these suggestions less and less.

Each chapter includes objectives which we hope to see accomplished through the material. As the facilitator this information both helps you understand what the focus of the chapter is, or could be, as well as provides direction as you pray for your group participants each week.

In addition you will find specific questions, and an occasional comment, that you can use to help move the group into discussion of the material. When you prepare, any ideas you decide to utilize should simply be written into the margin of your book rather than taking the facilitator's guide with you into the discussion group. REMEMBER that though the suggested questions and possible ideas for handling each question are stated strongly, they are only recommendations and ideas, not authoritative instructions on how you must handle the facilitating.

The following is the recommended procedure for preparing to lead *The Words of the Risen Christ*.

- ✓ Pray for wisdom and insight and then complete the bible study for your own edification. Ideally you should do the study two weeks before the discussion. That way if you need to alert them to some difficulty in the material you will have discovered it the week prior.
- ✓ Review the objectives for the session you will be leading.
- ✓ Review the bible study passages and questions for additional concepts that need to be clarified, emphasized or amplified during the discussion.
- ✓ Review the material on writing focus questions in the *Small-Group Dynamics Facilitators Guide* and begin writing additional focus questions.
 - Record the questions in the margin of your study.
 - You should have approximately one question for at least every two parts of the material.
 - Review the suggestions in this facilitators guide to see if the suggestions are useful.
- ✓ The day of the study, preferably the hour before the study, review the material and the questions you developed to refresh you memory.
- ✓ Of course, throughout the process of preparation you should be praying for wisdom and insight, and for the preparation of the participants.

Providing a welcoming atmosphere

Learning and sharing are enhanced when it takes place in an environment that does not distract from the process. There are several ingredients that contribute to a warm, welcoming, and conducive learning environment.

- As people arrive meet them at the door with a warm smile and hello. If you don't know them well or feel that others may not know them, make sure that you introduce them to the others in the group. Stimulate the "small talk" before and after the meeting by asking

non-threatening questions, recognizing points of commonality that will make connection to others in the group, and by inviting others into the conversation with those who are less well know.

- Make your home as comfortable and conducive to small group discussion as possible by:

- Making sure that pets are secured and will not jump on, climb over people or in anyway be a nuisance to others. Recognize that not everyone is a pet lover, in fact some people are fearful of some animals or are allergic to them, and may not appreciate your pets as you do.
- Make arrangements for handling outside interruptions such as the phone, doorbells, and children.
- Provide comfortable seating. Metal folding chairs are really quite uncomfortable to sit on for a 60-90 minute meeting. If you must provide additional seating consider purchasing some inexpensive plastic lawn chairs that are more comfortable.
- Arrange the seating in a circle so that the group is seated as peers.
- Arrange lamps and other objects so that people can have good eye contact without having to look around an object.
- If you offer refreshments keep them simple. If they are provided in future meetings allow the participants to share in the responsibility of providing them so that the host does not have this extra responsibility
- Offer your home as a gift to God and to those participating. Do not feel like your home has to be a fashion statement, simply, clean and comfortable will be adequate. You can anticipate having some wear and tear if a good size group meets there for many weeks. Remember that people are more important than things.

Step 2: Providing an orientation to the material

Distribute a copy of the book you will be using, *The Words of the Risen Christ* to each individual. Both husband and wife will need their own copy. Allow them a few minutes to look the book over, and mention to them any cost that they will incur for the book, and how you intend to collect the money.

Step 3: Providing an orientation to the group expectations

Many discussion groups never get off the ground, or die quickly, because the people who initially agree to participate are unaware of the real purpose of the discussion group and are not committed to its purposes. Many potential problems can be avoided by clearly articulating, to those invited, both the purpose of the discussion group and the format and material you intend to discuss. One of the worst side effects of not doing this is that a strong-willed participant will often unwittingly highjack the group by strongly suggesting different objectives, formats, and materials. So take time to clearly articulate what the discussion group is all about.

- Perhaps the easiest way to accomplish this is to prepare a “covenant card” that lays out all the particulars. Give a copy to each person and discuss it with them.

- On the next page is an example of a “covenant card.” You can use the above paragraph to explain why the groups needs to agree on their purpose and process. Or you can simply explain it this way, “Folks I am really excited about the study we will be doing together during the next few weeks. I looking forward to it. However, I am also aware how busy all of us are and how easy it will be to allow other things to either crowd the study our of our life altogether, or push it to the corner of our life where it will not be given adequate attention. So I want to discuss with you what my commitment will be as facilitator of this group, and then invite you to make a similar commitment.”

Then explain that you have made up a covenant or commitment card to guide the group to consider what their commitment should be. Begin by explaining what you think the purpose is and what your commitment to them entails. At that point simply toss the following question before the group for discussion, “What do you think your commitment should be in the following six areas?”

