

# Small group Introduction

TRANSFORMED LIFE

## Guidelines for Small Groups

This guidelines section is written primarily for small group leaders, but would also be beneficial to small group members. Later on you will see the Introduction section, getting you started on the Transformed Life journey.

### What do we want our groups to be like?

- Welcoming
- Inclusive
- Friendly
- Enjoyable
- Relevant
- Worthwhile
- Other-focused
- Stick to time
- Life-changing
- No cliques
- No Christian jargon
- Not 'religious'
- Not 'weird'
- Not self-focused
- Covered by prayer
- Well prepared
- Holy Spirit-led

### How can we achieve this?

These notes can help you to prepare for your group well in advance and to get other members involved. Share with your group the above characteristics that you may particularly need to focus on.

A key moment will be the welcome. Friendly, warm, fun, caring, joyful: these words describe a good welcome. The welcome starts the moment the first person arrives.

### Elements of a good welcome

- A welcome greeting at the door.
- A friendly welcome, introductions made and people taken over to the refreshments.
- Greetings/introductions to everyone else.
- Hugs or handshakes. For some, these may be the only hugs they get all week.
- Introductions are so important. Never assume that people will do this. Get up and greet folk as they enter. Make sure that you've spoken to everyone before proceeding.
- Icebreaker questions will help you get to know the members of your group so you'll begin to feel a sense of belonging and family. An introductory icebreaker can be very helpful to get people sharing and also listening to one another. Make best use of it and as a leader ensure all people have a chance to speak and be heard.

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**Discussion times** are also crucial for a meaningful time together:

- Listen / watch the study material.
- Decide which discussion questions you want to emphasize during the discussion.
- Keep the discussion moving and draw out the principal thoughts.
- The discussion must not only lead to knowing what the Bible says, but to understanding what God is saying to us.
- You will want to ensure that each person has an opportunity to share, and that the time is not dominated by any one individual.
- Don't allow the discussion to drag on too long, or allow too many questions.

## **Phrases you can use to help participation**

- *Thank you, now someone else?*
- *Any other thoughts?*
- *Who else?*
- *What other insights do people have?*
- *What does someone else think?*
- *Does anyone else want to add something?*

## **The 70/30 Principle**

The leader should aim to talk no more than 30% of the time and encourage the members to talk at least 70% of the time.

As the leader and facilitator, you determine how much time should be spent discussing one point of the study (be wary of red herrings!). You may choose to deal with some questions quickly and deal more thoroughly with others.

## **Facilitators empower others**

The root definition of facilitate is 'to make easy'. The leader empowers the members to enjoy God and each other.

Synonyms for facilitate: *help, aid, assist, make easy, empower, lubricate, smooth, make possible.*

The leader is not stiff and passive – only listening and not sharing. He/she interacts just like the other group members, sharing personal reflections, experiences, and modeling transparency.

**Prayer times** also need to be accessible to newcomers who may never have considered praying out loud or in a group. It is good to encourage short and simple prayers and possibly written prayers.

Speak to the current members of the group beforehand to avoid religious jargon in praying, or lengthy prayers, which can deter others from speaking out.

The **worship time** needs to enable newcomers to also engage. Give prayerful preparation for this, and if another member of the group is asked to lead this, please check beforehand the appropriateness of their thoughts and plans for this time. Standing in a circle singing a song unknown to newcomers is not advised.

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## Guidelines

- Lead by example. Try not to let the responsibility of leading the group distract you from your own worship.
- Seek to create a relaxed, informal atmosphere.
- Be prepared.
- Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting.
- This is not a time to browbeat members or yourself into a greater faith, but a time for you to enjoy and be at ease in God's presence.

Worship is our heart's response to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It involves responding to Him by inward and outward expressions of thanksgiving and adoration. This should infuse the whole of our lives.

'Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.' Romans 12:1 (*The Message*)

## REFLECTION – notes to self:

What do I need to do differently?

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What do I need to encourage others to do differently?

