

# Exploring a Life of Discipleship

## Facilitator's Guide

Dear Friends in Christ,

Thank you for your consideration in using *Exploring a Life of Discipleship*. The small group model is a powerful way of engaging and forming parishioners through relationship building and faith sharing. The hope in creating this resource is that participants will encounter a call to “holiness” through stewardship and that it will be a stepping stone to living as joy-filled disciples of Jesus. Many blessings as you continue to minister as a member of the Body of Christ.

Department of Stewardship and Pastoral Services  
Diocese of Green Bay

### Preparation and Strategies for Exploring a Life of Discipleship

The role of the facilitator is to:

- Make initial call to members with details of time and location of session
- Greet members as they arrive
- Make weekly materials available
- Keep time each session and the group moving (key role)
- Encourage all members as active participants in the group
- Assure room, CD player or tablet/computer for YouTube (if using for opening prayer), nametags and hospitality are ready
- Be the contact for members to call for information or in an emergency
- Contact members if there is a change in plans (weather, emergency, etc.)

**Time Frame:** This small group sharing process is meant to be done in six (preferably weekly) sessions of 90 minutes each.

**Group Size:** The ideal size would be eight members. If your group is larger, breaking into two small groups for “Questions for Reflection” will help you stay within your 90 minute time frame.

**Location:** Your small group can be held at the parish or in private homes. Providing a welcoming and “cozy” environment adds to the friendly nature of the event.

**Hospitality:** Beverages should be provided at each session. A simple treat is a nice option which could be rotated by the members if they are in agreement.

**Materials:** Reproduce materials for participants either as a complete packet or one session at a time. Though it is not necessary, encourage members to prepare for the session prior to meeting to enhance the efficiency and depth of your discussion.

*The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*

**Suggestions for Facilitating a Small Group Discussion:** An effective facilitator accomplishes three tasks. The first is to provide a safe and confidential environment for faith sharing, the second is to encourage participation from all members and the third is to keep the conversation moving in an efficient way so as to complete the session in its entirety. With this in mind, consider the following:

- At the first session, discuss the importance of confidentiality within the group.
- If you have eight or more participants, divide group into two small groups for discussion.
- When considering questions for reflection, go around in a circle for responses allowing members to “pass” if they choose.
- If you have extroverts who love to share, consider using a “two minute” per person option.
- If you have any introverts, invite them to share.
- Be affirming with all responses.
- Be aware of the time and gently give a two minute “moving on” warning.

## Components of the Process

### PRAYER

The first 30 minutes of the small group time is spent in welcome and prayer. Please be sure to use this time appropriately. When gathering any group, it is important to help them put aside the busyness and pressures of the day and to focus on the topic of the session. The call to prayer through scripture, music and reflection will help to open minds and hearts for the rest of the session.

**Prayer Environment:** A prayer area with a candle, bible, cross, or cloth of the liturgical season, is a wonderful idea. Additional symbols for the prayer area would be:

- (Session 1) a copy the Bishops’ pastoral *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*
- (Session 2) gratitude journal, small globe, flowers, book on the subject of gratitude
- (Session 3) calendar, iPhone, prayer book, rosary, copy of Lord’s Prayer
- (Session 4) parish ministry opportunities (booklet), articles or pictures of service
- (Session 5) coins, checkbook, debit or credit card, budget booklet, church envelope
- (Session 6) copy of a question mark (?), repeat one item from sessions 3, 4, and 5

**Songs:** The “suggested” songs are familiar to most people and are found in many parish liturgical songbooks if you have someone who is comfortable leading. An instrumental or a contemporary song on CD would also be an option. The YouTube selections have the lyrics included for better participation.

**Quotation for Silent Reflection:** This component of prayer is an additional opportunity to encourage thought and conversation on the topic of discipleship through stewardship. Use in a way that best suits the needs of your group.

**Scripture for Inspiration:** Be sure to have a copy of the New American Bible available so that the Word of God can be proclaimed during prayer. Perhaps assign the reading to someone at the end of the previous session so that they can prepare. All the participants can be invited to bring bibles or you can provide one for each if feasible.

