



LIVING  
IN LOVE  
& FAITH

# Facilitating Living in Love and Faith Groups

## A Short Guide

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## What makes for a well-facilitated gathering?

- ❖ Everyone is able to contribute, with no one dominating
- ❖ People feel safe and relaxed enough to be open, honest
- ❖ There is a culture of mutual respect
- ❖ People feel heard, listened to and understood
- ❖ Energy is maintained: it isn't too slow or too rushed
- ❖ The discussion has a sense of movement, momentum, direction
- ❖ Time-keeping and a clear road map is appropriately maintained
- ❖ The facilitator does not talk very much and is comfortable with silence
- ❖ New insights emerge

## Crafting good questions

Good questions in the right order help a group to journey together as they explore a topic or a Bible text. It takes time to think of good questions – but it is time well-spent!

1. observations	What, in your own words, did you hear I observe?
2. response	What surprised you? What feelings did you have?
3. interpretation	What questions do you have about the topic I text?
4. decision	What difference does our discussion make?

## A quick refresher: Good facilitation

### Being a good facilitator

Being a good facilitator is more about who you are than what you do:

- ❖ Servant-hearted
- ❖ Curious about others
- ❖ Observant
- ❖ Undistracted
- ❖ Unanxious
- ❖ Attentive listener
- ❖ Flexible
- ❖ Non-judgmental
- ❖ Hopeful



# LIVING IN LOVE & FAITH

A quick refresher:  
What is Living in Love and Faith about?

Living in Love and Faith is about using the resources

- ❖ to learn together
- ❖ to listen to one another
- ❖ to listen to God.

It's about sharing stories, understanding the topic and different points of view better.

It's also about helping each other to be safe so that we can be brave enough to learn new things and listen to each other in our diversity and difference, with love.

**Inviting:** Prepare and send an invitation for the session that is warm and welcoming, reassuring everyone about confidentiality. Include any practical details they need to know. List the topics of all the sessions.

**Planning:** Spend time preparing each session: walk through the session, making sure you can operate the videos and that you have your questions prepared, and a plan for how long you will allow for each session – while preparing yourself to be flexible in response to the group’s needs and dynamics.

**Timing:** If your time is short (less than 2 hours for the session), consider asking participants to watch one element of the video (such as the Pastoral Principle element at the beginning) beforehand to allow more time for group discussion.

**Practicalities:** If you are meeting in person, make sure the space is comfortable and as attractive and welcoming as possible. Think about refreshments and maybe flowers?

If you are meeting on zoom, make sure everyone has the link and understands how to log on.

**Groups:** Depending on numbers, think about whether the group needs to be sub-divided for the discussions. 5 to 6 people is optimum for a group discussion. Otherwise people won’t have enough time to discuss or some may not get a chance to contribute.

**Prayer:** Pray for the participants! And think about how you will use the prayer time in the session, so that everyone is comfortable.

## Before a session

Preparing well means that you are free to focus on giving all your attention to the members of the group and their contributions to the discussions.



**Introductions:** make sure everyone knows each other and don't forget to introduce yourself. If it's a large group, introductions can be made when people gather for discussion in smaller groups. Explain that these groups will stay the same throughout the course.

**Commitments:** Pause the video after the 'commitments' in Session 1. Recap what they are and check that everyone understands them and is happy to commit to them. You might ask, 'which commitment struck you as particularly important?'

Introduce the idea of helping each other to be safe so that we can also be brave in asking questions and sharing stories and perspectives.

Explain that in this first session, there aren't any story films, but we're thinking about how we learn together and the part people's stories play.

**Creativity:** You may want to offer participants some colouring sheets to do while they are talking: this can often help people to relax as well as focus. Others may want to doodle or draw! All of this is entirely voluntary – but it reminds us that as human beings made in God's image we are creative beings!

**Responding:** Let everyone know that they are all invited to complete the LLF questionnaire online or in hard copy when they have finished the course. Ask the group if they would like to send something in as a group: a photo, a prayer, a recording of a conversation, or some of the completed colouring sheets, if you used them!

## The first session

*Consider having a pre-course session when everyone can get to know each other and the group can discuss the commitments without having to rush. It's an opportunity to introduce the idea of discussions that enable us to be brave as well as safe – with plenty of opportunities for questions.*

**Model good listening** and a genuine interest in the views and contributions of others.

**Create a habit of pausing** to 'check in' on the group. Is everyone ok? Is there something someone hasn't had a chance to say?

**Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak** if they want to – but don't force anyone!

**Look out** for people who might be struggling – especially if the topic is particularly personal to them or they disagree strongly with others in the group. People may withdraw and be quiet, or they may become more assertive and maybe even angry.

If a larger group is splitting into smaller groups for discussion, you as facilitator may want to circulate among the groups to check all is well.

## In every session . . .

If there is disagreement in the group, help the group to see this as a positive. Here are some good questions to ask:

- ❖ Invite another view from among the group: 'Does someone have a different view?'
- ❖ Invite story telling: 'What led you to that conclusion?'
- ❖ Dig deeper: 'Tell me more'
- ❖ Recap what the disagreement is actually about: 'So this disagreement seems to centre around...'
- ❖ Invite points of agreement, common ground: 'We've talked about our disagreements. Where do we see common ground?'
- ❖ Encourage learning: 'What new insights have you gained from this discussion?'

## At the end of each session . . .

Remind participants about confidentiality – and about getting in touch with you or a chaplain in between sessions, if they would like to talk something through.

Draw participants' attention to the 'Going Further' resources at the end of each session in the booklet and the video.

## Reflecting after each session . . .

Reflect on who spoke, what went well and what might need to be changed for next time.

Ideally do this with someone who co-facilitated with you or whom you trust.

Contact any individuals you are concerned about to check they are ok.

## At the end of the course. . .

Make sure you leave enough time for the final prayer and reflection to end well.

**Remind everyone to complete the LLF questionnaire and/or submit a creative response as individuals or as a group.**