

THE ART OF MINISTRY PROMPTING: Small Group Guide

Small Group Guide Prompt Template:

You are a **[role, e.g., facilitator, small group leader, Christian educator]** preparing a small group resource for **[setting, e.g., church, retreat, youth group, Bible study]**. Create a **[number of sessions]**-session small group guide based on **[book, Scripture passage, or topic]**. The guide is for **[target group]**, within the context of **[theological tradition or denomination]**. The tone of the guide should be **[tone: reflective, practical, exploratory, theological, etc.]**. Each session should last about **[desired length]**. Present the sessions in **[format: outline, full leader guide, discussion handout, etc.]**. Include open-ended discussion questions in a **[discussion style: reflective, practical, theological, exploratory, etc.]**. Provide suggested opening activities or icebreakers that fit the tone and audience. End each session with a **[closing element: prayer prompt, takeaway action, reflection exercise, etc.]**.

Example Prompt:

You are a small group leader preparing a resource for a church Bible study. Create a 4-session small group guide based on the book of Ruth. The guide is for young adults, within the context of the Reformed (PCUSA) tradition. The tone of the guide should be reflective and practical. Each session should last about 60 minutes. Present the sessions in an outline format. Include open-ended questions in a theological and exploratory discussion style. Provide suggested opening activities or icebreakers that help participants connect their own experiences with the text. End each session with a closing prayer prompt and a simple takeaway action for participants to practice during the week.

What is this template used for?:

This template is designed to help you create discussion-based small group or Christian education content — whether that’s for adults, youth, or intergenerational groups. It’s especially useful for developing multi-session series built around a theme, Scripture passage, or book.

You can use it to draft session guides, generate discussion questions, brainstorm activities, or reformat a plan for a specific age group or learning style.

Prompt Template Explained:

Art of Ministry Element	Template
Context	Create a [number of sessions]-session small group guide based on [book, Scripture passage, or topic]. The guide is for [target group], within the context of [theological tradition or denomination].
Persona Priming	You are a [role, e.g., facilitator, small group leader, Christian educator] preparing a resource for [setting, e.g., church, retreat, youth group, Bible study].
Tone	The tone of the guide should be [reflective, practical, exploratory, theological, etc.].
Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Length: Each session should last about [desired length]. - Format: Present the sessions in [outline, full leader guide, discussion handout, etc.]. - Discussion Content: Include open-ended questions in a [discussion style: reflective, practical, theological, exploratory, etc.]. - Activities: Provide suggested opening activities or icebreakers that fit the tone and audience. - Closing: End each session with a [closing element: prayer prompt, takeaway action, reflection exercise, etc.].

Thinking About the Prompt:

When prompting the model to create a small group guide, it helps to give context about both your audience and your expectations for how the group will engage.

Here are some key things to clarify:

- **What's the content or topic?** A book of the Bible? A theme like forgiveness, belonging, or justice? A published book your group is reading together?
- **How many sessions do you need?** One-time? Three-part series? Lent or Advent study?
- **How long is each session?** A 20-minute youth session looks very different from a 90-minute adult class. Time guides tone and depth.
- **Who is this for?** Adults, teens, intergenerational? New to faith or long-time churchgoers?

- **What's the tone or dynamic of the group?** Is this a reflective and quiet space, or more interactive and social?
- **What kind of discussion style do you want?** Application-based? Text-focused? Personally reflective? Playful and exploratory?
- **What theological tradition or denominational perspective should shape this?** Whether you name your denomination (PCUSA, ELCA, UMC) or describe it (“progressive mainline Protestant” or “evangelical but not fundamentalist”), this matters — especially for the kinds of assumptions the model will bring into summaries or questions.

A Note About Books and Outside Sources:

If you're asking for a guide based on a specific book or resource, **don't assume the model has actually read it** — even if it sounds like it has.

Language models are good at sounding confident, even when they're wrong. That's what people mean when they say an AI **“hallucinates.”** It can generate convincing but inaccurate content if it doesn't have access to the actual material.

If there are specific quotes, ideas, or chapters you want the model to use, **copy and paste those into the prompt.** That anchors the output in your real source — not the model's guess at what the book might say.

Treat it like an assistant who's helpful but hasn't done the reading. It can shape discussion questions, simplify summaries, and adapt content — but it needs you to set the foundation.