

Gympie Presbyterian Church
Growth Group Studies

1 JOHN



Life

Assured

Welcome to Growth Group for Term 3

How to get the most out of Growth Groups

As we meet together in Growth Groups our goal is to *grow* in Christ—to *grow* in our knowledge of God, our love for one another, and our passion and ability to reach our region with the gospel.

Central to Growth Groups is God's Word because God grows his people through his Word. God is also at work through one another, as we share our lives, encourage each other, and pray for each other.

So how can you get the most out of Growth Groups?

1. Be praying for your Growth Group. Pray for other members, pray for the group times, that God would be working to grow us in Christian maturity.
2. Read the Bible passage(s) before the group meets and begin thinking about what the *main thing* God says in the passage.
3. Get into the discussion by asking questions. A key part of how we dig into God's Word together is through discussion—and asking questions is the best way to get the discussion going. That's why our study booklets are mainly questions...they're a tool to help us dig! And it's good to remember there are no silly or wrong questions—if it's something you're wondering about, someone else is probably wondering the same thing (or they'd love to work with you to find the answer).
4. Beware of study notes. Study Bibles are great resources—they have tools like maps, indexes, timelines, and diagrams that can help summarise and illustrate parts of the Bible. But sometimes in Growth Groups, Study Bible notes can prevent us from digging into God's Word. They take the discussion away from looking closely at God's Word and away from engaging with and encouraging one another. They can be a good tool—but only if handled with care!
5. Share what God's doing in your life. Things that are encouraging and you want to thank God for, things that are concerning and you need supportive prayer.

Credits

These studies have been developed with assistance from material from Maroochydhore and Aura Presbyterian Churches.

Personal Evangelism Pipeline

As we're going to discover in 1 John, when we are changed by the light of Jesus, we'll want to proclaim that he is eternal life (1 John 1:2-3).

But despite knowing this is true, many of us don't know where to start. So in our Growth Groups we're committed to encouraging each other in personal evangelism.

This begins with **prayer**. So begin by writing 2 (or more) names on the table below and then commit yourself to pray for 2 minutes *each day* for those 2 people—asking God for opportunities to take the 'next step' so they might hear and respond to the gospel.

Then each Growth Group we'll have a *PEP Talk*—a time to share about opportunities or setbacks in sharing the gospel. It might be a conversation or opportunity you had one with one of the people you wrote down, or a conversation with someone else or a stranger. Hearing these stories is a great encouragement for us all!

Christians have the greatest news in the world to share. Our hope and prayer is God uses this simple tool to help us better fulfil Jesus' great commission!

Next Steps	Person 1	Person 2	Other People
PRAY for opportunities Because it is God who saves, we pray!			
BUILD relationships This is about intentionally investing in relationships. Make opportunities to spend time together, getting to know them at more than a superficial level.			
SHOW love How can you show Christ-like love this person? Can you share a meal? Help in a specific and practical way?			
DEEPEN conversation Ask about their values, spirituality, or 'worldview'. Share how your faith has changed you. Ask about their struggles. Maybe offer to pray or give Biblical reflections.			
EXPAND the network What other Christians does this person know? How could you introduce them to other believers?			
INVITE to a gospel event What event would be appropriate for your friend? Could it be a regular church service, or Easter/Christmas? Could our church run a one-off event or start an evangelistic course?			
SHARE the gospel Everyone needs to hear the gospel message. How can you talk clearly about God, sin, death, Jesus, faith, repentance, forgiveness, and eternal life? Could you invite your friend to read a Gospel with you?			
LIVE each day on mission Every day we come across people who don't know Jesus. How can we find 'natural' ways to spiritual conversation with them?			

Jesus Brings Life

1 John 1:1-2:2

To get started

1. Have you ever been a witness to a serious or significant event? What happened?

Read 1 John 1:1-4

2. What clues are given in these verses about who¹ wrote this letter²?
3. In 1 John 2:1, we're given some information about the recipients. What does it tell us?
4. We learn about the *Word of Life* in these verses. *Why* does John tell them this?
5. Why do you think he includes not only *seeing* Jesus but actually touching him? (You might like to compare John 1:14-15).

It seems John is warning his readers about some kind of false teaching which denied Jesus came in the flesh (see also 4:2-3). Some were saying Jesus only *seemed* to be human. This false teaching is sometimes called **Doceticism**, based on the Greek word for 'it seems'.

Think about it?

6. Why do you think it's important that Jesus was actually truly God and truly human?

¹ 1 John is anonymous, but the style and content is very similar to John's Gospel, which is one of the reasons for being attributed to the Apostle.

² 1 John doesn't start like many of Paul's letters, telling us who wrote it and to whom, but based on 1 John 2:12-14, it seems like it is some kind of letter.

Read 1 John 1:5-2:2

7. In verse 5, John tells us the message he heard. What is this message?

8. How do those who *walk in the light* compare with those who *walk in darkness*?

Walk in the light	Walk in darkness

9. Can a Christian claim to be without sin? What's wrong if we profess to "be without sin"? How does the instruction of 2:1 not make sense if it's being said to non-believers?

