

Worldwide Marriage Encounter

LOVE CIRCLE

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FORWARD

Love Circle Guidelines

We would like to briefly describe the format of Love Circles as we are experiencing them. The evening begins with our hands joined, forming a circle for our open prayer. We usually have a burning candle within the circle or nearby. This candle reminds us of the presence of Christ among us, as well as keeping us aware of our Worldwide Marriage Encounter Community.

Group leaders are mainly in the role of facilitators. They should not "direct" the group in a demanding sense. The leadership role mainly involves scheduling the meetings, selecting questions, and initiating the sharings.

At the first meeting of the Love Circle, we review the basic guidelines that are followed for the sharings. We make an agreement that anything shared in the Circle will never be shared outside the group. We can share our own relationship with others, but **NOT** the relationship of anyone else. This helps to establish a bond of trust and confidence among everyone there.

In addition, we review the format we follow in the course of the sharing.

*We try to make everyone feel comfortable about sharing.

*We mention that if they cannot relate to the sharing question, then they may pass when it comes their turn. We will not judge them and they will be accepted with love. (It has been our experience that this option is seldom used.)

We point out that it is not a requirement for each couple to be dialoguing daily. However, we ask them to be aware of looking for questions to dialogue on based on the material brought up during the Love Circle. We also point out that the sharing questions may bring up topics that they have never discussed before. As a result, new areas for dialogue may be uncovered. We have been pleased to see a new enthusiasm and commitment for the dialogue come alive during the Love Circle.

Love Circle Guidelines

Keeping in mind our purpose in this type of Love Circle, we think it is important that these Love Circles be limited to about six meetings. This prevents the outcome from becoming only an inward experience where we focus on creating relationships with the Love Circle group. Instead, it focuses on strengthening one another so that they can reach out to the community. It is good to keep the sessions to about 2 hours which includes a break time. The break time should be simple - coffee, tea and a light snack. Ask the couples to bring their calendar to the first session to set the dates for the following sessions. It is good to have the sessions in about two week intervals. It is not recommended to have them more often than once a week and they shouldn't be scheduled further apart than 2 or 2 1/2 weeks. It has been found that holding sessions in spring and fall are usually the best. This helps in scheduling and keeps the sessions away from holidays and summer vacations.

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Love Circle Guidelines

I. THE PURPOSE OF THE LOVE CIRCLE

The purpose of the Love Circle is to build a loving community by bringing out the beauty that God has placed in each one of us. This revealing of human beauty is brought about through a series of sharing sessions that have proven effective in strengthening community love.

The guidelines presented next and the sample session are in summary form to help Love Circle leaders in their preparation. The guidelines make up the important elements that we believe are central concepts that have produced the success that we have enjoyed.

A. General Guidelines

The following guidelines are provided here as a quick reference, or checklist, for Love Circle preparation.

1. Prayer

Each session begins with a prayer by holding hands in a circle. The group leader asks for God's guidance and adds any additional prayers.

2. Trust

Trust in each other is gained through prayer, listening, acceptance, and confidentiality. Commenting on one another's sharing or making value judgements can quickly destroy trust.

3. Theme

Each session has a theme which is emphasized by the questions. The themes are:

Self

We

God

Christian Community

Sharing Self

Apostolate (Reaching out)

The sequence of the themes should be followed in the order shown for best results.

Love Circle Guidelines

4. Openness

The leader couple participates in the sharing at the same level as the others in the group. In fact, the leader's sharing and openness will set the tone of the group and are very important to the group. If the leaders are the first to risk and participate at a mutual level, others in the group are more willing to adopt their attitude.

5. Attendance Guidelines

Continuity in Love Circle is essential if the most effective results are to be achieved. Each session builds on the previous session and interaction of the total group is necessary. Because of these constraints, **it is important that the couples commit to attending all sessions. As a guideline, a session is postponed if anyone cannot attend.** Preplanning meeting dates at the first session and resolving any conflicts at that time simplifies matters. It is sometimes possible, but often difficult, to change a meeting night for a session. If all other members can arrange it, you may do so if necessary.

