

Introduction to the “Getting Personal with God: Sonship A” Series

Goals of Hope’s Community Group Sonship Series (“Sonship A” + “Sonship B”)

This Hope community group curriculum (“Getting Personal with God: Sonship A” and “Spiritual Processing Group: Sonship B”) is our primary offering for CGs in their third and final year. This is to honor Hope’s foundational DNA and your community group’s maturity.

Hope Community Church original pastors (Mark Upton and Matt Guzi) and their spouses and core group shaped their new church around three ministry emphases that had deeply shaped them. They had grown up in and first done ministry out of the relational evangelism model of Young Life. This outward facing, culture-engaging posture was coupled with the emotional and relational approach to people theorized by Dan Allender and Larry Crabb and practiced by The Barnabas Counseling Center. Finally, Hope turned to World Harvest Mission/Serge’s Sonship Course to foster deeper, heart-level spiritual maturity: rich theology married with every day self-awareness and devotional growth.

This curriculum is, therefore, intentionally adapted from World Harvest Mission/Serge’s small group series books and audio: *The Gospel-Centered Life*, *Gospel Identity*, *Gospel Growth*, *Gospel Love*, and *Sonship*. And as a third-year community group curriculum, “Sonship A” and “Sonship B” mean to foster this heart-level spiritual growth by building upon a CG’s previous two years. Sonship A and B aspire to deepen year one’s biblical foundation (“Weekly Sermon Discussion”) in cooperation with the deeper relationships fostered by year two’s personal story sharing (“Hope CG Stories”).

Format of the Content (How to Use “Getting Personal with God: Sonship A”)

“Getting Personal with God: Sonship A” and “Spiritual Processing Group: Sonship B” are meant to work together (as the Fall and Spring content for a Hope community group in year 3). They build off one-another: with different practices and Scriptures, they address the same 12 relationship categories built on 5 Reformed theological concepts. Each study in the series builds our awareness and application of relating to God, ourselves, other people, and the world- at a heart level, in daily life. Generally, Sonship A is meant to precede Sonship B, but really you can start in any order (for instance, with Sonship B then Sonship A) or just choose one to do (Sonship A or Sonship B).

Each week of “Getting Personal with God: Sonship A” follows this basic format with suggested time limits for the leader(s) to follow, to end in one hour- if desired:

- *Opening Questions*: This includes a few deeper ice breaker questions geared toward the topic we will look at in the Bible, group discussion, and prayer.
- *Scripture Study*: This includes a Bible passage or passages, in two translations (ESV and NLT), and a few questions for the group to engage with the passage.
- *Group Discussion*: This is the heart of the Sonship Series. The readings, charts, diagrams, and inventories- and the questions accompanying them- are meant to get people to apply their relationship with God more deeply and personally.
- *Group Prayer*: This is a continuation of the personal, heart-level sharing that is now intentionally directed towards God. The hope is that this happens as a group during the time together and continues in pairs over the course of the week apart.

Each week of “Getting Personal with God: Sonship A” has a Leaders Guide and Participants Guide. The Leaders Guide contains everything the Participants Guide has with the addition of the suggested time limits, Group Prayer directions, and questions for Opening Questions, Scripture Study, and Group Discussion. Each question has un-numbered, bullet pointed questions below them. These indented questions are meant as follow-up questions for the main numbered questions. Use the follow-up questions if the main question is too difficult or too easy, or to take the conversation deeper.

The “Getting Personal with God: Sonship A” series as a whole is laid out as follows. (Note: It is meant to go 10 weeks. So, if you don’t have that many weeks together or just want it to go shorter or longer, you likely need to choose what studies you think are essential and what ones to add or drop- for your community group.)

Study 1: “My Father’s” (Adoption)

Study 2: “Getting It Right” (Justification)

Study 3: “How Do I See Myself Honestly?” (Growth in Grace I)

Study 4: “How Do I See Myself Dishonestly?” (Growth in Grace II)

Study 5 “How Do I See Others?” (Growth in Grace III)

Study 6 “Who Do You Say I Am?” (Union with Christ)

Study 7 “Longing for Change” (Gospel Sanctification I)

Study 8 “A Lifestyle” (Repentance) (Gospel Sanctification II)

Study 9 “My Roots” (Faith) (Gospel Sanctification III)

Study 10 “Love’s Propeller” (Obedience) (Gospel Sanctification IV)

****Bonus Study 1 “Who Do You Say I Am? (Part 2)” (Union with Christ II)***

****Bonus Study 2 “Longing for Change (Part 2)” (Gospel Sanctification V)***

Proper Personal Preparation

The intention behind this community group curriculum is to make leading a third-year community group easier and better. I hope that the group leaders feel free to spend less time preparing content weekly, and that the leaders and group grows in their relationships with God, themselves, each other, and creation and culture. That said, this curriculum’s success does depend- at least to some degree- on the community group leader’s preparation ahead of time. It will help the dynamics of the discussion for the leaders to have read and be in process with the content ahead of time. This will help them know what to emphasize or skip, be emotionally and spiritually aware for how the content strikes them and the group, and to make it personal. As the leaders go, so go the group members- especially in terms of vulnerability, connection, and personal growth.

Over the years, I have thought and prayed a lot about deep and continuous community built on Jesus and commitment to one-another. This community happens by the Holy Spirit and with our buy-in: (1) carving out the time as unmovable ahead of time in our schedules, (2) being emotionally present and honest at a heart level during the sessions, and (3) suspending judgment on the time’s usefulness or “feeling” in your minds after. Think of this as a semester-long spiritual experiment: see if after 3+ months of meetings, you don’t treasure God, this time, and these people more. I trust you will, and hope and pray it will give you such a taste for deep and continuous spiritual community that you’ll repeat this “experiment” in our local church over-and-over again.

~Sid Druen, Pastor of Community Groups and author of “Sonship A”