



Core Community Leader Workshop and Resource Book

Introduction

- Welcome
- Opening Prayer
- Focus

Moment of Reflection on the Meaning of “Small Community”

What is Faith Sharing?

Experience of Faith Sharing: “Finding Ourselves”

Skills for Small Group Leadership

- Personal Preparation
- Leadership Skills
- Helpful Hints

Overview of Campus RENEW

Closing Prayer

1. Opening Prayer



Call to Prayer

Reading *Psalm 139:1-18*

Sung Response

Refrain (from the song "You Are Mine")

Do not be afraid, I am with you.

I have called you each by name.

Come and follow me, I will bring you home.

I love you and you are mine.

(Words & music: David Haas © 1991 GIA)

Guided Meditation

Closing Prayer

God you are with us as we begin this time.

You have formed us,
sustain us,
and invite us
into relationship with you.

You have led us to this moment
where we stand in your presence.

Help us to respond
to your beckoning
with open minds
and open hearts,
to create the space
to recognize you in the stories of our lives.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, our brother. Amen.



2. The Meaning of “Small Community”

Explore the following questions and discussion suggestions in small groups.

In what ways do western society and media define community for us?

Think of some examples of this.

In your opinion, what kind of representation of community is this?

What communities have you been a part of?

Have you been a part of a community that formed around an event or certain values?

Share an experience of a supportive community.

How is Christian community similar to and/or different from other communities?

Have you had an experience of Christian community?

Share this with the group.

Notes



3. Faith Sharing

“Finding Ourselves”

Welcome

At the first session, or whenever there is a new participant, invite the members to introduce themselves.

Opening Prayer

The leader may wish to use different forms of prayer and invite other members to be responsible for the opening and closing prayers.

All pray together

God of Love,
as we gather in your presence,
open our hearts to your love,
open our minds to seek and see your truth.
Help us to be truly present to each other
and to you
as we pray and share during this time.
We make this prayer through Jesus
in whose name we gather. Amen.



Scripture

Luke 2:41-52

*The Finding of the Child Jesus
in the Temple*

*The Gospel can be proclaimed by one person;
alternatively, if you think it would help bring the
text alive for your group, it could be shared
among three voices:*

- narrator
- Mary
- Jesus

Narrator

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him:

Mary

“Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

Narrator

He said to them:

Jesus

“Why were you searching for me?
Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Narrator

But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Catch a Phrase

What word or phrase stays with you from this story? Why? Share it with the group.

Reflection

Luke’s Gospel was originally designed for people who were like us in two ways.

Firstly, he was writing for Gentile Christians, that is those who were not converts from Judaism. This means he offers gentle hints, when needed, so that his readers will understand references to Jewish customs. We see that in today’s gospel.

As this passage begins, we are reminded that Jesus has been brought up in a practicing Jewish family, a family that observes the *Torah*. They are traveling in the company of their relatives to Jerusalem for the most important Jewish pilgrimage feast, Passover.

One day into the return journey, Jesus’ parents discover he is not—as they seem to have presumed—among other members of the family. Overcome with grief and worry, they search for their son. It is only three days later they discover him, at which point they scold him.

Jesus’ response reveals a certain coming of age, and an awareness that is not understood by his parents. He is discovering his vocation—a recognition, perhaps, that while he is a part of the community of his family and relatives, his call is to a greater community, which will eventually extend beyond his immediate family. The passage concludes with the statement that “Jesus progressed in wisdom and in years.”

The second way in which Luke’s Gospel is meant for people like us is that he was writing

for a cultured audience, people who were educated, and well-informed. Luke builds on this, by adopting a typical literary genre form that people of this Greek-style culture knew and appreciated. Nowadays we call this “Hellenistic biography.” It means, simply, that the childhood of the hero of the story is presented in a way that foreshadows what the child will later become and achieve in adulthood.

This is clearly the genre that Luke is using as the skeleton for this story. The focal place in the story is Jerusalem: Luke’s whole Gospel is about Jesus making his way to Jerusalem, for the culminating events of his death and resurrection. (The Acts of the Apostles, also by Luke, begins where his Gospel leaves off, in Jerusalem.)

