



## Initial Leadership Guide

# BOB Principles and Definitions

### The Goal:

The ultimate goal of BunchOBlokes is that men will discover, accept and celebrate their individual uniqueness and personal value and will encourage one another to live a full and satisfying life.

### Values

Our focus is to communicate with men who may have some connection to a church, usually via family or friends. Our purpose is to provide men with an opportunity to be part of a supportive community where they are free to express and investigate a range of views about their encounter with life, and what they value most. The BOB process is designed to engage and provoke response from participants and encourage ongoing discussion within a group of men. The intent of BOB is not to exclude women, but to include them as the usual recipients and beneficiaries of any reasonable definition and expression of a “*full and satisfying life*”. This suggests that there is an achievable reality of purposeful and meaningful experience, possible for all humanity. Not that all men’s experience will be the same, but the outcomes of life, despite our unique differences, do offer a similar reward of good relationships, peace and joy. We hope to discover this phenomenon together, not just as a theory, but as a real outcome of a thoughtful, passionate, wholehearted life where to gain something worth having, we are required to invest something of ourselves in others who depend upon us.

Generally, we will use common concepts and language to engage men in discussion relevant to their everyday experience. Our intentions are not religious in the sense that religion is a set of dogmatic theories that must be observed. Rather, we are unashamedly

coming from our lived experience of the story and real history of the Judeo-Christian tradition, presented from a substantially practical point of view based on an honest discussion about the success and failures of our own lives.

We do intend to take BunchOBlokes groups on a journey of discovery toward transformation, indicated by the topics and content of the Discussion Guides and other forms of communication delivered via the Internet. Although we will guide the topics toward what we believe are life-giving principles, we will always try to declare our beliefs for what they are and how they compare with common alternatives. In summary, we believe in Passionate Transformation: that our investment of faith, hope and love, that engages our whole beings of body, soul and spirit, will result in righteousness, peace and joy.

To be specific, we believe in:

### **The Lordship of Jesus Christ.**

We acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, according to the outline of Christian faith as described by the Nicene Creed.

We believe that the Bible is the authoritative literary/historical account of God's relationship with us, via the prophets and fathers of faith, culminating in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as told by his disciples and apostles. We also believe that the last 2000 years of history of the church is very important in our understanding of how this story of faith continues to remain relevant to us today.

### **Reference to the Bible.**

We regard the Bible as the authoritative word of God for instruction and teaching in all matters of faith and practice. Our intention is that the Definition and Principles contained within the Guides will be consistent with good Bible teaching. Please make us aware of any problems you find in the regard.

BOB Guides are not presented as a Bible study. They are designed to be used in a wide range of situations, where frequent reference to the authority of scripture, may not be appropriate.

## **Definitions**

**Sin:** Sin is the state of having fallen short of God's glory, and is rebellion against God of which all human beings are guilty. We believe we are all sinners and the closer we get to Jesus the more we realise how far short we fall of God's ideals.

**The need for repentance:** We believe that reconciliation with God requires a humble and repentant heart toward our sins, in relationship to each other and to God.

**Faith:** We believe we are saved from our separation from God by faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is a human experience, essential for many aspects of life. It is the substance of our hope for the future, the evidence of things being formed in our hearts and minds before they become a reality in our lives.

**Redemption and salvation:** We believe that we need to be redeemed by God's grace, facilitated by our faith in God, and our acceptance of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, to commence the process of salvation, which continues as long as we live.

**Transformation:** We believe that we are being prepared for the day of our salvation, by the redemption and transformation of our souls. Our salvation is ultimately worked out as we endure as willing participants in the Kingdom of God.

**Transformation into the image of Christ:** We believe that we are willingly transformed into the image of Christ as a result of our exercise of faith. We believe that faith comes from our hearing the Word of God from scripture and from the teaching and experience of others, enlivened in us by the Holy Spirit.

**FHL (Faith, hope and love):** We are not redeemed or transformed by knowledge, but by God's Spirit enlivening our spirit and bringing us to a crisis of faith, where we can see no alternative other than for us to exercise the faith, hope and love that we have available to us, as our necessary inputs to receiving God's grace.

**RPJ (Righteousness, peace and joy):** Righteousness, peace and joy are the outcomes of God's grace, as a result of the Holy Spirit acting within our lives. We are deceived by false images in our un-transformed minds when we believe we have become righteous by any other means.

