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Tweeting with MANUAL - PART D

Pilgrimages: preparation and follow-up

Michel Remery Ilse Spruit



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The #TwGOD team

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Tweeting with GOD Manual: Exploring the Catholic Faith Together - Part D

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Part D Pilgrimages: preparation and follow-up

Introduction

Our #TwGOD team – the team that creates *Tweeting with GOD* – consists mainly of young people. We all believe it is important to regularly go out and consciously devote attention to our faith: thus we took part in World Youth Days (WYD), summer camps, pilgrimages, weekend retreats, the list goes on. Through our work for the #TwGOD team, we are able to integrate the experiences from our pilgrimages in our daily lives and share them with other young people.

The following pages focus on how you can use the project #TwGOD during the preparation for pilgrimages like WYD, and especially how to use it as a follow-up. Hopefully, our experiences will also be useful for others. We have noticed ourselves what a difference a good preparation and a solid follow-up can make for our daily lives as faithful, which are surely not always easy!

You can also use the suggestions and experiences we share here for other occasions when you travel because of your faith, whether it is a pilgrimage to Lourdes, a Catholic youth camp or a visit to a local shrine: time and again we have noticed that participants have a lot of questions about the faith and their relationship with God and other people.

During the preparation for such a journey, you can use the book *Tweeting with GOD* to guide discussions, for example about the sacraments and the liturgy, and, depending on the aim of the pilgrimage, also about relics and different ways to pray. Afterwards, it is a good idea to meet with your group once or twice to exchange stories and pictures. Following these sessions, you can open up the group for other young people. Led by their own questions about life and the faith, they can discover the Catholic faith further.

For many of our team members, WYD and other faith-related journeys were important reasons to start living out their Catholic faith actively. The transition of a large-scale celebration of the faith to daily life is something that occupies us every day. We were lucky enough to find a group of young people that make us feel supported and inspired to live as Christians. At the same time, we see that not all young people have a group like ours in their community. We wish for all our peers to feel encouraged by the Church on their personal journey with Jesus.

The #TwGOD team



You may hear people complain about pilgrimages like WYD, saying that it is just a one-time event, not rooted in the daily life of young faithful and the Church. This criticism is justified when participants simply attend and return home as if it were any holiday. However, if prepared for and lived out passionately, the pilgrimage cannot but have a great influence on youth pastoral care! It is our own experience, shared by many, that for those who participate wholeheartedly it is impossible to return unchanged. Together, we have seen quite a few editions and brought home something different from each of them.

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For a pilgrimage to have a lasting experience,

a programme of preparation, as well as a follow-up afterwards are essential. In many places, preparation programmes have been set up, which were received with a lot of enthusiasm from the participants. Understandably, the main focus is on forming a pilgrim group and getting ready for travelling together. Unfortunately, a follow-up often does not go much further than a reunion to exchange pictures, and maybe a presentation to sponsors.

Tweeting with GOD (#TwGOD) can be a great instrument in preparing for the journey, and especially when, upon return, the young pilgrims want to deepen their experience with God and their fellow pilgrims. #TwGOD can help the pilgrim experience to become truly rooted in daily life.

For that to happen it is important that the group which went on pilgrimage does not remain closed in itself, but integrates into existing structures or evolves into new pastoral proposals, always open for new members. You will see in the following pages that this closely reflects the #TwGOD approach.

Preparation and follow-up

Father Michel: "In my experience, both the preparation of World Youth Day and the subsequent follow-up can be very fruitful for pastoral life in the parish and the diocese. Both are very important in order to let the WYD experience become part of daily life with Jesus and the Church.

For example, we went to WYD in Madrid with 100 young people from our parish in the Netherlands and from Suriname, after three days of pre-WYD festivities in the parish. These three days alone had a great impact on both the young participants and on the other parishioners, for all worked together to make this event into a great success. Furthermore, the preparation and follow-up with the young people led to many new initiatives regarding youth ministry in the parish, initiated by the young people themselves".



