

GUIDE TO REENGAGEMENT



EXPLORE **THE BIBLE.**

GUIDE TO REENGAGEMENT

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STEPS IN PREPARING TO REENGAGE

Solomon reminded his readers that there is a season for everything. The second pair of activities he listed was a time to plant and time to harvest (Eccl. 3:2). He also mentioned there being a time to scatter stones and collect stones (Eccl. 3:5). The year 2020 could be characterized as a time to scatter. Many sat scattered, unable to regather for a variety of activities including worship and group Bible study. Solomon would remind us that eventually, there will be a time to collect and regather. We may not know exactly when that day will come, but it will come. What we do now can help us get ready for that day.

ONE STEP ONE. OWN IT.

We need to own some realities as shepherds. We as church leaders are responsible for the spiritual lives of the people in our community. Our church exists for this reason. Also, all people need both group and individual time in the Bible. We need to own the ministry/service and outreach elements of groups. Groups are more than teaching hubs; they are Bible study communities organized to foster serving and sharing the gospel. Groups are where discipleship takes place and lasting connections are formed. Effective Bible study groups are critical for the long-term health of our churches and the people we serve.

TWO STEP TWO, PART 1. SET THE CLIMATE.

Groups don't just happen. They need attention. One reason ongoing Bible study groups may be declining in local churches is they are not being fed. How do we feed these groups?

1. LEARN ABOUT IT

a. READ ON PURPOSE: What we read will be what we talk about, so we need to read with purpose. Take some time to read 30 minutes a day and include these books on your reading list.

[*Together: The Power of Groups*](#)

[*Building a Disciple-Making Ministry*](#)

[*Breathing Life Into Your Sunday School*](#)

b. GET BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH EXPLORE THE BIBLE

RESOURCES: Take the opportunity to get a better understanding of the resources that help your groups.

Review goexplorethebible.com, examining the information about resources for each age group. Note the features that help each age group become students of the Bible.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

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Evaluate print and [digital](#) options. Some groups will prefer one over the other, and a few may want a combination of both print and digital (ex: print for group members and digital for leaders). Secure [samples](#) for review.

If you have additional questions about a specific age-group resource, contact:

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2. PREACH ON IT.

The pastor sets the tone for the church, beginning with the focus of the sermons delivered. Here are some topics that might help the church grasp the importance of Bible study groups and studying the Bible book by book:

Daily engagement with the Bible

All the Bible being valuable for study

The value of groups and relationships in spiritual development

The role of Bible study groups in discipling, serving, and reaching

And the importance of serving and using one's giftedness within the local church

Note: This last item will be important to help adult leaders understand the importance of releasing people in their group to go serve in other areas.

3. TRAIN FOR IT

Provide ongoing training for potential, new, and current leaders. Provide the books recommended above to your current and potential teachers, encouraging them to read a chapter and then discuss the content as a group. Also, be sure to help them understand how to get the most out of the resources provided. (Other resources for training your Bible study leaders are available [here](#).)

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Note: Pointing your teachers to the weekly leader training will free you to focus more of your training time on the skills needed by your teachers and leaders.

[KIDS](#) | [STUDENTS](#) | [ADULTS](#)

4. MODEL IT

Get involved in a group yourself. Here are three ways you can do this:

- a. Start a new group. Learn how to do it so you can help others do it. Show them how to get it done and that you are serious about the importance of new groups.
- b. Take over a group that lost its teacher. This group already has a structure in place so some of the work has already been done. When you talk to other Bible study leaders in your church, you can talk to them as a peer who is in the same boat.
- c. Assist in a group. You may not be the teacher or the leader, but you can be a substitute or assistant in a kids or student group.
- d. Attend a group every week. Attend the group you would attend if you were not a church leader.

Tip: Nothing says options a, b, or c should be an adult group. Think of the value of being involved in the lives of the kids in your church! You may find your greatest reward helping a preschooler understand the love of Jesus while building with blocks.

5. STRUCTURE FOR IT

Reinforce structures that support healthy groups. Examine the effectiveness of your prayer support, administrative support, training system, discovery of additional teachers, and welcome systems.

Some questions to ask:

How does a person find a group that might fit their needs?

How do the church website, bulletins, social media accounts, and other promotional channels emphasize your ongoing Bible study groups?