After the discussion has flowed a bit ask the group, “Can we articulate and agree on some basic commitments? Let me write them down, and I’ll give us all a copy next week.” Then take good notes and provide a revised covenant or commitment card the following week.

Introduction

Objectives:

To lay the foundation for a successful small group.

To kick off the study by having a fun and a thought provoking first session together.

To break the ice and get people comfortable interacting.

To insure that everyone is in agreement about the group culture and excited about beginning the study.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Get acquainted with the others in your group by sharing the answers to these questions:

“What is your name?”

“What is the best gift you ever received?”

This first session will set the tone for the entire course. Begin with a positive attitude and graciously welcome those who have come. Hold off passing out the material until the “Get Acquainted” material is finished. If your group has been together for some time, they will know each other quite well, however it will still be a fun exercise to complete the two questions in the getting acquainted exercise above. If you have any new people make sure that you facilitate relationships by pointing out natural connections, such as mentioning others in the group who are employed in the same or similar professions, or who are from the same state, etc.

(This is a good time to introduce the practice you will be using of having the material read aloud before you discuss it. Though people will have read and reflected on this material during the previous week it is essential that material be read aloud once again prior to the discussion of each section. The reason this is important is that usually there are several days between the time they prepared and the time of the group discussion. If you simply jump right into the discussion without rereading the material it will catch most people off guard and they will not be ready to share. So we always recommend that you have the material read aloud to enable people to recall the content and get ready to discuss.

Sometimes people assume that you simply can ask people to read the material silently to themselves during the meeting. The problem with this is that it always takes much longer than having it read aloud. This is because the speed and style with which people read something varies greatly, and so some people are always finished quickly and waiting for others, while some people are embarrassed because they are the last one finished, or else the group begins before they have finished. Thirty years of experience with literally hundreds of groups has proven that it is better simply to have the material read aloud.

You can vary the way the material is read. For instance sometimes you can have only one or two people read all of the section, while at other times you can simply have participants take turns reading one paragraph at a time. In some chapters you may find it helpful to only read one or two paragraphs and discuss them, and then read one or two more paragraphs and discuss them, proceeding this way until you have completed the section.

If you have some poor readers in your group, or people who prefer not to read aloud you need to be sensitive and honor their feelings. With the poor readers you can occasionally ask the person sitting to the right or left of them to begin reading and then proceed around the circle away from the poorer reader. Or you may prefer to find the shortest paragraph and mentally determine with whom the reading should begin in order that the poorer reader can participate in reading aloud, though having the easiest portion to read.)

Introduction: Have the “Introduction” read aloud up to **“Prepare as though your life depended on it”**. Because this material is rather lengthy you will not want to have the whole thing read at once, but read a few paragraphs and discuss them. We would suggest reading a few paragraphs and then asking for their comments and questions. You of course should have already read this material and have one or two things to point out and/or discuss from these paragraphs.

Chapter 1: Briefly walk through Chapter 1 with the group so that you can orient them a little bit more to the material. Explain:

- That each week, you will begin by reading aloud the scripture passage from which comes the phrase for that week's lesson.

- The way a participant should handle the Introductory Reflections is by reading, thinking and praying about the written material with a pen or pencil in hand so that they can underline, circle, and put asterisks, etc., by statements and concepts that impress them and stimulate their thinking. They should write questions and comments in the margin so that they can recall them when you meet to discuss the material.

- Explain that in the "Learning from Scripture" sections you will discuss one major portion of scripture and a smaller portion. (One or two chapters will have a third scripture portion.) You should share with the participants that they will receive from the bible study in proportion to the time and thought they put into it. Specifically, explain that rather than simply writing down a quick, undeveloped answer, they should take time to elaborate on their answer, putting it in their own words, and expanding on the concept. If they prepare in this way they will always discover significant truths and consequently also show up with significant thoughts to share. There is insightful a little poem that will help you emphasize this point.

Thoughts disentangle themselves
When they pass through the lips
And over the finger tips.

Simply stated, as they write down and express their thought they will become even clearer to them.

- Explain that they should handle the sections "Reflecting on the Church's Wisdom," and "Living the Words of the Resurrectin," in much the same way as they did the "Introductory Reflection."

- Explain that the section "Praying in Response to Jesus' Words" will give them an opportunity to apply what they are learning in a practical and helpful way as they talk to God through a prayer they will write. Emphasize that the opportunity to express their thoughts and heart to God in prayer is a vital part of each chapter and to please not minimize its importance.

- Point out that during your meeting each week you will actually pray the ending prayer together, and that they will be asked to pray the prayer on a daily basis the week following the discussion.

Practical Suggestions:

Return to the "Introduction" and pick up on reading the material with the practical suggestions. Have people read one, or at the most two, suggestions aloud and then ask for comments or questions. You should be ready to point out one or two things that you find particularly helpful or important.

