

On the Way: A Guide for Group Discussions



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We have created this free guide to help you lead classes or group discussions as you use Forward Movement's *On the Way: Seven Reflections on Life with Jesus* in youth forums, formation classes, or other group settings. You can use *On the Way* as a 7-week course, or you can adapt it for use in retreat settings, mission trips, or pilgrimages—particularly with youth groups. You can also use it as a tool in formation for sacramental rites, as a Bible study resource, or as a way to engage newcomers.

On the Way is a bilingual book, with the full text presented both in English and Spanish. The authors include lay leaders and priests of Latino/Hispanic heritage.

The readings are from the gospel lessons for Lent, Year A of the Sunday lectionary.¹ However, the baptismal character of these readings makes them a suitable companion not just during Lent but at anytime, for anyone searching and contemplating what it means to follow Jesus.

This resource is published by Forward Movement, a ministry of The Episcopal Church. Please send your comments and suggestions to WWW.VENADELANTE.ORG/CONTACTO.

General Guidelines

Create a sacred space. The space you choose should be clean and appropriately lit. If possible, create a comfortable space that is not too bright, and make a special place for a candle and your Bible.

Materials. Provide or ask participants to bring a Bible, notebooks for journaling, and writing or art supplies for each session.

Be hospitable. Consider providing refreshments or asking participants to bring items to share. If possible, provide water and coffee.

Establish some group norms that will facilitate participation, order, and confidentiality. Keep these handy at each session, and review them each time or refer to them when necessary to support positive group dynamics.

¹ For the meditations and collects of this guide to follow strictly the lectionary, start on the week of Transfiguration Sunday and read the chapters in the following order: 3, 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7.

Always begin with prayer that includes a place for participants to raise concerns and thanksgivings before God in community. See the Daily Office section in *The Book of Common Prayer*, beginning on page 37. The Lent collects included at the end of each session may also be appropriate.

Breathing. As part of your opening prayer, invite participants to breath in, imagining that breath is flowing to every part of the body, and then to exhale fully. Repeat three times. This may be done before and at the end of the study.

Read the scripture passage together. Choose a Bible with which you are familiar. Popular versions of the Bible used in many parishes include Dios Habla Hoy / Versión Popular (in Spanish) or the New Revised Standard Version (in English). If able, participants may read sections of the passage in turn. The gospel readings lend themselves to reading in parts by character as well. The facilitator might prepare the reading and assign it to several readers beforehand to practice, or have suitable binders with the complete text prepared prior to meeting.

Questions for reflection are provided to help participants engage more fully with the scripture, the reflection, and the art. The facilitator might invite participants to write in a journal for a few minutes prior to group discussion. Large groups should be divided into smaller groups to facilitate participation.

Keeping a journal can support personal reflection and sharing. You might choose to ask participants to log reactions, compose prayers or petitions, answer the questions at the end of each section, or jot down reflections on their rereading of the scripture passage.

Art is an additional resource for your personal and group reflection. Participants may choose to write about their impressions or be inspired to create their own art. You may want to integrate various types of artistic expression. Provide clay, paints, or markers, or invite participants to write songs and share them with the group.

Evaluate your sessions, ask for feedback and share your feedback, pictures, videos, testimonials, and artwork with us by emailing: WWW.VENADELANTE.ORG/CONTACTO.

Adapting *On the Way* to Your Group

This course revolves around seven episodes in the life of Jesus, and their corresponding mediations published in *On the Way*. The materials presented in this guide are mere suggestions. Do not hesitate to adapt them to the needs, schedule, or ages of the group.

As a teacher or group leader, you are called to teach, motivate, inspire, and help your students learn and grow. Prepare yourself by studying the scriptural passages in depth. Read the meditations carefully. Consider prayerfully how to turn these suggestions into a lesson plan.

The questions that follow each meditation are intended to enrich the personal reflection and the group discussion, but they can be adapted or replaced. In a group setting, feel free to use other questions that may be more suitable for the group.

Take two minutes after each session to evaluate what worked and what did not work, and use this information to help guide and adjust your next lesson plan. Do not hesitate to ask advice from more experienced teachers or those who know the group well.

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Lesson 1: Temptation: Click! (pages 4-7)

Prayer & Breathing Exercise: See “General Guidelines” for an explanation.