Questions

Pope Francis said: "Youth pastoral ministry must engage with the questions posed by the youth of today, and from this starting point, initiate a real and honest dialogue to bring Christ into their lives. And a true dialogue in this sense can be achieved by those who experience a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, which then overflows into their relationships with their brethren" (11 D_{EC} 2014). This is precisely what #TwGOD intends to do. Every pilgrim preparing for the journey has his or her questions, which will become even more numerous during and after the pilgrimage. So, why not place their questions at the heart of your pilgrimage programme and entire youth ministry?

Head, heart, and hands

Youth ministry is concerned with helping young people deepen their relationship with God, themselves, and people around them, and thus becoming mature adults in every sense. It involves both accompanying and educating them.

Pope Francis once said: "a good educator risks teaching students how to walk on their own". He added that education must focus on head, heart and hands, saying that these three must be in harmony (25 Nov. 2015). These three principles can be recognised in the #TwGOD approach: think, pray, act (SEE "D.2").

HTWGOD can be a great help in drafting your preparation and follow-up for a pilgrimage, linking these to parish ministry.



The tree key concepts of Tweeting with GOD are also key to both youth ministry and World Youth Day. The order can change, but the three concepts remain the same: #TwGOD invites participants to think, pray and act (SEE (D, I)).

Think

Many experiences on the way to WYD offer the young pilgrim food for thought: not only the spiritual input given by the pope and the bishops in their catechesis, the homilies and conferences by their pastors, but also the conversations and exchanges with their peers. These experiences help a lot to deepen their personal faith, especially when pilgrims are well prepared and studied some elements of the faith and the Church together before embarking on their pilgrimage.

Upon returning from WYD the pilgrims may have a great urge to talk about their questions and thoughts regarding the faith. This is where "ordinary" youth ministry should take over, although this cannot really be viewed independently from WYD ministry (SEE "D.1"). #TwGOD is a great tool in order to engage into a dialogue about the questions of the young pilgrims. Below you find our suggestions for a complete follow-up programme after WYD, based on the #TwGOD project (SEE "D.4"-"D.6" AND "APPENDIX 7").

Pray

WYD is more than just a holiday: it is a pilgrimage (SEE TWEET 3.17). The daily moments of prayer in the morning and the evening, the daily Eucharist, that moment of silence in the tent of adoration,

Hugging strangers

Margreet: "At WYD, thinking, praying and acting play a big role. First of all, a lot of thinking is involved when listening to the daily bible readings. It really pays off to give these your full attention and to seize this opportunity to learn more about the faith. You can also talk about the readings with your fellow believers. This is very useful especially for your daily life after WYD! In addition, you pray a lot together, the highlight being the concluding Mass with the Pope. That was very special! "Acting" at WYD immediately makes me think of the people walking around with a sign saying "free hugs". At WYD, you can do things you would normally not have the chance to: hugging strangers and making friends with Catholics from all over the world.... And of course meeting the Pope!"



these are all essential steps in learning how to pray for yourself. When prayer has been part of the preparation, this helps the pilgrims to know what is happening at the WYD mass events and to join in prayer instead of just chatting about what they see. Upon returning home, this prayer experience needs deepening. On one hand there is the need for personal spiritual guidance, on the other, there is the need to integrate prayer in the entirety of youth ministry. The #TwGOD approach aims to do precisely that.

Act

Without good acts, our faith is dead (JAS. 2:26; SEE TWEET 4.8). An important element of the WYD pilgrimage is the fact that you are undertaking this journey together. This helps pilgrims to discover that as people we cannot live only for ourselves, but that we also have to be there for others. If we say we believe in Jesus' message of love and care, this faith should also be visible in our acts. #TwGOD is not only an intellectual stimulus, but a way to integrate our faith into our lives. Head, heart and

hands are part of the same person, and need to act in unison in order for us to be ourselves.

Helping others where possible renders us more aware of ourselves, of our questions, and of our relationship with God. It is a deeply Christian task. Therefore, #TwGOD always integrates practical elements in the programme, also in connection to WYD or its follow-up. Think, pray, and act are three principles of #TwGOD that can be very successfully applied when organising WYD preparation or follow-up.



A good preparation is key for a pilgrimage to have a lasting influence (SEE "D.1"-"D.2"). But what to discuss when preparing? The best place to start is always with the questions of the participants (SEE B.1-B.3). At the same time, you would like your group to have some basic knowledge about the Church and the liturgy during the journey. That would help a lot in understanding their conversation with peers, possibly from other countries, and in following the programme and liturgy.