## CONTENT AND FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

### Consider This:

- The content pieces found on pages 2 and 3 of each session can be read ahead of time or at the time of the gathering
- If you are going to read aloud at the session, encourage those comfortable with reading to alternate paragraphs.
- Complete reading the pieces on both page 2 and 3 before considering the *Questions for Reflection* so that all material is covered during the appropriate time frame
- As your group goes through the *Questions for Reflection* be sure each person has an opportunity to answer each question before moving on to the next
- The last question of each *Question for Reflection* on page 3 encourages the participants to consider an action step based on what they read and their discussion. A lively sharing of ideas, if possible, would benefit the entire group

## LIVING LIKE JESUS

### Take Action and Commitment:

- Continuing the same line of thought from the previous page, go through and discuss some of suggestions for action found on page 4
- Using ideas from this list or from the prior group discussion on page 3, ask members to prayerfully commit to an action step for the upcoming week
- Consider playing some instrumental music while people are discerning
- The participants can be invited to share their commitments aloud or write them on a slip of paper to place in a basket

## FROM THE HEART OF POPE FRANCIS

### Take Action and Commitment:

- If time permits, reflect upon the quotations regarding the session topic

## CLOSING PRAYER AND PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK

### Wrap Up:

- Set the date and time for the next session and distribute next session handouts
- Take care of any announcements and reminders
- Assign the Gospel Reading for the next session
- Point out the *Additional Scripture Passages and Resources* for each session found in the inside cover
- Affirm the good work they did during the session and express your gratitude

### Closing Prayer:

- Be sure to take time to close each session with the provided prayer
- If there is extra time, allow members to express what they were particularly grateful for about the session

### Following Session Six:

- Thank everyone for sharing 540 minutes of their lives with you in the past six sessions
- Encourage them to keep their materials near as an ongoing reminder and inspiration
- Ask if they would like to come together as a small group on another subject

## Additional Ideas and Resources

### Marketing the Event:

- Invite small groups including parish leadership to pilot the resource
- Encourage invitation by word of mouth
- Send announcements electronically as well as the more traditional methods
- Publish a brief participant testimony in the bulletin, website or parish newsletter
- Duplicate a sample session and have it available after masses for members to preview
- Ask neighborhoods to form local groups
- Consider offering the opportunity followed by a scrapbooking session or other social
- Form small groups with couples (all ages) girlfriends, grandparents, fathers and sons, etc

### Bulletin Announcements:

*There has got to be a better way!!!!* In a busy, all consuming world, when is enough, enough? Would you like an opportunity to reflect upon your priorities in light of your Catholic faith? Have you been looking for *the pathway* to becoming a joy-filled follower of Jesus? Are you interested in joining others in this important conversation? If your answer is “yes” to any of the above, consider gathering your friends and forming a *Be Not Afraid* small group. Groups will meet for six sessions of 90 minutes each that include fellowship, prayer, information, conversation and encouragement in taking steps to becoming more authentic disciples of Jesus. For more information call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

Do you get up every morning and think “I need a new perspective or attitude adjustment?” If you do, consider refocusing by forming or joining a *Be Not Afraid* small group and discover what Scripture and the Catholic Tradition have to say about gratitude, prayer, service and sharing. For more information, contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

Would you like to enter into the Easter Season with a new perspective? Can you make time to meet with others for conversation and encouragement in becoming authentic disciples of Jesus? If yes, consider spending some of your Lenten journey *Be Not Afraid* in small group. This six week process will explore such topics as true gratitude, faith-filled prayer, compassionate service, and generous sharing from the perspective of Scripture and the Church. If you would like to greet Easter morning with a new resolve to authentic discipleship, contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ for more information.

### Prayers of the Faithful:

- For all members participating in a *Be Not Afraid* small group, that they may grow in their understanding of discipleship in order to become joy-filled managers of all God has given them. We pray to the Lord.
- For all small groups participating in *Be Not Afraid* for the next six weeks that God may bless their time together in prayer, formation, reflection and conversation and that they grow in their understanding and practice of discipleship through stewardship. We pray to the Lord.