Scriptural Passage: Read together Matthew 4:1-11.

Questions for Discussion

- What are examples of temptations people encounter on a regular basis?
- Sometimes, rather than being tempted to do something wrong, we are tempted to not do something right. Have you ever been tempted by apathy, cynicism, and disengagement?
- Can you think of other times in your life when you were tempted? What did you learn from those experiences?
- Look at the illustration on page 4. What is your reaction?

Video Discussion: *Angels in America* (3 minutes, 2003)

Roy Cohn (Al Pacino) is a corrupt attorney who is about to be disbarred because of illegal dealings. Roy wants to recruit a young, idealistic lawyer named Joe Pitt (Patrick Wilson) to help him. Using his political connections, Roy asks his friend Martin Heller (Brian Markinson) to offer Joe a powerful position in the Justice Department—with one condition: Joe must help stop the disbarment process against Roy.

- Watch a 3-minute clip, Video #1 at WWW.VENADELANTE.ORG/VIDEOSJUNTOS .
- What are the arguments that Roy and Martin use to try to convince Joe?
- By the end of the clip, do you think Joe is going to accept the offer?

Journaling and/or Art: Consider including a Journaling and/or Art component with this session, either during the session or as an assignment for the next meeting. See “General Guidelines” for an explanation.

Collect: Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; and, as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Lesson 2: Birth Status (pages 8-11)

Prayer & Breathing Exercise: See “General Guidelines” for an explanation.

Scriptural Passage: Read together John 3:1-17.

Questions for Discussion

- Have you ever felt out of place and/or participated in the exclusion of any individual or group? Why? How did you feel at these times?
- What can you do to make the wider world reflect the God-given reality that we are all children of one loving God?
- What other meaning can we find in Jesus’ challenge to be born “from above,” that is, of God?
- Look at the illustration on page 8. What is your reaction?

Video Discussion: DREAMers Who Excel as Students (6 minutes)

DREAMers are individuals impacted by the proposed Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. The bill aims to provide legal status to undocumented youth who entered the United States as children, if they graduate from high school and attend college or enter the military.

- Watch a 6-minute short, Video #2 at WWW.VENADELANTE.ORG/VIDEOSJUNTOS .
- How are the lives of these young people affected by the fact that they were born outside the U.S.?
- When we get baptized, we commit to “strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.”² How does your Christian baptism change your relation to “every human being”? How does it change your relation to other Christians?

Journaling and/or Art: Consider including a Journaling and/or Art component with this session, either during the session or as an assignment for the next meeting. See “General Guidelines” for an explanation.

Collect: O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

² *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 305.

Lesson 3: Do Not Be Afraid (pages 12-15)

Prayer & Breathing Exercise: See “General Guidelines” for an explanation.

Scriptural Passage: Read together Matthew 17:1-9.

Questions for Discussion

- Identify a significant transforming or transfiguring experience in your life. What made it so important?
- How can you put aside your fears in order to share the good news of God’s reconciling love for the world?
- What other meanings might “the mountain” have in the gospel passage?
- Look at the illustration on page 12. What is your reaction?

Video Discussion: *The Journey* (8 minutes)

Hari Raya is a Muslim celebration held in Malaysia and Singapore at the end of Ramadan, when Muslims visit the graves of their loved ones. On the eve of Hari Raya, two orphaned boys, Fizi and Ahmad, embark on a journey to visit the grave of Ahmad’s mother. Fizi is blind, and Ahmad has a hearing/speech impediment.

- Watch an 8-minute short, Video #3 at WWW.VENADELANTE.ORG/VIDEOSJUNTOS.
- In what way is their journey a transforming experience?

Journaling and/or Art: Consider including a Journaling and/or Art component with this session, either during the session or as an assignment for the next meeting. See “General Guidelines” for an explanation.

Collect: O God, who before the passion of your only-begotten Son revealed his glory upon the holy mountain: Grant to us that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Lesson 4: I Fell in Love (pages 16-19)

Prayer & Breathing Exercise: See “General Guidelines” for an explanation.

Scriptural Passage: Read together John 4:5-42.

