

Mixed Small Groups

"Group dynamics is delicate. We noticed a change when one of the couples was not fully participative; it changed the experience for others. The husband was not there for the faith formation but to try to get into it. There are some ground rules for the group, you need to address group members that over share (talking too much). There is a great need for openness to a group (coming and going), but there is great benefit to have a closed group where the participants are invested.

The format meets our needs. We contribute what we can, and we get what we need from it. It pushes the introverts but after enough time everyone gets comfortable with the space.

Some of the material was strange (some translation issues) so we attempted encyclicals. But heavy material became very difficult to discuss and take it. Nouwen's book with short chapters made for good content. The content serves as a starting point of how to launch into the faith formation piece. We end up with a place to share our spirituality, where we are presently in life. It was important to find a right balance with the material. We wanted the material to push us and challenge us. "

Good to use the initial 5 meetings to gather information which was used to develop the program.

There is an obvious need for men, specifically, to gather as a group for support, fellowship, and encouragement.

Always encourage folks to bring a friend. Give people material on topic ahead of time.

These "house church" groups were started many years ago. Of the many that once existed there are only 2 still meeting. Because the parish secretary and her husband lead one of the groups, she routinely invites new parishioners to join them.

This group has been around a long time and is sadly not open to new members.

If you go longer than 8 weeks, you get a drop off in the number of people who will sign up. A ton of programs are available with no time to do them.

We find that people attend more from other parishes because of the embarrassment they feel. Only half are from St. Gabriel who have attended.

Initially it seemed like this group was a forum for one man to share his ideas and opinions. It is now slowly morphing into being more collaborative.