# Using Stories in Small Groups

The series of stories *People Jesus Met* have a set of questions at the end of each text which can be used for discussion in small groups. A home is the ideal setting for these discussions. Anyone can participate, whether or not you have any previous connection with Jesus. The questions are about matters common to every human being. Everyone has something to contribute to a discussion from their own experience. Jesus met people of all walks of life and belief without prejudice. He accepted them where they were at, when and where He found them. Each person was on their own journey and that was their starting place.

Most of us are hardly aware of the dark stuff hiding in our hearts. Our present condition has become so normal that we don’t realise that a much better version of us is possible. The agent of change is Jesus. The quest for change is a life-time pursuit. These stories in the series, *People Jesus Met,* are for anyone and everyone regardless of their stage of life or maturity or problems. Every one of us should pursue growth as a person till the day we die.

## Four stages in the growth process:

1 John 1:7-9
*Vs 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.
Vs 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
Vs 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

These scriptures suggest four stages towards personal growth

Stage 1. Vs 8 *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

Denial is the starting position for most of us. We start with the belief that we are OK as we are, or that improvement is not possible. Neither of these positions is true. We are not OK, and change is possible.

Stage 2. Vs 7 *If we walk in the light as He is in the light*

Jesus claimed to be the Light of the World.[[1]](#footnote-1) Reading or listening to a story about Jesus meeting with someone is a first step towards engaging with the questions, “Who is Jesus?” and “How might He be relevant to my life?”
The subject of each story is a person(s) who had things hidden in darkness in their heart. These included attitudes, fears, sins, beliefs, hurts, shame, and all sorts of things. When Jesus, stepped into their world, those things could no longer stay in darkness. The presence of Jesus brought them into the light. He met needs they felt, and also other needs they may not have been aware of.

Step 3. vs 7 *We have fellowship with one another*

A small group is a safe place to discuss issues which come up in the story. There are questions following the text of each story. Discussing these questions provides opportunity to talk about how Jesus met the needs of the persons in the story, and how these matters may be playing out in your life. Everyone should have the opportunity to share what they want to. The facilitator of a group should make sure everyone has their say. Confidentiality is agreed on by everyone.

It may be that a ‘can of worms’ gets opened and someone needs the help of a skilled person outside the context of this group. The facilitator can make this call with the needs of the rest of the group in mind.

Step 4. vs 7  *the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.* vs 9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and purify us from
 all unrighteousness.*Prayer is essential to complete the process. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He offered Himself as the dumping ground for all darkness. Whatever has been disclosed should be brought to the cross in prayer. If it is sin, then confession is in order as in verse 9. If it is pain or shame it should be brought to the cross. If someone needs to forgive another, in or outside of the group, this should be spoken with witnesses in prayer in the group. But if you are not comfortable with prayer, that’s OK too. Be a spectator.

No matter should be left up in the air. It is better to stop discussion and allow time for Step 4 so that whatever has been brought into the light is also brought to the cross for healing and freedom. The cross of Christ is where real change happens. If there is more to disclose or more questions to answer, leave them till another time. But do not cut short Step 4.

There will always be more things to share. Like the layers of an onion, take off one and another shows up. Same with our hearts. We have many layers. One at a time is the way to go. One small step, deal with it in prayer. The freedom that is experienced will give you a taste for more.

## A few general things about these stories and small groups

The website [www.redemption.org.nz](http://www.redemption.org.nz) gives 21 stories in the series *People Jesus Met.* Each story has a video link. They are presented in chronological order as they occurred in the gospel accounts. But they can be used in any order. Start with a short one. Each text has a set of questions for discussion following the text.

Group size: Maximum of 6. The smaller the group, the more opportunity each person has to share, and the deeper the sharing. Groups could be split by age or gender or in couples to allow for smaller numbers. If there are more than one group in a house meeting, allow time to come together as a larger group and share highlights of your discussions. This builds community.

The facilitator of each group has two main roles. 1. Ask the questions. 2. Listen to the answers.
They may select them in any order. If one questions yields good discussion let it flow. Keep track of time and allow time for Step 4 and feedback to the big group. There is no need to get through all the questions. They may need to get the discussion back on track.

The facilitator should not dominate their group with their points of view. Participants will benefit most from what they discover for themselves and share with the group. It is helpful to take brief notes as reminders of issues which need to be covered in prayer in step 4.

The Questions begin with a set of 10 one-word answers to revise the story. These are icebreakers. It is fun to have two groups in competition. The first group to call out an answer gets a point. Each person only answers once. This gives everyone opportunity to open their mouth. Prompting is allowed.

Questions 2 to 10 are paired. The first question of each pair relates to the story itself. The second question relates the same issue to the participants. They are called **“get real questions”** because they encourage us to talk about our own real-life experiences.

Confidentiality is an important norm to establish. It should be stated at every meeting. Personal matters discussed within the group should not be disclosed outside the group. Of course, it is okay to share about the general themes and dynamics but not personal disclosures.

Finally. Have fun. Eat and drink together. Talk. And, don’t forget to **get real.**

1. John 8:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)