Questions for Discussion

- Samaritans and Jews did not get along. Sometimes there are disagreements and rifts within families, communities, and churches. How does the example of Jesus in his approach of a Samaritan woman challenge you?
- How can you be better a sign of God’s unconditional love to the oppressed, bullied? To your “enemies”?
- What do you think Jesus means by “life-giving” water?
- Look at the illustration on page 16. What is your reaction?

Video Discussion: *Human* (6 minutes)

In the decades since Indian independence from Britain and partition between India and Pakistan, violence between Hindus and Muslims has erupted many times. During the Gujarat riots of 2002, 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus were killed.

- Watch a 6-minute short, Video #4 at WWW.VENADELANTE.ORG/VIDEOSJUNTOS.
- What similarities can you see between this short and Jesus’ encounter with the woman at the well?

Journaling and/or Art: Consider including a Journaling and/or Art component with this session, either during the session or as an assignment for the next meeting. See “General Guidelines” for an explanation.

Collect: Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Lesson 5: A New Kind of Sight (pages 20-23)

Prayer & Breathing Exercise: See “General Guidelines” for an explanation.

Scriptural Passage: Read together John 9:1-41.

Questions for Discussion

- Can you think of any examples of contradictions between apparent knowledge and true belief?
- How have you been able to come to terms with a seemingly paradoxical experience and understand it in a brand-new way?
- Have you known someone who discovered a sacred truth after hitting rock bottom? What did you learn from their experience?
- Look at the illustration on page 20. What is your reaction?

Video Discussion: Two Blind Sisters See for the First Time (5 minutes)

Sonia and Anita, two sisters living in India, have been blind since birth, but a simple eye operation makes it possible for them to see their mother for the first time.

- Watch a 5-minute short, Video #5 at WWW.VENADELANTE.ORG/VIDEOSJUNTOS.
- How do Sonia and Anita react when they can see for the first time?
- Were you surprised to find out that the cost of the operation is only \$300?

Journaling and/or Art: Consider including a Journaling and/or Art component with this session, either during the session or as an assignment for the next meeting. See “General Guidelines” for an explanation.

Collect: Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Lesson 6: Come Out! (pages 24-27)

Prayer & Breathing Exercise: See “General Guidelines” for an explanation.

Scriptural Passage: Read together John 11:1-45.

Questions for Discussion

- What is binding you and keeping you from enjoying life in abundance?
- What might you achieve if you allow God to bring life back into what is dead in your life?
- What have you discovered about yourself since you began studying this book?
- Look at the illustration on page 24. What is your reaction?

Video Discussion: *The Shawshank Redemption* (4 minutes, 1994)

After being wrongly convicted of murder, banker Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins) is sent to a violent state penitentiary run by cruel and corrupt officials. Andy spends 19 years digging a tunnel through the prison walls with a small rock hammer.

- Watch a 4-minute clip, Video #6 at WWW.VENADELANTE.ORG/VIDEOSJUNTOS .
- What similarities can you see between Lazarus and Andy?

Journaling and/or Art: Consider including a Journaling and/or Art component with this session, either during the session or as an assignment for the next meeting. See “General Guidelines” for an explanation.

Collect: Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Lesson 7: The Triumphal Entry (pages 28-31)

Prayer & Breathing Exercise: See “General Guidelines” for an explanation.

Scriptural Passage: Read together Matthew 21:1-11.

Questions for Discussion

- Where is God calling you into the thick of turmoil?
- The same people who welcomed Jesus as a king later cried out, “Crucify him!” In what way might Jesus be leading you through a valley of darkness into new life?
- Look at the illustration on page 28. What is your reaction?

Video Discussion: *Gandhi* (3 minutes, 1994)

The Salt March of 1930 was an act of civil resistance by the people of India. Led by Mahatma Gandhi, the march was a nonviolent protest against the British, who had imposed a salt monopoly that required the people of India to pay taxes for it. This march to make salt from the sea gave impetus to the Indian independence movement. Gandhi’s life and teachings inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world.

- Watch a 3-minute clip, Video #7 at WWW.VENADELANTE.ORG/VIDEOSJUNTOS.
- What similarities can you see between Gandhi’s march to the sea and Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem?
- How do you understand the relationship between political and spiritual liberation?

Journaling and/or Art: Consider including a Journaling and/or Art component with this session, either during the session or as an assignment for the next meeting. See “General Guidelines” for an explanation.

Collect: Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*