

ALIVE IN THE SPIRIT SEMINAR GUIDELINES

A. OVERALL GUIDELINES

1. Form a team of willing Parishioners – ideally people who have done the seminars or Alpha course.
2. But don't worry if they don't have previous experience of Life in the Spirit: explain that, with prayer, the Holy Spirit will help them.
3. At the first meeting, explain the purpose of the seminars and the importance of soaking the whole plan in prayer, in advance and every week throughout the course (see TEAM MEETINGS below.)
4. Decide whether you are running the course for an existing group or to start a new prayer group; or for the wider parish. Be flexible about the meeting format: tailor it to your local situation.
5. When choosing people to facilitate the small discussion groups, reassure them they do not have to be experts – they are there to make sure the discussion runs well (see guidelines below)

B. TYPICAL MEETING FORMAT

1. Refreshments.
2. Introduction
3. Praise and Worship - if you don't have your own musicians you could use the recordings on ADoRE website <https://www.altonrenewal.com/2021>
4. Short testimony
5. Show video of the talk (See video links on Website <https://www.altonrenewal.com/2021>)
6. Small group discussion around the topic of the talk. (See guidelines HERE)
7. Final comments and closing prayer.
8. Handout reflections and prayers for the week

C. DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDELINES

1. A group or groups of about 12 is ideal – 2 facilitators, 2 helpers, 8 guests
2. The first aim is to discuss issues arising from the talk: give people the opportunity to respond and ask questions without being preached to.
3. What do they think and what do they feel?
4. Encourage participation, avoid being patronising.
5. Resist the urge to correct and criticize during discussion.
6. When someone makes a remark that is controversial or just wrong, comment: "How fascinating! I've never come across that idea before. What does anyone else think?"
7. Summarise at end of discussion and clarify misunderstandings at that point.
8. Gradually introduce Bible sharing and prayer as the course proceeds – go at the speed of the slowest group member.

D. TEAM MEETINGS BETWEEN SESSIONS

Overall purpose:

- Pray for the session, the team and the participants before each weekly session.
- Ideally this should not be just before the weekly session, as there will be too much distraction of organisation and greeting guests.
- You could use prayers and extracts from ["Prayers for a new Pentecost"](#)
- Highlight the key goals of the session and deal with any questions/issues.

Week One "God's Love" Key Goals:

- Re-state role of Facilitator – not an expert
- Be welcoming and loving
- Get to know participants
- Explain how the small groups work
- Encourage participants to share

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Week Two “Salvation” Key Goals:

- Build relationship with participants
- Help them understand the basic Gospel message
- The importance of Jesus to them as individuals

Week Three “New Life” Key Goals:

- Help participants understand the goodness of the gift given to them
- Explanation of baptism in the spirit
- Personal testimony
- Identify any individuals who may need additional explanation

Week Four “Receiving God’s gift” Key Goals:

- Help participants to take the next step of commitment
- Willingness to move forward in faith, rather than complete dedication
- Consider any special help individuals may need before next week

Week Five “Praying for Baptism in the Holy Spirit” Key Goals:

- Not just a spiritual experience but a new relationship with Jesus
- Explain how the session will work
- Help people relax, focus on the Lord, and receive

Week Six “Growth” Key Goals:

- Help people with ongoing growth and maturity
- Encourage commitment to Prayer and Scripture, Community and Service.
- Identify individuals in need of further help and decide how to give it.

Week Seven “Transformation in Christ” Key Goals:

- Offer a vision of ongoing transformation
- Encourage a sense of mission
- Help participants identify opportunities for involvement in their community

E. SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION POINTS

WEEK 1

1. The facilitator invites each member of the group to introduce themselves (Name and where they live).
2. Discussion starter: what made you decide to come to the Life in the Spirit Seminars?
3. The facilitator begins the sharing, including their own religious background, conversion experience(s), and a brief testimony to what the Lord has done for them. If someone in the group does not share important information (like religious background), the facilitator asks about it in a relaxed, friendly way.
4. The facilitator brings the discussion period to a close by leading the whole group in a short prayer.

Comments

- Above all else, we have to be welcoming in the first session. We have to make people feel at ease. We have to show them that we love them and will be at their disposal. If they can sense that we are there to be their servants and not to be their lords, they will feel much freer to return and participate. We should speak to them in such a way that we are beginning to welcome them as brothers and sisters.