6. Sharing Format

The sharing format for Love Circle is somewhat different than for other discussion-type groups. This Love Circle format is one of the main reasons for its success. The emphasis in the sharing format here is listening and acceptance. Persons sharing respond to questions without interruption or comment. Here is how it works.

At the beginning of the first meeting, the leader couple explains the format.

*The leader couple states the sharing questions and is the first to share. During the responses, the group members are asked to remain silent until everyone in the group has responded. When each person has finished their sharing, they turn to the person on their left and signal that they are finished sharing. The next person does not start sharing until they receive the signal. This continues around the circle until all have had a chance to respond.

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*No one is required to respond to a question, and this is made clear by the leader couple. If someone does not care to answer, they merely say "pass" and turn to the next person in order. It is very important that group members realize they can pass if they desire without any consequences. After the whole group has responded to the question, the leader couple may offer the person who passed another opportunity to share.

*The sharing on the next question begins with the couple next to the leaders and responses follow around the circle. Thereafter, a different couple is first to answer for each question given. This procedure permits everyone the opportunity to hear others share before his or her turn, thus balancing the information flow.

*At no time during the sharing should members enter into discussion about the topic or about what someone has stated. If there is a need for discussion, the leader will indicate that a discussion can be held during break or after the Love Circle meeting.

7. Selecting Questions

Selecting questions can be a challenging experience. The questions are the tools for bringing out the feelings of the group and highlighting the theme. In the rest of this booklet, there is a list of questions for each session that have been effective for stimulating responses. These questions are provided as samples of the type of questions used. There are several guides that can be used in selecting questions.

a) Feelings or attitudes

Select questions that have a feeling response or can be answered factually as an attitude statement. No answer should be judged as being "right or wrong".

b) Consider where people are at

A feeling for the group makeup helps in selecting questions. Some groups prefer spiritual and scriptural questions rather than personal ones.

Love Circle Guidelines

c) Consider religious background

Honor the religious differences in the group. Avoid questions that require a response on an issue of dogma.

d) Special 5th Session

Two questions have been found to be very powerful and essential in achieving community growth. The questions are asked in all Love Circles, normally during the fifth session. The questions are in this order:

"What was the most sorrowful moment in my life?" and

"What was the most joyful moment in my life?".

Responses to these questions draw everyone together in the group and the strong feeling of compassion and joy resulting can be a moving experience.

8. Event timing

Love Circle uses a building block method. Therefore, the timing of the various events is important. The secret couple activity should take place around the community theme session. The secret couple event is an acting out of the commitment to community and thus must be properly timed to reap the benefit. The deep sharing questions should be timed around the period when the feeling for community is high. These questions seem for some to be the glue that binds the group together. Careful adherence to the theme will in most cases resolve any event timing difficulties.

Love Circle Guidelines

9. Special Ceremonies

There are a number of ceremonies that can be incorporated into the Love Circle. A list of suggested ceremonies is given in the Appendix. These ceremonies are used consistently with good results: the candle ceremony, the agape dinner, ministering and the loveletter. There are many variations of these, some of which have been very successful.

A closing Mass is a very powerful way to close the Love Circle cycle. The community of all Love Circle groups come together to celebrate at Mass their new sense of community love. A special liturgy stressing the theme of community adds more to the joy of the occasion.

Love Circle Guidelines

II. SESSION 1

THEME: SELF

Begin with prayer asking for God's blessing.

The purpose of the 1st session is to get to know each other on a feeling level to build a spirit of trust and acceptance in each other. Its purpose is to show how beautiful we are as individuals and as a couple.

Go over the "how to's" of a Love Circle. Some things to consider are:

- A candle is always burning at each session - it reminds us of the presence of Christ among us, as well as keeping us aware of the our Worldwide Marriage Encounter community.

