

Growth Group Basics

Introduction

These few sessions are designed to look at some of the biblical principles behind growth groups. They have been written for Summer 2009, but can be used at any time –either by a new group or by an existing group as a ‘health check’.

Firstly, the obvious: Growth Groups are groups where we can grow! And, yes that means Up, In and Out! But how do Growth Groups become places which nurture this growth?

Here are 5 values that could help your group do that. They’ve been squeezed into an A-E –but I blame another writer for that!

* If it helps, great! If not, don’t let it put you off!

All Involved (In)

Becoming Disciples (Up)

Creating Community (In)

Doing Evangelism (Out)

Encountering God (Up)

There are 3 sessions, looking at the Ups, the Ins and the Out.

Further Reading

*The 5 values are taken from a book called ‘The Challenge of Cell Church’ by Phil Potter (Bible Reading Fellowship & CPAS 2001). If leaders, in particular, want to read more about the thinking behind Growth Groups, then this is a good place to start –although it’s important to consider how ‘cell principles’ fit with our context in Alsager, hence Growth Groups.

1: Growing Up: Becoming Disciples & Encountering God

This session looks at the 'B' and 'E' of the A-E of Growth Group values. These are the two concerned with growing closer to God ('Up').

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Think of one person who has had a major influence on your life. Share with the group how they have influenced you.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Put a model of a house or a brick in the middle of the room.

Read Luke 6:46-48 twice. Now, have a few of minutes of quiet. In the silence, think about different areas of your life...

- In what ways in your life are you putting into practice Jesus teaching? Thank God for those solid foundations.

Read Luke 6:49 twice. Now, in a couple more minutes of silence, consider...

- In what areas of your life have you heard Jesus' teaching, but are not putting it into practice? How could you change? Ask God for his help.

WORD

Read Mark 1:14-20 & 29-39

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?

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- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Look at verses 16-20. What did it mean for these first disciples to follow Jesus? How did it affect their lives?
- Imagine Jesus arriving one day where you spend a lot of time and saying 'Come follow me'. What difference would it make to your life?
- What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus? Who or what do you find particularly helps you to follow him?
- In what practical ways can you encourage one another to follow Jesus more closely in your Growth Group?

- From these passages, what do you think it was like being with Jesus?
- Jesus spends time doing things amongst the crowds and also withdraws to pray. Both were part of his ministry and lifestyle. What aspects of living as a Christian do you find easiest? Which do you struggle with?
- What are your expectations of encountering God?
- How can you help one another to encounter God during your times together as a group, or during the week?

WHAT NEXT?

You may want to split into smaller 3s-5s for this. Each share one practical thing you could do to help you grow closer to God in the next fortnight. Pray for one another, asking God to help the others in your group.

If you're brave & want to, next time you meet, share how you got on!

2: All Involved & Creating Community

This session looks at the 'A' and 'C' of the A-E of Growth Group values. These are the two concerned with growing closer to one another ('In').

Leave yourselves plenty of time for the last session this time!

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

If you're feeling brave, those who want to could share how you got on with your 'discipleship challenge' from the last session!

WORSHIP

Even if you don't usually, try using this suggestion this week...

Read out 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. List all the different ministries, jobs and organisations in the church that you can think of (however 'small'). Go round each saying a short thank you to God for each one.

WORD

Read Mark 10:32-45

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Compare James and John's requests in verses 35-37 with the path that Jesus describes in verses 33-34. Comment.

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In verse 35, look at James and John's approach to Jesus

- To what extent do you think their attitude is similar to many people's attitudes to Jesus/God/Christianity/church today?
- Are your attitudes to Jesus ever similar? It might help to think of how you pray or use your time.
- How would your life be different if you followed Jesus' advice in verse 43-45?

- Imagine how the disciples felt when they heard of James and John's request (v41). Try and think of all the possible reactions that they might have been tempted to have. What ongoing impact would each reaction have had on the whole group?
- What attitudes do you think help/hinder a growth group or church in creating community?

WHAT NEXT?

As a group, if you haven't done so yet...

1 Talk about how you can share round roles in the group, each serving one another –leading parts of the meeting (using these notes), organising care for one another, arranging socials, hosting, providing biscuits etc

2 Discuss how you can improve your care for one another.

3 Think of some ideas for group socials at different times from when you normally meet. Think of ways to maybe include those who don't normally come or family members. Put some in the diary!

Share, then pray:

1 For anything you'd like prayer for personally (ie for you yourself –e.g. health, a job situation, a relationship issue etc –however trivial it seems)

2 For someone you know who's not there with you.

3: Doing Evangelism

This session looks at the 'D' of the A-E of Growth Group values. This is to do with reaching out to others –sharing God's love with our community ('Out') in its widest sense. Often these activities are best done by individuals or as a whole church, but there is still a part to play for Growth Groups, which is what we are focussing on here.

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

If you can remember, share how you first came to the church. How did you feel coming as an 'outsider'? What would have made it easier?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Play some quiet instrumental music on a CD. Each close your eyes and imagine Jesus coming into the room and asking you to come with him to somewhere in your community. Where do you think he would take you? What would he show you? What would he say to you? Talk to him about it.

WORD

Read Mark 6:7-13 & 30-34

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

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Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- 'Apostle' means 'one sent'. Being sent was part of the job title! How do you think they felt being 'sent out' by Jesus (v7-13)? How do you think they felt coming back?
- To what extent do you feel being 'sent' is part of your commission as a Christian?
- How do you think they felt when the crowds caught up with them and Jesus decided to start teaching them (v34)?
- Jesus showed compassion both to his friends (v31) and to the crowd (v34). How can you as a group go into your community and 'show compassion' on them?
- Jesus' compassion includes teaching (v34), healing (v13), spiritual warfare (v31), physical feeding (v41). How can we practically show compassion in these ways?

WHAT NEXT?

Think about your group. What ways do you already reach 'out'? What new ways could you try? Here are two ways...

If you haven't already...

1 Plan a social for the whole church which you organise as a group. Make it something that outsiders could also be invited to.

2 Choose a community group that you have a group contact with (police, school, council etc). Commit to finding out more information about them and praying for them on a regular basis as a group. You could even let them know that a group from Christ Church was praying for them!

Now pray for these things & then pray for one another.

AND FINALLY...

Having looked at these 3 sessions on Growth Group Basics, what do you feel are your group's strengths and weaknesses?

If you haven't already, pick 2-3 specific things you can do to enrich the group –maybe one Up, one In, one Out.

Now pray for your group, asking for God's blessing.

EXTRA...

(you could do this as a separate week or include it at another time or leave it for the future)

Read Acts 2:42-47

This passage gives just one short snapshot of the very early church. It's not meant as a complete picture for church today, but it is a useful checkpoint.

Each write down each phrase from the reading ('they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching', 'they devoted themselves to fellowship', 'to the breaking of bread' etc).

- Which of these activities are best done as growth groups or as a church?
- Which of these activities are you good at as an individual which are you weaker on?
- Which are you strong/weak on as a group?
- What is your response?