

# Running A Mid-faith Crisis Book Group A Complete and Utter Sheet

Here's a handy information sheet and guide to running a discussion group as we journey through Nick's book - *The Badly Behaved Bible*.

**So grab a few friends or like minded people and get started!**

## Create a Safe Place

You already know this, but it's worth remembering that people have questions about faith and sometimes they are afraid those questions are too silly, or too trivial, or it might show up their lack of faith, or whatever! Try to create an environment where questions are treasured and welcomed. You don't have to answer them; in fact sometimes it's quite important not to! Make people feel comfortable with being open with, and owning their questions at this stage of their life. Maybe think through a few of your own and be vulnerable enough to start sharing one or two with the group.

A relaxed environment is good. A warm room in a house, or if you don't know the people maybe a quiet space in a cafe or pub. Maybe a throw or two. Some mood lighting and a joss stick. A cushion with a picture of a kitten on it... whatever it takes.

## Confidentiality

Always start the group with the assurance that what is shared remains strictly within the group. That means for those in relationships with people who are not attending the group, they don't get to go home and say 'so and so said this!'. Nothing will break trust quicker than that kind of behaviour. Sorry to state the (bongo-ing) obvious but it's very important!

## R-E-S-P-E-C-T Just a, Just a, Just a, Just a

I know this is hard to imagine, but people have different views and different interpretations of the Bible and just occasionally Christians don't all agree! We can thank people for sharing their views even if we don't agree with them. Kindness goes a long way! I hope your group will be characterised by kindness and respect for those with differing opinions to your own.

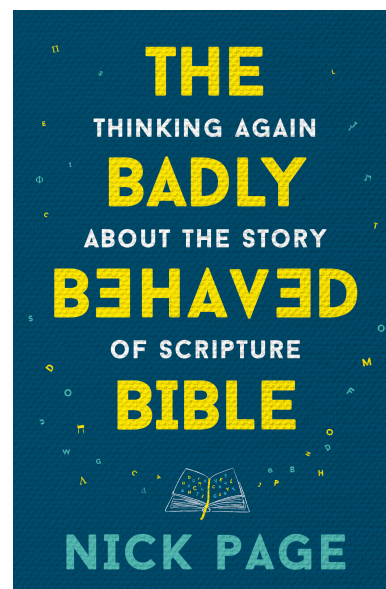
## Timings

This is not one of those church meetings that goes on to late at night! Set boundaries. Start on time and finish on time. Personally I start losing it after 9.00pm. So if you start at 7.30 or even 8.00pm finish by 9.00pm. Very often, people will make a decision on whether to come or not based on the finish time. Try to keep to it, or you will lose trust.

## How many people?

This is a tricky one. In the weekly group I help run (strictly 7.00-9.00pm) We start with a meal and are limited to 10 because that's how many people can fit around our dining room table! Even if there wasn't that limit I wouldn't want more than 10 because we want enough space to allow everyone to contribute if they want to. The book club meets in the lounge, so they are confined to 7!

I always think small is beautiful when it comes to group sizes. It allows for deeper sharing and helps not make the group time overly long. If you are confined to 1 hour then 2- 5 people. If you have 90 mins then maybe 4-8.



## **Shut up! (and listen)**

So I'm a bit of an extrovert and a 7 on the enneagram (don't ask!). This is a mixed blessing in a small group. On the plus side I'm quite fun to have around and can easily put people at ease in a group. On the other hand if I'm in a 'I love the sound of my own voice' mood and am undisciplined, I can talk more than anyone else, discourage the quieter ones in the group and generally damage the group dynamic.

So to the loud mouths I say....Shut up! (even though I'm sure, like me, all your comments are brilliant!) You are blessed to be able to think quickly on your feet and not be afraid to share your opinions. BUT... you need to learn to say your bit then sit quietly while everyone (and I mean EVERYONE) else takes a turn. Maybe you can share first, because it takes others a lot longer to formulate their ideas and questions.

We have helped solve this problem in our group with a sharing object. Could be a small cross, or a shell or a pen, a cuddly toy...anything! The object is placed in the middle of the group. When someone picks up the object they get to speak, and everyone else gets to listen - No interruptions, no clarifications, no anything! People may then speak when the person places the object back in the centre of the room. (When they do that if the host can say 'thank you' to the person who just shared that is always good)

This can all feel a bit false at first, especially in a group of friends who have known each other for awhile, but trust me. This really works and is worth persevering with.

## **Food**

Make an occasion of it. Have a simple meal (emphasis on simple). This is hospitality not entertaining. No fine china or posh silverware (unless you always do that!) Share it round. Someone (perhaps the host) bake a potato, others bring a filling, others salad, etc. In my experience people share better when they have eaten! Of course this might not be practical for you but please do consider it.

## **Enjoy!**

We really hope you have a lot of fun with this group.

Please drop us a line and let us know how you are getting along, or with any questions.

joe@midfaithcrisis.org