



**A companion for every  
small group member**

*with bonus sermon notes section*

**Edited by Karen Beilharz**



**matthiasmedia**

SYDNEY • YOUNGSTOWN

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*The Growth Group Notebook*

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# GROUP GUIDELINES

**S**TARTING IN A NEW GROUP can be uncomfortable at first. You may not have been in a group with this leader or these co-leaders before. You may only know the other members of the group by name, but beyond that, you don't know much about them or their personalities. Furthermore, you may not be sure what's expected of you and whether the norms are the same as the last group you were part of.

This is where it's helpful to come up with group guidelines: a set of mutually agreed upon expectations and values that all group members try to stick to; expectations and values that shape the group's week-to-week meetings. (Please note that these are different to group goals, which are covered in the next section.)

The guidelines are kind of a 'contract' between group members for as long as the group meets. That's why it's important for the group to come up with them together, instead of the leader imposing their own ideas, because everyone needs to agree to them. If someone feels they can't agree to the guidelines, it's best to get that out in the open early, rather than face discouragements, disagreement and disunity further down the track.

Here are a set of questions adapted from Rod and Karen Morris's *Leading Better Bible Studies* to help you come up with your own group guidelines:<sup>2</sup>

- What have been the best things about previous groups you have been in?
- What have been the worst things about previous groups you have been in?
- What are your expectations of the leader(s)?

2 Karen Morris and Rod Morris, *Leading Better Bible Studies*, Aquila, Sydney, 1997, pp. 119-23.

- What are your expectations of the other group members?
- What are your expectations of yourself in this group?
- What are your hopes for this group?
- What are your fears for this group?

When developing your own guidelines, try to phrase each one positively instead of negatively. For example, instead of “Don’t be late”, try “Be on time”; instead of “Don’t interrupt or speak over the top of someone”, try “Let people finish what they’re saying before speaking up”.

Here are some suggested group guidelines:

- We agree to turn up on time (or as close to on time as possible).
- We agree that if we can’t make the study, we will let the leader(s) know.
- We agree to encourage, serve and pray for one another in Christ.
- We agree to keep all prayer points shared in the group confidential.
- We will strive to accommodate different learning styles.

**Your agreed group guidelines:**

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# GROUP GOALS

**G**ROUP GOALS ARE different to guidelines in that they are more a vision for what the group might do together and how you might grow together. Obviously the goal for any Bible study group is Christian growth and gospel fruit, but there is great freedom in how that might be achieved.

Here are some ideas of things you might like to do together, loosely grouped around these four stages of Christian growth. (NB. These ideas are *not* listed in order of priority.)<sup>3</sup>

## Outreach

- Connect with your local community by volunteering for something as a group.
- Seek to reach a particular group with the gospel (e.g. your work colleagues, if your group is a workplace Bible study; people at the local gym or café; your local cycling group; Portuguese people in your community). Begin by praying for them whenever you meet, then think about how to reach these people and build relationships with them as a team. (Doing things as a team is less daunting than going it alone!)
- Adopt an outreach ministry (e.g. a missionary, the youth group at your church, a particular ministry organization) and pray for it regularly. Encourage those involved in that ministry by sending them a letter and maybe even fundraise for it.
- Run a group evangelistic activity. For example, you could door-knock your neighbourhood, or invite friends and neighbours to do

<sup>3</sup> Publication details for all of the resources mentioned in this section are listed in the 'Useful resources' section on page 137.

the *Christianity Explored* course with you as a group, perhaps having dinner together beforehand.

## Follow-up

- Meet one-to-one with young Christians for a term to help establish them in the faith. (Perhaps your pastor can make recommendations for suitable candidates.)
- Visit church newcomers or invite them over for lunch.

## Growth

- Look at a particular book of the Bible and study how it fits into the overarching narrative of God's story.
- Examine a particular topic (e.g. predestination, suffering, prayer, eschatology) and see what the Bible says about it.
- Memorize a Bible passage.
- Read a particular Christian book together. (If you're looking for ideas, consult Matthias Media's resource catalogue!)
- Do a particular Christian course together (e.g. *Where to, Lord?*, which is about guidance, or *The Course of Your Life*; again, you may find it useful to browse Matthias Media's resource guide).
- Plan social time outside the group to build up your relationships with one another. Have dinner together. Play games together (sporting or otherwise). Go on an outing and visit the beach or the local art gallery.
- Celebrate people's birthdays (and bring cake!).
- Pair up and meet one-to-one outside of group time. (This is best done with someone of the same gender as you.)
- Hold a prayer night and pray not just for the concerns of your group, but also for your church, your country, the world, missionaries, and so on. (See page 137 for ideas on where to source prayer points.)

## Training

- Learn a gospel presentation (like *Two Ways to Live*) and work out how to adapt it for various evangelistic opportunities.
- Learn how to do one-to-one Bible reading with someone else (perhaps using *One-to-One Bible Reading*) and encourage them in their Christian growth.
- Learn how to follow up a new Christian and establish them in the faith.
- Learn how to prepare, write and lead a Bible study. (This could be done by running a training session and then getting each group member to take turns leading.)
- Do a ministry training course together (e.g. *So Many Questions*, which will equip you to address common questions about Christianity, or *Six Steps to Encouragement*, which is about how to speak God's life-changing word into people's lives).
- Write and present an evangelistic talk at an evangelistic event run by your group.

Here's a suggestion: pick one activity from each category and aim to do one per term.

## Our group goals:

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