

 C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE

# *Leaders Guide*



*Journey* *Foundations for Discipleship  
and Mission*

## ***Leaders Guide***

### Notes for Leaders

#### **Why lead a *Journey* small group?**

Would you like to help other believers become more effective witnesses for Jesus Christ in their personal and professional spheres? To see your friends become more active in the church and excited about their faith? Would you also like to follow Jesus more intently in thought, word, and deed, allowing Him to work in both your heart and mind?

If your answer is yes, we at the C.S. Lewis Institute encourage you to lead a small group through this nine-month, eighteen-session *Journey* program. We believe you will be thrilled at the results that take place in your life and the lives of others. The dynamics will only partially depend on the great teaching, thoughtful reading, Bible studies, and group discussion offered through the program. In large part, the growth in your spiritual life and others' will be due to your leadership as you cooperate with the Wonderful Counselor Himself, the Holy Spirit.

The *Journey* program focuses on a number of key biblical themes that Jesus taught His disciples, with special attention to grace, true conversion, discipleship, love, humility, the Holy Spirit, the means of grace, calling and mission. An apologetics element provides insights about how to share the gospel in today's world in a respectful, winsome, and effective manner. This learning/growth takes place through study, small-group processing, fellowship, prayer, and obedient response.

The *Journey* guidebook identifies all of the essential components needed for this nine-month, life-impacting study on Christian discipleship. These include carefully selected books and articles that participants read between sessions, Bible studies, and teaching videos.

The *Journey* guidebook, articles, and videos are available on the CSLI website for free. Participants will need to purchase or otherwise obtain the six books and two booklets identified in the first section of this guidebook. Participants will also need a Bible, preferably a Study Bible.

#### **How the Program is Structured**

- Each small group typically meets together for nine months, with two meetings each month. The program focuses on a different key theme each month. Members commit to regular attendance and to doing the assignments between meetings to enable them to fully participate in the group meetings.
- A small group leader acts as a facilitator.
- Each session includes group discussion and prayer.
- Reading, Study and Teaching Videos. Between group sessions, participants read from designated articles and books. The total reading each month is about 120 pages, divided between the two sessions. There is also a Bible Study for participants to complete between sessions. Participants are encouraged to set aside about two hours each week to complete these assignments. Participants also watch a teaching video that is approximately an hour long, between the first (Meeting A) and second (Meeting B) sessions of the month, focusing on the primary theme of the month.
- The time for each session can be varied according to the needs of the group. We recommend at least 1 ½ to 2 hours for each meeting (the two-hour meeting includes time for a simple meal such as a potluck).



This program could be used in a home group, as a curriculum for a church small group program, or in other small group settings

## What are the roles and responsibilities of Journey small group leaders?

There are two primary areas of responsibility for Journey small group leaders:

- (1) Organizing a Journey small group, including recruiting participants,
- (2) Serving as the leader/facilitator of a small group (generally consisting of no more than twelve persons).

These notes address both leadership roles, which may or may not be filled by the same person.

### 1. Pray.

Throughout the process of planning and leading a *Journey* small group, it is essential that leaders pray for God's leading and direction. Pray that God would use you for His purposes in planning and/or leading a Journey small group, and for each participant and their family. Pray that all participants would grow spiritually as a result of the group.

### 2. Plan.

Before you begin, take time to plan by reading this *Journey* guidebook. Then begin the process of planning:

**Purpose.** Know the purpose of a *Journey* small group: that you and your fellow participants will grow spiritually and become more mature, well-grounded disciples of Jesus Christ who faithfully follow and actively serve Him in the world. Determine how you can best communicate the purpose of this program to the people you intend to invite to participate.

**Logistics.** Determine:

When: When will you meet (date, time, for how long)?

Where: Where will you meet (home, church)?

What: What will you need to do to prepare the place for the small group meetings (seating, lighting, room temperature, beverages, meals or snacks, childcare, removal of distractions, computer)?

Who: Who will take care of the various planning pieces? Do not be afraid to delegate. People like to contribute and actually become more committed when they play a role in the group, even if it is just preparing refreshments or setting up chairs.

Some possible roles include:

- Leader
- Assistant Leader
- Hospitality Coordinator
- Childcare Coordinator
- Facilities Coordinator

# Journey

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**Scheduling.** We recommend that *Journey* small groups meet on a twice-a-month basis. This will, among other things, provide sufficient time for participants to complete the specified book and other readings and teaching video before the next meeting.

