

Playing the Point Guard in a Life Group



*Ideas for developing your
Life Group and your leadership abilities*

Welcome!

No matter who we are, we were made for community. And community is essential to the life of a church. The thing is, often we think of church as simply that which takes place on Sunday morning. Or Sunday evening. But the church is more than that.

Some people talk about going to church as though it is some sort of activity that has to be done. But it's not! While worship might happen in a church building, the church actually comprises people who have a relationship with Jesus – and who want to grow in that relationship and engage in expressions of living that relationship out in the world.

Indeed, in our modern era, we have a pretty funny idea of worship – almost as though God needs us to gather together weekly to stoke his ego. He doesn't! In fact worship, properly understood, has nothing to do with us, or with what we do. It has everything to do with God coming to us to restore us, to forgive us, to heal us. But that is another story!

This brief booklet is all about the church. More specifically about people. And about growing as disciples. And about living the abundant life in the real world. And about sharing that abundant life with people who don't really get it.

And one of the best ways that happens is through small groups. I like to call them Life Groups. Because abundant life, the life to which Jesus refers in John 10, can often be best expressed as people learn to live together in small groups – life groups.

Pastor David Schmidt, August 2018
LCAQD, Ministry and Mission Department

God's way of Building Community

People need people. People need community.

This well-known fact is rediscovered every day as people seek meaningful ways to live their lives.

We confirm this truth through our own experiences.

And God confirms it to us through his Word.

It is the way He made us.

Genesis 2:18 says, "*The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*"

This incredible need for community expresses itself in a person's search for four basic "needs" of life:

- a) the need to belong
- b) the need to be valued
- c) the need to experience the love and care of others
- d) the need to be involved with others

Life Groups provide a healthy environment for these internal needs to be met.

Life Groups are healthy and valuable as they are based on...

- God's love for us
- God's forgiveness
- God's friendship with us
- a biblical model

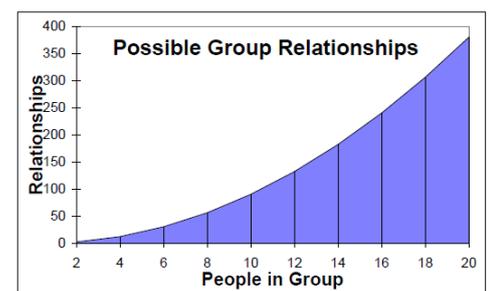
This Biblical model refers to two dimensions of Christian community:
- as Celebration
- as Cell
- multiplies

Living Life Together is Biblical (It's actually an outward expression of the church)
"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Acts 2:46-47

Life Groups provide intimacy, no matter how large the community.

If people desire community, they also need intimacy within that community. Life Groups help to develop that intimacy. Consider the possible number of combinations of relationships in a group of only 20 people—400 relationships.

Intimacy means "*to know someone well.*" It is not enough just to have people around. Our need for community is only met when people know each other in real and relevant ways.



Life Groups provide opportunities in which people can experience meaningful relationships and know that they belong.

In a very significant way, if someone does not belong to a Life Group, it is very possible that they will feel as though they do not belong.

Life Groups provide a life-line for support.

In an increasingly mobile and changing world, it is common for people to move into a new community and experience complete isolation.

A Life Group provides a place of contact, where...

- relationships can grow and mature
- trust can be built and broken lives healed
- new members can rapidly feel a sense of belonging in a new community

Life Groups provide a means of communication and decision-making within the wider community.

As a church grows larger, the lines of communication become less and less clear. It is possible for people to feel that their thoughts and feelings are of no value. They respond by either floating aimlessly within the life of the community, or by drifting away.

Life Groups are a means whereby the wider community can be involved in decision making. This lessens the level of anxiety, and increases the level of ownership of the church's mission within the wider community.

Life Groups are NOT a programme, but are an integral part of the community.

Because the Christian faith is primarily about relationships, Life Groups need to be given a priority by the church leadership.

The reason for this is simple. Programmes do not help people grow in their faith, or within themselves (eg: in self-esteem, or self-confidence). Every successful 'programme' is only successful because of the relationships that have been leveraged.

