The Small Group Dynamic

***“That you and I may be mutually encouraged by one another’s faith” (Rom. 1:12)***

**Why?** Adults don’t want to be exclusively talked at, but also want to share from their faith experience and wisdom. This edifies and enlightens others, and creates community.

Two extremes to be avoided:

1. Lecture only
2. Mere sharing of subjective opinion

One needs solid teaching on which to base effective discussion and sharing.

**Training:** Take time before study begins to train small group leaders in the following:

A small group leader is NOT A CATECHIST, THEOLOGIAN, OR COUNSELLOR. Rather, a small group leader acts as:

T\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Knows the terrain and where they are going, and can lead others to the best vistas while navigating around the less important sights and dead-ends.

C\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Affirms insights of participants in order to create a sense of safety and thus encourages the timid to participate. Note different temperaments: Some people like to talk right off the bat; some need to feel safe first, and need time to process.

T\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Directs traffic, stimulating and maintaining an equitable flow.

**Tips:**

When John is speaking, sit on front half of chair and face him with your body. When he finishes, thank him for valuable insight and turn body towards others, thus physically indicating a stop in traffic and green light for others.

If someone shares too much and dominates, as soon as they share something valuable, generously affirm the insight, thank them, and give others opportunity to participate.

Or, throw out a question explicitly to part of group that is more quiet.

Don’t be afraid of silence. Ask a question and wait, as some need time to formulate a response and will be shut down if you move on prematurely (say a Hail Mary slowly and silently as you wait to make you feel comfortable with silence).

If you can’t stop flow of traffic from someone with above techniques, take them aside, affirm them, and ask them to help you encourage others to share, so they become part of solution. As a last resort, you may have to un-invite someone for the greater good.

If someone brings up matters contrary to the Faith (e.g. “I can’t believe women can’t be priests!”), affirm the importance of the issue, indicate that the Church does have good reasons for Her teaching but that there isn’t the time to address them completely here. Make a plan to speak with them outside the group, refer them to Father, or find a resource for them for next week that explains the Church’s teaching. Thus, you will hopefully avoid direct confrontation, keep the group on track, yet still address the difficultly thoroughly.