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- The purpose of the first discussion is to lead people into a personal sharing of where they are in relation with the Lord. This will allow the team to get to know them better so that they can give them more help. The sharing will also introduce people to one another and will take the seminar out of a theoretical level on to a personal level.
- People who are new in the seminars appreciate receiving clear instructions about what to do. If we try too hard to be nice and end up being vague or hesitant, we do them no service. If we want them to stop talking to give someone else a chance, we should say so, gently but firmly.

WEEK 2

1. Welcome everyone back and ask any newcomers to introduce themselves.
2. Discussion starter: What things make you most feel the need for Christ?
3. Provide an opportunity sometime in the discussion for those in the group to ask any questions or discuss the things on their minds.

Comments

- Much of what is true for the first seminar is also true for the second seminar. From the point of view of the way people feel, the second seminar is still introductory. The team has to be welcoming.
- By the end of this seminar, each facilitator should know who the people in their discussion group are, and should know something about them, especially where they are in relationship to the Lord and the seminars.

WEEK 3

1. Discussion starters: Do you understand what it means to be baptized in the Spirit?
2. Do you understand what the gift of tongues is and why someone would want to pray in tongues?

Comments

- There is usually a change in people in the third seminar. Most people are affected by the talk. A new faith and a new desire to change are coming to birth in their hearts. The role of the team is to foster that new faith and new desire.
- Discussion starters may not be needed for the discussion this week or the weeks after. Frequently the discussion group is ready to get right into discussion after the talk. However, some discussion groups may always need discussion starters.

WEEK 4

1. Discussion starter: What has the Lord taught you so far about what you need to do to repent? What do you expect will happen to you next week? Do you have any questions about the gift of tongues?
2. The facilitator should begin the discussion by answering the first question and in doing so should give a short testimony to the way they turned to the Lord and experienced being baptized in the Spirit. They should include a few remarks about any difficulties in repentance and any fears about being prayed with to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Comments

- From the beginning of the fourth seminar to the end of the fifth seminar, we will have to encourage people to repent and to have faith. Our main service during all this time is to encourage people.
- People need to be assured of God's love, and they need to be assured that God is faithful to his promises. They need personal assurance to know that the problems they are experiencing are normal problems, that God's promises actually apply to them personally. They need to know that they can give up certain forms of wrongdoing and that the absence of that wrongdoing will not

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make them unhappy for the rest of their lives. They need to feel our love and concern. In short, they need to be encouraged to take their first steps.

WEEK 5

[No discussion in groups: prayer for baptism in the Holy Spirit.]

WEEK 6

1. Discussion starter: Share what has happened to you since last week. (This gives people a chance to see that they are not alone, and they can help one another)
2. After discussing this and any problems brought to light in the sharing, if there is time, the facilitator should encourage a discussion on prayer and community, if such a discussion does not come out of the sharing.

Comments

- The week after the fifth seminar is usually very different for different people in the seminar. People will run the whole range of reactions and emotions. The most common reactions are: complete euphoria (the person has had an emotional and spiritual experience which has left them feeling freer and happier than ever before); a feeling of “I hope it lasts” (this person is already experiencing some doubts and fears that they may “lose it” if not careful); disappointment (the person was let down because the experience was not what they had anticipated, or because they did not pray in tongues); and a reaction which has embraced all of these feelings in the short space of a week (perhaps the most common category).
- Each one of these reactions must be dealt with gently and lovingly. Each person should see that the facilitator understands what they are going through and is more than willing to talk or pray about it with them. The facilitator must not squash the euphoria, nor demand from anyone more than they can give, nor brush off as unimportant or ridiculous anyone’s disappointments or doubts. The sixth seminar should be a time when people begin to move away from approaching the life of the Spirit by their feelings and begin to approach it in faith. Those who are disappointed must be encouraged to have faith. They should probably be prayed with again for tongues or just encouraged to keep on praying those sounds that they are dissatisfied with. We should help others centre their euphoria on serving the Lord. All should be encouraged to make the Word of the Lord their foundation.

WEEK 7

1. Discussion starter: Share about the difficulties or trials you have had since being prayed with and share about the way you handled them.
2. Do you have any questions about how to be a part of a prayer group?
3. Concluding Prayer of Thanksgiving Together

Comments

- The last seminar is often a time for the facilitator to be of special help to people in the seminar: they should approach this as a chance for service and guidance on how people can become involved in joining or forming a prayer group or participating in parish activities.
- There could also be discussion about running follow-up sessions with more detailed explanation of the Charismatic gifts of the Spirit.

ADDITIONAL SESSIONS

See videos for weeks 8-11 on website <https://www.altonrenewal.com/2021>

These guidelines compiled by ADoRE (Alton Day of Renewal)

Website: www.altonrenewal.com