

## **FORMAT FOR PRAYER/REFLECTION MEETING (about 90 min session)**

### **(I) FORMAT**

Time frame given is only a guideline. Facilitator should exercise discretion and be led by the Holy Spirit during the meeting.

- 1. PRAISE & WORSHIP (8 min)**
- 2. OPENING PRAYER (2 min)**
- 3. PRAYING AND SHARING THE WORD (65min)**

#### **(i) 1<sup>st</sup> Reading (30 min)**

##### **First Step: We read the text**

The facilitator announces the chosen text. Wait until everyone has found the page, so that members will be able to follow. This is to maintain a prayerful atmosphere, by preventing members from having to ask the leader or other members again for the chosen text.

When everyone has found the passage, the facilitator invites someone to volunteer to read the text. A moment of silence follows. (The facilitator does not read the text but withdraws into the background so as to involve members in the group.)

##### **Second Step: We pick out a word or phrases and meditate on them.**

The facilitator continues: "We pick out a word or phrase. Which word or words strike you in a special way?" (Long sentences should be avoided; only short phrases or individual words.)

The members take turns to spontaneously read aloud the word or words that strike them. These are repeated 3 or 4 times in a prayerful way, with pauses in between these repetitions. (A quick repetition destroys the spirit of prayer.) After this person has finished, there should be a pause before the next member contributes. During these moments of silence between individual contributions, the members are encouraged to meditate on these words and allow the message to "soak in". In this way, "simple" words often take on new meaning.

As we listen, sometimes the word/s picked out by others may become more meaningful to us than the one which we have chosen for ourselves. It will be this significant word/s which we are going to take into step 4.

### **Third Step: We let God speak to us in silence and we share what we have heard in our hearts**

After all members have taken their turns in step 3, the entire passage is read again slowly by a volunteer. Then the facilitator announces a time of silence, giving the exact length of time. Eg “We keep silence for 10mins and allow God to speak to us. Members ought to spend this time in contemplative silence before God meditating on that significant word/s that struck them; they open themselves to the Lord, allow themselves to be loved by Him, gaze at Him, let God gaze at them, listen to Him and just be with Him.

Some ways to help in focusing during this time of silence:

- repeat the word or phrase that touched you or challenged you; repeat the word over and over again. In this way, you prevent distraction and become open to God’s presence and inspiration. Repetition is an age-old way of meditation and contemplation.
- engage your interior eye and look at Jesus, remaining in His presence
- if your heart is full of worries and anxiety, give Him all your worries until you experience calm and peace; then listen to Him.

(The group can evaluate later if this time of silence was too long or too short and can change accordingly for subsequent meetings.)

After the time of quiet, the facilitator announces the next step:  
“We share with each other what we have heard in our hearts.”

- We do this to share with one another our prayer experience and to help each other grow in the faith.
- This is a time for personal sharing, not preaching, discussion or commenting on other members’ sharings.
- In sharing, we talk about ourselves and what the scripture text meant for us personally.
- Sharing is a proclamation of God’s grace and power in the life of a person.
- Do not share things if you feel uncomfortable about them.
- Do not explain a text or present a doctrine nor tell others what to do.
- Do not destroy the spirit of prayer by discussing or offering comments on other members’ sharings.

- Personal sharing allows other members to understand the personal relationship which exists between God and me.
- Personal sharing helps members of a group to be open to one another, to accept each other in a family spirit and to grow together on a deeper level as a faith-community. This also creates mutual trust within the group.
- If somebody finds it very difficult to share in a personal way, he/she can be encouraged to just read aloud a word or a phrase which has become meaningful for them and briefly comment on it. Other members should just listen and not add to the comments or start a discussion. This is to maintain a prayerful atmosphere.
- If no words from the chosen text speak to a member, he/she may share on any spiritual experience from his/her daily personal prayer in the preceding week.

Sharing is also a time to practice our listening skills. **Listen** without judging, interrupting, commenting, counseling or analyzing. Accept others where they are. Simply listen with empathy and loving acceptance.

When someone is speaking, give them your full attention, the love and respect they deserve as a brother or sister in Christ. "Do to others as you would have them do to you." Lk 6:31

Eg of a Personal Sharing: "In this bible text, I see a mother asking a favour for her daughter. She does not give up. This touches and inspires me. My daughter left me long ago and I have given up praying for her. This encourages me to continue praying for my daughter and gives me hope."

