

Begin a New Life

Six-Week Program for Small Groups

Full Description of Meetings and How to Run Them

Start and end time

Each meeting in the *BNL Six-Week Program* has a start time and an end time, and it's divided into several parts. Meetings run for one hour unless otherwise determined by the group.

Opening Prayer

The meeting begins with a spontaneous prayer offered by the group leader, a member of the group, or different people creating an "additive" prayer. (An additive prayer is one in which each person adds a sentence or two to what others have said before them, and it ends when the group leader says "Amen.")

Reading(s)

The opening prayer is followed by one or more inspirational readings. The readings have been pre-selected for each weekly meeting. They appear in the meeting outline for each week. The readings are done by the group leader or anyone else in the group. If there are multiple readings for a given meeting, they can be divided up and read by different people in the group.

Check-in

The opening prayer and reading(s) are followed by a time for *Check-in*. *Check-in* is a time for hearing from each member of the group. People state their name and share one highlight from their day or week or an opening comment (*one* of these things, not both). *Check-in* gives each person a chance to start actively engaging in the meeting's activities. People who prefer to listen and not speak may "pass" on their turn. If the group is larger than eight people, consider breaking into groups of four to eight.

The key to *Check-in* is keeping it brief. Each person says just one, two, or a few sentences. There is typically no cross talk or conversation during *Check-in* (though this can be at the discretion of the group leader). The leader and other attendees acknowledge each person's contribution with the words "Thank you" before moving on to the next person.

Group business

Following *Check-in* is *Group Business*. *Group Business* is a time for any announcements or group decisions that need to be made. If there are no announcements or decisions, this part of the meeting is skipped. As with *Check-in*, *Group Business* moves quickly.

Task for the meeting

Each of the six meetings has a pre-assigned *Task*. The task is for people to practice one particular piece of the *BNL* process in advance of the meeting, and then come to the meeting ready to share their experience of doing so. Following *Group Business* the pre-assigned *Task* is read out loud to the group.

Group sharing

The bulk of the meeting is then given over to *Group Sharing*. *Group Sharing* is a time for people to share their experience of doing the task for the week. Sharing is initiated by the group leader posing a question: "What was your experience of doing the task for this week?"

Typically, the opening question will spark enough sharing to fill the entire *Group Sharing* time. In the event that sharing lags, there is a set of questions at the end of each meeting outline that can help. The group leader listens during *Group Sharing*, decides which questions he or she thinks would be useful for the group, and asks them when appropriate. (Some of the questions may have already been addressed during the initial sharing.) This process continues as needed until *Group Sharing* is over.

Closure

The final part of the meeting is *Closure*. The total time for this part of the meeting doesn't exceed 15 minutes. There are four parts of *Closure* as follows:

- **Task for the next meeting**

Each week of the six-week program has a predetermined task. The group leader now reads the task for the coming week out loud.

- **Leader for the next meeting**

If the six-week group will have multiple leaders, a decision is made for who will lead the next meeting. This responsibility is assumed on a volunteer, rotational, or assigned basis.

- **Closing comments**

Closing Comments is a time for hearing a final, brief comment from each member of the group. It allows people to remain actively engaged to the end and "check out" of the meeting. People who prefer to listen and not speak may "pass" when it's their turn. If the group is larger than eight people, consider breaking into groups of four to eight.

Closing Comments happens fairly quickly, with each person saying just one or two sentences. There's no cross talk or conversation during *Closing Comments*. The group leader and other attendees acknowledge each person's contribution with the words, "Thank you," before moving on to the next person. The total time for *Closing Comments* doesn't exceed 10 minutes.

- **The Lord's Prayer**

The meeting ends with *The Lord's Prayer*. Group members stand, hold hands, and say the prayer together. Those who prefer to listen may do so.