Point out that the thing which makes this study different than just a "bull session" is that we don't just share our opinions off the top of our head but actually read the text, think about the questions, and discover a basis for our thoughts in Scripture. When we do this we reason together and come up with a collective insight that far exceeds our off the top of the head comments.

Encourage them to start their preparation early and to write out their answers to questions in well-developed paragraphs rather than with just two or three words. Explain that, "Thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through the lips and over the fingertips."

Explain that when they read the various sections they should take a pencil or pen and underline, or circle things that stood out to them, and write comments and questions in the margins so that they will later be able to recall those points that the Holy Spirit impressed on their hearts.

Prior to the weekly group meeting, review your study and choose six of the most meaningful things you have learned, so that when you have an opportunity to discuss the material, you will be focused in your sharing.

Chapter 1

“That the world may know”

Objectives”

1. To set the tone for future meetings by having a fun and enjoyable time of sharing and prayer.
2. To understand how Jesus’ prayer the night before he was betrayed sets the stage for his post resurrection communications.
3. To see how we are intricately woven into Jesus’ plan for the ages.

Introductory Scripture and Reflection

John 17:1-26

Explain that John 17 and the content of this chapter of the bible study provides background and perspective on the things Jesus did and said after his resurrection. Normally it is helpful to read the passage before beginning the study discussion but since this passage is rather long either omit reading it, or simply summarize it’s content in an outline form.

Have the reflection read aloud, either all at one time by several people sharing the reading task, or read a portion of it and then discuss that portion. For instance you could have the first four paragraphs read and discussed, and then the final four paragraphs.

“What stood out to you from these introductory paragraphs?”

“Of the six things or areas about which Jesus prayed which one do you feel the most need for in your own life today?”

If someone doesn’t bring up the concept that Jesus was thinking of us, ask them to comment on this concept.

Learning from Scripture

Take your time working through these questions based on John 17. You can read the opening sentence and then have a person read the questions and give their answer. For this first lesson why don’t you simply go around the group in order having a different person answer the next question.

Once the person has shared their answer ask the group,

“Does anyone have any additional insights they could share?”

As people share listen to see if they are basing their answers on things they have read or discovered in Scripture.

Reflecting on the Church’s Wisdom

First have the quotation read aloud and then ask for comments or questions. After people have discussed the quotation read the question, “Which of Guardini’s observations about Jesus speaks most strongly to you right now? Why?”

Living the Words of the Resurrection

Have this portion read aloud asking for questions or comments. After the sharing consider asking, “Has anyone determined ‘to devote more time to prayer and reflection that we may know the Lord more fully...’”

Praying in Response to Jesus’ Words

Since this is the first time they will have had an opportunity to share the prayers they have written, ask each in their turn to read their prayer. As the leader you should go first by reading what you have written.

If some did not write out their prayer let them know that this is a crucial part of processing the content of this course and that by writing out their prayer they will be able to personalize what they are learning.

If some are hesitant to read their prayer because they think it is too personal, you can allow them to not share, but emphasize that part of what will make this group meaningful is the willingness to be vulnerable and transparent, as was Jesus in his prayer.

Prayer Together

Remind them to try praying this prayer daily during the coming week. Give them about 30 seconds to read the prayer silently and then lead them in prayerfully praying in unison together.

Chapter 2

“Was it not necessary . . . ?”

Introductory Scripture and Reflection

Luke 24:13-35

Because of the length of this passage you may want to briefly tell the story of this encounter with Jesus rather than read it. If you decide to have it read aloud have several participants share in reading. (Sometimes people ask not to be required to read. This can be due to poor eyesight, poor reading skills, or undo shyness. Outside of the study ask them to share with you why they are hesitant to read. If it is either of the last two reasons encourage them to still try, and that you will select short portions for them to read. We have seen very poor readers become quite proficient simply because they were willing to try.)

Have the reflection read aloud using several participants to read the paragraphs. Then begin by sharing one thing that stood out to you. Then ask for their comments and observations.

After drawing their attention to the sentence, “Instead, they let sorrow and confusion preoccupy their thoughts and dictate their behavior,” ask,

“Have you ever experienced this kind of emotional confusion and preoccupation? What pulled you out of that condition?”

“When we are with other believers, in whom Jesus lives, he is there, really there. When we read or hear the Scriptures, he is there, really there. When we unite with others around the Eucharist, Christ is present, really present. Yet, sadly, we often fail to recognize him,” is a profound concept. If it doesn’t come up in the sharing naturally, ask,

“How do you feel about this concept?”

“What part do you think sacred Scripture plays in maintaining a right balance when one is undergoing spiritual, emotional, or mental distress?”

