

# Snapshots 2

REAL STORIES ABOUT  
CHRISTIAN LIFE IN COMMUNITY



# Snapshots II

## Real Stories about Christian Life in Community

### Leading healthy groups

#### Confidentiality

When you invite people to participate in groups such as this, you are inviting them to share honestly and openly about themselves. It is therefore of great importance that each person in the group is committed to confidentiality. Each person should give an undertaking that nothing shared within the group will be repeated except with the express permission of the person who shared in the first place.

#### Discussion Group or Study Group?

Rather than being an exegesis or study of the Biblical text, this resource is a conversation about people's spirituality and faith journeys. It is hoped that these stories will draw out more stories from the participants in the ecumenical groups taking part in this series.

Of course various individuals in groups will bring their understandings of the Biblical text to the discussions that take place. This is not to be discouraged, but it not central to the design of the material. Furthermore, there will be times when individuals may be uncomfortable with the stories which are told, but it is hoped that this resource will give people an opportunity to share deeply and personally about their own life experiences.

#### Work through each session beforehand

It is important for group leaders to be familiar with the various texts and the way the questions are asked. Try and get a sense of the direction of each session and how you can draw out people's stories in the group.

It is usually wise to allocate a set amount of time for the various sections of each session so that you finish in around 90 minutes.

#### Encourage all present to participate in the discussion.

Try to include everyone in the conversations, and guard against one or two people from dominating the session. Don't be afraid of silences.

#### Share the readings and roles

When reading the Bible texts and praying together, be sure to include different group members. It is sometimes wise to divide longer readings into shorter sections.

#### Encourage preparation for the following week

If it is possible invite people to view the material provided in advance and allow brief reflection on the session of the previous week if necessary.

#### Set the scene

Ensure that the environment in which the group will meet is comfortable, inviting and free of distractions. There is the possibility that some members of the group will share very personal stories, so make sure that the environment is private and free from interruption.

Some group leaders find it helpful to set a reflective mood by lighting a candle.

#### About this resource material

All of the material (booklet and the DVD) is protected by copyright. However you have permission to copy this booklet only for distribution to group participants. Alternatively, you can download a copy of this booklet (pdf) from the website ([www.eculent.org.au](http://www.eculent.org.au).) and print it out for group participants.

## **Session 1 New Life in Community**

### **Ice Breaker**

You're about to head off on an exciting journey – through the sharing of stories and the deepening of relationships. If you don't know everyone in your group, take some time now to introduce yourselves and share a little about yourselves and something about the faith community (be it a church or small group) to which you belong, and share something about your hopes for this series.

### **Praying together**

Sit quietly and pray that God will make you mindful of the presence of His Spirit and his blessing for this time together.

**Scripture** John 20:1–18

### **Questions**

- What stories from your experience come to mind when you hear these stories?
- How does your community respond when people go through difficult times? Describe an example.
- Are there people in your community that run ahead (as did the other disciple in the scripture reading) and those who wait back? Which are you?
- What is God's Spirit saying to you through this story?

## **Session 2 Doubt**

### **Ice Breaker/ Praying together**

Go around the room and give each person an opportunity to offer a short prayer of thanks for the things we value most about our communities .

**Scripture** John 20:19–31

### **Questions**

- What stories from your life experience come to mind when you hear these stories?
- What is God's Spirit saying to you through the story of Thomas?
- Are there times when people in your faith community have been supported through periods of doubt?
- Is it OK to have doubts?
- How does your faith community respond to people's doubts?

## **Session 3 Stepping out in Faith**

### **Ice Breaker**

Take a few minutes and give each person in your group an opportunity to share what they've gained from participating in this series so far.

### **Praying together**

Affirm one another as part of your community, and pray for one another, acknowledging God's presence with you.

**Scripture** John 21:1 - 19

### **Questions**

- What stories from your experience come to mind when you hear these stories?
- What is the boldest step of faith your community has ever taken?
- Are there some issues facing your community requiring some steps of faith?
- What steps of faith are needed to demonstrate God's love to the world?

## **Session 4 Listening**

### **Ice Breaker**

Take time for each participant to share what has been most important for them in the week that has just passed. Have there been some times when God's Spirit has seemed especially close?

### **Praying together**

Open the session with a time of prayer, recognizing God's presence in each of your lives.

**Scripture** John 10:. 22 - 30

### **Questions**

- What stories from your life and faith experience come to mind when you hear those stories?
- What is God's Spirit saying to you through the words of Jesus in this week's scripture reading?
- How is Jesus' voice heard in your community?
- How does your community handle it when different people want to go in different directions?

## **Session 5 Love**

### **Ice Breaker/ Praying together**

The theme for this week is love, so take some time to allow each person in the group to share a personal experience of the love of God. Give thanks to God for those times.

**Scripture** John 13:31 - 35

### **Questions**

- What is God's Spirit saying to you through these stories?
- Describe the ways in which your faith community demonstrates that its people are disciples of Jesus.
- To be a recipient of love, sometimes we need to be vulnerable. When have you found it difficult to be vulnerable in a community?

## **Session 6 Peace and Strength**

### **Ice Breaker and praying together**

Allow each person to share a few impressions of things you find in community that you particularly value. Pray for one another, and for God's presence and blessing to be made known to each of one of us as we participate in this session.

**Scripture** John 14:23 – 29

### **Questions**

- What stories from your experience come to mind when you hear our guests' stories?
- Has your community ever carried someone when they were in great need?
- Talk about a time when you found peace in your community.
- Describe the strength found in individuals in your community.

## **Session 7 Unity**

### **Ice Breaker**

Go around your group and share with each other about someone who is a source of inspiration for you.

### **Praying together**

Invite each member of your group to offer sentence prayer of thanks for the people who inspire and motivate us.

**Scripture** John 17:20–26.

### **Questions**

- What stories from your experience come to mind when you hear these stories?
- What is God's Spirit saying to you through Jesus' words in this week's scripture reading?
- What do you think Churches other than your own do really well?
- How can Christian Groups in your neighborhood grow closer together?

## **Session 8 God's Spirit**

### **Ice Breaker**

As this is the last session, go around the group and share what this group has meant to each participant.

### **Praying together**

Thank God for one other and the community that has been shared in this group,

**Scripture** John 14:8 - 17

### **Questions**

- In what ways is the Spirit's presence made known in your community?
- Describe some individuals within your community who serve to remind you of God's presence.
- What changes in your life and thinking have taken place as a result of these groups?



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