



ONE BOOK ONE PARISH

LOYOLAPRESS.
A JESUIT MINISTRY

Facilitator's Guide

Now that you've agreed to facilitate your parish's *One Book, One Parish* discussion group, you may be wondering, "What do I do now?" Here are some helpful tips to guide you through the process.

Announcing and Publicizing the Discussion Group

The first step is to get people interested in the discussion group. Put a notice in the bulletin or make an announcement at the end of Mass (see the suggested language for these at www.OneBookOneParish.com). You might put a sign-up sheet in the lobby of the church so you know how many people are interested. Ask for e-mail addresses so you can contact the entire group quickly and easily when needed.

Preparing the Room for the Discussion Group

Depending on where you are holding the discussion, here are a few things to keep in mind.

IF HOLDING IT AT YOUR CHURCH:

- Make sure you have enough chairs for everyone who has registered to attend, and then add a few extra for those who decide to show up at the last minute.
- Arrange the chairs in a U-shape or a circle so that everyone can see and hear each other.

IF HOLDING IT AT SOMEONE'S HOME:

- This may be a more casual and social event, so consider what, if any, food and beverages you want to have available.
- Make sure you have enough seating for everyone, and do your best to arrange it so that everyone can see and hear each other (though this may be harder with home furniture).

Regardless of where you hold the discussion group, make sure to start and end on schedule. Respect other people's time.

Facilitator's Guide, cont'd

Open the Discussion Group with a Prayer

Ask God to help you maintain open ears and hearts as you discuss the contents of the book. You could start off with an impromptu prayer, the Lord's Prayer, or a reflection for that day of the year from *A Book of Grace-Filled Days* published by Loyola Press.

Leading a Book Discussion

The facilitator's role is somewhere between a chairperson and host/hostess. It's the facilitator's responsibility to:

- Ensure everyone knows when and where the meeting is taking place. It's a good idea to send out an e-mail a few days ahead to remind people.
- Keep the meeting on track.
- Make sure that everyone feels that their voice has been heard.
- Make sure that no one person's voice is heard too much. (That includes your own!)

At the start of the meeting, you may want to ask for general comments about the reading for the week. To avoid any awkward silences, it's a good idea to have several comments or questions of your own prepared to spark conversation. Keep it light at this point to allow the group to gradually move into discussion mode.

Review the questions in the discussion guide in advance so that you are fully prepared to keep the conversation moving and to jump in if things seem to lag. As the facilitator, feel free to come up with your own questions, but avoid questions where a simple "yes" or "no" can suffice. Also, don't feel like you have to get through every single question if the conversation is strong and animated. The best questions sometimes lead to intense discussions. That's a good thing!

Sometimes people may need to think before they answer. Part of being a good facilitator is being comfortable with silence. Don't jump in every time if no one answers immediately. If needed, clarify, expand or rephrase the question.

Let others answer first. When you are asking questions, you want to facilitate discussion, not come off as a teacher. By letting others in the group answer first, you will promote conversation and help everyone feel like their opinions matter.

Make connections between comments. If someone gives an answer to question 2 that connects well with question 5, don't feel obligated to ask questions 3 and 4 before moving to 5.

Occasionally direct questions toward quiet people. You don't want to put anyone on the spot, but you want everyone to know their opinions are valued.

And lastly, have fun! Just because the discussion is about a spiritual book doesn't mean that everyone needs to be stone-faced and serious. Make sure people know the group is about fellowship and communion.