By promoting opportunities for these relationships to develop and grow, the community becomes a powerful witness to God's compassion and love—his transforming love and peace.

Jesus spoke plainly about this his disciples;

"Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples; baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19,20 GNB)

Jesus said it plainly. "Go!"

He is not simply speaking about going overseas; sending missionaries to "heathen" overseas nations! Yet, this has been the perception and attitude of many since Constantine made Christianity a state religion in 313AD (*cf Loren Mead, Once and Future Church*).

Life Groups as Mission

Rather, as with the early Christian church, mission work takes place within every aspect of our daily existence. It happens as we live our lives in love and compassion towards each other and the wider community.

This is what is implied in Matthew 28:19. "Go, then," that is, "in your going, in the things that you do, lead people into a living relationship with God."

Therefore, Life Groups do not exist for the sake of themselves. Rather, they exist for the sake of **people**, to provide a community in which genuine Christian love, faith and obedience can be encountered.

There are **Four Key Activities** of an effective Life Group.

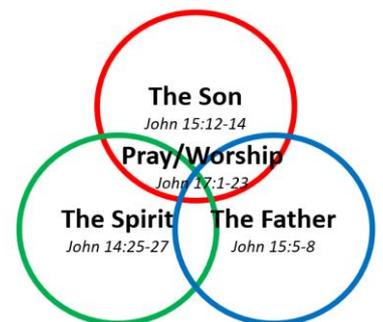
Four Key Activities

They **Love** - this is their **connected** focus
 Christ first loved us. (1 John 4:7ff)
 This is Jesus' command. (John 15:12-14)
 Our lives are lived out in love and service to others.
 This is the essence of Community and Pastoral Care.



They **Grow** - this is their **transformation** focus.
 People either grow or they die.
 There is no middle ground.
 God sent us his Holy Spirit so that we grow in both faith and in life. Some churches call this discipleship or formation (John 14:25-27, See also Acts 2:42 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17)

They **Witness** - this is their **mission** focus.
 When we are called into his family, we become God's/Jesus' witnesses (Acts 1:8). Our faith is meant to be shared.
 Life Groups, therefore, are never totally inward looking.. Rather, they look for opportunities and find ways to express their faith externally in words and actions, reaching out to others. They love people because God loves people.(John 13:1-17; 15:5-8; Acts 6:1-7)



They **Pray and Worship** - the focus which *unites*.
 In his prayer (John 17), Jesus prays that his followers may be united as one. Therefore, prayer and worship are essential to building a healthy Life Group.

Since relationships are important, a healthy church will often have every member involved in a Life Group of one form or another.

You might be fascinated to notice that when we collectively live our lives in terms of "love, grow, witness and pray", we are actually expressing the unity for which Jesus prayed in John 17:1-26. Put another way, living life together helps us to reflect the 'image of God' in which we were created (Genesis 1:26-27).

A definition

A Life Group is an intentional community of people who meet together for the purpose of building relationships.

A healthy Life Group will build relationships on four levels:

- 1. with each other (building up the group)***
- 2. with people 'outside' (reaching beyond the group)***
- 3. within oneself (strengthening the individual)***
- 4. with God (growing in faith)***

A Life Group is Intentional.

Life Groups do not just happen. They take time to develop. They are built around a common need. In this respect they are intentional - a purposeful coming together around a common goal.

A Life Group is a Community.

This is fundamental to a Life Group's existence. The Life Group exists for the sake of community. It becomes irrelevant if it exists for the sake of having another church programme.

A Life Group exists for the purpose of building relationships. The people who comprise the group are more important than any programme that the church might offer.

Within each group people have an opportunity to grow through finding answers to four foundational life searches (*cf Kennon Callahan, Effective Church Leadership*):

The Search for Individuality - Who am I?

The Search for Community - Where do I belong?

The Search for Meaning - Why do I exist?

The Search for Hope - What do I look forward to?

A Life Group provides a secure environment as people seek, discover and grow in these foundational life searches.

A Life Group meets to build relationships on four levels.

Relationships are important. Christian Life Groups recognise the internal drive for people to grow in multi-dimensional relationships;

connect and proclaim
*with each other and with people in the
neighbourhood*

spiritually
with God

transformationally
within themselves.