How do we encourage and support our teachers?

Is our teacher pipeline (the path a person takes to be discovered and become a teacher) effective? How do we strengthen the pipeline?

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6. TALK ABOUT IT

What we talk about communicates our priorities.

Recognize groups that are being effective.

Include information about groups in announcements and church publications.

Share about what you are learning in your Bible study group.

Reference during a sermon a point or idea included in that day's Bible study session.

Include a song in the worship service that supports the Bible lesson (consult the *Kids Worship DVD* or the *Adult Leader Guide*, looking for the weekly music idea in the group plans).

STEP TWO, PART 2. IDENTIFY THE GROUPS NEEDED.

This step can and should be conducted while setting the culture. Most of us now have four categories of people or families within our church ministry area.

1. WE ARE MEETING FACE-TO-FACE.

These individuals are in areas where they can meet or are highly motivated to meet face-to-face. Lots of factors make this possible but they are meeting in some form or fashion.

2. WE WANT TO MEET FACE-TO-FACE BUT....

These people want to meet but are limited by physical risks, kids or parents, facility requirements, job requirements, and other factors.

3. WE WERE MEETING, BUT...

These are the people who were meeting prior to COVID-19 but are no longer motivated to attend. They are functionally disengaged and see little need to reconnect.

4. WE HAVE NEVER BEEN IN A GROUP.

These are the people who need to be in Bible study but just do not know it. They may not even know Bible study groups exist. These are the people who were not in your church prior to the pandemic but are in your ministry area.

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Each category may require a different approach when it comes to reengaging, but we can't know that until we know who is in what category. We may not know how to categorize everyone yet, so start with what we do know, then go from there. We can contact everyone in our ministry area with the help of other leaders to identify who is in what category. We may not be able to contact everyone, but we can attempt to do so. Within each category, we may find sub-categories that need to be noted (for example: a person wanting to meet but having children will have different needs from a person wanting to meet but with health risks).

STEP THREE. CREATE AND FACILITATE GROUPS FOR EACH OF THE CATEGORIES AND SUB-CATEGORIES.

The goal of this step is to determine what additional groups are needed to help the church better engage with the people in your community.

Compare a list of current groups with the list of categories.

Define the current groups (Who is it for?).

Identify groups that need to be created to fill the gaps based on the comparison.

Secure leaders (that also means finding and training new leaders).

Provide the leaders (and groups) the tools they need (Zoom accounts, [curriculum](#), space if needed).

Help them get started well.

Here are some tips and ideas that may help as you consider the creation of additional groups.

Many of the groups may be smaller than they were before COVID-19, but that is a positive thing!

Consider setting a limit on the size of each group. This varies by age group. When a group hits that number, you will then know it is time to start an additional one.

When an adult group is started, consider the impact on kids and student groups. You may need to start a new kids or student group as well.

Track what is important. For example, if you are leading an online group with the goal of reengaging, tracking the number of comments may be a better way to measure the success of the group than by tracking the number of views.

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If half of a pre-COVID group are hesitant about meeting face-to-face, consider creating two groups (one that is face-to-face and a new one that is virtual).

Consider creating hybrid groups that include both face-to-face meeting and virtual elements (idea: use of a smartTV with a camera so groups can see each other, or encourage use of phones by the people present so groups can see each other). Realize that a hybrid type of group is also the most challenging for a leader to manage.

Consult the best practice documents for online groups.

[BEST PRACTICES FOR GROUPS](#)

[KIDS MINISTRY FROM ANYWHERE](#)

Create virtual groups using phone calls and email.

FOUR

STEP FOUR. GET AFTER IT!

Set a launch date for the new groups and to begin the reengaging process. Reengagement will take some time, so let your plans have time to succeed. Invest time in building the groups, train (use the online tools used by your groups), find more people who ought to be in a group, and start more groups. Use the principles discovered in the books recommended above.

FIVE

STEP FIVE: CELEBRATE THE VICTORIES.

Find ways of celebrating healthy groups. Recognize leaders and groups that are helping to start new groups.

Tip: As you look at each action in this list, set target dates for completing each action. The target date may be a start date or an ending date depending on the action.

Having trouble getting the links to work?
Go to goexplorethebible.com/reengagelinks for a full listing of links.