
GROUP PROCEDURE

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

As a group we will read the text aloud from Henry Burton Sharman's Records of the Life of Jesus. Through discussion we will explore the text and our ideas and thoughts about it with no pressure to arrive at a specific conclusion or, in fact, any conclusion. All ideas and thoughts are welcomed for group thinking. We are together to enrich one another's thinking, not diminish it by argumentation or debate.

Guidelines for Group Members

- Maintain an attitude of searching – a ‘beginner’s mind’ – and try as far as possible to read as if for the first time.
- Stay text-centered in comments and questions.
- Talk briefly and to the point. Give others a chance to speak. Talk to one another and encourage others who hesitate to speak.
- Listen to learn. Do not mentally shut off the ideas of another person by thinking only of your own comments while that person is speaking.
- Contribute your ideas. Relax and trust what you know; acknowledge what you do not know. Do your own thinking. Feel free to wonder.
- Check your preconceptions and biases at the door. A helpful image is that of a hat rack when you come in on which you stop to hang all your theological, academic or other “baggage.” You can pick it up on your way out, but for the time in class let it stay there.
- Be sympathetic and ready to receive the opinion of another rather than eager to reject, correct or change it
- Honor silence when it develops. Let it be a time for germination of new ideas or to reflect more deeply on what has been said.
- Bring to class one of the many translations of the Bible, now so prolific. Often different translations will shed light on an obscure passage or even add deeper understanding to the text. Do not hesitate to bring attention to a different translation.
- If you come late, or have missed a previous meeting, wait a period of time to be sure that what you have to say will fit into the ongoing discussion and spirit of the group.