Once a new *Journey* small group commences, it takes nine months to go through the program. While a new small group could begin at any time, we recommend considering a schedule that follows the school year, e.g., beginning in September and finishing in May.

**Group size.** It is recommended that *Journey* groups be small. It is hard to have interactive discussions with groups larger than thirteen including the discussion facilitator.

Meeting Agendas. The agenda for *Journey* small groups can vary depending on the needs of the group. If your group has time to meet for a meal or even dessert, the fellowship over food can help build relationships and thus enhance the overall experience.

The time for each session can be varied according to the needs of the group. *Whatever time is adopted, it is important to announce the beginning and ending times of the meetings in advance, and to end at the specified time.*

## Sample Journey Small Group Meeting Agenda (Total: 90 minutes)

15 Minutes—Social time

5 Minutes—Opening Prayer and Bible Reading

50 Minutes—Discussion of assigned reading/videos (using questions included in the *Journey* guidebook)

10 Minutes—Share prayer requests

10 Minutes— Closing Prayer (Allow time for anyone who wants to pray.)

## Sample Journey Small Group Meeting Agenda (Total: 120 minutes including a simple meal)

45 Minutes—Simple meal and social time (pizza, salad, drinks, and desserts, or a potluck)

5 Minutes—Opening Prayer and Bible Reading

50 Minutes—Discussion of assigned reading/videos (using questions included in the *Journey* guidebook)

10 Minutes—Share prayer requests

10 Minutes— Closing Prayer (Allow time for anyone who wants to pray.)

Take some time before each meeting to plan out the activities so that things flow smoothly. Always start and end on time. People will get discouraged if the meetings go overtime or start late. If you desire, you can end the formal meeting on time and give people the option to stay later to fellowship or pray more, but always give people the opportunity to end at the prescheduled times.

**Needs.** Be on the alert to the needs of the people who are either in the group or may join the group. As you pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your planning process, He will give you guidance and help you determine the needs of your particular group and your responsibilities in meeting those needs.

Rick Howerton, in his book *Destination Community*, suggests some key questions to ask the Lord regularly to prepare for small group leadership:



Is there:

Someone to pray with?

Someone needing counsel?

Someone to encourage?

Someone to hold accountable?

Something to celebrate with someone?

Something to learn?

A need to be met?

A call to be made?

A conflict to be resolved?

### **3. Prayerfully recruit participants.**

After initial planning, the next task of the leader is to pray and recruit the participants. Take some time to pray and ask the Lord to lead and point you to the right people to be in the study—people who are hungry to deeper with Christ. Then begin inviting. Do not be disappointed if some say, “No, thank you.” Persevere and keep on inviting until you get a committed *Journey* small group together.

Jim Collins, author of the modern leadership bestseller *Good to Great*, writes, “Great endeavors are accomplished best when the right people are in the right place doing the right thing.” As you pray and ask the Lord to put together the right group, have faith that He can arrange the right people in the right place doing the right thing.

A personal invitation or a phone call is the preferred method of communication, as an impersonal e-mail might be overlooked and does not provide immediate conversational answers to questions.

Bobb Biehl gives the following advice in his book *Mentoring*: “Don’t hesitate—initiate.”

You should be prepared to answer the following questions when recruiting people for the *Journey* small group. You might try to formulate an honest answer that you would like to hear if you were considering a study.

How much time each week will it take me to prepare for and do the study?

How long will the study last?

What kind of homework is involved?

Does it cost anything?

Do you have to know a lot of Bible or be able to pray out loud to be in the group?

How many people will be in the group?

What are we going to do in the meetings?

Who else is coming?

Do you provide childcare?

Can I leave midway through the study if I find it’s just not for me?

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## 4. Informational meeting (optional).

As part of recruiting participants, the small group leader might consider holding an informational meeting a couple months or so prior to the beginning of the program.

## 5. Consider a group covenant.

Covenants provide a means of providing purpose, balance, and accountability within small group relationships. If people have knowingly signed a covenant, they are more likely to follow through on their commitment. What is more, the covenant makes it easier for people to give grace and/or lovingly confront someone who is not living up to the covenant.