Making Disciples

In a very real sense, every Life Group is a discipleship group!

In the Great Commission Jesus says, *"I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:18-20 GNB)

We need each other to grow as disciples in spiritual maturity. and to grow as discipplers. God has placed us in a body. We weren't meant to do it on our own!

Three Key Areas...

1. Sharing—both spiritual struggles and joys

"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." Romans 12:15

2. Encouragement—spurring each other on

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together...but let us encourage one another. Hebrews 10:24-25

3. Accountability—helping others to be all they can be in Christ

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. Colossians 3:16

As a Christian Life Group, participants become accountable to one another as they grow towards "maturity in Christ".

In every group, there will be participants at different levels of faith maturity. As the group grows in trust, and in community, they encourage each other to explore and live the faith.

People learn best in an environment of honesty, openness and trust.

When people are involved in a community, and when that community is open to the vulnerability of need (either internally within their lives or externally in the world around them), people are open to life-changing learning. These can be called "teachable moments."

This is a key happening within an effective Life Group. A Life Group point guard needs to be sensitive to these "teachable moments".

Therefore, it is sometimes valuable to ask questions like...

"What do you think God wants to do in your life at this moment in time?"

"In what ways do you think you need to grow?"

"How can I (or the group) help you to achieve this goal?"

Getting Started

Point Guards

Just as there are many types of personalities within the world, so there are many ways in which a Life Group can be facilitated or led. The most appropriate style should be determined by at least three factors;

1. the type of group
2. where the group is "at" (ie., its maturity)
3. the variety of gifts within the group

Each group needs a "point guard", even if that person is not clearly identifiable by someone outside the group. Point guards also need to remember that they are part of a team – hence, point guards must always play the game as part of a collaborative team.

The Life Group point guard has two central tasks.

Love Jesus

Since a Life Group exists for the sake of relationships, it is imperative the point guard, while not necessarily having their life together, is desiring to have an intimate, growing relationship with the living Lord.

Love Others

Since a Life Group exists for the sake of relationships, a point guard simply needs to love others. Are you worried about what might happen? If no one shows up? If someone asks a really tricky theological question? If the house is in a mess? If you might forget someone's name? Doesn't matter. Just love those whom God brings into your space.

In beginning a new group, some key questions need to be considered.

1. *Who am I trying to reach? – we can't reach everyone*
2. *What am I planning to do? – will it be a deep group, a social group, etc*
3. *How well does who I want to reach match with what I plan to do?*
4. *What will my teaching/leadership/discipleship style be?*

So what happens first?

Your first meeting as a group should really be focussed on building relationships!

Relationships are key. People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care. The first group meeting can be intimidating for everyone involved. Including yourself! Let the first night be a time for people to get familiar with one another.

Then what?

The amount of time you might spend on each of the activities of a group will change depending on what is happening in people's lives and how long a group has been together. But, as a general rule of thumb, groups often go through this 'movement'...

- Hang Time ("doing life together")
- Study (exploring God's Word and its application for my life today)
- Prayer (for people, for their lives, for each other)

Some other basics

Create a welcoming environment.

Think about the space where you will be hanging...

SEATING: A seat for everyone, preferably with a back.

TEMPERATURE: Too hot and they will doze off; too cold and they will squirm.

LIGHTING: Mood lighting is fun, but people need to see each other!

Clarify some ground rules

This sounds a bit controlling, but it is really valuable... as clarifying ground rules helps with people's expectations. But remember. These are your ground rules. They are group rules... so spend a bit of time simply sharing what everyone might be thinking. You might like to clarify the ground rules around the following topics...

- The Golden Rule – as God accepts us 'just as we are' we will accept each other, just as they are.
- Confidentiality – what is said in the group stays in the group
- Commit to each other – it takes time to build relationships. Like dating, if someone doesn't show up, others are sad!
- Agree to serve together – not just each other, but something or someone beyond the group
- Hang time – talk about the possibility of chilling out together 'outside of group time'.

Food

Yes!

Food is comforting. It is magnetic. And it can be simple!

Group Dynamics and Personalities

Pay attention to how the group is rolling, and if there are any dominant personalities.

