



discovering **Christ**

a seven-week experience

ask.
seek.
knock.

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Discovering Christ: Small Group Facilitator Guide, 2nd edition

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST,

Congratulations! By saying yes to facilitating a small group for Discovering Christ, you have answered God's call to lead people to Jesus. For some it may be their first personal encounter with Jesus and for others it will be leading them to a deeper relationship with Him. Pope Benedict said this:

"Faith is above all a personal, intimate encounter with Jesus, and to experience His closeness, His friendship, His love, only in this way does one learn to know him ever more, and to love and follow Him ever more. May this happen to each one of us."

The word the Church uses is "evangelization." This word might sound a little scary to you. Sometimes when people hear "evangelization," it conjures up images of people dressed in their 'Sunday finest' going door to door or others standing on street corners pressuring people about Jesus! But *Discovering Christ* is not like that at all! If you follow our manual, you will see that this is a gentle, soft, loving, way of evangelizing. And most importantly, it's effective! Since 2010 we have had over 60,000 people participate in *Discovering Christ*. Soon, you will be adding to these numbers!

Maybe you've never done anything like this before, so we want to give you some helpful hints.

You might be a little nervous about facilitating a small group. But if you love God and you love people you can do this! First of all, we want to take some pressure off and tell you up front, you don't have to teach! In fact, we don't want you to teach. What we want you to do is facilitate the discussion at your tables. This Facilitator Guide has all the discussion questions you will be asking after each video teaching.

First, start praying for your small group members, even before you meet them. Once you have their names, we want you to pray for them each day, by name.

Be friendly with your table and be yourself. We are all journeying together. The entire ChristLife team continues to serve on the Discovering Christ teams at our own parishes, and we still grow closer to the Lord each time.

Finally we want to leave you with a scripture passage that will encourage you as you lead your group. Read this daily as a devotional, to encourage you and help prepare you.

"Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly-not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. And when the Good Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor."

1 PETER 5:2-4 (NLT)

We pray together daily for the success of all the Discovering, Following, and Sharing Christ courses around the United States and abroad.

In the Lord Jesus,
The ChristLife team

HOW DISCOVERING CHRIST WORKS

Discovering Christ consists of seven sessions and one retreat day. Each session includes four components: 1) dinner, 2) welcoming and prayer, 3) teaching, and 4) small group discussion.

Dinner. At dinner you sit with the small group assigned to you. The point of dinner is to welcome everyone, introduce one another, and get to know everyone in a casual atmosphere. It is a time to step a bit out of your comfort zone and make conversation with others. Dinner is not a time to debate doctrine or have religious conversations. Conversation should focus on getting to know the persons in your small group. Ask about careers, families, hobbies, the food, etc.

Welcoming and Prayer. After a few announcements from the emcee, most courses will begin with a few songs of praise. For the sake of the guests and helping them come to know Jesus, the songs move deeper progressively over the sessions and help participants move from simply singing to really praying. So, early on, don't get so excited that you scare others away by your love for Jesus in praise and singing. As we move through the course, your job is to model to others prayer and worship. By the retreat you may feel comfortable praying with your eyes closed, or lifting your hands. That is fine by this time in the course.

Video Teaching. The video teaching is basic proclamation of the Gospel message. Follow along and take notes if you like in this manual.

Here are the topics:

Session 1	Talk 1	What Is the Meaning of Life?
Session 2	Talk 2	Why Does Jesus Matter?
Session 3	Talk 3	What Does Jesus Want Us to Know?
Session 4	Talk 4	Why Do I Need a Savior?
Session 5	Talk 5	Why Is the Resurrection Important?
Retreat	Talk 6	Who Is the Holy Spirit? (retreat)
	Talk 7	The Holy Spirit and You (retreat)
Session 6	Talk 8	New Life in the Spirit
Session 7	Talk 9	Our Need for the Church

Small Group Discussion. The primary purpose of this time is to give participants a chance to talk about how they feel about each teaching. Discussion questions are found following each session outline in this manual. Ask your guests what they think or feel about the talk

FACILITATING SMALL GROUPS

Before facilitating a small group, it is ideal to receive training at a ChristLife conference or a training day. However, here are some guidelines that are helpful to think and pray about:

Confidentiality. We want to respect the privacy of our group members by keeping what was shared in the discussion confidential. We want guests to feel open to sharing their honest thoughts and feelings about each teaching in an atmosphere of mutual respect and love. We never want to gossip about an individual in our group, even if they are difficult to relate to.