For example, if someone is regularly missing the group's meetings, the leader of the group can say, "Hey, we've missed you recently. Your contribution is important and necessary for our group to function and grow. What can we do to help you make it to the group for the next meeting and fulfill your covenant?"

One of the first things a group can do to assure success is to agree upon a covenant. A covenant needs to take into consideration both the principles and logistics needed to achieve the group's goal. It would be wise to write up your covenant and then distribute copies to everyone in the group. Have the group discuss it and express any concerns or reservations about it. It can be adapted to meet the needs of the group as long as it doesn't compromise the mission of the program.

Some of the key components might include:

***Attendance:*** a commitment to attend the twice-a-month small group meetings for the nine-month period barring an unexpected emergency.

***Preparation:*** a commitment to do the homework and to come prepared to the meetings. However, if participants haven't finished the homework, they should be encouraged to come anyway so that they can benefit from the group's discussion and get back on track.

***Prayer:*** a commitment to pray for the group and that the Holy Spirit would help everyone grow spiritually through all the components of the program.

***Confidentiality:*** anything shared in the group must stay in the group and not be shared with others. This is an important part of the covenant as it builds trust when maintained and allows people to be more open.

***Openness:*** a willingness to share and participate in the discussions.

***Honesty:*** a commitment to being honest and forthright in all relationships within the group.

***Sensitivity:*** a commitment to being sensitive to the needs of others in the group.

***Love:*** a commitment to love those in the group as commanded by Christ himself.

## 6. Facilitate discussion.

One of the great things about the Journey small group program is that you do not have to be a theologian or biblical scholar to lead this study. All you need is to be a committed follower of Jesus Christ who wants to grow spiritually and wants to bring people alongside to grow as well. Most of the programming is already done for you. Having said that, you will be asked to facilitate the group discussion. Discussion questions are provided to help you. These questions can be modified, adapted, or you can use some questions of your own to get people talking. The key is to get others talking rather than doing the talking yourself.



An “ask, don’t tell” policy is a good approach when leading the thematic discussion. Usually, people should be ready to talk after having completing the specified readings and teaching video and Bible Study in preparation for the group time.

Some things to remember:

Remember the questions who? what? when? where? why? and how?

Give people time to answer. Do not answer your own question. Rephrase it if you would like, but do not be afraid of “pregnant pauses.” Someone might be ready to birth an amazing response, but it takes time sometimes.

Be affirming by using expressions such as, “Great insight,” “You’re on the right track; can you expand on that?” or “Wow!”

Repeat responses as a way to get people to continue talking.

Do not ask yes/no questions. If you do, have people expand their answers.

Redirect people if they start to get off track. It is alright to politely interrupt and ask them to get back to the question or the main idea of the conversation.

Do not go off on rabbit trails—topics outside of the focus of the meeting.

Do not let one person dominate the conversation. Politely ask to hear from others in the group.

## **7. Start and end on time.**

This is crucial to maintaining the morale of your group. If you meet the expectations of your group when it comes to the beginning and ending time of your meeting, you will be trusted with other things later on. Be trustworthy in the little things, such as timing, and people will begin to trust you on more important matters. People live busy lives and need to know that they will be dismissed on time. If you go late, you may lose people in future meetings. Also start on time, cluing people to the importance of arriving on time. If people know you will be starting late, they will begin arriving late; it is just human nature.

## **8. Model what it takes to grow from the study by preparing yourself for the group meetings.**

In other words, practice what you preach and complete the assigned readings and Bible Study.

## **9. Use the *Journey* guidebook.**

As part of this, occasionally review these Notes for Leaders.

## **10. Pray and enjoy!**

Pray for the members of your group and pray that the Holy Spirit would guide the discussion. Pray that all distractions would be removed during the meeting. Do the work, show up to the group, facilitate the discussion, get to know the people in your group. Enjoy the program.

## **11. Follow up.**

Send an e-mail after each meeting with a highlight or two from the meeting and a reminder of the next meeting date and time.

The C.S. Lewis Institute was founded in 1976 and endeavors, in the legacy of C.S. Lewis, to develop disciples who will articulate, defend, share, and live their faith in Christ in personal and public life. From its inception, the Institute has been inter-denominational, has worked closely with a variety of churches and sees itself as a servant ministry, assisting churches and pastors in making disciples of Jesus Christ. This takes the form of discipleship programs, area-wide conferences/seminars, pastor fellowships and resources in print and on the web.