The Church

Questions like "How does someone get to be pope" or "What kind of monks, nuns, and friars are there?" could be great starting points for a dialogue about the visible Church (SEE TWEET 2.4 AND 2.9). Or maybe the group comes up with more delicate questions regarding the history of the Church with infamous chapters like the crusades and the inquisition (SEE TWEET 2.31-2.32). Each of these is helpful in starting a dialogue about the role of the Church.

Whatever the starting point, purely intellectual knowledge about the Church is not enough. A pilgrimage is in the first place an experience of how we all form the Church together. The biblical image of the Church as the Body of Christ may be very helpful in this regard (SEE TWEET 2.1 AND 2.12). Jesus is the head, and we are the members of one single body: all members are needed for the body to be complete, however insignificant some of these members may seem in the eyes of others.

The liturgy

During pilgrimages like WYD, the liturgy is often experienced as being very different from that at home. Indeed, the choirs are larger, the music is different, and so is the congregation! But the essence of the liturgy, which is the personal and communal encounter with Jesus Christ, is exactly the same. So is the role of the celebrant, whether he is a priest, a bishop or the pope! It is very helpful for the participants to know something about the liturgy of the Church, in particular the celebration of the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, as they will encounter these during the pilgrimage (see Tweet 3.38-3.39 AND 3.44-3.50). This preparation will also help them to understand the continuity between the liturgy in their home parish and during the journey.

The #TwGOD app can be very helpful in this regard. Getting to know the essence of the liturgy will help to experience the pilgrimage liturgy not so much as a one-time event, but as a large and intense celebration of the same Eucharist celebrated at home, where they meet Christ in person.

Preparation programme

Typically, preparation for a pilgrimage starts several months before the great event. This allows for some time to get to know each other, possibly work together to find the necessary funding, and



Involving the parish

Mrs. Severijnen: "I am not a young person, but the preparation of WYD in my parish has helped me a lot with my personal faith and the way in which I see the Church. It was great to be a volunteer during the days of WYD preparation in the parish. In fact, especially the result of several neighbouring parishes working together made a lasting impact on many parishioners. Both through the enthusiasm of the young participants, and of the parishioners with whom I worked hard to prepare various events, I was strengthned in my faith and found new joy in my volunteer work in the parish. I am happy to say that I am not alone in this experience!"

especially to learn about the faith together through group sessions, prayer, and action. All these elements should be part of your preparation programme.

Tweeting with GOD is well suited to the preparation for a pilgrimage. In fact, your preparation can look a lot like any #TwGOD session (SEE B.1-B.3). It may be the best way to get your group involved in themes that go beyond the practical and financial preparation of the journey. It is an ongoing invitation to all of them to start tweeting with GOD themselves!

> The travel preparations can help you discover how the Church and the liturgy can support you on your personal path with Jesus.



Everyone working with youth knows that the participation in pilgrimages like World Youth Day Can be a life-changing experience. As such, it can have a great and positive influence on the daily pastoral care in your parish or diocese. Pope Francis said: "How beautiful it is to see that young people are pilgrim missionaries, joyfully bringing Jesus to every street, every town square and every corner of the earth!" (EvangeLII GAUDIUM, 106).

This is a great description of many of the young people returning from, for example, WYD, who try to live as good Christians displaying care for the people around them. Speaking with enthusiasm about their experience including their encounter with Christ, they are very strong and convincing evangelizers. In this way, pilgrimages have contributed a lot to the New Evangelisation called for by all recent Popes (SEE TWEET 4.49).

Back to normal?

But how to link the unique experience during the pilgrimage to the day to day pastoral ministry among the youth? The challenge for youth leaders is to help young pilgrims integrate their experiences to their everyday lives upon return. Having lived an intense few days or weeks on the road with like-minded people, the teens and young adults often have a hard time readjusting to life at home. It is not so hard to go to daily Mass when this is part of the pilgrim's programme, but back home school, jobs and other activities are all waiting for attention. Similarly, praying before every meal is easier when you are surrounded by peers who profess the same faith than it is sitting at a table with non-believing students or even family members.