- We will always sit in a circle.

- We will begin and end each session with a prayer.

- We will tell you the theme and purpose at the beginning of each session.

- Go over the purpose of a Love Circle. (see page 4)

- The rules for sharing

- *What is shared in this room stays here.

- *One person speaks at a time, no interruptions or commenting on anyone's sharing, especially your spouse

- *You do not have to share on a particular question (remind them, however, that sharing is essential to the success of the Love Circle)

- Procedure for sharing (see page 6, Sharing Format)

- *Sit in a circle

- *Leader Couple starts the first questions, then each question after that is started by the next couple in order

- *When you are done sharing, signal to the person on your left

- *You may pass on a question (the leader will give you another opportunity to share after everyone is done)

- *Openness and trust are important to sharing

- *Share what you are thinking even if someone else has already shared it.

Love Circle Guidelines

- It is not necessary to be dialoguing daily, but this is an opportunity to look for topics/questions for you to dialogue on. New subjects for dialogue may come up that will help you.

- Attendance by everyone at all six sessions is important. If anyone cannot make a session, the session is rescheduled or canceled. The group may get together any way to just be together, but no Love Circle sharing will take place.

- At this first session the dates, time and place should be set for the next 5 sessions. It seems to work best to schedule the sessions about two weeks apart. You may wish to consider scheduling an extra session in case one is canceled. If you make all 6 without any cancellation, then the last meeting can be used for a potluck or just fun.

- There will be a break time at each session. The host & hostess should prepare a simple snack only. It is not necessary or desired to spend a lot of time preparing for the break time.

The atmosphere should be relaxed with a candle burning in the middle of the group. Each one has a turn answering questions pertaining to himself or herself. Simple questions stressing topics that help each to know the other are asked. After four or five questions, or whenever time permits, a break for coffee or tea and a light snack is taken. After the break, some leaders ask deeper questions depending on whether they think their particular group is ready to respond. Usually three more questions are adequate. All groups will be different, some will be ready to share easily, while others will find it difficult to share of themselves. The following is a list of simple questions or topics that may be used for the theme - Self. Compose your own questions if none satisfy the need.

Love Circle Guidelines

SESSION 1

SAMPLE QUESTIONS & TOPICS

1. Introduce yourself and tell a little of your background.
2. What is your favorite month of the year and why?
3. What is your favorite time of the year and why?
4. What is your favorite spot in the house and why?
5. What was the highest point in your life this past year?
6. What three things are most important in your life right now?
7. How do you think others see you?
8. How do you see yourself?
9. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
10. Describe the best vacation you've ever had.
11. What is your favorite sport?
12. What is your favorite type of music?
13. What is your favorite food?
14. Where would you go on a trip if money and time were no problem?
15. What do you like to do most on a night out?
16. If you could live anywhere, where would you choose?
17. If you could live in any time period, when would it be?
18. Who was the most significant person (not parents) in your childhood?
19. How would you like others to see you?
20. When do you feel the loneliest?
21. In the book of Genesis, we read that after each of the Father's creations, He said, "It is good, I am pleased". What have I done in my life that I can say, "It is good, I am pleased"?
22. In many ways we can recognize that we are creators. We can create in our own atmosphere peace, dissention, love and joy. How do I want others to see me? How do I see myself?
23. What I need more than anything else from this group is
24. What would you like to gain from this group?
25. When do you feel most alone and when do you feel most loved?
26. When was the loneliest time of your life?
27. Where do you think you excel or have strength?

