



SIMPLICITY

(*A Starting Point for New Groups*)

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDE

Using Simplicity to Reach New People for Bible Study

THE PURPOSE

Reach adults not currently involved in an ongoing Bible study in your church by starting a new group built around a six-week study about remaining focused on Christ.

THE NEED

People who are not in an ongoing Bible study group need a safe onramp to get up to speed. The need for onramps is especially true if we use an ongoing Bible study groups strategy, like Sunday School. Groups have their own rhythm and internal code. These rhythms and codes are developed over time and help the group function efficiently, but they also cause guests to remain focused on their rearview mirror, until they get up to speed in the group. The solution in Ames was a new ramp that connected Interstate 35 and Highway 30. *Simplicity* was created for this purpose; to help start a new group so people could more easily get involved in an ongoing Bible study group.

THE SIX-WEEK STUDY

It is never our plan to complicate our lives, but it happens. Over time, we keep adding layers to our lives. We complicate our lives with activities, possessions, ambition, and not enough time to do it all. Behind all this drive is ultimately a focus on ourselves. When we let go of all these things, deny ourselves, and focus simply on Christ, we find contentment.

The study follows the Daily Discipleship Guide model with daily study designed to be completed after the group time. A group can do the daily studies prior to the group time, just make sure everyone in the group is doing it the same way, since that impacts how the teacher leads and prepares to lead. A group plan is also included for the teacher to use when preparing.

The Action Plan

The following action plan begins on the first Sunday of a quarter with session six of the *Simplicity* study being conducted on week thirteen of the quarter. The group can then be transitioned to the Lifeway study resources used by other adult groups in your church. The plan follows five big actions: Recruit, Define, Gather, Launch, and Continue.

ACTION 1: RECRUIT

Week 1: Secure prayer support. Invite people to serve as prayer support for the new group and the leader of that new group. Ask them to pray that God will provide the other leaders needed, and for the people yet to be reached by the new class.

Week 2: Enlist and begin to train a teacher/leader. Most of us will look for a person who is not currently teaching a group now. We may ask current teachers for names or observe people ourselves. Since both the teacher and class are new, they will learn from each other.

We may also turn to a current leader. A teacher of a current group may be apprenticing someone in their group with a view of handing over the reins to the apprentice declaring him or her the new leader of the established group. The apprentice becomes the leader of the current group so that the current leader can begin a new group. This approach is less disruptive and makes more sense because an experienced leader has a higher probability of succeeding at starting a new group.

Either way, both will need to be trained to lead the new group.

ACTION 2: DEFINE

Week 3: Define characteristics of people the group will seek to reach. While anyone may attend the new group, having a clear picture of who you are trying to reach will help you plan and prepare. College students have different needs than their parents; ongoing Bible study groups should reflect those different needs.

Here are a few of the things to look for when determining a target for the new group:

- a current group has exceeded a manageable size (you must define manageable for your setting but twelve in attendance is a good number to consider)
- there is no place for a new person to sit in a current group

- new home and apartment construction near the church facilities or near clusters where many of your church members live
- type of people that are underserved but obviously present in your community (go to a coffee shop or restaurant in your area and compare who is there with who attends your classes or groups)

You may also scan worship attendance, looking for those who are not currently involved in an ongoing Bible study group.

ACTION 3: GATHER

Week 4: Identify by name people who might join the group who are not currently involved in a group. Once you have a target group, you and the new leader can identify people who could be in the new group. That may mean approaching people before or after worship, and securing a list of church members who are not in an ongoing Bible study group who may fit the description of the new group. You may need to reach out to people in an apartment or new neighborhood. The intent is to figure out who specifically by name may be a part of this new group. Challenge the group leader to begin praying for each person by name.

Week 5. Invite potential participants to a meet and greet. Plan an event prior where potential group members can get to know each other prior to the first Sunday. This also gives you the opportunity to share your goals for the ongoing Bible study group. Doing so in this format makes it possible for the first Sunday to be more like a “normal” group time and can remove some of the awkwardness of the first Sunday. If possible, plan the meet and greet in the room or location where the new group will meet.

Encourage the teacher to invite every potential participant. The invitation needs to be personal, so ignore the temptation to rely solely on a social media posts or ads on the church website. Since a list of potential participants has already been created (see Week 4) and are being prayed for by name, inviting them personally to the meet and greet should be more natural.

Week 6. Conduct a meet and greet. Be sure to provide everyone with two copies of the resource to be used by the group (make copies of *Simplicity* prior to the meet and greet). Encourage them to use the second one to invite a friend to the first Sunday gathering. Deal with administration issues like updating contact information, securing birthdays, determine the best ways to communicate, and setting up any social media groups if desired. If no one shows up other than you and the group leader, use the time to pray for the group and those whom the group will eventually reach.

ACTION 4: LAUNCH

Week 7. Make final preparations.

- a. **Gather everything needed.** Gather markers, paper, and other resources needed by the group well in advance of the first Sunday.
- b. **Prepare to lead a Bible study.** Make sure the new group leader knows how to use the resources provided to create a first day experience built around Bible study. Some groups fall short by focusing on organization and other items the first time the group meets. Remember, people are gathering for Bible study, so you will want to make sure that the new group leader is prepared to do Bible study.
- c. **Contact everyone personally.** Encourage the new group leader to contact everyone prior to the first group time. Remind them to include information about what to study or do prior to the first group time.

Week 8. Start the group (Session 1). Be sure to begin on time and provide nametags.

ACTION 5: CONTINUE

Weeks 9–13. Encourage the teacher to contact all participants every week. Direct them to invite regular attenders to take on some of the responsibilities of the group, such as greeters, recorder, and prayer leader.

Ensure the church orders resources for this new group once they complete the *Simplicity* study. Review the resources with teachers, making sure they know how to use the resources.

Week 13. Distribute new resources. Encourage the teacher to deliver to each group member a copy of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* or *Personal Study Guide* used by other ongoing groups in your church, making sure every person has a copy for the coming quarter. Remind the group leader and group of the importance of inviting others who are not involved in an ongoing Bible study group.

Week 14. Start a new quarter. Encourage the group as they begin to follow the same study plan as used by other ongoing groups in your church. Continue to train the group leader and other leaders in the new group.