Their questions

If you wish to continue the dialogue that took place during the pilgrimage also at home, the best place to start is the questions of the group members. In the beginning these may be mainly related to the pilgrimage itself, but soon other questions will come up. The Tweeting with GOD approach can be a great companion in streamlining these questions and helping the young people to become more and more rooted in their faith. That way, the pilgrimage no longer is a unique but single event in their lives, and becomes a truly life-changing experience! (SEE <u>"D.1"</u>).

The great majority of the questions of your group will be found in the project #TwGOD. As each of these questions came from young, active people, many of them are about the practical aspects of Christian life: Why go to church? How do I pray? How can I be a Christian online? At the same time, it also contains answers to other fundamental questions: Why is the Bible so important? What did Jesus do for us? Etcetera. # Integration



No progress without follow-up

Rowy: "I used to be a "regular" church goer: every year at Christmas only. For me, WYD was extremely exciting, and I had a great time with my friends. However, coming home I realised that I had many more questions than before. I think that, had there not been the post-WYD proposal of #TwGOD, I would have skipped going to church even at Christmas. My questions would have remained unanswered, and I would not have proceeded on the path of faith. WYD is a great experience, during which you live the faith together with others, but to make this part of your life, you need a thorough follow-up programme". What you are looking for is to stimulate the integration between the powerful experience during the pilgrimage and daily life, between theoretical faith-related questions and a personal relationship with God, between prayer and practical help to one's neighbour. Saint Ignatius of Loyola spoke of "finding God in all things", which is precisely what is needed here. This #TwGOD manual provides useful information for group leaders to do so on the basis of questions from the young pilgrims (SFE B.1-B.6). In addition, the following pages will outline a follow-up programme specifically developed for after WYD.

> Ideally, a follow-up programme helps to move from pilgrimage questions towards including also questions related to daily life as a Christian.



In our view, the follow-up after a pilgrimage focuses only initially on the pilgrim group and their experience, opening up quickly to others. This is intentional: it is important to stimulate the integration of the experience into daily life. Anyone can speak about the faith, irrespective of whether or not they have joined the pilgrimage. The enthusiasm of the pilgrims will undoubtedly be contagious and stimulate other young Catholics to learn more about the faith.

Phase I: Travel experiences

The customary reunion to exchange pictures and catching up is also a great opportunity for exchanging deeper experiences. If a stay-at-home programme was organised for those who could not attend WYD, it is a good idea to invite them too for this reunion, as they will have partly similar

Phase 1: Exchanging experiences

Session 1

- Aim: To catch up with fellow pilgrims and exchange experiences.
- 00.00 Start meeting (with coffee / soft drinks).
 - Exchange pictures.
 - Get to know new faces (SEE APPENDIX 3).

00.45 Sharing in small groups (if the group is large enough to split up). Questions for the groups:

- What is your most precious memory of?
- What did you dislike most?
- What is most difficult coming back home?
- How do you think you can integrate your experience in daily life?

01.45 Prayer in the chapel

02.00 Conclusion.

- Singing pilgrim hymns.
- Spontaneous bidding prayers by participants.
- If possible: a moment of adoration.

Session 2

- Aim: To make a smooth transition from the unique experience to continuing growth in faith on a daily basis.
- 00.00 Start meeting (with coffee / soft drinks).
 - Time to chat and catch up.
- 00.30 Sharing in small groups (if the group is large enough to split up). Questions for the groups:
 - What questions did you encounter coming back?
 - What do you find most difficult about
 - connecting your experience to daily life?How can you live as a good Christian?
- 01.45 Prayer in the chapel.
 - Singing pilgrim hymns.
 - Spontaneous bidding prayers by participants.
 - Praying Compline together (SEE TWEET 3.13).

02.00 Conclusion.



experiences. One of the big problems participants will keep bringing up is the great difference between the experience during the pilgrimage and the "dull" daily life the participants have come back to. The challenge is to keep the enthusiasm of their experience going whilst integrating it into daily life. We give a suggestion of how to set up these first meetings (SEE BOX).

