

# Salem Small Group Leader Training

## August 2021

### Definition of Facilitator:

- a person or thing that makes an action or process easy or easier
- someone who helps to bring about an outcome by providing indirect or unobtrusive assistance, guidance, or supervision
- \* *not a teacher or preacher*

Every small group has the same goal and desired outcome: to Encounter God, Equip one another, and Extend the gospel to those around us. Another way to describe the three Es would be 'to know God intimately and to be more like Him'.

By endeavoring to be a facilitator rather than a teacher, you are encouraging your group to be proactive in making their faith their own as they actively seek the Lord for themselves. Facilitating pushes them to seek answers from God's Word rather than another person.

When specific questions come up, try to draw answers out from the rest of the group first rather than jumping in to answer them yourself.

- *“That is a great question. What do you guys think about that?”*

### Be prepared:

- Pray for the people in your group throughout the week.
- Cue up the DVD (if applicable) before people arrive.
- Re-read the study questions and leader guide the day before.
- Familiarize yourself with the scriptures you'll be going through.

### A good facilitator:

- **is positive, authentic, confident, and open to change**
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- **remains *neutral* as they guide and support the conversation, and leaves personal agenda out of it**
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- **creates fruitful conversation**
  - Ask open ended questions which require a sentence rather than a yes or no answer.
    - Good questions start with: What, When, How
    - Avoid questions that start with: Do, Are, Have

- Allow for quiet space.
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- Be sure to affirm the person, even if you don't agree with their answer.
  - Possible words of affirmation: *“Thank you for sharing.” “I appreciate your openness.” “Thanks for sharing your perspective with us.” “It's good to hear varying thoughts on this.” “Awesome conversation. Thanks guys!” “I appreciate you sharing that personal story with us.” “It's great to hear how the Lord is working in your life!”*
  - The only thing that needs 'correction' before moving on is a salvation issue: Salvation comes through Christ alone.
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- Keep the main thing the main thing so that you stay Bible centric!
  - Stay on point with the study questions, and avoid rabbit trails.
    - If you run out of time allow for people to stay or leave. *“I realize it is time for us to be done, so I am going to pray for us. Then if anyone needs to leave, please feel free to do so. But if you would like to go through these last few questions, you can hang around.”*
    - If discussion heads down a rabbit trail gently pull the group back. *“I love all the discussion, but in the interest of time I think we'd better keep going to the next question.”*
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- You need to be a peace keeper!
  - Be very careful with potentially divisive topics.

Stay Christ-centered.

- Conversation and disagreement can be expected, but if it becomes divisive between people, or if someone is dogmatic and shutting down other points of view, then it needs to be curbed so that all participants feel cared for and comfortable. Otherwise, you will end up losing people and your group will not thrive. Things you can say:
  - *“There is definitely more than one way to look at this, and that's okay! Thank you, everyone, for sharing your thoughts, but lets move on to the next question.”*
  - *“There are certainly a few perspectives when it comes to this topic. It's good to hear differing ideas. Lets continue on to the next question now.”*
  - *“I appreciate hearing the various perspectives you all have, but I think it's probably best if we move on now.”*
- From time to time it may be good to rephrase questions as you go through, but be sure you are sticking to the intent and content of what was originally being asked.
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- It can also be helpful to summarize or paraphrase a person's answer every now and then. But do this carefully.
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- If you have some people dominating conversation, try to draw the others out.
  - *“I appreciate you sharing that. Would anyone else like to share?”*
  - *“Thank you. What has the Lord been showing the rest of you?”*
  - *“This side of the room is quiet. Would any one like to add anything?”*
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- **is an active listener when others are sharing**
  - Be engaged with eyes and ears.
  - Listen without judgement.

- **cultivates relationship**
  - Be observant of the people in your group, reaching out to them that week if needed.
  - When someone is absent, contact within a week to let them know they were missed.
  - Follow up on prayer requests.
  - Get to know them personally.
    - Calling, texting, and mailing cards are all great options.
    - Go a step further by meeting for coffee, inviting them for lunch, going for a hike, etc...

### Lay the groundwork:

- Successful small groups possess accountability, vulnerability, and encouragement amongst each other. This requires relationships built on trust. Establishing and keeping a **safe environment** for people needs to be a big priority.
- Go over these 6 items with your small group the first week. If someone new joins during the year, go over these items with the entire group again before beginning your discussion that day. Reminders are good from time to time, and this is a natural opportunity for that.

### - Small Group Participant Guidelines

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- 1. Confidentiality is important! Anything shared amongst our small group needs to stay within our group whether it's a prayer request or a personal answer given during discussion.
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- 2. Personal information about *other* people (family members, neighbors, co-workers, etc...) should never be shared unless full permission was given by that other person ... even for the sake of prayer. This becomes gossip and should be avoided. You can always ask for general prayer for a person if it is needed. God knows the details.
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- 3. As we go through our study questions, sometimes our own personal examples and stories may include other people from our lives. Be sure that any answers you say aloud maintain respect and love for them. Omit names and details that compromise others.
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- 4. Please avoid divisive topics. We want to focus on God's Word and what the Holy Spirit is teaching each one of us through our Bible study. Things

like politics are best kept for outside of small group time.

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- 5. Everyone needs to be respected and loved, even if we don't share the same perspective. It's okay to see things differently. Our group needs to be a safe place for people to share and to grow.
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- 6. If you tend to be a quiet person who finds it difficult to share during small group, try and find at least one or two questions that you feel comfortable sharing on. If you know that you tend to be a talker, try and hold back from answering on every question to allow space for the quieter people to open up.

Again, thank you for your faithfulness! Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns!

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