

Discernment in Depth

Small Group Leadership Guide for Our Participants

Session 1: Ready, Set, Experiment (Pg 63 –66)

Introductions: (Time ~ 5 – 10 minutes)*

Each of the co-leaders will introduce themselves and prompt each person to do the same (suggestion: name, what charism you are discerning, and what you hope to get from this program)

*Have one of the co-leaders keep track of time throughout the meeting.

- Read the Ground Rules:
 - Conversations stay in the group
 - Everyone gets a chance to speak; everyone is expected to speak
 - Sharing feedback on another's experiment with a possible charism can help them clarify or make critical adjustments to their proposed experiment.
 - Stay on topic.
 - We as small group leaders don't lead that's the Holy Spirit's role; group leaders facilitate
- Read Purpose: To help each member of the group fruitfully discern their charism; it's about the group.

The theme of this week's session is to ensure that everyone is comfortable with the discernment process so far and is able to explore their charisms based upon their experiments they are planning to do.

(Time from Welcome to Opening Prayer: 10 minutes)

Read the Opening Prayer (led by the one of the co-leaders)

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does, he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him, will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me, will be thrown out like a branch and wither, people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. ~ John 15:1-8

Discernment Discussion Sharing: (Time: 15 minutes)

(Please refer to the Discernment Resource on the St. Helen's Called & Gifted website for further detail)

- Ask what do we mean by discerning?
- Why is discerning important?
- How do we discern?
 - The power of prayer
 - The use of experiments
- What is an experiment?
- How do we experiment?
- Sharing Experiments: (Time ~45 – 75 minutes)

Have one of the co-leaders begin by going around the table and ask each candidate about the Interview. Tell us:

- What stood out; did Anything surprise you?
- What charism did you choose?

- Are the three signs of a charism present:
 - Finding Joy/Energizing; feels like Prayer
 - We are extraordinarily effective; accomplishing more than we can do on our own – the Holy Spirit
 - Feedback from others: Direct or Indirect
- Did you create an experiment plan? How does it feel; what does it look like?
- Do you have questions, or need help to refine your experiment?
- *Go to the next person*

After everyone has had a chance to discuss their interview experience, charisms and experiments, ask:

- Does anyone have other suggestions for experiments for someone in the group?
- Do you see evidence of a charism that is not being recognized and/or tested by someone in the group?

After everyone has had a chance to speak, prepare to conclude the meeting.

- Prior to the closing prayer, ask if there are any final thoughts/questions/suggestions for next meeting. Perhaps ask of the group members to share some of the practical insights they gained from the session. (Time: 5 - 10 minutes)
- Remind them, at the end of Sessions 1-3 to complete the exercises for between sessions (pp. 66 -81)
- Encourage them to enter the results of their experiment every few days and reflect upon the results prior to the next session.
- Send a meeting reminder before each of the next sessions, perhaps a week in advance of the meeting, this is an excellent time to encourage them to
 - continue with their experiment
 - remind them of the interim exercises

- and pray for one another!

One of the co-leaders will read the Closing Prayer:

Holy One, you are the Good Shepherd who fills the hungry with good things, who spreads a table before us, who fills our cups to overflowing, who calls each of us by name and leads us out. Thank you for all of your gifts.

Today I am seeking to discern the special gifts you have bestowed to make me a channel of your love for others and to take these charisms up.

Open my eyes to your ways. Tune my ears to your voice. Teach me what is important for me to know right now as I reflect on who I am and the meaning of my life. Especially, Lord, make the next step clear to me and fire me with a desire to take it. In the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Between Sessions:

Start your day with prayer; specifically, ask the Holy Spirit to help you Discern and Experiment

As you experiment be aware of three signs of a Charism:

1. Were you feeling any of the following: prayerful, joyful and or did it feel right?
2. Was it supernatural i.e. not you're doing, but the work of the holy Spirit through you?
3. Did you get any feedback—direct or indirect?

Use the book distributed at registration “Fruitful Discipleship” as a companion aid for your discernment journey.

Refer to your discerning together worksheet: pray for each person.