Phase 2: questions

The questions of the participants form a great starting point to do so. These questions can be related to experiences during the pilgrimage or to any matter of faith and life in general. They stem from curiosity and a desire to get to know God. The journey-related questions will soon fade out, whilst questions about faith and daily life will increase. That is why we speak of a second phase. As said, it would be good to open up this phase for anyone interested in joining.

A season with #TwGOD

A good way to organise Phase 2 is through a season with #TwGOD. This manual explains step by step how to go about this (SEE B.1-B.6), whilst the Appendix gives you a suggestion for the programme during the season (SEE APPENDIX 1 AND "APPEN-DIX 7"). We have worked out a specific programme for the follow-up after WYD 2016, that might be helpful as an example of the great variety of approaches possible with #TwGOD (SEE D.6).

After two pilgrimage-related sessions, open up the group to others and continue searching together for answers to questions.

Pilgrimages: preparation and follow

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The theme of World Youth Day is yearly announced by the pope in a message to the youth. For example, in 2016 Pope Francis invited the young people to recognise God's mercy, and to ask forgiveness for anything that went wrong in your relationship with him. At the same time, the pope invited everyone to take better care of their neighbour. In that sense, the theme is a concrete answer to the Biblical imperative to love God and neighbour (SEE THE #TwGOD APP; TWEET 1.19 AND 4.7).

During WYD the young pilgrims heard a lot about the theme "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (MT 5:7). However, will they have understood its implications for their own lives? It would be good to have a brief look at the theme from the three #TwGOD angles: think, pray, act (see <u>"APPENDIX 7"</u>).

Think: recognise God's mercy

God is always waiting for us to turn to him. He asks us to be "merciful like the Father", as the motto of the Year of Mercy instituted by Pope Francis for 2015-2016 says. That invitation does not only apply to WYD, but especially to daily life. The challenge is to recognise God's mercy every day again and to mirror it in your daily life. Recognising the love of God for myself, and realising that this does not depend on my sinfulness is not always easy! (see Tweet 4.14 AND 4.31).

Pray: recognise the need for forgiveness

A special feature of the Year of Mercy is that in many diocese holy doors have been opened. These doors are a great symbol of God's mercy, especially when passing through the door is com-

A 17-year old Pope Francis

Pope Francis: "God's mercy is very real and we are all called to experience it firsthand. When I was seventeen years old, it happened one day that, as I was about to go out with friends, I decided to stop into a church first. I met a priest there who inspired great confidence, and I felt the desire to open my heart in Confession. That meeting changed my life!... We keep looking for God, but God is there before us, always looking for us, and he finds us first. Maybe one of you feels something weighing on your heart. You are thinking: I did this, I did that.... Do not be afraid! God is waiting for you! God is a Father and he is always waiting for us!" [POPE FRANCIS, MESSAGE FOR WYD 2016, N. 2]



bined with asking forgiveness in the sacrament of reconciliation. It would be very good to pass through the holy door with the post-WYD group, including also other participants, and to experience the power of this sacrament (SEE BOX; TWEET 3.38-3.39). This is also an excellent occasion to repeat the possibly first ever confession during WYD in a more daily setting, inviting the participants to return often to this sacrament.

Act: recognise the needs of others

An integral part of the Catholic faith and the #TwGOD approach is to act merciful, first of all because of our relationship with God. This is all about putting your faith into practice. Doing volunteer work with the group is an excellent way to do something for your neighbour and to act out your faith. Think together about ways to do so. Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati said: "Jesus pays me a visit every morning at Mass in Holy Communion, and I return the visit in the meagre way I know how, visiting the poor".

Recognising Jesus

Eline: "Volunteering has taught me that acting out my faith is not about big gestures, but about small acts of kindness. It is about recognising Jesus in the person in front of you – regardless of their age, health condition or disability – and putting yourself second. I had a wonderful experience in Lourdes, but you can act merciful anywhere". Think, pray, act: the theme of God's divine mercy should penetrate all aspects of daily life!

Appendix 7: Follow-up after WYD

Upon their return from World Youth Day, the young pilgrims will hopefully be full of enthusiasm about their faith and the Church, but also full of questions and zeal to find answers. In the following scheme we meet every fortnight, but you can also meet weekly by simply adding other questions. This works best if you have a small team of young people joining together in preparing the sessions. Try to start with a question that is interesting, but not too personal: after a few meetings the group will know each other better and can share also about more personal issues.