Learning from Scripture

Work your way through these passages and questions as before. Have individuals read the question, the passage, and share their answer, then ask for additional input.

(When there are several questions coming up in numerical order it is easy for people to fall into the habit of looking ahead to see which question will be theirs. This provides a degree of security but also enables people let their minds drift to other things while others are sharing. You can avoid this pitfall by calling on people randomly to answer the questions rather than in order.)

Question 5 contains a lot of information. Give adequate time for people to respond. Remember to have them turn in their Bibles to the two passages mentioned so they can follow along. You can do this by simply saying,

“Why don’t we turn to these two passages so that we can follow along with where people are getting their answers.”

Question 7

“What is the difference between transformation and information?”

[Point out to them that the Scripture for question 3. c. in next week’s lesson is incorrect. It should be John 8:28-29.]

Reflecting on the Church’s Wisdom

Have one person read this material aloud.

“If your daily intake of food corresponded to your daily intake of Scripture how healthy would you be?”

”The Church “forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn ‘the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ,’ by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures.”

“What constitutes ‘frequent reading?’”

Have volunteers give their answer to “What do these statements imply about the relationship between Scripture and your faith life?”

Living the Words of the Resurrection

Have this material read aloud.

“What are the promises of this passage?”

Praying in Response to Jesus’ Words

Ask for 2-3, or about a quarter of the group to share their prayer aloud with the group. After they have shared have the rest share their prayer one-on-one with another member of the group, preferably with someone other than their husband or wife.

Next week ask for volunteers from those who did not share their prayers this evening.

Prayer Together

Ask them how successful they were in remembering to pray daily the prayer from the previous chapter? Talk about the importance of this briefly. Perhaps you could ask,

“Did you find that praying the prayer daily made any difference in your life?”

Point out one or two phrases from this prayer that is especially meaningful to you. This enables people to briefly focus on the content before they are asked to pray this prayer. Then lead them to pray this prayer in unison.

Note:

This material wraps up the third session. Take a few minutes to talk about how it is going. You could say something like, “Now that we have experienced three sessions together how is it going? Are you finding it difficult to schedule time to prepare? Are you taking the time to answer the questions in depth or just making the necessary entry? How are you doing with praying the ending prayer throughout the week? Give me a little feedback so that I can know how it is going.”

Listen to their feedback and encourage them, and perhaps give them some ideas on how they can overcome their difficulties.

Chapter 3

“Peace be with you.”

Introductory Scripture and Reflection

John 20:19-23

Have the Scripture read aloud.

Have several participants read portions of the reflection aloud.

“What did the Holy Spirit impress on your heart from this reflection?”

“Of the two illustrations used in this reflection which do you think would be the more difficult one in which to find peace?”

“Have you experienced anything comparable in your life?”

The reflection brings out the point, “As members of Christ’s Church, we are responsible to participate in this mission—to proclaim the message of peace and reconciliation to a world seriously in need of both.”

“How do you see yourself, or how do you feel about participating in this mission?”

Learning from Scripture

Question 3. Have participants first read the passage of Scripture on which the question is based and then provide their answer. Ask others for additional comments.

a. “How do we sometimes pass judgment on the world?”

b. “What would be the implications of this attitude for us?”

c. [As mentioned in the facilitator’s guide for last week, the reference is incorrect it should be John 8:28-29.]

d. “What is the relationship between our works and Christ’s light?”

Question 4. Try and give everyone a chance to answer this question.

Questions 5.

“When it comes to talking to people about Christ and their relationship to him, what causes fear in *your* heart?”

Question 6. Try and help people to be practical in their thinking. Ministries like Emmaus Journey have several training resources to help Catholics become confident and comfortable sharing the Good News.

Reflecting on the Church’s Wisdom

This is a great reflection by Pope John Paul II. Have people share their thoughts after having read it. This also might be a good time to remind them that when they read something like this it is a good idea to get out a pencil or pen and underline, circle, etc., things which impress them from the article.

“How do you respond to Pope John Paul II’s description of Christ in paragraph three?”

“How do you feel personally about participation in the Rite of Reconciliation (Confession)? Do you participate in it frequently? Why or why not?”

Living the Words of the Resurrection

Have this material read aloud and ask for comments.

Praying in Response to Jesus’ Words

Again this week ask for 3-4 volunteers, from those who did not read last week, to read their prayer aloud. After listening and commending them on the good job they did, have the others share their prayer one-on-one.

Prayer Together

You could handle prayer together this week by having you or another participant pray this prayer aloud, thoughtfully, while the rest pray along silently. If you use this method make sure that when it is prayed aloud that the person doing it thinks through in advance on the emphasis he/she wants to bring to it. Pray slowly and clearly so that the others can pray with you from the heart.

Chapter 4

“Do not be faithless, but believing.”

