

Scripture

The ladies meet in a circle so that no one has more authority over another. A circle is more conducive to building trust and they are open to hearing each other's ideas. Whoever offers an idea of a study is then responsible for leading the study. This group was formed after the parish help listening sessions to determine the needs of the women. The other group that formed from this is the Women's Book Circle.

1) For someone coming into the role, you need to ask for volunteers. Be specific what you are looking for. Tell them "this is the need." People want to help you. If you are willing to ask for someone to do a specific task, they are more likely to say yes rather than come to you asking for help. 2) What was helpful to growing in faith wasn't just going to the meetings. I created friendships with people that is going to last forever. Don't forget also to do the fun spontaneous stuff. The fact that Peter was a genuinely kind person made me feel welcome and brought me into the group. I signed up in 2010 for the young adult mailing list. It took me 5 years before I actually came. So, when I encountered the leader at the time, he didn't put me on the spot or drill me with questions, he made me feel like I belonged. 3) groups can be cliquish but I did not experience that in the group and so I felt welcome. I decided to join for Lent but then I wanted to come back afterwards. Then in time I was the coordinator and now it has been 4 years. 4) The hardest thing is for a person to walk through the door. How do you get someone to walk through the door? On that part I really don't know.

Keep on trying. Look at options if one type of approach doesn't work, look for an alternative. Vary the approach to sharing and try to involve the participants rather than talk to them. The more you can engage them the more likely they are to return. Make it less like school.

I think ladies in particular appreciate and need a support system. This group has longevity because of the Catholic faith format, flexibility with topics, and friendships and support system that have developed.

This is more a course like group and not as much a faith-sharing group.

This group organically grew from being together for Just Faith Good News People.

As a result of the success of this program, we now have a monthly women's group (GIFTS) and weekly men's group (FISHERMEN) that meets; inspired by the activities of this group.

Those who participate have come to know that scripture applies to their own lives – can hold a personal message and can learn from each other and add that understand to what they gain from the homily.

We have tried studies without the DVDs, but they are less successful with this group, so we find that we need to have the video supplement to aid in the understanding.

Be welcoming to all ideas. People need to be able to discuss their faith truthfully and how it becomes a part of who they are.

FINANCES - very necessary to get parish and pastor to recognize value of investing in funding the resources needed; limited funding designated for "Adult Faith Formation" in a small parish vs children/youth formation funding

Leave time for discussion beyond prescribed questions. Allow for faith sharing. It is good to include refreshments.

Letting a Deacon (educated and qualified) run this study frees the DRE to offer other things.

I have found that these studies work best when the leader is knowledgeable about scripture. Folks have a lot of questions. We offer study groups in the morning and evening and change the day of the week with each new study to help make the studies available to more people. Providing hospitality is key to any small group function. Participants take turns bringing in snacks to share with the group.

Environment is key to getting people engaged. Need a creative team to do this. Program is not geared for a diverse group. Especially geared for the mom and wife aspect of being a woman.

Help advertise in the best way possible to attract a wider audience. Give pastor support to make this possible.

Try something like this or adapt it to your own parish. Know the people you serve and try to meet their needs.

It is all about relationship. Recognizing people's gifts and inviting them with a personal one on one invitation to be part of something bigger. Small groups are a wonderful way to cultivate relationships and pull out / recognize each other's gifts.

Men who in the past have never shared their faith with anyone, now feel comfortable with sharing their spiritual lives with other men.

It is important to offer formation to our Hispanic brothers and sisters.

Should be offered in every parish. Don't know how badly you need it until you go.

There is power in planning to gather. Feeling a responsibility to one another calls us to be "present" in many ways. Togetherness in prayer. Reading scripture. Sharing make us more of a family of brothers and sisters.

Plan and pray always. Do not get discouraged about attendance, they will come! Bring everything to the LORD, He will give you the energy and the time. Give it time for the group to "click". Pray on who to invite, have an empty share to encourage others to continue to reach more and continue to invite.

As group members aged, transitioned to daytime because night driving; however, that eliminates those still working.

Prepare, invest time in your people (1:1s)

One must really have your finger on the pulse as to what the adults are looking for regarding what they want to study/learn in order to pick the appropriate group study. This means that the facilitator has to spend the time building relationships with the group to learn of their interests, what topics they desire to learn more about, where they are at in their faith formation, etc. in order to pick a program that they will have an interest in attending. This isn't a mandatory program that they have to attend regardless of what is taught, so the programs picked should intrigue the group / "speak to the group" where they are now in their faith journey. This small group has created a group of adults who seek a relationship with the Lord, desire to become better Catholics, and are more willing now to share their gifts.

Intentional gathering with an intentional commitment to continue supporting each other (while welcoming newcomers!) has proven to be an invaluable characteristic of the group.

There is beauty in simplicity.

Be warm. Be welcoming. Be non-judgmental.

Community and relationship building in an environment where there is mutual appreciation and respect for each person's contribution to the group.

Where two or three are gathered, there am I in their midst.

"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.

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.

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.