Exploring God's Word

We'll talk about that in a bit!

Be transparent

That's right. Be real!

Build momentum

Start on time

End on time – but give permission for people to hang around longer

Spend some time in prayer together

Recap the previous gathering... and if anyone has anything to share that grew out of that gathering

Praying together

Prayer is a vital part of your personal spiritual growth and relationship with Jesus. The best thing you can do for your group is to nurture your relationship with Jesus. To know and experience 'God's transforming love and peace' always precedes sharing Him with those 'in our communities'.

Group Prayer

Prayer is a valuable and integral part of the life of the Life Group. It promotes and strengthens the relationship that participants have with each other and with God.

However, many people find it difficult to pray either in public, or in the confidence of a group of intimate friends. They struggle...

- with concerns about saying the right thing or praying the right way
- with opening their lives to others,
- with feelings of inadequacy

The value of group prayer is that as people share their joys and their concerns, and prayers are both offered and answered, a group is united together by Christ's own presence. As Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I will be there." (Matthew 18:20. See also John 17.)

There are three reasons why people should pray together:

- 1) Jesus prayed with his disciples.
- 2) The early church practised it.
- 3) We experience untold advantages in praying together.

It is important to pray alone, but it is equally important to pray with other people.

There are three advantages of group prayer:

- 1) When people pray alone, it is difficult to sift our selfish desires from our real needs, and our own will from God's intentions. So when we pray in a group, we have the advantage of testing our assessment of God's will against the group's insights.
- 2) There is a deeper joy in praying together, an added vitality, strength and power—a plus difficult to define. It is rather like the difference between eating your meal alone and sharing a party feast. Eating together is not the same as eating in solitude; the something more is the unity, the fellowship. So it is with prayer.
- 3) Members' spiritual gifts can interact, leading to greater clarity about what God is saying.

Encouraging people to pray.

Praying together is a vital aspect of the life of the Christian community. Therefore, it is appropriate to encourage people to pray publicly. However, this needs to be done sensitively, simply providing opportunities for people to pray if they so desire.

Prayer Ideas

Some people have found it helpful to begin a group prayer time as follows...

At the conclusion of the study, a time of sharing takes place. This provides an opportunity for people to express those significant events that have happened to them since the last meeting, or the things they are looking forward to in the near future. This time of sharing may take between five and twenty minutes, although as leader, it may be necessary to guide this time. After sharing has taken place, a prayer conversation begins. There is no set order in which people pray. It simply provides an opportunity for people to contribute to the prayer time, if they so desire.

Important guidelines.

- Encourage silence.
- Encourage people to pray just one point at a time.
- Keep confidentiality so people can be honest and open
- Be real, don't try to impress others or God (It's not about the right way to do it, it's about a loving relationship)

Group Dynamics

People come in many different shapes and sizes.

With much the same diversity people communicate, participate and interrelate in different ways.

One of the tasks of a point guard is to ensure that all participants within a group have as positive and uplifting an experience as possible. This is one of the points at which the pastoral care of a group is embodied in action.

Group dynamics is the way in which a point guard can strive to make this happen.

Remember all people are...

- created in God's image. (Genesis 1:26-27, Psalm 8:5)
- flawed and have sinned (Romans 3:22-25)
- wounded (Matthew 11:28, 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10)
- different and unique – experiences, personalities, strengths, weaknesses, viewpoints, attitudes
- have different needs

There is always a balancing act between

...the goal/purpose of the group

...the maintenance/health of the group (eg unity, trust, openness)

...the needs of the individual

The 'Dos' Of Group Dynamics

1. Avoid making hasty assessments of people
2. Be wary of projecting your own hang-ups/experiences onto other people
3. Remember that all needy people need a group
4. Know that groups need different kinds of people
5. Conflict properly handled can lead to individual and collective growth
6. Christian Life Groups are redemptive communities
7. Try to discover the cause/reason behind the behaviour
8. Pray!
9. Be prepared to seek specialised guidance
10. Care for group members between meetings

Creating An Effective Group Environment

To create an effective group environment which fosters good group dynamics these characteristics are vital. (Philippians 2:1-8)

