

Begin a New Life

Six-Week Program for Small Groups

General Description of Meetings

Introduction

Each meeting in the *BNL* six-week program has a start time and end time, and it's divided into several parts. Meetings run for an hour and a quarter.

Opening Prayer & Reading(s)

Each meeting begins with an *Opening Prayer*, followed by one or more inspirational reading. Readings have been pre-selected for each of the weekly meetings. They appear on the meeting outline for each week. The group leader (or someone else in the group) offers the opening prayer and does the actual reading. This part of the meeting is meditative, and it happens with or without quiet music in the background.

Check-in

The *Opening Prayer* and *Reading* are followed by a time for *Check-in*. *Check-in* is a time for hearing from each member of the group. People share one highlight from their day or week, or an opening thought (*one* of these things, not both). *Check-in* gives each person a chance to start actively engaging in the morning'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. The group leader (and others in the group) 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 to be made, this part of the meeting is skipped. As with *Check-in*, *Group Business* happens quickly.

Reading of the Task for the Week

Each of the six meetings has a *Task* associated with it. The task is to practice a particular piece of the process in advance of the meeting, then come to the meeting ready to share your experience of doing so. Following *Group Business*, the *Task* that is linked to the current meeting is read out loud.

Group Sharing

The bulk of the meeting is then given over to *Group Sharing*. *Group Sharing* is a time for people to talk about their experience of doing the task for that 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 time of *Group Sharing*. But in the event that sharing lags, the leader will have a set of questions available to help elicit further sharing. (The questions are included in each week's meeting outline.) The questions are specific to that week's task. As the group leader listens to the sharing, he or she decides if one or more of the questions might be appropriate for the group. The leader also decides which question to ask and when to ask it. (Some of the questions may already have been addressed in the initial sharing.) This continues as needed until the end of *Group Sharing*.

Closure

The final part of the meeting is *Closure*. There are four parts to *Closure*, and the total time of *Closure* doesn't exceed 10 minutes. The four parts of closure are as follows:

- **Closing Thoughts**

The first part of *Closure* is *Closing Thoughts*. *Closing Thoughts* is a time for hearing a final, brief thought from each member of the group. It allows people to remain actively engaged to the end of the morning and to "check out" of the main session. 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.

Closing Thoughts happens fairly quickly, with each person saying just one or two sentences. The total time for *Closing Thoughts* doesn't exceed ten minutes.

- **Leader for the next meeting**

Following *Closing Thoughts*, a determination is made as to who will be the *Leader* for the next meeting. This responsibility may be assumed on a volunteer or rotational basis.

- **Person responsible for choosing the next meeting's *Step* or *Topic***

After a *Leader* has been decided on for the next meeting, a determination is made as to who will choose the *Step* or *Topic* for that meeting. (This responsibility may also be assumed on a volunteer or rotational basis.) If the meeting is already scheduled to be a *Process* meeting, that is announced to the group.

- **The Lord's Prayer**

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