Avoid teaching and preaching. This is not a time for you (or others in the group) to teach or to fix someone else. Help the small group members to maintain focus on the discussion topic for each session.

End with prayer. End each session with a *brief* prayer committing the time together to God. As the facilitator, you are the designated leader of prayer for the first few sessions. As *Discovering Christ* progresses, be open to your helper or another person you feel capable leading the closing prayer. This will help each one to grow in self-confidence and ability to pray aloud with others.

End on time. Please be respectful of everyone and end the session on time. Many people are working or have childcare obligations. You want to assure everyone that you will be prompt beginning and ending each session. Ask someone in the group to help you with the responsibility for keeping time and staying on task. If people want to continue talking when the session is over, encourage them to do so in another location.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUP SITUATIONS

A. IF THE GROUP CANNOT GET STARTED

- Rephrase the question.
- Go around the group and ask if anyone has a response.
- Skip whatever is halting the discussion and move on.

B. IF SOMEONE DOMINATES THE DISCUSSION

- Learn the art of interruption:
 - » “Excuse me, Dave, before you continue may I ask if anyone has a comment?”
 - » “We haven’t heard from this side of the room. Let’s hear from someone else.”
- If all else fails, pull the person aside after the meeting and explain the dilemma to them directly. Invite them into the mission of the course.

C. IF THE GROUP STRAYS OFF THE TOPIC:

- “This is an important topic, but we don’t have time to talk about it here.”
- “That’s interesting. But how does it relate to the topic?”

D. THE DISCUSSION BECOMES HEATED:

- “We have two views here. Does anyone else have another view to share?”
- Move on to another topic and work on a settlement at another time.

E. IF SOME MEMBERS NEED TO BE DRAWN OUT:

- “Does anyone from this side of the room have something to share?”
- Connect to a person’s interest. “Mike, from your experience with _____, would you care to comment?”
- Be direct. “John, what do you think?”
- Affirm quieter members and their contribution.

F. IF THE SHARING IS TOO IMPERSONAL:

- Go back to your starter questions: “What do you think? How do you feel?”
- Briefly share on a personal level: “_____ struck me, what do you think?”
- Ask your helper to comment on a personal level.

G. IF THE SHARING BECOMES TOO PERSONAL:

- Be interested and sympathize, but steer the conversation back to the topic or toward others.
- Talk to them aside and clarify the appropriate level of sharing: “Please don’t feel like you have to share to that level of detail.”
- The Leader or Helper of the same gender: talk to them one-on-one and offer to meet, talk or pray with them during the week.

H. WHEN CLOSURE IS NEEDED:

- “I’ve just received the 5 minute warning, we can take a just few more comments before we close.”
- “We are just about out of time. Is there a final comment?”
- Summarize some key points made during the discussion.

I. WHEN YOU ARE NOT SURE HOW TO RESPOND:

- Do not be afraid of admitting ignorance. If you do not know the answer, say “I am not sure how to answer that, let me do some research this week and let you know next week.”
- **AVOID DOMINATING THE GROUP** by teaching, preaching, or controlling the discussion.
- Bring the focus back to the topic. Do not let the group wander without direction.
- For a situation you do not know how to handle or serious situations (i.e. abuse, suicide) contact your Small Group Coordinator for help and/or discerning the severity of the situation and if reporting the incident is appropriate.