10. What promise does John give for those who admit their sin?

11. What has Jesus done and what is Jesus now doing that gives us confidence in God's promise?

Think about it

12. **My next step:** write one thing you've been challenged to do in each of the following areas.

Personal spiritual life	Your church family	Those who are not (yet) Christian

To close, your group may like to pray (together or lead by one person) the following prayer of confession from the *Book of Common Prayer*:

Merciful Father, we have strayed from your ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the schemes and desires of our own hearts and have broken your holy laws. We have left undone what we ought to have done, and we have done what we ought not to have done. Yet, good Lord, have mercy on us; restore those who are repentant, according to the promises declared to us through your Son Jesus Christ. Grant, merciful Father, for his sake, that from now on, we may live godly and obedient lives, to the glory of your holy name.
Amen.



Walking the Talk

1 John 2:1-14

To get started

1. What are some criticisms (whether you think they're legitimate or not) that are often directed at Christians and churches?

Read 1 John 2:1-11

2. According to what we've just read, what difference must knowing Jesus make?
3. From what we've just read and from what you know in the Gospels, list all the ways Jesus wants his people to relate and interact with each other. Try to explain what each of these means in practice.

Think about it

4. How does claiming to be 'in the light,' yet hating a brother or sister, affect us and the church?
5. Can you think of Christian brothers or sisters you hate?
6. Can you think of Christian brothers or sisters who, by the way you speak about them or interact with them, may feel hated by you or someone might think you hate them?

Read 1 John 2:12-14

7. Why do you think each of these three groups (little children, fathers, young men) is addressed separately?
8. In the context of verses 1-11, what assurance and encouragement is given for different groups of believers?

Bring it together

9. How do we hold together the tension of 'Whoever [...] does not do what he commands is a liar' and 'I am writing to you [...] because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name'? What problems come from emphasising one of these at the expense of the other?
10. Living as a Christian body that follows Christ's example and is truly loving is hard work. This is particularly so knowing from our previous studies that we are all sinners. What can you do to walk as Jesus did and love those at church?

11. **My next step:** write one thing you've been challenged to do in each of the following areas.

Personal spiritual life	Your church family	Those who are not (yet) Christian

Testing Your Heart

1 John 2:15-27

To get started

1. If you had to leave your house in a hurry, what 5 things (apart from people) would you take with you?

Read 1 John 2:15-17

2. What commands are given in these verses?
3. How does 'loving the world or anything in the world' take us away from the direction Jesus is taking us (i.e. eternity)?
4. What is meant by
 1. lust of the flesh
 2. lust of the eyes
 3. pride of life?
5. Why should we not love these things? Where are they going?

Read 1 John 2:18-27

6. According to the following verses, what are the characteristics of *antichrists*?

1 John 2:4	
1 John 2:18-19	

1 John 2:22-23	
1 John 2:26	
1 John 4:1-3	
2 John 7	

7. What are *antichrists* trying to achieve (note v26)? How can believers and churches counter this?

Think about it

8. Some of these *antichrists* seem to deny that Jesus ‘came in the flesh’ (i.e. was truly human)? What do we lose from the gospel if we were to adopt this teaching?

9. 1 John 2:18 says those who first read this letter were in the *last hour*. Other parts of the New Testament teach we’re in the *last days* or *end times* (e.g. Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2, 1 Peter 1:20, 4:7). What difference does it make knowing we are in the last/end days/times/hour?

10. **My next step:** write one thing you’ve been challenged to do in each of the following areas.

Personal spiritual life	Your church family	Those who are not (yet) Christian

Spiritual DNA

1 John 2:28-3:10

To get started

1. What attributes do you see in yourself from your parents (or, if you have children, how do you see your attributes in them)?

Read 1 John 2:28-3:3

2. According to 1 John 2:28, in what can Christians be completely confident?
3. What is the basis for this confidence?
4. According to 1 John 3:1-3, what has God done to show his great love for his children?
5. Why is it important that believers are called *God's children*?
6. According to 1 John 3:2, what is the great hope for Christians? How does this certain hope encourage us?

Read 1 John 3:4-10

7. What are the characteristics/attributes of those who are children of God and those who are children of the devil?

Children of God	Children of the devil

8. In these verses, John makes big claims about believers and sin (e.g. that no-one who lives in Christ keeps on sinning). Taking on board all we've read so far in 1 John (especially 1 John 1:8 and 2:1), what do you think John means by these verses and what does he not mean?

9. Although these can be troubling verses, what encouragement is found in:

1 John 3:5

1 John 3:8

Bring it together

10. How would you use these verses to talk with:

A Christian who is struggling with assurance

A Christian who is 'caught in sin' (e.g. Galatians 6:1)

11. **My next step:** write one thing you've been challenged to do in each of the following areas.

