

The cover features a white central area with abstract green geometric shapes on the left and right sides. The shapes are composed of various shades of green, from light to dark, creating a modern, layered effect.

Facilitator Training

Facilitation Tools for conducting Small Group Discussions

Purpose of Our Small Groups

Create a Christ-centered environment for spiritual growth

- ▶ Offer accountability
- ▶ Build each other up
- ▶ Provide a safe place to be vulnerable
- ▶ Listen and respect each other
- ▶ Find relevance and applicability
- ▶ Support and care for one another
- ▶ Catalyst for reflection and change
- ▶ Serve together

Why does our church have a small groups ministry?

To create a Christ-centered environment for spiritual growth, both personally and relationally.

Ideal size is 8-10 (max 12)

Role of the Facilitator

Moderate conversations to inspire participation!

- ▶ Invest personally
- ▶ Model openness and vulnerability
- ▶ Be encouraging
- ▶ Provide balance and direction
- ▶ Maintain the vision
- ▶ Cultivate future leaders

Facilitate: *make (an action or process) easier*

Make learning easier - no where does it say “to teach”

- Love and support others on their personal learning journey
- Provide a safe environment in which to grow
- Support self expression of what others have learned, self discoveries, personal development, and difficulties
- Encourage a deeper introspection and new perspectives through interaction with other learners and facilitator

Characteristics of a Facilitator

- ▶ A love for the Lord, His Work, and helping others
- ▶ Possess curiosity and ability to listen well
- ▶ Be authentic and genuinely interested in people
- ▶ Ability to encourage and challenge (with love)

Your love for the Lord, His Work, and helping others needs to be felt by the participants

As we know, it is less about what we say and do, and more about how we make others feel after participating in a small group session

Tools to be an Effective Facilitator

- ▶ Positive phrasing of questions and comments
- ▶ Affirm and validate
- ▶ Verbal and non-verbal acknowledgement, especially to foster deep sharing and vulnerability
- ▶ Notice “*Aha!*” moments and personal growth
- ▶ Directness tempered with mercy
- ▶ Self discipline to not launch into teaching mode

You are there to “facilitate” discussion by asking questions...good questions, open ended questions that elicit thought and introspection.

It is suggested that you utilize the tools and techniques provided in the NAC “Small Group Facilitation” training

Caution!

- ▶ Encourage - not push
- ▶ NEVER tell anyone how to feel
- ▶ Avoid the word “should”
- ▶ You are NOT there to teach the material
- ▶ You cannot have the answer to a self-discovery question for someone else

Rule of thumb: A good facilitator listens 80% of the time and talks less than 20% of the time.

Remember Purpose of a Small Group

Helps us accomplish our Mission and Vision

- ▶ Creating **health**
- ▶ A place to feel at **home**
- ▶ Experience the **love** of God and the joy of **servicing**
- ▶ **Reaching out** to all people
- ▶ Providing **soul care** and cultivating a **warm fellowship**
- ▶ Finding relevance in living out the **Gospel of Christ**

3 Types of Questions

- ▶ Reflective Questions
- ▶ Application Questions
- ▶ Clarifying Questions

Never tell when you can ASK

The following slides will help explain when and how to use these 3 types of open ended questions

Reflective Questions

Causes group to ponder over the topic

- ▶ What about this topic is important to you?
- ▶ How does this apply to you and your current challenges?
- ▶ When is this most relevant for you?

Can lead to an application question...

Reflection questions cause the Group and participants to pause, ponder over the topic and explore how it fits in to where they are.

It may cause them to dig deeper into the topic, or consider how they can apply what they have learned, or discuss challenges facing them as they contemplate a current or anticipated situation

Application Questions

Moves group into action mode

- ▶ What change do you need make right now?
- ▶ What are you going to do differently going forward?
- ▶ How will this be applied in your life and in faith?
- ▶ What are the specific steps and plans you need to make?