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28. What do you think is a weakness or an area you can improve?
 29. The person I have most difficulty accepting is
 30. Your greatest strength and weakness is
 31. What are your thoughts and feelings on starting this Love Circle?
 32. If you could ask for one thing from God, what would it be?
 33. What do you have to give to this Love Circle?
 34. Read Mark 4:35-41. Picture yourself in the setting at the Sea of Galilee with the disciples and experience their feelings:
How would you feel
 - a. before the storm?
 - b. at the beginning of the storm?
 - c. at the height of the storm?
 - d. after the storm?
- Ask yourself: In what sense am I going through a storm?
35. Read Matthew 11:28-29. What burden is heaviest for you now?
 36. Are you the kind of person that affirms others?
 37. If you knew you could not fail, what is one thing you would like to do in your life?
 38. Do you find it hard to see the strengths that you possess in yourself?
 39. Who builds you up and helps you feel worthwhile as an individual and how?

Love Circle Guidelines

III. SESSION 2

THEME: WE

The purpose of the second Love Circle is to focus on our relationship with our spouse. The goal is to strengthen our coupleness and to understand what we each contribute to our relationship.

Choose questions to stimulate an open-minded look at qualities we look for in each other.

As with all sessions, begin and end the session with group prayer. All members hold hands in a circle, around the candle. A prayer for the spouse can be done at this session and be very effective.

The format for Session 2 is the same as Session 1. Depending on the size of the group, share on three or four topics, have a break, then finish with three more questions. An effective way to share for this session is to ask the couples to turn toward each other and look into each other's eyes when they answer each question.

Love Circle Guidelines

SESSION 2

SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Describe what you would like your life to be like in 5 years.
2. What is one thing your spouse does that helps you feel loved?
3. What special gift can you give your spouse now?
4. Our greatest strength and weakness as a couple is
5. If you could give one thing to your spouse, what would it be?
6. What does "trust" mean to you?
7. What does "being open" mean to you?
8. When have you felt the most loved?
9. How do you see your spouse?
10. How do you think your spouse sees you?
11. What quality in your spouse do you admire most?
12. What do you think your spouse adds most to your couple life?
13. How does your spouse most help you?
14. Describe how you met and proposed.
15. Describe your wedding day.
16. When do you feel most loved by your spouse?
17. What qualities in your spouse make you know that he/she is a gift from God to you?

Love Circle Guidelines

IV. SESSION 3

THEME: GOD

The purpose of the third Love Circle is to develop and share our relationship with God. By this session, the group sharings have relaxed people and a feeling of trust has occurred. This session encourages sharings about feelings and attitudes relating to God. This may be the first time in their lives members verbalize feelings about God that they have held for a long time.

Again, begin this session with prayer and a restatement of the sharing rules and the need for confidentiality.

It is important to observe and be sensitive to differences in religious views in selecting questions or topics.

SPECIAL CEREMONY

"Ministering" should take place at this session or the fourth session. See Appendix A - Ceremonies for the details of what to do. If done in this session, question 8 is a good one to use.

Because the "Ministering" ceremony takes extra time, you will not be able to share on as many questions as the previous sessions.

Love Circle Guidelines

SESSION 3

SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Share a time in your life when God has changed your thinking in the direction of His own.
2. Read Acts 11:1-17. Read slowly. Tell the couples to let their imagination recreate the setting, the historical implication and applications of today. Trying to put yourself in the shoes of Peter.

What is your response and why to: If I had the same kind of vision today, the chances are that I would find in the sailcloth:

- a. a person of a different race.
 - b. a person of a different faith.
 - c. a person of a different social status.
 - d. a person of a different moral view.
 - e. a person of a different political view.
 - f. a person of a different theological view.
3. Read Acts 11:1-17 (as above).
The main thoughts I get out of this passage for today are:
 - a. The conflict between religious establishments and the Gospel.
 - b. The way God overcomes prejudice.
 - c. The Holy Spirit cannot be pigeonholed.
 - d. The Church must accept who God accepts.
 - e. The universality of the Gospel.
 4. Read Acts 11:1-17 (as above).
The Time in my life when I experienced something like what Peter experienced was
 5. Read Acts 11:1-17 (as above).
When I try to discover what lies ahead, the person I have the greatest difficulty accepting is:
 - a. myself as I am.
 - b. my spouse as he/she is.
 - c. my children or parents as they are.
 - d. my friends as they are.
 - e. my enemies as they are.
 6. Read John 13:1-5 and John 13:12-17.
If I was a disciple and Christ washed my feet, how would I feel?

