



NightChurch Small Group Bible Studies on John 13-21
Term 1, 2015

Sunday

January 4
January 25
February 1
February 8
February 15
February 22
March 1
March 8
March 15
March 22
Good Friday
April 5

Bible Talk

John 13.1-35
John 13.36-14.14
John 14.15-31
John 15.1-17
John 15.18-16.4a
John 16.4b-15
John 16.16-33
John 17
John 18.1-27
John 18.28-19.16a
John 19.16b-42
John 20-21

How to be in a small group

Another year, another Bible study group. Time to sign up, turn up and get things rolling for another year. Time also perhaps to ask some questions about your small group. Do you feel as if you just go along because that's what you're expected to do? Does the group have a clear purpose, or does it just exist because it has always existed?

More to the point, what part are you going to play in this year's group? What can you be doing to make the group a success? There are many books and guides and training materials for small group leaders (like *Growth Groups* from Matthias Media), but what about the humble group member? What can each of us be doing to make the most of our small groups?

Why go in the first place?

People go to small groups for all sorts of reasons to fulfil expectations, to make friends, to pursue romantic possibilities, to receive encouragement and counsel, to learn, and so on.

While most of these might be perfectly acceptable reasons to join a small group, the first and indispensable reason must be clear in our minds. Our primary reason for belonging to a small group is to give us opportunity to love and encourage other people in Christ. It's not about Me; it's about Them. And it's about Them because of Christ.

This after all is what the Christian life is about. Our most basic principle is to love other people as Christ has loved us, to lay down our lives for them as Christ did for us. This applies as much to small groups as it does to marriages, families, workplaces, and larger Christian meetings. We go to small groups not primarily to have our needs met, but to meet the needs of others. Of course, we have needs too, and no doubt they will be met along the way—but we can let others worry about that. In fact, paradoxically, the more we focus on loving others, and doing whatever we can for them, the more encouragement and strength we find ourselves.

There are many ways we can love and encourage the other people in our groups. Here are five powerful ones (complete with alliterative titles).

1. The power of presence

This is the simplest and most obvious, but is no less powerful for being so. Just being there each week without fail is a powerful encouragement to the other members of the group. In making the group time a solid commitment, to be missed only in times of emergency, you send a very clear message to the other members: "Being with you matters very much to me. Unless something very important comes up, you can expect me. Encouraging you is a top priority."

Conversely, inconsistent attendance sends a somewhat less encouraging message: "I don't mind coming, but it's not that important. If I feel a bit tired or something else crops up, don't expect me. Being with you and encouraging you isn't really a very high priority for me."

Turning up regularly requires no extraordinary gifts or talent, but it is a powerful way of loving other people.

2. The power of preparation

Most small groups complete their evening's Bible study with a plaintive plea from the leader for people to read the passage and prepare for next week's study. The leader knows full well that most people won't, but there's no harm in trying!

However, preparing for the group time is another powerful way to love the members of the group. Of course, having read the

passage, or done the homework, greatly increases the benefit you yourself receive from the discussion. More importantly, however, it equips you to encourage others by what you say. Rather than throwing in whatever occurs to you at the time, you have actually thought about the Bible passage and the issues that it raises. You are much better prepared to say things that stimulate and encourage and teach others if you have bothered to give it some thought beforehand.

3. The power of prayer

Paul's friend and fellow worker, Epaphras, would have made an ideal small group member. According to Paul, he was always "wrestling in prayer" for the Colossians, that they might "stand firm in all the will of God". Paul was able to vouch that in doing so, Epaphras was "working hard for you" (Col 4:12-13).

Praying for others is hard work, but real work. It is one of the most loving things we can do for our fellow group members, not only because it is through our prayers that God does his work in people's lives, but because it is such a quiet, inconspicuous form of ministry. Making a casserole for someone, by comparison, is much more satisfying—you see something very tangible for your efforts, and you have the pleasure of delivering it to the person and receiving their warm expressions of thanks. Prayer has none of those rewards. You do it for one reason only: that you care for that person and want what is best for them in Christ. And so you pray for them.

4. The power of personality

The alliteration may be starting to stretch a little thin here, but the point is solid enough—that a powerful way of loving others in your small group is to be willing to share your own life and personality with them.

This is by no means an easy thing to do. Many of us would much rather keep quiet and not give too much away. However, by opening up and sharing our lives and thoughts and struggles and joys, we do others a great service. We not only show them that we have the very same struggles that they have (but thought they were alone in suffering); we also encourage them to open up as well.

