

Seaside Church: Bible Groups



What is it?

A Bible group¹ is 2-4 men or women who agree to meet on a regular basis in order to read and discuss scripture together. Bible groups can be done with someone who is just beginning to follow Jesus or among those who have been Christians for some time. They can be geared towards developing a future leader or even in a mentoring context (old and young together). A Bible group is also a great way for someone who's never read the Bible or isn't sure what they believe to participate in.

Why do this?

First, because there are incredible things to learn about God and yourself in the Bible.

Though there are many verses I could give you to encourage you to read the Bible, here is one of my favorites, "[162] *I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil*, (Psalm 119:162 ESV)." There is great treasure waiting for you so go find it!

Second, Bible groups are simple. While programs, classes, and events are helpful and necessary to help people grow spiritually, a Bible group doesn't require a building, curriculum, or a staff member of a church to run it. It's something that any believer can do. All it requires is 2-3 men or women, some Bibles, a simple guide(provided here), and a place to meet.

Third, they allow for quality spiritual growth. Because they are groups of 2-3, everyone can share and talk. This allows friendships to grow faster and deeper. In addition to the small size they are also gender specific. Let's be honest, there are certain struggles that men and women face that we aren't willing to talk about in mixed company. Also, though many churches have small groups or community groups (10-12 adults and kids) that are great for building community and serving others, this format is not always the best for spiritual growth. Often there are distractions ("What are the kids doing now?") and the size of the groups can prohibit everyone from participating. Bible groups allow for a level of learning and discussion that is typically difficult in a small group setting.

Fourth, they are flexible and accessible. Bible groups are very flexible. A group can change their meeting time every week. This is helpful for men and women whose work schedules are constantly changing (military, police, hospitals, etc.). Bible groups can also give people more access to the Bible not just in terms of schedules but even in terms of a different opportunity to learn the Bible. For example, you may have a friend who wouldn't come to our Sunday gathering but would meet with you to read and discuss the Bible over a cup of coffee, beer, or meal.

Fifth, they allow for the Bible to be learned in the context of friendships. There's nothing wrong with taking a formal Bible class and there's nothing wrong with just getting together to hang out and build community. But what if you could grow in your relationship with God by reading the Bible and make some good friends at the same time. Let's face it, some of us have a hard time reading the Bible on our own but reading it with one or two friends helps us stay in God's word and gives us some accountability.

Finally, they are reproducible. After going through a few studies, almost anyone can feel equipped to start a Bible group. My heart for our church is that you would be equipped and feel confident in your ability to make a disciple. This is the most basic way to do that.

¹ Much of the concepts for Bible groups is taken from *One to One Bible Reading*, by David Helm. The C.O.M.A. method for Bible discussion that is mentioned below is directly from this book. I encourage you to pick up a copy.

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How to get started?

Pray. Pray about who you should ask to do a Bible group with you.

Ask. Ask the person(s) if they'd be willing to meet to study the Bible.

Bible. Decide together what you are going to read. See our "Bible Groups" Tab under 'Connect' and 'Community' on our website for suggested Bible Group studies.

Duration. Discuss how long you're going to meet. This is important so that no one feels trapped in the group and there is an end in sight. This could be 6 weeks, 3 months, 1 year, etc. I recommend starting off with a 4-8 week study and then figuring things out from there.

Let us know. Shoot an email to biblegroups@seasidechurch.com and tell us about your group. Who are you meeting with? Share with us any prayer requests you may have. You don't need any "approval" from our church leadership to start a group, but we do like to know how many groups are meeting and who is currently meeting so we can keep you in prayer.

What will a typical Bible Group look like?

1. Pray and ask God to lead and bless your time. Take turns praying as the group is comfortable.
2. Read the Passage out loud.
3. Use the C.O.M.A. method outlined below. These questions can be answered in the group (no preparation) or the group can decide to work through some of these prior to meeting.
 1. **Context:**
 1. What kind of book is it? (Letter, Gospel, History, etc.)
 2. Are there any clues about the circumstances under which it was written?
 3. What has happened so far? (this is a good question to ask each week)
 2. **Observations:**
 1. Are there any breaks or sections to the text?
 2. What is the main point or points?
 3. What surprises are there?
 4. Are there any key words or repeating words/phrases?
 3. **Meaning:**
 1. How does this first relate to other parts of the book?
 2. How does this relate to Jesus?
 3. What do we learn about God in this passage?
 4. What do we learn about people in this passage?
 5. How would you sum this up in your own words?
 4. **Application:**
 1. How does this passage challenge or confirm my understanding?
 2. Is there an attitude or belief I need to change?
 3. How does my life look different or change from applying this passage?
4. Schedule your next meeting
5. End in Prayer

A quick note about beginning your meeting. I encourage you to not take a lot of time catching up with each other before you get into the discussion. The reason is because as you discuss you'll be sharing what's going on with you personally as you reflect and talk. Bible groups are built around the Bible and friendships and while we don't want to ignore building a friendship at the expense of "completing the study" we also don't want to miss out on the Bible at the expense of "building community." I'm praying that all of you would participate in a Bible Group. Thanks for reading this! - Rob Steinbach, Lead Pastor Seaside Church