- Love and acceptance
- Empathy and support
- Trust, openness and confidentiality
- Affirmation and encouragement
- Freedom and accountability
- Availability and sensitivity
- Faith and hope
- Life related learning

For additional insight to working with these people see John Mallison, [The Small Group Leader](#)

Consider how you would deal with the following people in the light of the above characteristics:

The Talker

The Listener

The Harmoniser

The Devil's Advocate

The Gossip

The Quibbler

The Enquirer

Children in the group

Children are a delight! Their effervescent natures and enquiring minds provide much value for daily living. Their insights can often place a new and honest perspective on life and issues of faith. Jesus praised his Father for revealing His mysteries to "little children" rather than to the wise and learned (Matthew 11:25). He encouraged his followers to become like little children:

"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me." (Matthew 18:2-5)

However, within a Life Group environment children can be both a blessing and a curse. Their demand for attention can destroy the group spirit which is important for healthy Life Groups.

It is for this reason that where families are involved within a group situation, it is imperative that participants discuss and determine strategies regarding the involvement of children at a Life Group meeting.

The following are strategies that some groups have found helpful.

Each family contributes to the cost of a child-minder - either for the entire meeting, or just the study and discussion time.

ADVANTAGE: All participants can become involved in the Life Group experience.

DISADVANTAGE: Cost factor. Difficulty in finding child-minders.

Space - if children and Life Group meeting take place in the same location.

Group participants take turns to mind children - either for the entire meeting, or just for the study and discussion time.

ADVANTAGE: No cost. Most participants can become involved in the Life Group experience.

DISADVANTAGE: Disruption due to lack of continuity of Life Group participants. Space - if children and Life Group meeting take place in the same location.

A temporary "grandparent" is used - an older person within the local congregation is invited to be a "grandparent" for the night.

ADVANTAGE: No to low cost (although a gift of appreciation is valuable).

A sense of value and purpose to older people. Creates an "extended-family" atmosphere within the local congregation.

DISADVANTAGE: Difficulty in finding a "grandparent".

Accountability

Accountability is that function of pastoral care through which people take responsibility for caring for each other, just as a healthy family provides mutual care and support.

Jesus frequently spoke of this aspect of the Christian lifestyle. Looking after one another is associated with looking after him and we are ultimately accountable to him. *"I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."* (Matthew 25:34-36)

Paul emphasises the importance of accountability. *"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God."* (Colossians 3:13-16)

The secular world has tended to use accountability as a weapon. "If you don't do as you are asked, if you are not accountable, you will be sacked!" That's the law working. But the Christian concept of 'being accountable' is not to hit someone with the law, but to assist someone to become everything they were meant to be.

The Good News About Accountability

Jesus said, "I have come that you may have life, life in all its fullness." (John 10:10) The followers of Christ know that He has only the best in mind for us, so we seek and are thankful for those who help us to be accountable, and in doing so help us to become 'more complete', 'more fully human', 'more as God intended us to be.'

Are you becoming all that God intended you to be? Do you have people who help to hold you to account? To ask the sometimes uncomfortable questions about how your faith journey is going or how you are dealing with a certain person or a certain issue?

In many respects the Life Group is the ideal place where this can happen. Surrounded by a group of people who equally know that they are sinners, that they have their own failings, you can become open to each other and help each other become more real, more the person God intended you to be. You can support and encourage each other.

A Spiritual Journey

In the great commission, Jesus says,
I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.
(Matthew 28:18-20)

This is a profound command! It is worthwhile to consider three implications for Life Group ministry.

Go, then...

The Greek suggests that this is an on-going activity. Not a once off event. You could say "*In your going... In whatever you do...*"

This command also asks us to move out of our individual comfort zones and out of our Life Group comfort zones, to be active out in our communities. It is about helping people experience His transforming love and peace.

...Make them my disciples...

It is a fair criticism that sometimes the church has been responsible for making people church goers, but not necessarily making people disciples.

...Teach them...

This is an essential part of Life Group Ministry. It encompasses Loving, Growing, Witnessing, Praying and Worshipping. Teaching helps people become disciples, as they grow towards maturity of faith.

A Life-long Process

In many instances witnessing is a process. It consists of "movements" or "progressions" towards maturity in faith.