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7. Read John 13:1-5 and John 13:12-17.
Jesus ministered to His disciples in this way. What was He trying to show?
 - a. love
 - b. leadership
 - c. servanthood
 - d. humanness
8. Read John 13:1-5 and John 13:12-17. (use this question with ministering ceremony)
Imagine Christ stepping into this room. What would he minister to you (what are your needs at this moment)?
9. Read John 13:1-5 and John 13:12-17.
In what way would you minister to the outside world like Christ ministered to His disciples?
10. The Spirit was in Christ to give Him His powers. The Spirit lives in us all! If you had the power to give or do one thing to the world, what would it be?
11. What is your spouse's most Christ-like quality?
12. In your relationship with God, do you experience His love and affirmation in a real and personal way?
13. Read Mark 8:22-26.
Considering the experience of the blind man as a picture of my present spiritual state, I am:
 - a. in total darkness.
 - b. at the point of reaching out for help.
 - c. just beginning to see.
 - d. seeing quite clearly.
14. Read Mark 8:22-26.
I need to feel the healing touch of Jesus Christ in my relationship with:
 - a. my spouse.
 - b. my family.
 - c. myself.
 - d. my friends and/or coworkers.
15. Read Mark 8:22-26.
If I could bring someone to Jesus for healing at this moment, it would be
16. Read Mark 8:22-26.
What area in your life do you need to feel the healing touch of Jesus?
17. Where are you in your relationship with God?

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18. How could you make your relationship with God closer and more personal?
19. In what ways could your prayer life be improved?
20. When have you felt closest to Christ this week (month) (year)?
22. When has Christ felt most loved by you lately?
23. You're sitting alone at home and there's a knock at the door. Christ is standing there. What would the conversation be?
24. Who is your neighbor?
25. Read Luke 7:36-50.
Assume you are in the room during the time the Gospel takes place. How do you view the dinner party from the following points of view?
 - a. From the point of view of an Apostle.
 - b. From the immoral woman's point of view.
 - c. From the Pharisee's point of view.
26. Read Luke 7:36-50.
How did the Pharisees react to Jesus' treatment of the woman?
27. Read Luke 7:36-50.
In all honesty, my relationship with Jesus Christ is most like:
 - a. the Pharisees.
 - b. the immoral woman.
 - c. an Apostle.
28. Read Luke 7:36-50.
Right now, I would like to ask God to forgive me for
(Do not share with the group, but keep to yourself in silence by talking to God.)

An option is to turn off the lights - have just a candle burning- ask everyone to close their eyes and try to make their minds blank to receive whatever God would send them (a quiet meditation). Emphasize not to worry if nothing comes, as this is something that takes time to develop in some people.
29. Read Matthew 7:7-8.
When have you experienced the power of prayer?

Love Circle Guidelines

V. SESSION 4

THEME: CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

The purpose of this session is to experience, first hand, what it means to truly love others in the name of Christ. In addition, this session helps us to learn how the community loves us.

In preparation for the meeting, write the name of each couple on a separate piece of paper. Fold the papers and place in a cup or paper bag.

Start the meeting with a prayer for your Marriage Encounter Community. The thrust of the evening is to focus on what the early Christian communities were really like. You will see that the first Christian communities were based on the love of God and each other. That same spirit of love can become a tangible experience today if we are willing to live for others.

We live in a world where it is easier to give than to receive. Our real growth may come in unconditionally accepting the love of the community for us.