Application questions move the Group and individual participants into “action mode”.

What is my “call to action” with respect to this topic?

What practical steps do I need to take to develop in this area?

Clarifying Questions

Encourages group to go deeper

- ▶ Are you saying that...
- ▶ Did you mean...
- ▶ Here's what I'm hearing...

Use throughout discussion to:

- ▶ Clarifying key points
- ▶ Bring back to the topic, refocus, and/or keep moving

Clarifying questions are helpful to encourage deeper or more focused thought and response.

They are helpful to get more hesitant participants to engage, or go deeper.

They are helpful to better understand or keep discussion on topic

→ **“Knowledge questions”** for clarifying content (i.e. What were the 3 main points highlighted in the video / script?)

→ Questions provided should be a combination of knowledge, reflective, and application questions.

To make sure the material was understood, ask:

- Did you understand what you read or heard in the video?
- What were the 3 points that were brought up?

All Questions - YOU are in charge

- ▶ Know your group and what works best for them
- ▶ Select key questions ahead of time, and their order
- ▶ It's ok to add in different questions
- ▶ Allow others to ask new questions

Your objective:

- ▶ Create discussion, NOT get through all of the questions!

Ideally, by the 3rd or 4th question you have created a great discussion. If that takes you through the rest of the time, great!!

Facilitator Reactions to Responses

- ▶ No sarcasm
- ▶ No judgment
- ▶ Be specific
- ▶ Be encouraging

Remember, you are a facilitator, not a teacher! Be supportive

Sometimes an encouraging glance, silence or a “Tell us more...” is sufficient

Be specific and keep your comments short or in the form of another question – perhaps a “Clarifying Question”

→ A few ways to deal with “wrong answers” could also be to ask the question: Have you ever thought about it this way?

Or try to engage them in a different perspective : Why do you feel that way? Always seeking to understand...

Take Into Consideration

- ▶ Special needs:
 - ▶ Reading ability
 - ▶ Comprehension

This is very important.

Not everyone has the same capabilities or is at the same place as another.

Be aware of these differences and take them into consideration, especially as it pertains to pacing the session

Be Aware

- ▶ Shallow responses
- ▶ Every question has a purpose - does each individual see it?
- ▶ *How* someone responds, and what is *not* said

Listen carefully to what is said, how it is said, what is not said.

Observe body language, facial expression, attentiveness and participation.

Think less about what you want to say and be AWARE through listening and observation

10 Second Rule

- ▶ Don't answer for them
- ▶ Be patient - give them time to think

Silence can be a Facilitator's most valuable tool. Wait ten seconds after asking a question to give all the participants time to think and formulate a response.

Use silence wisely and give each one time to think and process

Pacing

- ▶ Mark your timing
- ▶ When they've got it - move on
- ▶ When they don't, set a limit
- ▶ Record difficulties
- ▶ Keep to your time limit
- ▶ Follow up "off-line"

Time goes quickly and some of the sessions have more questions than time will allow.

Pace the group and stay focused on common areas of particular interest, but stay focused on the topic.

Should the group want to review something or spend more time and agree to do that, adjust future sessions as necessary

Where individual follow up may be requested or needed, please suggest an "off line" discussion with that participant, and/or involve your Rector

What to do if...

- ▶ Participants come unprepared
- ▶ Are resistant to the content
- ▶ Don't want to share
- ▶ Don't understand the content
- ▶ Answers are shallow
- ▶ Participants says what they think you want to hear
- ▶ You feel like you are in over your head

Any of these observations should be addressed by you and in your way of consideration, encouragement and helpful suggestions

If you ever feel like you are over your head, or the session has lost focus, etc., it is best if you take a short break, then reconvene.

Or, if near the end of the session, suggest an early adjournment, rather than waste everyone's time. Then collaborate with your Rector.

With facilitation experience, and with God's help, you will learn what to do!

Remember Your Purpose

Facilitate: make (the learning experience) easier