

## Practical tips for facilitating a small group

It is important to note that the facilitator is not an expert and doesn't have to have all the answers!

1. **Prepare the session in advance.** This will allow you the time to reflect on the session.
2. **Arrive early.** Prepare all materials and ensure that all electronics are functioning. It may be appropriate to include symbols appropriate for the discussion.
3. **Greet the participants.** It may be more welcoming, if appropriate, to offer refreshments. *During the early sessions it may be important to have name tags or to take some time for introductions.*
4. **Value the time together.** Try to begin on time and to be faithful to ending on time as well. Allow everyone who wants to speak the opportunity to speak. Silences may occur and that is okay. If someone has spoken once, try to ensure that others have an opportunity to speak before a second opportunity.
5. **Use open ended questions.** Try to avoid questions that lead to yes or no answers. Alternatively have a second question available to supplement the first.
6. **Prayer.** Begin the session with Scripture; this can be done through music, when appropriate. End with a prayer.

### Working with Small Groups<sup>1</sup>

*Recognize and respect adult learning theory and different learning styles by paying attention to the following:*

- A. Create a climate of hospitality and safety where it is safe to ask questions, express doubt, tell one's story and be accepted.
- B. Accept that learning is both Product [content] and Process. Pay attention to both.
- C. Include a rich cross section from the Tradition: Scripture stories, quotes from the saints and mystics, Church documents.
- D. Provide a creative combination of materials: use song and music, poetry, prayers [traditional and contemporary], symbol and sound into it to attract all the senses.
- E. Use a variety of teaching styles: presentation, conversation, dialogue, sharing, PowerPoint, readings, and others.
- F. Offer dynamic ways of interacting with and assimilating material: silence, dialogue, small group sharing, plenaries, journal writing, drama, crafting, and other means.

### Best Practices from *On Good Soil*<sup>2</sup>

*Honouring the insight that God dwells in and speaks through peoples' experience, we might be ...*

- A. Asking questions that are open and allow the adult to identify experiences.
- B. Inviting people to tell their stories in order to plumb the richness of meaning and the activity of God in their lives.
- C. Encouraging people to hear their own experience reflected in the lives and experience of others.
- D. Opening up the rich storehouse of the Church's Tradition so that adults might place their experience into conversation with and be enlightened by the stories of our brothers and sisters in the Communion of Saints.
- E. Allowing time for silence, for reflection, for God to enter and shed His light.
- F. Opening up and offering the richness of Church Teaching in a gradual, yet complete, manner as people need to or are ready to hear.
- G. Leading diverse experiences of prayer—Lectio Divina, Christian meditation, contemplation, the Liturgy of the Hours, Consciousness Examen, etc.—so that people discover ways in which they might become ever more attuned to God's presence and activity in their lives.
- H. Offering and sharing experiences to explore God's action in the lives of individuals and in the life of the community through transformative conversation.
- I. Accompanying and assisting to build communities of adult believers, where faith and life can be brought into conversation.

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<sup>1</sup> From <http://www.ongoodsoil.ca/images/17.%20Best%20Practices%20Respecting%20Experience.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> From <http://www.ongoodsoil.ca/images/17.%20Best%20Practices%20Respecting%20Experience.pdf>