SPECIAL CEREMONY

For this session there are two options for special ceremonies. If you did not do the "Ministering" in Session 3, then you should do it in this session. Question 7 is a good question to use (see Appendix A - Ceremonies for the exact details). The other option is to do the "Agape" which is explained in Appendix A - Ceremonies. If you do not do the "Agape" in this session, it should be done in Session 5.

As the ceremony takes up time, you probably will only have time to share on 4 or 5 questions.

Shortly before the end of the evening, ask each couple to draw the name of another couple. No one is to divulge the name they have drawn (make sure no one has their own). For the next two weeks (or until the next Love Circle meeting), they are to be a "Secret Couple" for the couple whose name they drew.

Love Circle Guidelines

(READ THE FOLLOWING OR SAY IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS TO THE GROUP)

These next two weeks will be very special for building "community" in our Love Circle. There should be no attempt to "compete" in doing extravagant things for each other. Instead, be yourself. Do what is uniquely you, as a couple. Live this time, showering your special couple with the love the Father has for them. His love for them may become more believable at this time than it has ever been before. Your hands are the hands of God at this time - be tender, gentle and loving.

As you approach the joy of these days that follow, we encourage you to have your children become involved too. Ask for their ideas. They do a great job delivering gifts; they can ring the door bell and run back to the car faster than you!

The following is a sample list of some ideas for gifts and activities:

1. Bread and wine.
2. Attend daily Mass.
3. Attend Daily Mass as a family for your couple.
4. Make a poster out of butcher paper telling your couple how much they are loved.
5. Have someone else deliver them a singing telegram of love.
6. Send them a coupon redeemable for one weekend of babysitting to allow them some private time.
7. Prepare a meal and ask another couple to deliver it.
8. Have a weekday Mass offered for their intentions. Send them a Mass card so they can attend the Mass, if possible.
9. Daily rosary.
10. An hour of prayer.
11. Send anonymous cards or notes of love.

Love Circle Guidelines

SESSION 4

SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. Read Acts 2:42-47.
What quality of the daily Christian communities impresses you the most?
2. Read Acts 2:42-47.
How do the Christian communities of today differ from those described in the reading from Acts.
3. Read Acts 2:42-47.
The most Christian community that you have ever experienced is
4. Read Acts 2:42-47.
What qualities do you have to offer our Christian community today?
5. Read 1Corinthians 13:1-7.
How does this verse relate to your life situation? (are you this way or not?)
6. Read 1Corinthians 13:1-7.
What are the things you need to work on in your life?
7. Read John 13:1-5. (use this question with ministering ceremony, if done in this session)
Imagine Jesus stepping into our group right now and ministering to each of us individually.

How would you think Jesus would minister to you right now?
8. What has your experience taught you about God's love for you?
9. If you were to write a 5th Gospel, a Gospel according to you, what could you say about the person of Jesus Christ from your own experience?
10. If I know that I could count on the support of a real Christian community, I would like to do
(of your own choosing - one or two projects)

The hang-up that I am going to have to overcome is . . .
11. Read Mark 2:1-12.
How did the four men see the paralyzed man?
12. Read Mark 2:1-12.
If you had a need as the paralyzed man, could you count on four friends?
13. Read Mark 2:1-12.
Why do you think you could or could not count on four friends.

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14. Each person go around the room and offer a gift to fill the other's need. (i.e. you might give understanding, self-confidence, etc.)
15. What does Church mean to me?
16. What does community mean to me?
17. What does Christian community mean to me?

Love Circle Guidelines

VI. SESSION 5

THEME: SHARING SELF

This evening always follows the two weeks of "secret couple" because the trust and openness of the couples will be at a peak. It is the evening for sharing self at the deepest level. This is the most necessary evening of the circle, since it cements the bond of love between the couples.

In preparation for the meeting, write the name of each couple on a separate piece of paper. Fold the papers and place in a cup or paper bag. See Appendix A - Ceremonies for Loveletter.

Start the meeting with a prayer for all the love spread these past two weeks in our Love Circle community through being secret couples.

