

1. Find and engage a facilitator

This can happen a few ways; either by seeking out those who have the right skills, or a person can volunteer to be a facilitator. They should be a brother or sister that wants to help create an environment where people can learn about Christ and each other. Being a facilitator doesn't mean that you talk the most, but rather that you enable and encourage others in the discussion. The following characteristics are helpful:

- Committed to investing personally
- Able to create a welcoming and safe environment for discussion
- Open to exploring ways to make the learning experience easier
- Model openness and honesty
- Be encouraging to everyone
- Provide balance and direction that ensures engaging discussion
- Genuinely curious about people
- Willing to cultivate future leaders

2. Invite participants

The facilitator invite participants to the group, send reminders about discussions, and ensure everyone feels welcome and wanted. This can be done on a group-by-group basis, or if you are trying to promote small groups in your whole congregation, it might make sense to have all facilitators and the congregational rector meet together to make sure there is a place for everyone.

You should also discuss with the leadership of your congregation to determine how you will be tracking and reporting attendance.

Groups can be divided up by age and season of life (couples with young children, elderly, etc.), or by location – so it's easier for people to get together in homes. Men's and women's groups are often very successful, but so are mixed groups. Each congregation can do what they think will work best for them.

Ideally, small groups have between 6-12 people. If too small, maintaining healthy discussions becomes a little difficult. Too large, then you really should split into two groups because not everyone will contribute.

Keep in mind that small groups are a great way to reach out to guests. If someone in your group has a friend, family member, or co-worker that they were considering inviting to church, suggest inviting them to small group first. It is a more comfortable atmosphere (especially if you have your discussions in someone's home) and gives them a chance to get to know members of the congregation. Small groups are also a great way to integrate new members of the congregation and make them feel at home.

3. Intro meeting

Invite your small group participants to an introduction meeting and review the following:

- a. Decide on a location. This can be at church, in a home, or at a public place that allows for meeting (libraries, community centers, etc.). Keep in mind that you want to create an environment where people are comfortable. Some groups have snacks during discussion, or have dinner together before or after. Some groups rotate between the homes of the various group members. Decide on what will work best for your group.
- b. Decide when you will have small group – pick a day and time that works best for everyone. If you have older, retired people in your group – you might consider meeting during the day. If you have younger people that work late, consider picking a later time and sharing dinner.
- c. Discuss what a small group is and what is expected of your participants. We have various resources available to assist you with this:
 - *What is a small group?* booklet
 - L.O.V.E. postcards and videos which explain what it means to participate in a small group
- d. Decide on whether you would like everyone to do preparation work, or just come to the discussion with an open mind.
- e. Make sure that everyone knows how to access the materials (online, app, etc.)
- f. Suggest that everyone bring a Bible to discussion.
- g. Talk about confidentiality. In order for people to feel safe discussing personal things about their faith or life, they have to know that they can trust the members of the group. What is talked about in small group, stays in the group.
- h. Consider doing an assessment at least once a year to discuss the state of your small group and what might need to change to keep everyone engaged:
 - Is everyone willing to recommit?
 - Do we need to split into two groups because we have grown?
 - Would anyone else like to learn how to be a facilitator, or at least try?
 - Should we move to a different location, or change the day or time?
 - Is there anyone else that we could invite to our small group?

Then – pick a date for your first small group and get started!