Introductory Scripture and Reflection

John 20:24-31

Have the passage read aloud, and then have several people read the reflection aloud.

“What comments would you like to make on this reflection?”

“I know we have all said it but what do you think about the statement, ‘seeing is believing’?”

“What has been your experience with doubt?”

“How do you feel about the statement, ‘We have a choice, for faith is first and foremost an act of the will, and only secondarily an act of knowing’?”

Learning from Scripture

Progress through these questions encouraging everyone to share. Take time to especially affirm those who share less frequently, or who seem more timid.

Question 4. Look for the following elements of the Samaritan woman’s progression to faith.

Vs 7 encounter

Vs 13-14 hearing the promise

Vs 15 receptivity to the promise

Vs 16-18 consciousness of the need in her life

Vs 19 acceptance of God’s judgment regarding her sin

Vs 21-24,26 receiving the Gospel which resulted in

Vs 39-42 belief, reception, and witness (Romans 10:9,10)

Question 5. Give everyone plenty of time to share their faith journey.

Question 6. As you listen to people’s response to this question you should look for an understanding of both inner belief (belief in the heart) and outer profession (the mouth professing belief). Make sure they don’t confuse methodology, how this is done, with doctrine, what is necessary and what can be expressed in many different ways.

Reflecting on the Church’s Wisdom

Have the reflection read aloud and give people a chance to share what impressed them from St. Cyril’s thoughts. Ask for volunteers to answer:

“What conclusions about faith would you draw from this selection by St. Cyril?”

Living the Words of the Resurrection

Have this material read aloud.

The issue of knowing whether we will spend eternity with Christ is often called “assurance of salvation.” It is a tricky subject trying to balance confidence in what God has promised and Christ has accomplished, without being presumptuous. Perhaps the following information from *Hiding God’s Word in Your Heart and Mind* will be helpful.

“God does not want us to go through life worrying about our salvation, nor does he want us to go through life overconfidently thinking that our eternal destiny rests *solely* on some past response to God. The former can make us fearful and keep us from focusing on the joy of our salvation and growth in Christ and/or cause us to try and earn that which is truly a gift. The latter condition can make us presumptuous and oblivious to the consequences of our actions, or oblivious to Jesus’ warnings, like in Matthew 24:13 where Jesus cautions that people will grow cold in their love for God, ‘But he who endures to the end will be saved.’

“The key to assurance of our salvation is not to look to ourselves but to Jesus. *Let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race*

that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.'

As we continue to love and follow Christ, we can be free of fear and confident in his mercy and faithfulness to bring us to eternal life—we should never doubt that he is utterly reliable. ...”

Praying in Response to Jesus' Words

This week ask for volunteers from those who have not yet shared their prayer aloud with the rest of the group. Commend them for doing a good job. If there are some who haven't yet volunteered talk to them after the study to see if they will share their prayer next week. By then everyone should have shared their prayer at least once.

Continue your practice from previous weeks by having people share their prayer one-on-one.

Prayer Together

Pray the closing prayer in unison, or ask four individuals to lead the group in prayer by praying one of the sections which begins with the word “Lord.”

Chapter 5

“Come and have breakfast.”

Introductory Scripture and Reflection

John 21:1-14

Either have the Scripture read aloud or give a brief summary of what the Scripture passage conveys.

Have the reflection read aloud by several people, and then ask,

“What did you learn from this reflection?”

“When it comes to disappointment and frustration, how many times in your life would you say you have experienced one or the other in a major way?”

“What did you feel you needed most when you were experiencing major crises like this?”

“Many families eat most of their meals on the run. What role do meals play in the life of your family when you were growing up? What role do they play now?”

Learning from Scripture

Question 1. (a) (b) (c) (d) Have one or more people read their answers to this set of questions.

Question 2. Open this question to general interaction from the group.

Question 3.a. Consider going around the group and having each person share one thing they learned that has not been shared yet.

b. Each person should answer part b “Where do you personally provide and find community?” This is a good opportunity to gain insight into where the people in your group find relationships in Christ.

Question 4. The second part of this question ought to also generate comments from most in the group.

“What aspects of community does having a meal together require from us?”

Question 5. Listen for awareness of the reconciliation aspect of salvation.

6. Help people to recognize that receiving the Eucharist should enable them to deal with the presence of sin in their life and rejoice in the removal of guilt through the forgiveness of sin.

Reflecting on the Church’s Wisdom

In light of the following quote, “The command of Christ is particularly relevant in our time, when there is a widespread mentality which, in the face of difficulties, favors personal non-commitment.” Ask how would you rate your life in the area of commitment, fairly non-committed, sometimes non-committed, or usually pretty committed. If someone asks what you mean by “non-committed” ask them to define the term.