Then begin the evening by sharing who we had as a secret couple, and how special we felt having been the recipient of the love and attention given.

There are only two questions used on this evening for maximum effectiveness. These are essential questions.

There may be a break between the questions. During the break you may use the SPECIAL CEREMONY of the "agape feast" (if you haven't used this ceremony in Session 4). See Appendix A - Ceremonies for the details of what to do. This session can be a very healing experience.

Love Circle Guidelines

SESSION 5

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

As this session is a very special session, the questions are set for this meeting. You should do the session in the following order.

1. General Sharing
Share what your secret couple did for you the past weeks.
How did you feel to receive special love for two weeks?
2. What was the most sorrowful moment in your life (past year)?

(It might be good to take a break right now, to give everyone a few minutes before going on to the next question.)
3. What was the most joyful moment of your life (past year)?
4. Draw names of couples. Between now and the next session you are to write a loveletter to the couple whose name you drew. Bring the letter to the next session and place it face down on the table when you arrive, so your couple won't know yet that you have written to them.
5. Close with prayer all around. Pray for the couple that gave to you these past two weeks. Pray the Our Father.

Love Circle Guidelines

VII. SESSION 6

THEME: APOSTOLATE

The purpose of the last Love Circle is to look at what you have experienced in being a Christian community and to see how you can now go forward to affect other people in our Marriage Encounter community and Church Community.

You will probably want to do this session sitting around a table or after the break move to a table to set up the candle ceremony.

As with all the other sessions, begin with a prayer thanking God for this time you have shared together. After the opening prayer, pass out the loveletters and give everyone time to read them privately.

For this session you will have time to only do a few questions, so not as many sample questions are given. You will be ending the evening with a candle ceremony. You will need to have enough candles for the ceremony (the number will depend on which ceremony you choose).

Close with a prayer of thanksgiving for all you've gained through this experience.

Love Circle Guidelines

SESSION 6

SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

1. What have you gained from this Love Circle?
2. What can you contribute to our community now that you have experienced a Love Circle?
3. What quality do I see in each of you that I love? (this can be done as part of the candle ceremony) Start with one person and have them go around the circle and tell each person their good quality, then continue with the next person.
4. What is your greatest strength?
5. What is your greatest weakness?
6. Group Leader explain the apostolates in the Church where there are needs. (i.e. Religious Education Teachers, Baptism Classes, Marriage Preparation, etc.)
What gifts do you think you have to share with others?

CANDLE CEREMONY

Be sure to leave enough time for the ceremony. If you use question #3 as part of the ceremony, then you probably will only have time for two or at the most three other questions. It is easiest to take a break and at the break time set out all the candles.

Comment on the candle that is burning in the center of your circle, representing God's love.

Read Philippians 2:15.

Read Luke 8:16.

TURN OFF ALL LIGHTS

Explain and show how when you shelter the candle with your hands, you hide the light just as you can hide God's love by closing your eyes and ears.

Love Circle Guidelines

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS FOR THE REST OF THE CEREMONY.

A) Each person has a candle in front of them.

Leader lights his/her candle from the center candle and then his/her spouse's candle and the candles of the others.

See how everything is lit up! Even though we have all taken away light, the single candle still burns strong.

How many other candles in our community are waiting to be lit?

B) Each person has a candle in front of them.

The leaders light their candles from the center candle, then in a clockwise motion, let each one light the other's candle, signifying Christ in each of us and the sharing of His love as we pass it on. As each of us light our candles, Christ's original flame (love) never diminishes, just burns stronger as it grows to others.

How many other candles in our community are waiting to be lit?

C) Each couple has 4 candles (or the same number of candles as there are couples in the Love Circle) in front of them. You can make up a wreath or some other simple way to use to hold the 4 candles for each couple.