Within Jerusalem, the place of discovery is the Temple: Luke, together with the other evangelists, presents the final days of Jesus before his arrest as time spent preaching, teaching in the Temple, and facing up to questions put to him by Jewish leaders (scribes, pharisees).

As well as this episode foreshadowing the “where” and the “what” of the principal moments of Jesus’ life, it highlights the “how.” Jesus is engaged in debate, discussion, persuading, arguing, challenging his hearers to come to a new understanding. In today’s gospel, at the age of twelve (the age at which Jewish boys still today make their bar-Mitzvah, by the way), we are told how amazed those who heard him were at his intelligence and his replies. In the first act of his public ministry, Luke recounts how those who heard him were astounded because of the authority with which he proclaimed and interpreted the Scriptures (see Luke 4:14 ff., especially verse 22). Luke is describing the young Jesus with key qualities which will later be so characteristic of Jesus’ public ministry: his charisma for relationship with people, and through that, offering them a new relationship with God.

In other words, Luke paints a picture of a defining moment in the life of Jesus. A defining moment when he asserts that he feels called to something other than what his parents want for him, to something that is between him and the Father. A defining moment which hints at what that something is, and where and how it will

end: in death and resurrection (notice the little but deliberate detail Luke slips in that Jesus is found “three days later”).

We are older than Jesus in the story, and we may not have any formal “coming of age” ritual. What has not changed, however, is that we all must “come of age.” Part and parcel of “coming of age,” is discerning our vocation, our mission, our purpose in life.

Just as for Jesus, events of our childhood point to our own gifts and talents, which are enfolded as we mature. In discerning our own path in life, have we had similar experiences of not being understood? Have others challenged (perhaps even ridiculed) what we feel called to pursue? The process of maturing and discerning our path in life emphasizes the importance of community. On one hand, we find ourselves separated from our parents, our families and our childhood friends, from the communities in which we have been raised. Yet, this does not mean we are no longer a member of those communities. What it does mean is that we are called to redefine our sense of community, or to belong to the community in a different way. On the other hand, we are invited to become members of new communities, those with whom we study, work, and live. The Christian dimension adds to this experience of community an opportunity to reflect on life experiences in light of faith—to bring Scripture and tradition to bear on our life experiences.

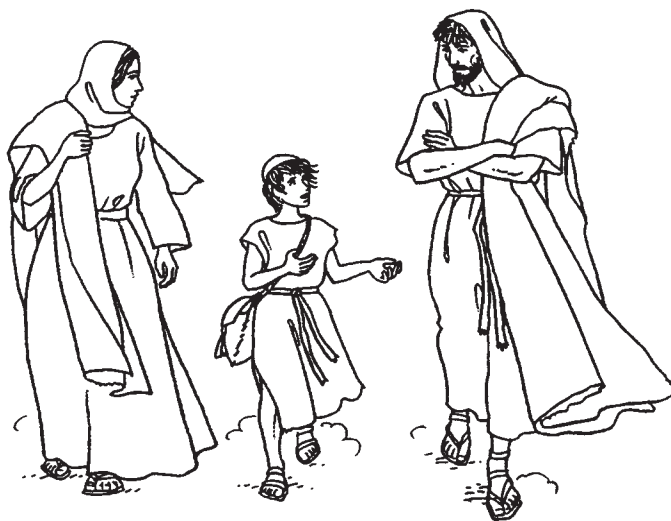
Faith Sharing

- What communities have supported me as I have journeyed through life?
Share a difficult situation in which the support of a community was a gift.
How has (attending/working at) college challenged me to redefine my sense of community?
- What are the talents and charisma that God has given me?
What have I done with those gifts?
What should I be doing with them?
Have I experienced being misunderstood by friends or family in what I feel I should be doing with my life?

- How have I grown since I’ve entered college? Am I “progressing in wisdom” as well as “in years”?
Who or what have been most influential in my time here?
How have I seen God active in those around me during this growth?