Consider asking, “How do you cultivate a deep spirit of prayer nourished by a daily listening to the Word of God?”

Have several share their answer to the reflecting questions, “In what ways has Jesus called you to ‘put out into the deep’? How have you responded?”

Living the Words of the Resurrection

Have this material read aloud. Ask for comments or observations.

“How does your family deal with conflict?”

Praying in Response to Jesus' Words

Have two or three volunteers read their prayer aloud, but instead of having others share their prayer one-on-one explain that prior to the closing prayer together we are going to allow each person to pray the prayer they wrote aloud, and then together we will pray the closing prayer in unison. Remember to set the pace by beginning with you praying your written prayer. Explain that “we will simply move from one to another around the circle.”

Prayer Together

Pray as indicated above.

Chapter 6

“Do you love me?”

Introductory Scripture and Reflection

John 21:15-19

Since this is a short Scripture passage have one person read it aloud, or do so yourself.

Have several read through the reflection aloud. You do not always have to read the reflection from beginning to end. Sometimes you can have a portion read, stop and discuss it, and then have the next portion read aloud to be discussed.

Consider using the following questions:

“What stood out to you in this reflection?”

“What have you learned or experienced about feelings of guilt?”

“The Christian life is about relationship. How does this incident affirm that statement?”

“What can we learn about God and our life in him, through Jesus’ dealings with Peter?”

Learning from Scripture

Answer these questions by having people read the question, the Scripture, and share their answer.

Question 1.

“In your life in Christ, what have you learned about spiritual estrangement and reconciliation?”

Question 3. Question 3.a. and 3.b. should be answered in tandem. They are important questions to bring application to the concepts of this study.

Question 4 – 9 Are well formed questions and should be answered by one person and then referred to the other participants to get their input. Remember to have the scripture passages read.

Reflecting on the Church’s Wisdom

After having the reflection read ask, “What stood out to you from this reflection?”

“In what ways do Origen’s observations apply to your own life?”

Living the Words of the Resurrection

Have this material read aloud.

You might ask for people’s attitude toward the Rite of Reconciliation.

Ask them if anyone did look up the Reconciliation times in their area.

Praying in Response to Jesus’ Words

Ask for 2-3 volunteers to read their prayer and then have everyone share their prayer in a one-on-one relationship with someone other than their husband or wife.

Prayer Together

This is a profound prayer of confession and reconciliation. Have each person in the group pray one of the stanzas (usually two lines of the prayer) aloud. Point out that the 7th and 10th stanza are only one line each. At the end, you should thank God for the time of study and say “Amen.”

Chapter 7

“I send the promise of my Father upon you.”

Introductory Scripture and Reflection

Luke 24:36, 44-53; Acts 1:3-9

Have one or two people read aloud the Scripture passage.

Have one or more people read the reflection either at one time, or in parts if you wish to discuss it by sections.

After receiving people’s comments or questions consider asking the following if these points were not touched upon.

“How do you respond to the following statements? ‘In fact, one of the evidences of the Holy Spirit’s presence is that we do become witnesses,’ ‘the message needs to be packaged in lives that demonstrate this overcoming power’ and ‘He is always an active presence.’”

Learning from Scripture

Question 1. Have these questions answered as you did in previous chapters. From time to time it is worth the effort to have people specifically read what they have written in their books. This will give you a good idea of whether they are doing the thinking ahead of time that they need to do or simply sharing off the cuff during the study.

Question 2. Help people to see both the widening influence and responsibility of the geographic ramifications of “in Jerusalem, and Judea, and Samaria, and the uttermost part of the world.”

City—area—region—world

Known—familiar—unfamiliar—unknown

Friends—countrymen—outsiders—strangers

Question 4. Keep both questions in mind as you listen to people share their thoughts.

Question 5. This is a great question for everyone to share their answer.

Reflecting on the Church’s Wisdom

Have someone read this aloud, and then have people share their answers to the reflection question.

Living the Words of the Resurrection

Have these paragraphs read aloud and then see if anyone found any good resource for helping people walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit?

Praying in Response to Jesus’ Words

This week just have people share their prayer in groups of two or three.

Prayer Together

A good way to pray this prayer in unison is to pause between each stanza for a brief reflection of what is going to be prayed.

Note:

Next week is the last session in this bible study. Take a few minutes to find out how people are feeling about the study and possibly continuing the group.

Also ask them to come next week ready to share one or two things that were especially meaningful to them from this study.

Chapter 8

“Go and make disciples of all nations.”

Introductory Scripture and Reflection

Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-20

Have two people read aloud the two passages of Scripture.

Have a person read the first two paragraphs of the reflection aloud. Give people a chance to share their thoughts on these paragraphs and consider asking, “How can we tell if we are ignoring this command?”

