



LivingDeeper

Spiritual conversations with friends

LEADER'S GUIDE (for small groups)

SMALL GROUP WEEK 1

In your small group...

1. Discuss—Discuss one of the five *Soularium* questions in your small group. (For example: “As you think about your life so far, which image best describes what you’ve experienced spiritually?”)

Set aside about half of your time for this discussion. (The second half will be used to talk about the LivingDeeper challenge—items #2-8 below.) Aim to give half the group members a chance to share their stories.

2. Brainstorm—After the discussion, ask the group to take time to think about the following question: “Who is one friend you would enjoy having this same conversation with?” (Who would you like to know more about their spiritual journey?)

3. Tell a story—As the leader, share a story (even a simple story) about a time when you or someone you know took a step of faith. Or, describe when God began giving you a heart to reach out to those who don’t know God personally. (What Bible verses did God use in your life? What were the circumstances?) You might also read: *Jessie’s Story*, p3.

4. Read—As a group, read the LivingDeeper Introduction. After reading it, invite the group to give comments or ask questions. (The Introduction can be found at: cru.org/soularium under “Small Groups.”)

5. Share—Invite the group to share fears: Does the idea of seeking to understand someone else’s spiritual journey make you nervous? Why? Explore the group’s fears.

Also, allow the group to share ideas about how they imagine bringing up the *Soularium* question with a friend. Here’s a start:

“Earlier this week me & some friends had a conversation using images to describe our spiritual journeys. Can I hear about how you would describe your journey sometime?”

6. Pray—As a group, pray for friends, opportunities, & personal attitudes.

7. Download—Take time for everyone to download the *Soularium* app.

The Challenge: With a friend outside the group...

8. Ask—In the week following your small group, encourage group members to ask a non-Christian friend the same question that was discussed. This doesn’t need to be a big deal; they just need to be genuinely interested & excited to hear their friends’ thoughts!

BASIC SUMMARY

For the next two weeks, your group will be sharing stories & discussing meaningful experiences as it relates to a question from *Soularium*[®] (e.g., “Which image describes what you’ve experienced spiritually?”). Half of your group will share their experiences during the first week; and the other half of your group will share during the second week.

During these two weeks, you’ll also challenge everyone to talk about the discussion question with a non-Christian friend. That’s basically it!

Bring a physical *Soularium* deck to your small group! (Available at CruStore.org) Or, you can also use the *Soularium* app.

Tips!

- Many people might need a few **reminders** to connect with a friend during the week. As the group leader, consider sending an encouraging text to your group.
- Week 1 will take all of your small group time. Week 2 might have space for a 10(?) minute devotional? If so, consider reading John 4:4-26.

LEADER'S GUIDE (CONTINUED...)

SMALL GROUP WEEK 2

In your small group...

1. Review—Talk about how the week went! Share stories, challenges, and answered prayers.

Some questions to ask...

- How has it gone asking your friends the *Soularium* discussion question?
- What has gone well?
- What are some of your fears? Hesitations?
- What are some of the challenges you're facing?
- Have you run into any other friends or classmates whom you felt God prompting you to consider exploring their spiritual journey?

Here are some ways you (the leader) can help your group be successful...

Encourage. Applaud even the tiniest steps of faith! Be a leader who celebrates!

Provide a way. Get under the rock of your group's challenges & help them think through how to overcome difficulties. Empathize & understand the challenges, but help provide a way forward for those needing guidance. If you have people who are seeing success, let the group glean advice from them.

Tell another story. Share another story about a time when you (or someone you know) took a step of faith.

Pray. Please pray regularly for the members of your group. In fact, take a few moments right now to pray for them.

2. Continue the Discussion—Continue discussing last week's question with your group; allow the other half of the group to share their stories. Again, you will have limited time for significant content outside of the LivingDeeper discussion. Perhaps you'll have time for a 10(?) minute devotional (if your group meets for an hour)?

3. Pray—Pray for friends, opportunities, and personal attitudes.

The Challenge: With a friend outside the group...

4. Ask—Continue the challenge. Encourage members to ask and discuss the small group discussion question with a friend.

SMALL GROUP WEEK 3

Celebrate & review the last two weeks!

Review—Discuss how the week went. Share stories, challenges, and answered prayers.

Some questions to ask...

- What did you learn about yourself the last two weeks?
- What did you learn about God?
- Do you have other ideas for how we can invite friends into the kinds of conversations we have here in the group?

Celebrate & carry on—Praise God for how He used the last few weeks in people's lives! Continue your regularly scheduled small group content.

LivingDeeper: cru.org/soularium (under "Small Groups")

LivingDeeper

An invitation.
A conversation.
And a lasting connection.

Jessie's Story

It was my first year in college and I began to settle into campus life. I found my favorite places to study, the cheapest lunch locations, and the best trees to string up my hammock to. But more importantly, I found eight awesome friends in my dorm.

Up to this point in life, my close friends had been like-minded Christians. And I expected to connect with similar friends in college. But to my surprise, I was the only Christian out of my new friends. It was quite a dramatic shift. I found myself with friends I genuinely liked, but friends I didn't connect with at spiritual level.

Then came a personal challenge. I was challenged to take a step of faith and ask one of my non-Christian friends a question about God, meaning, or Jesus. I decided to find out how my eight hall friends thought about such things.

One afternoon, my friend Collin and I set up our hammocks in the stairwell and we started talking. I decided to change the topic and just asked, *"So Collin, who do you believe Jesus is?"*

I was surprised by his response. *"Honestly Jess, I've heard the name Jesus, but I don't know who he is...I've actually never been inside a church before."*

I had always envisioned the mission field far off overseas somewhere where super Christians went to share the Gospel to people who spoke other languages. Yet here was Collin, my friend, an 18-year-old college student from a suburban home in North Carolina who didn't know who Jesus was...and had never been inside a church. *What?*

In that moment a flip switched inside my heart. The mission field is right here--and it looks like God's ambassador is me. In other circumstances I would've thought it cliché to share John 3:16, but I asked Collin if I could read for him one of Jesus' sayings and he agreed. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*

I'll never forget Collin's response. *"Jesus said that? Wow. I've never really thought about God loving the world before."*

We continued talking. And at the end of our conversation, he thanked me for sharing.

Incredible. One simple question and I got to know my friend in a way that I hadn't before. And our conversation wasn't awkward or weird; it was actually refreshing and meaningful--for both of us. He even thanked me for our conversation.

Now, years later, I'm not sure if Collin has made the decision to follow Jesus. He didn't during the four years we were in college together, but over that time he had multiple opportunities to hear who Jesus was and how He impacted my life and the lives of other Christians on campus.

God used my conversation with Collin in profound ways. There are so many "Collins" in the world and I'm praying for the opportunity to call more of them my friends.



**I asked my friend Collin a simple question about his faith...
And I'll never forget his response.**