When an infant is baptised, we talk about them becoming part of the body of Christ. But their "maturity" in faith is not complete. What begins is a life-long process of growth in relationship with the Lord, and of learning to live out the faith in loving service towards others.

This is equally true for adults who join the family of faith. For them it is also the beginning of a life long process through which they will grow in their relationship with the Lord, and in learning to live out the faith in loving service towards others. There are many theories suggesting the processes which take place following conversion towards maturity in faith.

Adapted from "The Engel Scale" in CRMA and Francis Cosgrove, Essentials of Discipleship

When looking at any diagram, it is important to realise that maturing in the Christian faith is an on-going process. We are continually touched by an awareness of our need for God. Daily we turn in humble repentance to what God has done for us in baptism. We regularly devote ourselves to further instruction and on-going fellowship. This process could also be drawn in a cyclic form.

The following is offered, not as a prescription of what takes place, but as a description of things that may occur as people move towards conversion, and through conversion towards maturity in faith.



Reaching Out

Every Christian has an opportunity to live the Great Commission.

The biblical principle of witnessing is focussed in the "natural networks" of friends, relatives and business associates. The book of Acts refers to these as "households".

The major principle of "Friendship Evangelism" is that of *loving people into the Kingdom of God*.

As a group you have a unique opportunity to support and encourage each other to witness. Pray together about people you could invite into your group. Pray for opportunities to do so.

You may start building relationships by simply offering practical help, support or care to someone who needs it.

It may feel uncomfortable to invite friends and workmates to a Life Group study. So begin by inviting a friend to a Life Group social get-together (eg, a BBQ, day at the beach, fishing trip etc).

Relationships will be established through this Life Group event. This provides an opportunity for members of the Life Group to interact with and form new friendships with a person who does not necessarily know Christ.

The friendship process needs to be lived out in a gradual way. It needs to start with where the relationship is at.

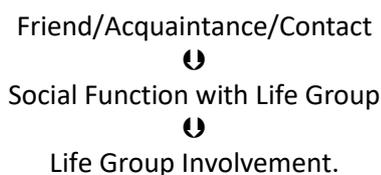
Once Life Group friendships have been established, opportunity will occur to invite the new contact to a Life Group meeting, which has a study component.

An invitation may be offered, *"Reg and Julie, as you know we are part of a Life Group that operates within our church. Next month we are going to begin a study on the theme "Getting the Most Out of Life." Would you like to join us?"*

Do not feel let down or disappointed if they say "No." At the same time, don't be surprised if the response is positive.

Remember; this is Friendship Evangelism. It is long-term involvement. It may take from several months to 1-2 years. But it is the most valuable and effective way of drawing people into a relationship with Christ.

This process may be sketched as follows.



Valuing each other

Many people have had wide and different experiences and expectations of the Christian faith.

Some people have had *painful experiences* of the Christian faith; of being forced to Sunday School, or to attend church. These people especially need to experience a refreshing and positive expression of the Christian faith.

Some people have *no understanding* of the Christian faith beyond that which they interpret through the modern media (TV, Films, News reports etc). These people need to experience a realistic expression of the Christian faith that is a radical alternative to pre-conceived expectations.

Some people have a *mind-set* or *heart-set* against the faith. For whatever reason (pride, arrogance, etc), many will refuse to respond to the Christian message. These people require a lot of Christian love to restore them into God's family.

Some people are *religious yet still do not fully know Jesus* in an intimate, life-changing way. Having been to church for years, they perceive church more as a community club, than as a place of belonging and restoring to the family of God.

Whatever a person's background or past experiences, all people need to hear the message and hope of God's saving love through Jesus Christ.

Some Creative Ideas for Bible Study and Prayer

1. Share a Favourite

Invite people to bring a favorite bible text or passage to your next meeting.
Ask them to be ready to answer the questions...

1. Why is it special to you?
2. How has it helped you?

2. Head, Heart and Hand

Read through a passage and explore what it says by asking the head heart and hand questions in turn.

Head – What are the facts?
What is this passage saying?
What happened in this story?

Heart – What is the heart of this passage for me?
What is it saying to me?
How is God speaking to me through it?