Have the remaining paragraphs read aloud and consider using the following questions if necessary to generate additional consideration of these thoughts.

“How do you feel about witnessing? Is it scary to you? If so, why?”

“How conscious are you of the fact that your life, behavior and attitudes are suppose to create wonder and hunger in the hearts of others to ask, ‘Why are you like you are?’ ”

“Have any of you experienced this happening with people you know?”

Learning from Scripture

Question 1. Everyone should be given a chance to respond to question 1.

Question 3. Encourage several people to share their definitions.

Questions 4 and 5. These questions go to the heart of why Christ has given us a mandate to take the Gospel to the world. Take time here to make sure that people begin to grasp the ramifications of a life without Christ and death without faith in Christ—even for their “very nice” non-Christian friends and family members.

Question 4.d. *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization*, (p. 2), provides an excellent explanation of the essential elements of the Good News.

- “God, whose love is unconditional,
- offers us divine life even in the face of our sin, failures, and inadequacies. . . .
- He became one of us in Jesus, God’s Son,
- whose death and resurrection bring us salvation. . . .
- Christ sends his own Spirit upon us when we respond to him in faith and repentance,
- making us his people, the Church,
- and giving us the power of new life and guiding us to our eternal destiny.”

Question 7. Have everyone share their answer to question 7.

Reflecting on the Church’s Wisdom

Have this reflection read aloud. Ask for their comments, especially about how they respond to, “*absolutely demands that the word of Christ receive a more ready and generous obedience.*”

Ask for volunteers to answer the reflection question, “As a member of the church, how are you carrying out your vocation and mission to proclaim the gospel?”

Living the Words of the Resurrection

Have this material read aloud.

Praying in Response to Jesus’ Words

Have one or two people, or perhaps yourself, share their prayer and then have the rest share their prayer in groups of two or three.

Prayer Together

One way you could pray this prayer together is for you to pray aloud the first paragraph, and then have everyone join together in praying the remainder of the prayer.

Conclusion:

Express to the group how much you have appreciated their input and insights, and perhaps express appreciation of the observed growth in some participants. Commend them for being prepared, etc, and let them know that by participating in this group and completing the material they have accomplished a significant task.

Remind them of Pope John Paul II's statement that, "The first condition for 'putting out into the deep' is to cultivate a deep spirit of prayer nourished by a daily listening to the Word of God." Then ask, "Where shall we go from here? We could just close off this study and thank God for it and be done. Or we could choose to continue learning together as a group by agreeing to do another study. What do you think?"

After listening to their responses you should have a general consensus as to their desires. If they want to continue, be ready to make 2-3 suggestions of studies you could do together. (Emmaus Journey has several other popular studies.)

Using Questions to Stimulate Discussion and Enhance Learning

The first objective of the discussion group facilitator is to get people thinking, only then does the second objective of communicating truth come into play. If we turn these objectives around we will find ourselves *instructing* people rather than devising ways to help them *discover* truth. "A living faith is a *searching* faith—it '*seeks understanding.*' Adults need to question, probe, and critically reflect on the meaning of God's revelation in their unique lives in order to grow closer to God." (*Small Christian Communities: A Vision of Hope* by T.A. Kleissler, M.A. LeBert, and M.C. McGuinness; published by Paulist Press, 1991)

Telling is not teaching, as any parent will affirm. Telling tends to cut the learning process short and cause people to turn on their "uhhs," whereas well developed questions seem to enhance the learning process and turn on a person's desire to know. If you raise a timely, well thought out question, and allow people to wrestle with the answer, the truth will become part of their understanding.

Unfortunately most small group discussion materials only use a form of questions called observations. These types of questions are valuable for enabling people to locate facts, however they don't require people to wrestle with either the meaning or the implications of the facts. Consequently, it takes a trained facilitator to develop additional discussion group questions that will enable people participating to answer, "What does it mean?" and "How should I respond to this truth?"

There are many different types of question formats you can use. We will give you three in this section. But before we explain these three types of questions it is helpful to understand the process of preparing and using them. Here is the recommended sequence.

1. It is important to first simply prepare the material for your own spiritual enlightenment as a fellow participant.
2. Review the material, especially the Scriptures referenced, for words, concepts, and implication which would be helpful to have expanded and clarified.
3. Decide which type of question format would best enable you to lead people to think through on the word, concept, or implication. It is always more interesting if you use a variety of question formats.
4. Compose the question and write it in the margin of your study material so that during the study it will be readily available if needed. Always compose many more questions than you anticipate using.
5. During the study, based on the groups interest and understanding of the material, and when an additional question is needed, selectively use those questions that will stimulate discussion.

