
FORMING A GOSPELS STUDY GROUP

*This material is an excerpt from Approaching the Gospels Together,
by Mary Morrison*

The first essential thing in starting a Gospels study group and keeping it going is a **person who is eager and seriously interested**. Here is what to do:

MEMBERSHIP: Hold firmly to the concept that **this is a group activity**, in which the important elements are not the learning and expertise of one specialist or even a general level of prior knowledge, but the ease and openness with which the individuals within the group interact, and approach the Gospel material. With this in mind, begin to inquire around for people who might be interested in taking a **fresh look** at the subject. Groups can vary in size comfortably from six to sixteen, a size large enough for **variety of insights**, small enough for **freedom of expression**.

LEADERSHIP: Your group can proceed with one learner/leader; or with a pair who work up the material together and alternate leadership; or with rotating leadership. **The important thing for a leader is not to have answers, but to know how to ask questions;** how to keep the discussion focused on the text and moving along at a steady pace; how to encourage all possible points of view; how to keep the more vocal members from dominating the group.

SCHEDULE: A weekly meeting is desirable, if possible. It is a good idea to **set up in short units at first**, ideally of not more than four weeks, or at the most ten. Regular year long study will develop naturally if the group goes well.

GROUP PROCEDURE: Group members should feel a responsibility to listen to one another, to express themselves as openly, freshly, briefly, and as much to the point as possible; and encourage others to do the same. In their dealings with the text, they should maintain openness and **encourage freshness by trying to read as if for the first time** (this will put everyone, oldtimers and newcomers alike, on an equal footing). There should be no coercion of any kind; the group is not trying to reach conclusions, but to open, vitalize and enlarge the thinking of each individual within it.

These procedures are designed as a beginning step only, to help you in formulating your own procedures as you work with the Gospels and the group. And so, good luck and much enjoyment!