
GROWING TOGETHER AT ST JAMES

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:24-25

THE BIG PICTURE

At St James, our mission is that - *by God's grace in Christ, we exist to be disciple-making disciples in the upper north shore of Sydney, reaching out to the world with the gospel, for the glory of God.*

We desire our Growth Groups and Word One-To-One pairings to head in this direction by helping people *grow* as disciple-making disciples of Jesus.

THE PRINCIPLE: GROWING TOGETHER

The Bible makes it clear that the Christian life is not to be lived solo. As those who have been adopted into God's family, we find ourselves in relationship with brothers and sisters who have been gathered around God's throne. As the gathered people of God, **gathering with God's people is part of our DNA.**



But *you have come* to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. *You have come* to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven...

Hebrews 12:22-23a

Furthermore, gathering together with God's people is **a vital means by which God sustains us in our faith** and protects us from drifting from our confidence in Jesus in a world filled with unbelief.



See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Hebrews 3:12-13

It therefore follows that it is **through the ministry of God's people to each other that we grow** as disciples of Jesus Christ as each person plays their part.



So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ... speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. **Ephesians 4:11-13, 15-16**

THE PRINCIPLE: GROWING TOGETHER

As can be seen above, **this growth will happen as we gather together around the Word of God**. It is through God's Word that we encountered Christ and came to faith.



For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

1 Peter 1:23

Through the Holy Spirit, the Word of God is at work in us to convict, correct, challenge and rebuke us in order to grow us in our faith to become more like Christ.

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.



1 Thessalonians 2:13

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1 Timothy 3:16-17

In summary, there is a clear Biblical principle that as disciples of Christ we are to **grow in faith together, by gathering around God's Word** in the power of the Spirit. Gathering with God's people is therefore a non-negotiable.



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Hebrews 10:24-25

OUR PRACTISE: GROWTH GROUPS

One key way we seek to practise this Biblical principle of growing in faith by gathering around God's Word together is through our growth groups. These groups are not mere book clubs, but rather are geared towards members growing as disciple-making disciples. We expect to be transformed by the Holy Spirit as we come to know God and His desire for our lives through His Word.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

St James has a variety of growth groups led by members of our congregation. Some meet at church, others in homes. Some meet during the day, others during the evening. Some are single-gender, others are mixed. Some meet weekly, others meet fortnightly. What is consistent across our groups however is that each week they meet around God's Word.



Our groups follow the current sermon series with its set Bible passages. This enables members to discuss any questions arising from the sermon and focus on applying the passage more individually to their lives. Group discussion is guided by study notes (**published online at stjames.info/teaching**) which is aimed at helping steer the group through the passage and consider its application to their lives.

We therefore encourage members, as much as is possible, to have read the passage and study material beforehand so as to be able to best contribute and receive from the group time.



We also anticipate that our groups will devote themselves to prayer. This should happen within the group time and also outside it as members prayerfully support each other. This will be a vital step as members seek to grow as disciples of Christ in response to the week's passage and also in light of the various ups and downs of life. We desire our growth groups to provide members with a closer pastoral support network within the wider community at St James.

We therefore encourage members to prioritise being together each week for the sake of others in the group and to personally communicate with the leader when they are unable to make it.

WHAT YOUR LEADER WILL DO

Our growth group leaders are engaged in the privileged task of being shepherds.



Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. 1 Peter 5:2-4

Accordingly, you can expect that your home group leader will have:

1. A mature and growing knowledge of God
2. A Godly character worth imitating
3. An ability to teach God’s Word
4. A propensity to encourage and care for their group members
5. A capacity to lead the group and be led by those in leadership over them.

OUR PRACTISE: READING ONE TO ONE

For a variety of reasons, joining a growth group won’t be possible for everyone. Yet the Biblical principle of gathering together around God’s Word still remains.

Accordingly, we encourage those unable to commit to a growth group to consider signing up to read the Bible one-to-one with another member of the congregation.

This arrangement allows a certain flexibility with regards to meeting time and frequency and may better suit busy or variable schedules. The approach would be much the same as that of a growth group but on a smaller scale - the pair would meet to read the Bible, discuss it, apply it and pray for each other. This could happen on a lunch break, over coffee, or even via video link up.

The pair would either track with the current sermon series, or chose a pre-published *Word One-to-One* resource. Those interested can contact the church office to request a reading partner, or register a Bible reading pair. This will then enable those registered to receive the relevant resources and support to assist them moving forward.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

If you have any further questions, comments or ideas, please don't hesitate to get in touch. Otherwise here are some next steps you could take.

JOINING A GROWTH GROUP



Contact the church office on 9144 4090 or office@stjames.info. Inform us of your availability and preferences. If there is a particular group you'd like to join, please also let us know. A member of the staff team will then be in touch to make further arrangements.

STARTING WORD ONE-TO-ONE



Contact the church office on 9144 4090 or office@stjames.info. Inform us of your availability and preferences. We will then work with you to find a suitable reading partner. If you have already found a partner, simply let us know. We will then provide you the necessary resources and assistance as you move forward.



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