The three question formats that are most helpful in stimulating discussion are:

Questions of Value: This question format uses adjectives like "most," "main," "major," "least," "primary," etc., words that cause the answerer to assign value to a set of facts. Because the question is formed in terms of what is most or least valuable *to them*, they do not need to fear giving the wrong answer, or having to defend truth. They are simply sharing what *they* perceive is most or least valuable. However, because in any group the participants will have multiple opinions this question format tends to elicit additional opinions and the reasoning behind them. Here are two examples of this type of format:

1. What to you is the *least* important aspect of evangelization?
2. How would you state the *major* truth of this passage?

Questions of Feeling: This question format is especially valuable when facilitating a group in which one or more participants may feel somewhat insecure about participating. If you ask them a question that requires them to give a definitive answer as to the meaning of some passage they will often freeze up and simply mumble an, “I don’t know.” However if you handle the same material with a feeling question they usually will be quite comfortable telling you how they feel. Frequently, you can move from a feeling question right into the question, “What then do you think it means?” Here are two examples of this type of format:

1. How did you *feel* when you read about the poor widow having given her last two cents to the temple?
2. How did you *respond emotionally* to this passage on the roles of the husband and wife?

Questions of Relationship: This question format deals less with stimulating discussion and more with revealing understanding. It tends to force people participating back into the text of the Scripture, or the material you are using, to rethink and rediscover some truth they overlooked. It calls for the answerer to discover a *connection* between facts. Often when the connection is discovered, such as a cause and effect relationship between two concepts, the Holy Spirit opens their minds to deeper more meaningful truths. Here are two examples:

1. What is the *relationship* between forgiveness and bitterness according to this passage?
2. What is the *connection* between the disciples’ receiving power after receiving the Holy Spirit, and their role as witnesses?

Lastly, here are four principles which will serve you well if you implement them in your task of facilitating a group discussion:

Encouraging Application: Someone has observed that God did not give the Scriptures to simply increase our knowledge but to change our lives. No discussion group is complete until the participants, individually and collectively, have answered the question, “What does it mean *to me*?” or “How should *I respond* to this truth?” It is always helpful to be as specific as we can in applying God’s truth to our life, but in reality there are many truths that have implications for the way we think rather than what we do. So answering these questions can result in either applications or implications. As facilitator you should always end with questions like these, and allow people to really discuss what difference the material should make in their lives. As facilitator you should especially have these questions thought through for yourself, so that you can set the example (pace set) in the area of applying truth.

K.I.S.S. Principle: “Keep It Simple, Stupid” or “Keep It Simple Sweetie” provides a very blunt reminder that people appreciate functioning on a basic academic level. When we use highfaluting theological and ecclesiastical terms we may sound intellectual but we do not enable others to relate to what we are saying. Most profound statements are simple statements that are profound in their simplicity. So when you are composing your discussion group questions compose short, simple sentences.

If when you ask a question of the group, one or more people ask you to repeat the question, usually that is an indication that you have stated a question that is too long and complex. If you have a complex concept which you would like to discuss by asking the participants a question, try composing a couple of short questions, rather than a longer complex sentence.

Dead-enders: A dead-end question is one that results in either a “yes” or “no” answer. Invariably these questions have been composed by beginning with a helping verb such as do, does, is, are, was, were, could, would, should, etc. When a sentence begins with one of these

words the answer always results in “yes” or “no.” For example, “Don’t you think this is a good suggestion?” If you want to generate discussion you should rephrase this question into one like the following: “What do you think of this suggestion?”

Don’t Preach: Because we are also learning a lot, and feel passionate about some of the things we believe, it is easy to appear like we are on a soapbox preaching at people. As you know, most of us do not appreciate being preached at, and if we become too uncomfortable from someone’s preaching at us, we will simply extricate ourselves from the situation.

The way we can share some really intense concepts without sounding “preachy” is by avoiding the uses of pronouns like “you” and “your” and instead use pronouns like “I” and “we.” As you read and listen to the following two sentences you will see what I mean.

(a) “You people need to take this passage about being transformed seriously. If you really want to be transformed you will get into studying God’s Word and allow the Holy Spirit to renew your mind.”

(b) “As I read this passage about transformation I realized that I need to really take this seriously. If I want to allow myself to be transformed I will need to get serious about studying God’s Word and allow the Holy Spirit to really renew my mind.”

Paragraph (a) sounds very preachy and as though you are pointing out their failures and needs. On the other hand paragraph (b), though making the same points just as strongly, sounds like a non-threatening testimony. The second communicates the issues just as clearly, and though people will feel equally challenged by your sharing, no one will feel personally lambasted.

So if you desire to have a really stimulating discussion, come to each session with additional well thought-out questions to supplement the material, and share them in a simple non-threatening way.

We pray that God will bless and enable you as you facilitate *The Words of the Risen Christ*, and that those in your group will be drawn into a deeper love for, and commitment to Jesus.