

Small Group and Bible Study Series “How Christians Grow”

Aim:

This series is intended to provide an examination of Andrew Prince’s book “How Christians Grow”, which considers spiritual formation throughout history, by way of spiritual disciplines, such as meditative reading and prayer as well as an examination of spiritual gifts.

Whilst the book is provided as a formative study for the church, the aim is not to just engage in a program or exercise, but that the whole church would undertake a journey of formation – that we might grow in maturity in Christ, together.

Benchmark:

The series commences by asking everyone to undertake a brief discipleship survey – to provide a benchmark for where each person is at – before they begin to undertake this period of growth.

The survey apparatus is found on www.wearemakingdisciples.com and is chosen as it is the synod’s discipleship team preferred tool, is free and is easily used by a whole of church (or denomination wide). It also has a trove of discipleship resources to assist with formation - considering how Christians grow toward maturity. To undertake this survey and register /link with Emmanuel enter our church code at the end of the survey: _____

The survey results are confidential and only ‘contribute’ to the overall shape of the church – no individual information is passed onto the ministry agents / administrator.

Content:

Over the two terms we will be considering Christian growth through a church camp, small group studies on individual characters and reading / reflecting on Andrew’s book.

The church camp which will provide a time of community reflection around what is spiritual formation, spiritual disciplines... an opportunity to reflect on your own journey as well as *trying* some spiritual disciplines, like Spiritual reading and reflective prayer.

Each week we will lead off with our Sunday message which will focus on a character of the bible who has exhibited growth in a particular area – and we will stop and consider *how* God used that person / circumstance / situation to form them.

This will be the content of our Sunday message / Sunday school (or all age worship). We will then be diving down into that person’s story during our Brigades sections / Youth Discipleship and small groups during the following week.

As is our way at Emmanuel, we believe people of all ages and all stages, are to grow together... and so we encourage this approach with our lesson planning and content, particularly promoting faith at home / discipleship modelling and resourcing / equipping families to have the conversations around

the content taught at the church on Sunday and then throughout the various sections during the week.

During the week our explore groups will be provided with material to work through. Explore group material will be EITHER a bible study on the character as highlighted by that Sunday's message OR a chapter from Andrew's book with questions / opportunity for reflection. The characters which we have chosen to study as part of small group activities – and the readings for same – are deliberate. Therefore, please follow the WEEKLY structure as per the table below. (i.e. please don't pick and choose which characters to do, or which chapter to read).

The Study guide for the book is attached as a separate document. "Study Guide for How Christians grow". The study guide for the characters is attached as a separate document. This document is generic i.e. it is the SAME for each character study. See attachment "Study Guide for identified characters". The texts for each study are below .

For term 2 it will look like:

Week starting	Character	Theme	Bible study OR book chapter
14 April 2024	Naomi	Thankfulness through suffering	benchmark & study1
21 April 2024	Ruth	Faith through uncertainty	Book chap 1
28 April 2024	Abraham	Faith through uncertainty	Study2
5 May 2024	John8 woman	Forgiveness through mistreatment	Book chapter 2
12 May 2024	Joseph	Forgiveness through mistreatment	Study3
19 May 2024	PENTECOST Sunday	TBA	
26 May 2024	Mary	Humility through Testing	Book chapter 3
2 June 2024	Moses	Humility through Testing	Study 4
9 June 2024	Hannah	Character through difficult people	Book chap 4
16 June 2024	David	Character through difficult people	Study 5

Biblical texts for CHARACTER studies: the following texts are to be worked through:

Study 1 - Naomi and Ruth: Growing in thankfulness through suffering (Ruth 1:1-7,19-22; 2:19-22; 4:13-17; Heb 5:7-9)

Study 2 - Abraham: Growing in faith through uncertainty (Gen 12:1-7; 15:1-21; 17:17-27; 22:1-18)

Study 3 - Joseph: Growing in forgiveness: through mistreatment (Joseph – Gen 44:1-45:14; 50:15-21)

Study 4 -Moses: Growing in humility through testing (Exo 2:11-15, 4:10-17; 14:10-16; Num 12:1-15)

Study 5 - David: Growing in character through difficult people (1 Sam 16:8-13; 18:1-11; 30:1-6; James 1:3-4;)

In Term three our small group study for each week will look like:

Week starting	Character	Theme	Book / Study
14 July 2024	Daniel	Perseverance through adversity	Study 6
21 July 2024	Esther	Perseverance through adversity	Book chap 5
28 July 2024	Peter	Leadership through Failure	Study 7
4 August 2024	Abigail	Leadership through Failure	Book chap 6
11 August 2024	Paul	Joy through obedience	Study 8
18 August 2024	Saul	disaster through disobedience	Study 9
25 August 2024	Stephen	Thankfulness through suffering	VOM materials
1 September 2024	Rahab	courage in difficult circumstances	Chap 7
8 September 2024	Gideon	courage in difficult circumstances	Spiritual gifts survey?

Biblical texts for CHARACTER studies: the following texts are to be worked through:

Study 6 - Daniel: Growing in perseverance through adversity (Dan 1:1-21; 2:25-28; 6:1-28)

Study 7- Peter; Growing in leadership through failure (John 18:10-11,15-18, 25-27; 21:1-19 cf. Acts 2:1-47; 4:1-31)

Study 8 - Paul: growing in joy through obedience (Acts 9:1-18; 16:16-36; Phil 4:4-14)

Study 9 - Saul: Disaster through disobedience (1 Sam 10:1-12 Saul anointed King; 1 Sam 13:5-14 Saul's disobedience; 1 Sam 31:1-6 Saul's downfall) This particular study is about someone who did the opposite of growing – declined. It is a juxtaposition of what happens when someone is willfully disobedient and falls away and ends in disaster.

The bible study readings for the week where a character's journey of growth is being examined can be sent out at the start of the week (or the start of the term really!). This gives people time to read the few passages in advance each week. For those avid readers, the whole chapters into and out of the nominated texts would be good for context / bigger picture / thinking.