Personal spiritual life	Your church family	Those who are not (yet) Christian

Deeds of Life

1 John 3:11-24

To get started

1. When's a recent time you've felt loved? What did someone do to make you feel loved?

Read 1 John 3:11-18

2. What is the key message of this section according to the following verses:

1 John 3:11

1 John 3:16

1 John 3:18

Read Genesis 4:1-16

3. Look again at Genesis 4:7. Does Cain listen to this warning? What does this tell us about Cain's heart/life?³

4. According to 1 John 3:11-12, how is Cain's story a warning for believers today?

5. Look again at 1 John 3:13. What should not surprise Christians? Why is this so? (See also John 16:2.)

6. What warnings are found in the following verses

1 John 3:15

1 John 3:17

³ Cain's response to the LORD's warning reveals that the reason for his offering being rejected (v4) is because of what was offered but the heart and faith of the offerer (see also Hebrews 11:4).

1 John 3:18

Read 1 John 3:19-24

7. What things might cause your heart to condemn you?
8. When this happens, how can our hearts be put to rest/reassured?
9. What is God's commandment? How does his commandment give confidence before him?

Bring it together

10. How do you think we, as a church, could grow in loving each other? What things make it hard for us and how could we remove these obstacles?
11. **My next step:** write one thing you've been challenged to do in each of the following areas.

Personal spiritual life	Your church family	Those who are not (yet) Christian

Confessing Jesus

1 John 4

Read 1 John 4:1-6

1. Verse 1 warns us to be discerning when people claim to be speaking truth about Jesus. When have you seen this kind of *discernment* done well? Have you seen it done less well?
2. What is the link between spirits and prophets in these verses? What does this teach us about people claiming to be prophets?
3. According to 1 John 4:5, what is one mark that reveals someone is a false prophet? How does this fit with people's desire for celebrity or popularity in Christian ministry/teaching?
4. According to the following verses, what is the benchmark by which we test for certain someone's teaching?

1 John 4:6

1 John 4:14⁴

Read 1 John 4:7-21

5. According to the following verses, how has God shown his love for his people?

1 John 4:9-10

1 John 4:13-14

1 John 4:19

⁴ The 'we' in this verse means John and the other apostles who were eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and teaching.

6. According to the following verses, how are we to respond to God's love?

1 John 4:7-8

1 John 4:11

1 John 4:20-21

Think about it

7. John is dealing with essential matters—whether or not Jesus is God the Son in the flesh. Do we see the same kind of false teaching/prophecy today? What areas of Biblical teaching are commonly falsely promoted today?

8. John is dealing with essential matters—whether or not Jesus is God the Son in the flesh. Does this mean that all areas of 'incorrect' or 'false' speaking claiming to come from God are all equally damaging?

9. "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." (1 John 4:12 NIV) What is lost when we don't love one another?

10. **My next step:** write one thing you've been challenged to do in each of the following areas.

Personal spiritual life	Your church family	Those who are not (yet) Christian

Assured Faith

1 John 5

To Get Started

1. One of the sayings people use when they're sure of what they've said is, 'is the sky blue?' What are some other turns of phrase we use when we're totally sure of something?

Read 1 John 5

2. According to 1 John 5:2-4, what is the one sign of true faith in Christ?
3. 1 John 5:3 says the same kind of thing as Jesus in Matthew 11:30, that God's commandments are not burdensome. How does this fit with your experience?
4. What is the great encouragement of verses 11-13?
5. Although verses 16-17 are a little tricky, what clear promise do they contain? How does this grow Christian assurance?
6. In verses 18-20, what three things do we 'know'? How have these ideas been taught throughout 1 John? How does knowing these things grow assurance?
7. The final sentence seems to raise a previously unmentioned issue, idolatry. Tim Keller defines idols broadly as, 'anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give.' Skim back over 1 John, how do you see the threat of idolatry (either worshipping a pretend god or the kind of idolatry Keller describes) throughout this letter?

Bring it together

8. The Westminster Confession of Faith says this about assurance:

This infallible assurance is not so essential to faith that a true believer may not have doubts and conflicts about it, possibly wait some time for it, and grow into it. But since the Spirit enables believers to know the things which are freely given to them by God, every believer may come to a full assurance of salvation by the ordinary working of the Spirit without unusual revelation. Therefore it is every believer's duty to establish the certainty of his calling and election so that his heart may be filled with peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, with love and thankfulness to God, and with strength and cheerfulness of obedience. These are the true products of assurance, which is never conducive to an undisciplined life.⁵

What themes and ideas do you see in this paragraph that resonate with things we've read in 1 John?

9. Why is it important for Christians to have assurance of eternal life?

10. **My next step:** write one thing you've been challenged to do in each of the following areas.

Personal spiritual life	Your church family	Those who are not (yet) Christian

⁵ Westminster Confession of Faith, Modern English Version 3rd Edition (Evangelical Presbyterian Church), 18.3

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