Invitation to Action

- Take a moment to journal about those things that “made you tick” at a young age, those gifts and talents that you remember, or those that have been pointed out by friends and families.
Do they correspond with the path you are now pursuing?
- Reflect on the many communities to which you belong.
How do these communities meet your needs for safe spaces in which you can discuss your life stories?
How do they provide opportunities for learning and support?
How does being in a small Christian community interweave with your many communities?
Discuss this with one of your community members.
- Think of one of those times you have been misunderstood, or have misunderstood another. Seek reconciliation with this person.





4. Personal Preparation for Small Community Leaders

Small communities enable people to grow in their relationship with Christ. Within a climate of trust, participants read Scriptures, share faith, pray and support one another in their faith journey.

As the leader of the small community, it is your privilege and responsibility to help make that happen. The success of a small community is directly dependent on the extent to which its leader encourages good sharing. This is why the leader must *always* be well prepared for the session.

Each week, in preparation for the session, you are encouraged to set some time aside (ideally, at least one hour) in an uninterrupted, quiet place. Take each of the steps below and prayerfully enter into your personal preparation for the small community session.

Pray

Pray for yourself first. The spirituality of the leader has a major impact on the small community. Speak to God of your own desire to grow through this faith community. Ask for the grace to be a good leader.

Pray for the other members of the community. Lift them up to God in prayer by name. If specific needs have been raised in the small community, pray for them again at this time.

Read

First, slowly read all the material in the session for that week. Be sure to look up the Scripture passages.

Read all of this prayerfully. Do not take time to analyze it or react to it.

After you have read it once, go back over it and underline or put thoughts in the margins as you re-read it.

Relax

Take a stretch break here, and walk away from the materials. Put the booklet down, close the Bible and just “be” with the content. Allow the message to sink into you. Get a feel for the overall theme and what you feel God is trying to tell you in this week’s session.

(If possible, take a brief walk outside to think about what you have just read—or even sleep on it.)

Imagine

In your mind’s eye imagine this session unfolding.

- How is the room set up?
- Are there any special symbols or ways to enhance the environment that would speak to this theme?

Picture the people in your community. Visualize them around the room.

- How will they respond to this session?
- How could you maximize the opportunities to share and learn from one another?
- What could be done to deepen the quality of the “faith in action” in light of this theme?
- What can you do to make this session better than the previous one?

Respond

This step is very important because it enables you to be very familiar with the materials. Go over the lesson again and be a “participant.” Get into the questions of the session. Have an idea how you might answer them.

- Are the questions clear?
- Are you comfortable with them?
- Do you understand why those questions are being asked?
- How do the questions tie in with the theme of this week?

The questions offered for the faith-sharing sessions are intended as a help to get discussion going. In this sense, they are only “suggestions.” If, as the leader, you can think of a question or questions which are more relevant to the life style, experience, and circumstance of your group, then note it/them for use instead of the printed ones.

When several questions are offered, you might think of asking the group the order of priority in which they would like to address the them. There is no need to answer all the questions: it is far better to answer one in depth, allowing everyone a full chance to respond, than to deal with them all superficially and cut people short.



Since you have already gone over all of the questions, you may find that you have a tendency to answer first or that you respond often in the actual session. A good leader is one who encourages others to participate before offering his or her own responses. Not only will this encourage the others to participate, but it will improve your own response, because your reflections on the

questions will help you see the wider picture and to allow the session to flow better.



5. Leadership Skills

There are certain key skills that, as the leader of the group, you should exercise and perfect.

1. Being a good listener

Presence

Vulnerability

Acceptance

Honesty

Constancy

Verbal & nonverbal tools

Give people time.

Listen for content, feeling, background.

Ask clarifying questions.

Listening with understanding.

S O L E R

2. Dealing with personalities

Dominator

Shy person

Skeptic

Intellectual

3. Dealing with emotions

Feelings are not right or wrong, they just are.

All feelings in small groups are respected and honored, whether we agree or disagree.

Let the person feel the emotion.

Listen to and acknowledge feelings.

Repeat remark back in your own words.

