

SMALL GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

Opening Dinner Guide

Dear Small Group Leader:

This welcome dinner guide includes helpful tips and reminders for you as you plan out your opening session. The items are laid out in a certain order to help the session flow, but feel free to scan through and use whatever you think will be most helpful for your particular group!

But in particular, please make it a point to highlight the “Protections and Policies for Children” and “Serving Our Hosts Well” under *Administrative Tasks*. We want to communicate these two clearly!

In Christ,
Pastor Mat

Dinner

Preparing for the Dinner

Take some time to contact the group welcoming them to the small group. Since most of the welcoming will be done during the opening dinner, you don't need to have an extensive introduction. Just simply include the following:

- The name of the co-leaders
- Your contact information
- Time and date of the meeting
- Instructions regarding food – if you'll be catering, or if it'll be a potluck and there needs to be potluck sign-ups, etc.
- *** *If meeting over Zoom: Please remind the members to have their dinners ready by that time if they choose to eat together.*

Dinner

When most people have arrived, introduce yourself as well as the other co-leaders, open in prayer and get dinner started! This may be a good time to make announcements about restroom location or for any special instructions regarding the food (e.g. how much to pitch in).

*** *If done over Zoom, one thing to consider doing is breaking people up into groups of 4-6 using the Breakout function.*

Please be aware if there are newcomers in your group. As a leader, do your best to get them involved in the conversation. You can also help make connections with other people in your group for them. A good practice to have is to not leave a person alone in your group but to involve them with another group member before moving on. Also be aware of newer couples/families that may default to talking amongst themselves if no one is reaching out to them. Remember, you want them to feel part of the Lighthouse family, which is both loving and helpful for the rest of the sessions.

Introductions

After everyone is more settled, gather everyone back together and have everyone introduce themselves (where they're from, what they do, how they got connected to Lighthouse, a favorite hobby, favorite TV show or movie, etc.). Feel free to start by introducing yourself so people have an idea of what to share (and how long to share).

Then consider doing an icebreaker! Here are some ideas:

- **Guess Who?** Have each participant think of something unique, interesting, and fun about themselves. Then using the chat option, have each person send the fun fact to the facilitator only. After the facilitator receives them all, the facilitator can then read the fact out loud, and people can guess who that fun fact belongs to. To add more interaction, the facilitator can ask each person why they think it's a certain person. After the person is revealed, have the person share a little story behind that fact.
- **Two Truths and a Lie.** Have each participant share two truths and a lie about themselves. The facilitator should ask the rest of the group which one they think is a lie by having people raise their hands. If you'd like, to add more interaction, people can share why they think one is a lie or not. Afterwards, the person reveals the right answer, and have that person share a little story behind that.
- **Hidden Talents.** Have people share (and perform) hidden talents! For example, can they touch their nose with their tongue? Do the splits at the age of 40? Do a handstand? Do a certain dance from the late 80s? Whatever it is, have them do it! Encourage people to share a story behind that!

After everyone is finished introducing themselves, you can welcome the group by talking a little bit about our small group ministry and also by sharing how you have been personally blessed through the small groups ministry in past seasons and how God has been working in your life since you've been at Lighthouse.

Overview of the Study

After introductions, feel free to take some time to introduce the small group study for this semester. Here is a suggested prompt (from the introductory page of our notebook):

What is the greatest sermon you have ever heard? Or who is the greatest preacher you have ever heard? The Sermon on the Mount has been famously described as the greatest sermon ever by the greatest preacher ever.

In our study of Matthew, we have focused on the truth that we exist *for King and kingdom*. The Sermon on the Mount builds on this theme by showing us what it truly means to be a citizen in God's kingdom. It confronts us with some of the most demanding challenges we find in Scripture, such as Jesus' words about lust, anger, anxiety, prayer, and loving our enemies. In his commentary, John Stott described the Sermon on the Mount as "the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, the least understood, and certainly the least obeyed ... It is [Jesus'] own description of what he wanted his followers to be and to do."

And yet, as challenging as the Sermon on the Mount is, it isn't devoid of gospel grace. In fact, the very first word of the sermon is, "blessed." This is because being a citizen of God's kingdom isn't just about what we do, but who we are. We will be challenged by the demands of the King, but we will also be comforted and encouraged by the grace of the gospel. As D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it, "The Sermon on the Mount crushes me to the ground again and again. But after the crushing is over, it raises me up."

Administrative Tasks

1. Schedule: Feel free to go over your group schedule (not the church calendar) and if you are making any adjustments that pertain only to your group (sometimes groups meet earlier for opening and closing dinners). It is also helpful to clarify that there are “OFF” weeks in our small group schedule so that your attendees do not show up unexpected!

