

ADVENT HOUSE GROUPS LEADER GUIDELINES

Suggested Timings (with example for a group meeting at 7:30pm)

- **Welcome** - 5 mins (7:30pm – 7:35pm)
- **Opening Antiphon / Prayer** - 2 mins (7:35pm – 7:37pm)
- **To Share** - 13 mins (7:37pm – 7:50pm)
- **To Listen/Through the eyes** - 10 mins (7:50pm – 8pm)
- **Discussion/Additional Questions** - 25 mins (8pm – 8:25pm)
- **Closing Prayer** - 5 mins (8:25pm – 8:30pm)

Do

- **Do begin with prayer** – Start with a short prayer to set a spiritual tone and invite God's presence into the discussion.
- **Do create a safe, welcoming atmosphere** – Encourage openness by letting people know it's a space where everyone can share without fear of judgment.
- **Do encourage everyone to participate** – Invite quieter members to share their thoughts in a gentle and non-pressuring way, also share the reading of the materials.
- **Do set ground rules for respectful listening** – Establish at the beginning that everyone should listen attentively without interrupting.
- **Do maintain eye contact with the group** – This helps people feel seen and acknowledged, fostering deeper engagement.
- **Do gently redirect when someone dominates** – If one person monopolizes the conversation, thank them for their input, then invite others to share.
- **Do be aware of time** – Keep an eye on the clock to ensure the conversation stays within the allotted time without rushing or cutting discussions short. With agreement, do feel free to adjust the suggested timings to something that works for the group.
- **Do allow for moments of silence** – Silence can give people time to reflect and can encourage deeper contributions.
- **Do use open-ended questions** – Ask questions that encourage discussion and deeper reflection rather than simple yes/no answers.

- **Do affirm contributions** – Acknowledge and affirm each person's input, making them feel valued and heard.
- **Do foster a prayerful environment throughout** – Keep the tone of the discussion focused on God's guidance and maintain a spiritual atmosphere.
- **Do ensure that people feel comfortable not speaking** – Let the group know it's okay to pass if they don't feel like sharing.
- **Do allow space for prayer requests** – Offer time for group members to share prayer needs and pray for one another, enhancing the spiritual connection.

Don't

- **Don't rush through the discussion** – Allow enough time for meaningful reflection and sharing, without pushing too quickly to the next point.
- **Don't allow side conversations** – This can make others feel excluded or distracted. Keep the group focused on the main discussion.
- **Don't let discussions stray too far off-topic** – Steer the conversation back to the theme if it begins to wander away from the purpose.
- **Don't allow one person to dominate** – If someone is speaking too much, gently redirect the conversation to give others a chance.
- **Don't force anyone to speak** – Avoid pressuring people to share if they are uncomfortable. Respect their personal boundaries.
- **Don't interrupt people** – Let everyone finish their thoughts without cutting them off, even if the conversation feels slow.
- **Don't dismiss anyone's contribution** – Avoid making anyone feel their input is irrelevant or unimportant, even if it's off-topic.
- **Don't over-correct or criticize** – If someone shares something incorrect or sensitive, gently guide them rather than publicly correcting them harshly.
- **Don't let the group go over time** – Respect everyone's schedule by finishing at the agreed time, unless there's a consensus to extend.
- **Don't dominate the conversation as the leader** – Your role is to facilitate, not lecture. Make sure others have ample opportunity to share.
- **Don't let the conversation become a debate** – Keep the environment respectful and focused on spiritual growth, avoiding arguments or divisive discussions.
- **Don't allow cliques to form** – Make sure no one feels left out or marginalized by encouraging everyone to engage with one another.
- **Don't forget to check in with participants** – If you sense someone is struggling with the conversation, follow up with them privately to offer support.
- **Don't make the conversation too formal** – Keep the tone relaxed and approachable, so everyone feels comfortable contributing.