Hand – What action do I need to take?
What can we do as a group to help you?
What could our group do as a whole?

3. Putting Yourself In The Picture

Ask people to use their imaginations and put themselves in the picture as a bible story is read.

How would they feel, think, react if they were there.

Ask questions that help people to identify with the characters in the story.

Allow time for people to reflect on their answers.

eg Mark 3:1-6

- Which character do you most identify with in this story? Why?
- What is your 'withered' or 'crippled' hand? What could be crippling you or holding you back from experiencing fullness of life?
- What is the 'Pharisee' in you? What attitudes of these Pharisees do you see in yourself?
- Is there a 'sabbath' day in your life? Is there a special part of your life that you keep for yourself? Is there a part of your life where you do not want God to work in or on
- How does Jesus fit into the picture in your life?
- What is Jesus saying to you about your 'withered hands'? Your 'Pharisee'isms? Your 'sabbaths'?

4. Silent Sharing Method

Give group members a Bible passage and ask them to read it individually and in silence. After they read the passage ask them to reflect silently on these questions...

- What means most to me in this passage?
- What is God's message for me at the moment?
- Invite people to share their reflections with the group. (The point guard should be prepared to share first, and be sensitive to the fact that this could be inhibiting to others.)

5. The Swedish Symbol Sharing Method

Read the passage together as a group. Then individually read it again and fill out the table below

| SYMBOL | VERSE | COMMENTS |
|--|-------|----------|
| <p>This is something I never realised before</p>  | | |
| <p>This speaks to me personally</p>  | | |
| <p>I don't understand this word, phrase or verse</p>  | | |

6. Sermon Based Bible Study

This is not about regurgitating the sermon. While questions can be composed around a specific theme, essentially the intent is to be drawn more deeply into the text with an exploration around personal application. Questions are generally open ended. For example...

1. What did you find most challenging, helpful or troubling (about the sermon or about the passage that was preached on)?
2. Which character in the bible story did you most identify with and why?
3. This weekend we explore how David refused to seek his own revenge over being ridiculed. How might God be inviting you to respond to those people?

7. Relevance To Current Events

Select and read out an appropriate passage from the bible eg Phil: 4:4-9, Col 2:6-8, 3:12-17, 4:4-6

Each person is given (or brings) a current newspaper. They are then asked to find in the paper any news item upon which the passage throws light. These questions may be asked:

1. Why is the passage relevant to the news item?
2. Is there something I/we could or should do about it?
3. Is there a similar situation close at hand?
4. What is the group feeling about the item?
5. What can we pray about this situation?

8. Lectio Divina

1. Invite participants to listen silently to a bible passage, and as they do to notice
 - a. What parts of the passage catch your attention
 - b. What words, phrases, or images do you hear as though for the first time
2. **Read the passage aloud, slowly**
3. Wait a few seconds, then **read the passage aloud a second time.**
4. After a minute or two of silence, invite participants to share the word, phrase, or image only. (Ask them not to provide meanings or interpretations at this stage)
5. Invite them to prepare for a third reading of the text by silently reflecting on "how is your life touched by this word or phrase or image"? The following guiding questions might help
 - a. For what reasons do you feel drawn to this phrase or image?
 - b. What does it remind you of?
 - c. What meaning does it hold for you?
 - d. What might God be saying to you?
6. **Read the passage aloud slowly a third time**
 - a. Invite participants to share one or two sentences a response to the four questions just listed.
7. Invite participants to share something that they might be learning about themselves, about others or God.

9. Praying The Scripture

Someone reads a sentence or verse then there is a period of silence as each person in the group allows God to speak to them through the words.

P Is there something to **praise** or thank God for?

R Is there a sin or attitude to **repent** of, confess and ask forgiveness for?

A Is there something to **ask** God for?

Y Is there an attitude or part of your life that needs to be **yielded** to God?

Pray as a group as God leads you. Have someone else read the next sentence or verse and repeat the process until you worked through the passage.

10. Prayer Response

After you have had your bible study give each person a piece of paper and ask them to write a prayer in response to how God has spoken to them or touched them through the study. Write down what you would say to God as if you were speaking to him. Be honest. Have a prayer time where you share and read out your prayers.