2. Praying for the Needs of Our Church, Community, and World: One of the things that we want to continue to grow in as a church is regular prayer. So like last season, we will continue to have the prayer requests and needs of our church, community, and world in the beginning of each study guide.

3. Weekly Study Guides: Remember, all small group studies are found on our Lighthouse webpage under “Adult Small Groups” and are available for download. They’ll all be based on what is preached the Sunday prior. Additionally, they’ll be linked on Church Center Groups in the “resources” section as well.

Please graciously (and enthusiastically!) encourage your group to work through the study guide questions during the week as that will allow your group as a whole and each individual to benefit the most from this study. At the same time, encourage your group to still come out to small group if they were not able to get the reading/assignments done!

4. Protections and Policies for Children: If you are a child-friendly group, please take time to review the protection policies for children. You can just read directly from the “Lighthouse Community Church Small Group Policies and Protections for Children.”

- **Never alone rule.**

No adult is ever allowed to be with a minor alone unless that person is the child’s parent/guardian. There are absolutely no exceptions to this rule.

- **Child supervision.**

Children should always be supervised. How that is applied may vary from small group to small group and will be left to the wisdom and discretion of the leaders. Here are some potential ideas:

- o **Have a clear line of sight and immediate accessibility.**

Make sure that there is always a clear line of sight and immediate accessibility to the children so that children are supervised while in session. Be mindful of any “blind corners.”

- o **Have a rotation of adult supervision.**

If children are in a different room that does not provide a clear line of sight or accessibility, have a rotation of 2 adults from 2 different families who will serve as adult supervision for that week so that: (1) There is accountability and; (2) It allows opportunity for the small group members to practice serving

- **Reporting**

Contact the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Child Abuse Hotline at (800) 540-4000 or visiting the website at <http://lacdcfs.org/contactus/childabuse.html>.

5. Serving Our Hosts Well: One of the ways we can express our thankfulness and support of the host families is to make it a point to be good stewards of the host home. Throughout the season, please make it a point to remind the small group to be thoughtful of the host home and especially for child-friendly groups, to remind the parents/guardians to be thoughtful and responsible for their children.

Small group leaders, please address the following guidelines on *behalf* of the host:

- **Clarify areas where the kids are allowed to hangout and areas that are off-limits** (i.e., bedrooms, offices, etc.).
- **Show the kids which restroom(s) they are to use.**
- **Explain to the kids that if they have any questions about what to do, what is allowed, or if they are having trouble with any of the other child(ren) in the group, to approach the adults who are supervising the kids.** When it comes to the actual host home, when in doubt ask the host!
- **Adhere to the schedule of the night.** Make clear when certain things will happen and what is acceptable and unacceptable. For example, it's acceptable to grab food/snacks during food/snack breaks, but not before (unless you make it an open table when they can go whenever).
- **Show children where they are allowed to eat their snacks and drinks during fellowship time and remind them to clean up after themselves.** If needed, there can be an adult to help serve the kids snacks and drinks to prevent spills and to provide appropriate portions to make sure there is enough for everyone.
- **Talk about how the last 7-10 minutes of small group time will be used to clean-up.** Aim to help the hosts and make it better than you found it!
- **Remind the kids to say "thank you" to the hosts and those who brought snacks that week.** This is a great way to help them practice thankfulness!

Serving Each Other and Prayer Support

Prayer Cards: Remind the small group that we'll be passing out prayer cards later on in the season for the missionaries from Lighthouse and/or staff from Valor Christian Academy that you will be supporting. If possible, take a picture of your group so that you can later email it to the people you are praying for so they know who you are! (Please email a copy of the picture to smallgroups@lighthousesouthbay.org as well.)

Serving Your Group: Lastly, share how you as a leader want to help shepherd them.

- Please provide your email address to them (if you haven't already contacted them via email) and if you are comfortable you may provide your phone number.
- Please ask your group to contact you if they can't make it to a small group, so you are not waiting on them and to help promote consistency.
- Remind the group if they need help or have any questions, that they can always approach you.

Close in Prayer

Then either split into smaller or gender-specific groups to pray or close in prayer altogether. For those of you using Zoom, you can use the "Breakout" function.

Ask them: **What is one way that you are hoping to grow in our small group study in this season?** Make sure you record that in the bottom section "Sharing and Prayer."

Aftermath

Feel free to either hang out a bit longer to chat and linger. Or if people are up for it, find a game to play together!

Sharing and Prayer

1. What is one way that you are hoping to grow in our small group study in this season of life in our study? (It's okay if people don't have an answer yet. But encourage them to think about that as we begin our study)

Be sure to follow-up on their prayer requests week to week as a way of tracking and encouraging change!

2. Share other prayer requests.