Held Small Group Guide

For parishes, OCIA groups, retreats, and anyone gathering to pray through fear together.

Fear is easier to carry when you are not carrying it alone. That is what a *Held* group is for.

You do not need training to lead one. You need a quiet room, a willingness to listen, and a copy of *Held* for each person. This guide covers the rest.

How a group works

Each volume of *Held* covers 13 weeks. Each week has a theme, a short teaching, seven days of Scripture with guided Lectio Divina and space to journal, and a simple practice. Members read on their own each day. Once a week, the group gathers for about an hour to pray and talk about what they noticed.

Advent	4 weeks	The first four weeks of Volume I
Lent	6 weeks	The first six weeks of Volume I
One volume	13 weeks	Any single volume, start to finish
The full series	52 weeks	All four volumes, one after another

A one-hour session

1. Welcome and opening prayer (5 min)
Begin with a minute of silence. Then pray the opening prayer below together.

2. Check-in (10 min)
Invite each person to share one word for their week. No one has to explain it.

3. The weekly teaching (5 min)
One person reads the week's teaching aloud.

4. Lectio Divina together (20 min)
Choose one Scripture passage from the week. Read it aloud slowly three times, with silence after each reading. After the first, listen for a word or phrase. After the second, notice what it stirs in you. After the third, speak to God about it in the quiet. Then anyone who wishes may share their word.

5. Conversation (15 min)
Choose one or two of the questions below. Let the conversation go where it needs to.

6. Practice and closing (5 min)
Read the week's practice aloud. Close with the Our Father.

Opening prayer

Lord, we cannot carry this alone. You already know what we are holding. Meet us here. Hold us steady. Lead us back to You. Amen.

Questions for any week

- Where did fear show up for you this week?
- Which day's passage stayed with you? What do you think held your attention?
- Where did you notice God's presence, even in something small?
- Did anything you wrote in your journal surprise you?
- What made this week's practice easy, or hard?

For the leader

- **You are a companion, not a teacher.** You do not need answers. Listening is the work.
- **Let silence be.** It may feel long. It is not wasted.
- **Sharing is always optional.** No one has to explain their fear, and no one needs to be fixed.
- **What is shared in the group stays in the group.**
- **Know the limits.** *Held* is a devotional, not a substitute for counseling or medical care. If someone is carrying more than a group can hold, gently encourage them to talk with a priest, a counselor, or a doctor. If anyone is in crisis, call or text 988 (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, US). Catholic Mental Health Ministers (catholicmhm.org) offers resources for parishes.

Group copies

Group pricing is available for parishes and ministries. Tell us how many copies you need and when, at **xavierpublishing.com/parishes** or **hello@xavierpublishing.com**. Steve is also available to visit your parish or retreat in person or virtually: **xavierpublishing.com/speaking**.

Leader notes