- she said what the text meant for her personally
- she talked about herself, shared something about her life
- she did not tell others what to do
- she did not explain the text in clever words

## **Fourth Step: We pray together**

The facilitator now invites everyone to pray. Members take turns to pray voluntarily and spontaneously.

Members are encouraged to incorporate in their personal prayer whatever has been of special importance to them during the meditation.

The biblical text, the sharings and experiences of God's Word, the individual's needs and needs of the group can "flow into" the prayers.

Some find this form of sharing in prayer the easiest way to communicate with others.

Eg of a Prayer after sharing Mk 8:1-3 Jesus heals the leper

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Divine Healer, here we are, your people. We need your healing love. Please stretch out your hand to touch and heal us in body, soul and spirit. Restore us with Your gentle touch and powerful word and make us whole. We thank and praise you Jesus!

### **(ii) 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading (30min)**

Repeat the above 4 steps with the 2nd Reading

### **(iii) Word of Life (5min)**

At the end of this step, the leader can ask the group "**Is there any word/s which we can live this week as our "Word of Life"?**"

The "Word of Life" is a word or phrase taken from the bible text read at the meeting. The group can agree on selected word/s as the "Word of Life" to remember and live out for the coming month. The "Word of Life" helps the group to experience the power of the Word as it is lived out and shared.

Eg from Phi 4: 4-13, the group picks "Rejoice in the Lord" as the Word of Life

## **4. INTERCESSION (10 min)**

-during this time, you can intercede for the group members' intentions and for the Church, diocese or world events; up to discretion of leader & as time permits; short prayers will do.

## **5. CLOSING PRAYER/HYMN (5 min)**

## **6. FELLOWSHIP**

## **(II) SELF EVALUATION FOR FACILITATOR**

- Was there a spirit of prayer? Was there anything that disturbed or destroyed the spirit of prayer?
  - Did everybody find the text before it was read?
  - Did we allow a time of silence in between the word/s read aloud?
  - Did we read them aloud in a prayerful way?
  - Was the time of silence too short or too long?
  - Was there real personal sharing or preaching to others and discussion?
  - Did we maintain a prayerful atmosphere?
  - Did we allow enough time for everybody to pray spontaneously?
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## **(III) BENEFITS OF PRAYER/REFLECTION MEETING**

### **- Promotes Prayer**

This method of Bible Sharing can be seen as a **school of prayer**, helping members to develop their prayer life.

- it helps members to come into personal contact with God
- it introduces them to the value of silence
- it offers the possibility for people to experience meditation/contemplation
- it helps them to apply the Word to daily life and see their life through God's eyes
- it liberates them from looking at themselves only; it develops a concern for the needs of others.

### **- Promotes love and unity in the Ministry**

Sharing our difficulties and joys can bring the group closer together, increase our understanding of each other and strengthen the bonds within the group. As members open up to each other and discover that they are all battling in the faith, that everyone has their difficulties, they will come to accept each other in a family spirit and grow in mutual trust and love. When members become more bonded, they will be able to share more deeply and richly, thus inspiring and motivating each other in this spiritual journey towards God. It is Jesus in our midst, who makes all this possible.

### **- Helps us in our preparation to proclaim the Word of God**

### **(III) Commitment to Jesus and to the Lector's Ministry**

I want to be a faithful disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ. I therefore commit myself to spiritual formation and involvement in my Ministry. This means that I will cooperate with Jesus in trying to be as faithful as possible to the following:

1. I will strive to attend each meeting.
2. During the meetings, I will share as sincerely as I can with fellow members.
3. I will strive to build up my spiritual life and pray for a minimum of half an hour each day
4. Out of respect for my members, I will keep anything that is shared in confidence.
5. I agree to be a companion (not a teacher, not a saviour), being vulnerable in sharing my own experience to the extent that I can, reverently taking to heart the sharing of another in a deep love that affirms all the good that is hidden within that person. I cannot take away problems but I will empathetically listen and pray with my group so that we can grow in commitment to Jesus, receiving His love and sharing love.
6. I will strive to forge unity and love within the group and keep my fellow members in prayer.

### **(IV) Self-Examination for Ministry Members**

Do I have a disciplined prayer life? Am I praying every day?

Is there a balance between activity and prayer (Martha & Mary)?

Are my priorities in order?

Am I living out what Lord tells me to do?

Am I witnessing God's love to others?

What am I doing to build up community?

Am I loving the other members in my Ministry? Do I pray for them?