Of course, it is anything but loving to indiscriminately dump everything we are thinking or feeling onto the group. We need to heed the advice of Proverbs and think carefully before we speak; as well as the words of Ephesians 4: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Eph 4:29).

5. The power of love

Whatever you do in the group—every word you say, every action—do it for the sake of others. Look for how you can support and help the leader. Look for ways to care for the members of the group—those who could really do with a phone call or visit; those who would benefit from having someone to pray or read the Bible with; those who need financial or other material help; those who just need a friend to have pizza and a video with.

Belonging to a small group can be a very demanding exercise. It can cost us our lives, because that is what it means to be a follower of Christ—to lay down our lives for the sake of others. If we grasp the possibilities, small groups represent an enormously fruitful opportunity for doing just that.



Introduction to John

John tells us very clearly what he's trying to achieve with his gospel. John 20:30-31 says, “*Jesus did many signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but **these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***”

John was one of Jesus' disciples. He was the son of Zebedee, and the brother of James, who was also a disciple. Along with this gospel, John also wrote three letters that are included in the new Testament—1st, 2nd, and 3rd John, and the last book of the Bible, The Book of Revelation. In his gospel, John refers to himself as “the disciples whom Jesus loved”, which helps us not to confuse him with John the Baptist, who is a significant character in this book.

John probably wrote his gospel toward the end of the first century A.D., a long time after the gospel's of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were written. John wrote to both Jews and Gentiles. He wrote to both Christians and non-Christians. As the verses above say, John wanted them, and he wants us, to have life in Jesus. In order to convince us, John records the passion narrative (Jesus' farewell, trial, crucifixion, death, and resurrection) in great length and detail. This, John says, is Jesus' *glory*. It reveals what kind of king and Messiah Jesus is. This has earned the second half of the gospel (chapters 13 to 21) the nickname, 'The Book of Glory'.

John's gospel sets forth evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. John wants us to believe that Jesus is the Messiah (Messiah means God's anointed king), so we believe and have life. John says that without believing these things, you will not have life. Believing what John has to say about Jesus is the difference between life and death.

John's message is not just evangelistic. He wants followers of Jesus to grow in their belief, and to grow in the life they have in Christ. Belief for John is not just intellectual assent—John wants us to put our lives in Jesus' hands. He wants to reveal King Jesus to us, so we can know and love him.

Study 1; John 13.1-35

- Preparation **before** you meet at Small Group.

Reading the passage before Small Group greatly increases the benefit you receive from the discussion. But it's also a powerful way to love the others in your group as you share what you have discovered.

- Pray and read John 13.1-35

Remember that John's gospel is all about Jesus, God's anointed king. According to John 20.30-31, Jesus is the promised Christ, and the Son of God. By believing in Jesus, people can have eternal life. Keep this in mind as you read.



Write down a few of the main ideas of this part of the bible—anything that stands out to you as being significant.



Write down any questions you have.



How does this passage call on you to change the way you live?

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Share any questions you have. Using the passage, and remembering everything that's been covered so far in the book, see if you can work out an answer.



How does this passage call on you to change the way you live? Try to share real and practical ways that this part of the bible changes you.

Pray

What would John want you to pray about?

What can you pray for each other at Small Group?

What can you pray for our church?

What can you pray for all those outside our church?

Study 2; John 13.36-14.14

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Study 3; John 14.15-31

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Study 4; John 15.1-17

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- Pray and read John 15.1-17

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Study 5; John 15.18-16.4a

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- Pray and read John 15.18-16.4a

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➤ Pray and read John 15.18-16.4a



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Study 6; John 16.4b-15

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- Pray and read John 16.4b-15

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➤ Pray and read John 16.4b-15



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Study 7; John 16.16-33

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- Pray and read John 16.16-33

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➤ Pray and read John 16.16-33



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Study 8; John 17

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- Pray and read John 17

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➤ Pray and read John 17



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Study 9; John 18.1-27

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- Pray and read John 18.1-27

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➤ Pray and read John 18.1-27



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Study 10; John 18.28-19.16a

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- Pray and read John 18.28-19.16a

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➤ Pray and read John 18.28-19.16a



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Study 11; John 19.16b-42

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- Pray and read John 19.16b-42

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➤ Pray and read John 19.16b-42



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Study 12; John 20-21

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- Pray and read John 20-21

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