The leaders light their candle from the center candle saying "We light our love from God's love and spread it around the room". They then move to the couple to their left and light one candle sharing with each spouse "The quality that I see in you that I love is". They move around the circle lighting one candle for each couple, telling the quality they love in them. When the lead couple is finished, the next couple gets up and does the same. Do this until all candles are lit.

End by saying "Even though we have each taken light from the candle of God's love, it still burns as brightly as before, and the love just shines brighter as we pass it on.

How many other candles are there in our community that are waiting to be lit?

End the evening with a prayer of thanksgiving for all you have received through these six sessions.

Love Circle Guidelines

APPENDIX A: CEREMONIES

Ceremonies

Ritual and ceremony are important ways for us to experience each other and give a comfortable format for sharing. The various ceremonies described below, as well as the secret couple activity, are effective in the proper placement. Remember, the activity should be a natural expression of the group's state at the time.

There are two options for Ceremonies in the flow of the six sessions:

OPTION ONE: Session 3 - Ministering
Session 4 - Agape
 Draw names for Secret Couple
Session 5 - Draw names to write loveletter
Session 6 - Candle ceremony

OPTION TWO: Session 4 - Ministering
 Draw names for Secret Couple
Session 5 - Agape
 Draw names to write loveletter
Session 6 - Candle ceremony

The following is the suggested way to do each ceremony. The exact process of the ceremonies can be changed to fit the needs of the group.

MINISTERING

This should take place at the third or fourth session. The purpose of ministering is to become aware of couples' deep needs and express support and acceptance of them.

How it works: One of the questions for the evening could be similar to this: "Imagine Christ stepping into this room. In what way would He minister to you?" What are your deepest needs at this moment?

It is best if the leader couple is not the first to share on this question, but is the first to minister as an example to the group of what you are asking them to do.

After the first couple both share, stand and ask that couple to stand. Embrace them and speak to them the words you believe Jesus would have spoke to them regarding the needs they just expressed. Express love and acceptance of each person as you minister to them. You don't need to say a lot - just what's in your heart or what the Spirit leads you to say.

When you finish ministering to the couple ask the couple to remain standing. The lead couple would then sit down and let the next couple in the circle minister to them in the same way. After all other couples have ministered to that one couple, everyone sits back down and the next couple will share on the question. Continue around the circle until everyone has shared and been ministered to.

Love Circle Guidelines

AGAPE

This ceremony should take place at either the fourth or fifth session. It works best when done just after secret couple names are picked at the fourth session. The purpose is to express unity and love.

How it works: The leader couple should have ready a loaf of unsliced bread, a bottle of wine and glasses. (If you have recovering alcoholics in your group, it is best to have a non-alcoholic wine.) The wine is poured, the bread is passed around and each couple tears off a fairly large piece of bread. The first couple will stand and move to the couple to their left, tearing off a piece of bread for each of them and giving each of them a sip of their wine. They can at that time express their love and feelings of closeness to the couple. They then move around the circle and do the same for each couple. When they are finished, the next couple in turn will do the same until each couple has been to every other couple.

SECRET COUPLE

The names for secret couple are drawn at the 4th session. Between the 4th and 5th sessions the couples are to do special things for one another. The purpose of this ceremony is to show and experience Christian community and love.

The exact how to's are explained in Session 4.

LOVELETTER

At the end of the fifth Love Circle, each couple picks the name of another couple from a cup or bag. Write a loveletter to this couple and bring it to the sixth session. The letter should be signed so the receiving couple knows who has written to them. The purpose of this ceremony is to express one couple's love for another.

How it works: As each couple arrives for the sixth session, their letter is placed face down in the center of the table. Before beginning the questions for the evening, each couple is given the letter written to them and they read it to themselves. If they wish to share the letter, permission from the writers should be obtained first.

CANDLE CEREMONY

The candle ceremony is done at the close of the 6th session. The purpose of this ceremony is to show how the love of God has been spread to all of us through the Love Circle and encourage us to go out and spread His love to others.

The exact how to's are explained in Session 6.