



# Session One

## Core Team Meeting Session One

### Preparation

*Have leaders get into small groups of about 8-10 people.*

### Part I: Faith Sharing

*Read the following passage and take some time to journal on the following questions, and then share them with one other person.*

*Bring these questions back to the small group and share your responses.*

### Scripture

**John 20:11-18**

Mary Magdalene does not recognize Jesus standing in front of her because he does not appear in the same way she has known him.

- How has Christ made himself known to you in new ways through this group?
- Who have been “bearers of good news” in your group? How have you been a “bearer of good news” in your group?
- What are you learning about yourself as a small group leader?
- How is RENEW impacting your own faith life?

### Part II: Highlights and Challenges

Meet with your co-leader, and read over the six elements below. Choose to reflect in depth on two elements, one which speaks to the strongest element of your group, and one that reflects your biggest challenge.

- Preparation
- Group Attendance
- Environment
- Opening Prayer
- Reflection
- Action Steps

After discussion with your co-leader, divide into groups of 8-10 people. Share your highlight and biggest challenge with the small group, and have a secretary record the conversation. Spend some time brainstorming with the group about the following:

- What is your strongest element? What wisdom can your group offer other groups to aid them in strengthening that element?
- Discuss your biggest challenge. What advice can the group offer to aid in addressing this challenge?

## Part III: Bringing it back to the large group

Bring your small group discussion back to large group.

Have one or two people present the positives that resonated the most with the group (and any good ideas that flowed from the small group discussion on ways to spread this to other groups), and the challenges that seemed the most daunting.

Get feedback from the group on ways to deal with the challenges.

## Part IV: Facilitation

*If you have time, and choose to have input as part of your session, the following is formation on group facilitation. Use part/all of it, as you see fit.*

It is helpful to remember that your role is that of a facilitator. A facilitator is not an answer person. Here is how Thomas Kayser, *Mining Group Gold*, defines what he means by “facilitating”:

“... I mean the person focuses on guiding without directing; bringing about action without disruption; helping people self-discover new approaches to problems; knocking down walls which have been built between people while preserving structures of value; and, above all, appreciating people as people. All of this must be done without leaving any fingerprints.”

### The differences between a novice and experienced facilitator

- A **novice facilitator** panics easily. When something does not appear to work, he or she concludes that the sky is falling. Within seconds, this facilitator rushes with an alternative, only to get caught in a vicious

circle. A novice facilitator fears silence, fearing that he/she must fill it. The novice facilitator has trouble identifying where the group needs to go, and therefore, can shut down productive conversation in favor of being a slave to the format and the questions. On the flip side, a novice facilitator can also allow the group to spend its entire time on a tangent, rather than truly engaging the intersection of faith and life.

- An **experienced facilitator** refuses to panic. When something appears not to work, he or she concludes that the Spirit is working. This facilitator waits patiently until things fall in place and everything flows smoothly. An experienced facilitator recognizes the place for silence, and can discern when and where to intervene, or gently bring the group back to questions. An experienced facilitator recognizes when an apparent tangent is fruitful and more productive for the group than the original thought or material. **An experienced facilitator disappears, and the group experiences only the presence of God in the stories of its members.**

### Some advice to help you to become a better facilitator:

- **Root yourself in prayer.** When rooted in prayer, a facilitator can better attend to the movement of the Spirit in the group, and have a sense of when/where to intervene, and what needs to be said. When you are unsure of how to proceed, say a quick prayer before doing anything.
- **Trust your group.** Most groups are self-correcting systems. For example, they will bring the disruptive members under control without you having to lose your temper.
- **Trust the process.** Focus on the overall results and not on the temporary glitches. Sooner or later, the bad things will be swamped by the good things, the walls will fall, and people will feel comfortable enough to trust one another and the Spirit who guides them.

- **Ask good questions, but know when to keep silent.** Stay away from yes/no questions, but ask questions that delve deeper. Instead of, “Do you feel this way?” you could ask, “What’s behind what you’re feeling, how you acted?” Also realize, however, that there is no need for you to respond to every comment by each group member. This should be a group discussion, not a question/answer session between you and the participants.
- **Know when to intervene.** “The first thing that needs to be said is that intervention is a much wider term than is commonly thought. Whenever a facilitator speaks about the life of the group she is intervening and these interjections are much more commonly to provide information, or to make suggestions, than to avert some difficulty or danger.”

(“Know when to intervene”  
by Carter McNamara, MBA PhD  
is taken from the Free Management Library,  
located at : [www.managementhelp.org](http://www.managementhelp.org))

## **Additional information**

*[The following is further information for the leader of the process—it is not necessary to share all of it with the leaders.]*

“Where interventions are more common and, of necessity, more spontaneous, is when the sharing and conversation takes place. It is hoped that such interventions will become less and less necessary as the group develops but they may be required in some or all of the following situations:

- An individual wants to speak and is not being given the opportunity.
- Certain group members are losing interest.
- A monologue or dialogue develops which excludes other group members.
- The group becomes tense or embarrassed.
- Factions begin to emerge.
- Whispering takes place.
- The conversation stays entirely “in the head”.
- Someone is openly criticized.
- The conversation drifts into argument.
- The group appears confused.

## **Should I intervene?**

If you have time to weigh up the possibilities you may want to consider the following:

- **What do I want to achieve?**
- **What will happen if I do not intervene?**
- **What effect will my intervention have on group members?**

The decision itself cannot be anticipated and there is always an element of risk when intervening particularly when responding to moments of conflict. Everyone makes mistakes and there is no substitute for having a go. Those who facilitate on a regular basis develop their own style of facilitation and this includes their ways of intervening. In general terms, however, there are the following guidelines:

- Interventions are best made in the form of questions or suggestions.
- A brief review of the developing situation is often helpful.
- Naming your own feelings is often important as it invites others to do the same.
- An element of humour is sometimes helpful in diffusing tense situations.
- If you have to interrupt do so with due deference and an apology.
- You may need to remind the group of agreements you have previously negotiated.”

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