

thrive groups – getting started

Since those who follow Jesus Christ believe that the Bible is the most important piece of literature on earth, it is important for Christ Followers to read it and to share what they learn with others. The Bible is not only the central conversation partner for those who follow Jesus Christ, but is essential in understanding God for those seeking to discover more.

DESCRIPTION:

1. **thrive** groups are informal settings created to foster friendships and spiritual growth with others who are interested in reading and sharing personal insights from the Bible.
2. Groups are encouraged to meet on a monthly basis to share insights about a book of the Bible (such as the book of James, Proverbs, Romans, John, etc.) The group will decide on the next “book of the month” at the end of the meeting time.
3. Group meetings are encouraged to take place at an informal and comfortable location. Groups may choose to meet in a home, a coffee shop, an office, a church, or a pub, anywhere conducive for great conversation.

PARTICIPATION:

4. Group meetings are open to anyone willing to read, listen or share their insights from the selected Bible reading. It's for those just discovering spiritual things as well as those who may be further along their journey with Christ.
5. The share time is not for “lecturing” but is to be a safe environment for all to share and learn from each other and the Bible.
6. You don't have to be a “Christian” to participate in reading, listening or sharing.
7. The insights and perspective shared from the Bible reading will be welcomed and valued.

GUIDELINES:

8. Group meetings are encouraged to set a specific start and ending time.
9. The share time should be limited to the selected Bible reading chosen prior to the gathering.
10. Those who have read any part of the selected Bible reading are encouraged to share their insights during the share time.
11. Every participant is encouraged to bring notes of their insights as well as take notes from insights provided by others in the group.
12. During the share time, each person should have the opportunity to answer the following questions:

- 1. What insights did I gain from the Bible reading this month?**
- 2. How will I live differently because of what I've learned?**

- The purpose of the share time is not for debating theology or religion. Extensive "Q & A" is encouraged to take place outside of the scheduled share time.
- Anyone acting in a disrespectful or disruptive manner should be asked to step out of the group meeting.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Personally invite a few friends to participate in a group with you.
2. Determine a specific time and location for the group meeting.
3. Select a "book of the month" for your upcoming gathering or following the reading schedule on the Thrive website.
4. Share this "Getting Started" document with those participating in your group so they can understand the purpose and direction of the group.
5. At every meeting, be sure to review the guidelines of the share time as a reminder. This will help make new participants feel more comfortable and will help the group maintain its focus.
6. Ask new participants for their contact information to communicate with them concerning any meeting changes, updates or reminders.
7. Keep your monthly meeting information updated on our Thrive site.

SUGGESTED GATHERING SCHEDULE:

The schedule of each meeting will greatly depend on the make up of the group and the meeting location. The amount of time needed will depend upon the number of people participating in the share time.

It is important that every participant have the opportunity to share his or her insights from the Bible reading. As participation grows, you may need to extend your meeting schedule, breaking into separate groups for share times or consider starting another group.

Connection

- Show up early to prepare the location and welcome everyone.
- Introduce new people to the group and catch up with what's going on with each person.
- Great to be done over a meal, drinks or an activity.

Share Time

- Begin with a short prayer. You can pray something like this:

*“God, we open our hearts to You.
We ask You to speak to each person here.
Help us learn more about You and each other.
Thank You for this time together. Amen.”*

- Do a quick overview of the guidelines and remind those participating about the two questions to answer as they share.
- It is vital that the sharing time be comfortable and predictable, especially for new participants.
- Be sure that everyone has time to share before the meeting ends.
- Confirm the “book of the month” for the next gathering.

Prayer Requests

- Ask people how the group can pray for them personally.
- Ask someone in the group to write down the prayer needs to refer to during the next months meeting.

Closing

- Thank everyone for coming and encourage them to invite a friend.
- Confirm the upcoming gathering time and location.