Offer words of support, without dismissing problem.

4. Dealing with situations

Notes

6. Helpful Hints

<i>If this happens . . .</i>	<i>. . . here is how the leader might respond</i>
1. Interrupting, jumping in	“Let’s try to have only one person talk at a time so we can all listen.”
2. Side conversations	“We seem to have two conversations going on here; maybe we could hear from X first and then Y.”
3. No response to questions	“Let’s reword that...” (or ask another question related to it.)
4. One person “wipes out” another person’s comments	“Even if we disagree, what someone else says is valid and from his/her own experience.”
5. Member remains silent	<i>Gently invite participation, reaffirm the right to silence. Get to know the person before and after the meeting.</i> Say, “___ , you have been listening intently. Is there anything you’d like to add?”
6. Repetition of the same idea	<i>Summarize the person’s main points and say</i> “Thank you for your insight: now, what is everyone else’s experience?”
7. Wandering from the topic	<i>Only correct this situation if necessary—sometimes the best insights come from wandering.</i> <i>However, when necessary, be prepared to invite</i> “Let’s get back to our question ...”
8. One member dominates the session	<i>Offer a reminder that we want everyone to have the chance to share. If particularly bad during a session, begin a question with</i> “Would anyone who hasn’t yet spoken like to respond to...”
9. A member questions each response	<i>Remind everyone of the group guidelines</i> —respect for each other, respect for opinions/thoughts/feelings, desire to hear from everyone.
10. A member begins to cry	Comfort if you are able to without moving dramatically (just touching is often enough). Allow silence for a few minutes. Make tissues available (but don’t hand them directly to the person—this can make them feel that crying is unacceptable). Acknowledge the person and thank them for sharing.
11. The sharing becomes too academic	“This is really interesting, but can you say a bit more what this means in your life. And how does this affect or relate to your faith?”



7. Overview of Campus RENEW

SEMESTER ONE **Preparation Semester**

Initial Information Session
Opening Retreat (Core Community)
Core Leadership Gathering
Faith Sharing
Core Leadership Gathering
Invitational Workshop
—Looking to the Next Semester

SEMESTER TWO **Scripture**

Opening Leadership Retreat:
Scripture
Core Leadership Gathering
Invitational Efforts
Faith Sharing
Monthly Leadership Gatherings
Core Leadership Gathering
Invitational Workshop
—Looking to the Next Semester

SEMESTER THREE **Prayer**

Opening Leadership Retreat:
Prayer
Core Leadership Gathering
Invitational Efforts
Faith Sharing
Monthly Leadership Gatherings
Core Leadership Gathering
Invitational Workshop
—Looking to the Next Semester

SEMESTER FOUR **Discernment**

Opening Leadership Retreat:
Discernment
Core Leadership Gathering
Invitational Efforts
Faith Sharing
Monthly Leadership Gatherings
Planning for the Next Semester

SEMESTER FIVE **Reaching Out**

Opening Leadership Retreat:
Reaching Out
Core Leadership Gathering
Invitational Efforts
Faith Sharing
Monthly Leadership Gatherings
Planning for the Next Semester

8. Closing Prayer



Leader

We are the people who trust in God's Word.
We follow a long line of believers
who unfold the meaning of the divine Word for us.
We call on these holy ones to walk with us
as we strive to hear God's voice
and live the Word we hear
as we strive to become a Christ-centered community
in service to the world

Scripture Reading

Acts 2:42-47

Those who were baptized on Pentecost
devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
Awe came upon everyone,
because many signs and wonders were being done by the apostles.
All who believed were together and had all things in common;
they would sell their possessions and goods
and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.
Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple,
they broke bread at home
and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,
praising God and having the good will of all the people.
And day by day
the Lord added to their number those who were saved.

Leader

As we go forth this day . . .

The following lines are proclaimed alternately by each side of the room:

Side 1 Make us faithful like Sarah and Abraham.

Side 2 Give us the courage of Moses.

Side 1: Inspire us to the deep devotion of Ruth.

Side 2 Help us to choose the obedience of Samuel.