

THE ART OF ACCOMPANIMENT

FOUNDATIONS FOR SMALL GROUP LEADERS

Small group leaders serve as cultivators of community, hospitality, and spirituality within their small group. To make their small group a space that fosters intentional friendships, prayer, and mission, small group leaders must be well-versed in the art of accompaniment.

“The Church will have to initiate everyone... into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other... The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.”

Accompaniment, or the intentional ministry of walking with others in their Christian journey, involves special attention to the formation of particular skills.

ACTIVE LISTENING Accompaniment involves walking with others in all experiences of their lives, drawing near to another in both joys and challenges. Small group leaders are called to listen to the joys and challenges of participants non-judgmentally, offering prayer, support, and encouragement when appropriate.

HOSPITALITY Walking with others requires a welcoming attitude and an openness to connection. Small group leaders cultivate hospitality by intentionally investing in the participants of the group, knowing their names and stories, and fostering a space in which the group can share conversation, mission, and encouragement.

TRUST Accompanying others in the midst of their Christian journey requires the building of trust. Small group leaders establish trust within their group by establishing healthy boundaries, maintaining confidentiality when appropriate, and fostering an environment where everyone feels known.

SELF-AWARENESS Those who accompany others influence others in their path to holiness. Small group leaders must be active participants in the growth of their own spiritual, mental, and emotional lives so that they may use their gifts and strengths to cultivate holiness within their group.

GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT The Spirit directs all of our steps in walking the path of the Christian life. Small group leaders take care to allow the Spirit to guide the group in prayer, preparation, and discussion according to the needs of the participants



HELPFUL PASTORAL TIPS FOR PRACTICING THE ART OF ACCOMPANIMENT



ACTIVE LISTENING

- Get to know the participants in your group, and ask them about their stories.
- Encourage everyone to feel free to jump into conversation, but ensure that there is also space for everyone to listen to one another.

HOSPITALITY

- Make an effort to know each participant's name, and encourage the entire group to know one another.
- Depending on where and when you host your group, consider offering drinks, snacks, and a comfortable environment.
- Make new members feel welcome by inviting their input into conversation.

TRUST

- Discuss as a group, if appropriate, a standard of confidentiality.
- Model non-judgmental listening of others' experiences.

SELF-AWARENESS

- Maintain your own prayer life, attend confession and mass, and pay attention to your own spiritual life and growth.
- Discern your gifts and be aware of your weak points with the help of a trusted friend, counselor, or strength-identifying tool.

GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Pray for your group, the participants, and the intentions of the participants.
- If a need surfaces in a group session that needs attention or extra conversation, pay attention to that.
- Frequently assess the direction of the group to make sure it stays faithful to its mission.