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## INTRODUCTION

### WELCOME

Say something like ‘Over the coming weeks, we will learn together, get to know more about God, more about ourselves, and also get to know one another better. I am so glad to be journeying with you all!’

Before you start, it would be good to get to know a bit more about one another. Ask group members to introduce themselves and tell everyone one thing about their early life when they were growing up.

It would be good to express something of your delight and excitement about coming together for this eight-week series to discover more about the Transformed Life.

Through our time together, we will examine three of life’s most important questions:

- Who am I?
- Where do I belong?
- What am I living for?

These questions of **identity, belonging and purpose** are vital for our whole existence and security.

Considering *identity*, it would be good to know the names and contact details of everyone in the group, if members are happy to share them.

**ACTIVITY:** Give each person a sheet of paper and have them write their name, phone number and email on it, and then pass it round the group. Keep going until you receive your original paper back, which should then have everybody’s details on around the group. (This is helpful as it also provides a reminder during the evening of the names of people within the group).

Hand out the *Transformed Life* devotional books to each person (unless everyone already has a copy). You might suggest that they write their names in the inside cover to identify who it belongs to, in case one is left behind one week. Ask the members to bring the book with them each week.

It might be helpful to read the following from Dave Smith, the author of *Transformed Life*, to explain more about the book...

*‘The purpose of this devotional is to help us digest these wonderful truths in bite-sized chunks. So, every day for the next 50 days, we are going to be studying a verse or verses from Ephesians 1–3, which will help paint a picture of the Transformed Life. In order to benefit the most, it is important to invest the appropriate time. As well as setting aside a few minutes every day in reading each section, it is so important to follow this up with personal reflection and response.’*

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*'A recent survey of how people grow in their spiritual journey with Christ highlighted that the number one spiritual growth tool (twice as influential as any other practice) was the discipline of regularly reading and reflecting on Scripture.*

*'If you already have this discipline, then hopefully this study will give you some extra material to use alongside your daily devotions. For others, our hope and prayer is that this will set you on a course of daily reading and reflecting on Scripture that will last a lifetime!'*

Please remember to bring your devotional with you to each small group meeting.

## WATCH THE INTRODUCTION SESSION

'Who am ...?'  
'Where do I ...?'  
'What am I ...?'

**Identity**  
**Belonging**  
**Purpose**

## WORD

- Where do you think people can look for their own identity, other than looking to God and His word?
- Who are some of the people who have helped you lay down good foundations in your life?
- Why do you think knowledge of belonging is important to our personal sense of wellbeing?
- What could be points in people's lives when they may reflect more on their purpose for living?
- What did Dave Smith outline as life as God intended it? How can you relate to this?

## WORSHIP

Give people time to personally read and reflect on Psalm 8 (in their own Bibles, or have copies for people who don't bring a Bible). Then say that you are going to read it out loud, and afterwards you'd like all who feel able to say a short personal prayer of thanks to God for the importance He places on their life.

## CONCLUSION

The key elements of the *Transformed Life* series are:

- Sunday teaching
- Daily devotional
- Small Group studies
- Weekly memory verse
- Weekly action steps for life application

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If you want to do some further study alongside this, we would recommend a couple of commentaries on Ephesians:

- On a simple level, *The Message of Ephesians* by John Stott
- A more technical study is *The Letter to the Ephesians* by Peter O'Brien.

## **ACTION**

Set aside a time this week to read through the whole of the letter to the Ephesians in one sitting.

Get yourself a drink, then find a modern version of the Bible either via an app, online or a paper version! (We are using the New International Version (1984 and 2011) for this study, so it might help if you do the same.) Then slowly read through all six chapters out loud. When you have finished, pray!

Here's a link to an audio version of Ephesians chapter 1:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/audio/suchet/nivuk/Eph.1>

Take some time each day to pray for those in your group.

Take time to reflect upon the three foundational questions in your devotional:

- Who am I?
- Where do I belong?
- What am I living for?