#I. Exchanging experiences after World Youth Day

For: Pilgrims to WYD and participants in a stay-at-home-programme.

September: First post-WYD session

• See <u>"D.5"</u> for the programme ("Session 1").

September: Second post-WYD session

• See <u>"D.5"</u> for the programme ("Session 2").

#2. Faith-related questions

For: The participants of #1. and all other young people interested.

October: First meeting

- Spend time to get to know each other better.
- Collect questions (<u>SEE APPENDIX 2-3</u>).

Team: Organizing questions & planning (SEE B.3)

October: #TwGOD-meeting 1 (SEE B.2)

- Talk about a question related to the content of the faith, e.g. 1.1 Doesn't the Big Bang rule out faith in God?*
- See B.2 for a possible programme of the meeting.
- Ask yourself in what way the answer is important for your personal faith.
- How can you share this with someone of your age?

November: #TwGOD-meeting 2 (SEE B.2)

- Talk about a question related to the
- Church, e.g. 2.1 What is the Church? Who is in the Church?*
- How does this affect your personal faith?
- How would you explain this to someone in class or at work?

Team: Evaluation & team building

Weekend in November: Pray

- Take time for a longer moment of prayer together, for example:
- adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- praising God singing hymns together
- intercession prayer
- lighting candles
- celebrating Mass
- praying the Liturgy of the Hours
- etcetera.

November: #TwGOD-meeting 3 (SEE B.2)

- Talk about a question related to prayer, e.g.
- 3.1 Why should I pray and how can I do it?*
- How does this relate to your personal relationship with God?
- How can you tell others about your bond with God?

December: #TwGOD-meeting 4 (SEE B.2)

 Talk about a question related to Christian life, e.g. 4.1 Why are we here on earth?*

- What does this mean for the way in which you live as a Christian?
- Is this helpful in your relationship with other people?

Weekend in December: Act

- Take time to help people in need together.
 For example: ask the charity committee or your parish priest to make a list of people that cannot do these things because of illness, old age, e.g.:
- cleaning out a garden
- repairing a doorbell
- painting a shed
- etcetera.
- Alternatively, you can help in a soup kitchen, at the Sisters of Mother Theresa, ...

December: #TwGOD-meeting 5 (SEE B.2)

- Talk about a question related to Christmas, e.g. 3.28 ls Christmas the greatest feast or holiday of the year?*
- Why is this feast important for you?
- How would you explain to someone the importance of going to church at Christmas?

Team: Evaluation and team building

Weekend in January: Have fun

Celebrate Christmas and the New Year together.

January: #TwGOD-meeting 6 (SEE B.2)

- Talk about a question related to the Bible, e.g. 1.10 Why is the Bible so important?*
- What is the importance of the Bible to your life?
- In what way can you explain to others the fundamental role played by the Bible?

January: #TwGOD-meeting 7 (SEE B.2)

 Talk about a question related to the history of the Church, e.g. 2.31 Why were there violent Crusades?*

- What does it mean to you that throughout history people committed crimes in name of the Church?
- Can you still speak enthusiastically about the Church to others?

February: #TwGOD-meeting 8 (SEE B.2)

- Talk about a question related to your relationship with God, e.g. 3.17 Why pilgrimages and processions? What is a retreat?*
- In what way can a retreat help you? Did you ever go on a pilgrimage?
- What will you tell others when you go on a retreat?

Weekend in February: Pray on retreat

• Take time together for a retreat, maybe a full day or even a few days. You could go to a monastery, a convent or a place of pilgrimage, or simply stay in the parish hall and have prayer sessions in the church. It would be good if you are not disturbed during the day. Best would be if your priest or someone else is willing to preach the retreat.

March: #TwGOD-meeting 9 (SEE B.2)

- Talk about a question related to Christian ethics, e.g. 4.26 When does human life begin?
- · What is the relationship with your faith?
- How can you speak about your Christian morals in a clear manner without hurting others?

Etcetera: continue the season in a similar way

* These sharing sessions work best when you are discussing the real questions of the people in your group (SEE B.1-B.3).

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