**AHA! (Awakening, honesty and action):** Is how we explain the need for a moment of awareness of our inability to transform ourselves to become acceptable to God. It suggests a moment when we become aware of our particular human failings (conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit) and a conscious decision to change the way we think and act (repentance).

**False gods:** Until we are entirely transformed (which is probably never in our current time and space) we adopt or create false gods of many kinds in our hearts and minds that are more or less pernicious. The worst ones we create are a self-righteous entitled images of ourselves that we worship. This is evil, because there is only one true God that we know as Jesus Christ. He is evidenced in our lives by love that we direct toward others, just as his love is directed toward us.

**Self-restraint:** Self-restraint is essential to love and transformation. As we exercise our God-given sovereign right to choose, one of our continuous choices must be to restrain ourselves from what we could otherwise do, as this reflects the glory of God and his restraint toward us and facilitates our transformation as we realise our sin (shortcomings) and confess our inability to change without receiving grace. As important as this is in the process of transformation, it is not self-restraint that saves us, as this is merely our recognition of human weakness and inability to be transformed by ourselves.

**Body:** Our bodies are said to be the "temple of the Holy Spirit", as he resides in us when we are redeemed and increasingly, as we are transformed. Our bodies are the physical reality, including our brain, which incorporates the functions of our mind and rational processes.

**Soul:** The needs of a man's soul are a primary concept for discovery and discussion. *My soul is restless, until I find my rest in thee.* Augustine.

The human soul is a non-physical analogy representing those aspects of humanity that are made for relationship with God, in particular, our emotions and passions. The totality of these passions is represented by the human "heart", or centre of our being, which can be either good or evil, as this is true of all human character and behaviour. Our soul is identified by our human passions, as distinct from our ego, which in turn, needs to be both encouraged and restrained. In time, with sufficient encouragement and clarity of mind, we

will be able to articulate the goals and passions that enhance our lives and to identify our attitudes, behaviours and situations that hold us back.

**Spirit:** Spirit means the distilled essence of a being. The Holy Spirit is that part of God who comes to teach, inspire and encourage us. The Spirit is elusive as he comes and goes as he wills, not subject to our demands and manipulations. Our spirit is the essence of us, that responds either to the Spirit of God, who is loving and does us good, or the spirit of evil, which is malevolent and does us harm.

A man's spirit is his self-transcendence, the acknowledgment that there is more to reality than we can experience with our senses within the time, space and material continuum. This implies that self-awareness will take us only so far, after which we need to become spiritually aware to a being whose essence is love.

**Love:** Love is the will to do good to another, at some risk to yourself.

**Religion:** Religion is the human things we do in relation to our faith in God. Although we do religious things, religion does not save us, as only our faith in God does.

**The World:** The creation includes everything good that God made. The things we experience that God did not make are in rebellion against his sovereignty and his ability to make sovereign choices, consistent with himself, without reference to us. In that sense, "the world" means those cultural and spiritual powers and people who rebel against God.

**Rebellion (Why do so many people seem to hate God?):** If we are in rebellion against God without even being aware that we are, we feel judged because we worship ourselves, and we are jealous of any competition or other demands made upon us by God, or godly righteous people.

### Related BOB Discussion Guides

**The Golden Rule Part 1**

**The Golden Rule Part 2**

**The Golden Rule Part 3**

## Participant Principles

- Turn up as often as possible, but the BOB group is not the meaning of life.
- Families come first, most of the time.
- Work is very important, perhaps second after families.
- Food and drink is important, but should not be the main reason for getting together as a group.
- Stick to a schedule and don't vary it too much because someone is away.
- Participate.
- Tell the truth unflinchingly, but not brutally.
- Treat each other with respect.
- Enjoy each other's company, talk about everything of shared interest.
- Laugh as much as possible.
- Build trust.
- Get everyone to speak and to lead if possible.
- Share the realities of your life, particularly the struggles and hardships.

- Find ways to affirm, endorse and encourage each other.
- Share new understandings, especially significant books, movies, etc.
- Verbalise any new understanding. Don't expect that others will always read the book or have the same experience as you.
- Refer to scripture as the source of authority.
- Accept that the written word can be interpreted and applied in a way that is contrary to its real meaning.
- Real meaning of anything, especially scripture, is derived from not just what it means abstractly or theoretically, but also how it works in the reality of individual lives.
- Question all dogmatism.
- The real meaning of individual lives is relational.
- Individual accomplishments are important, but not ultimate.
- There is always someone smarter or more knowledgeable than you.
- Knowledge and wisdom of any kind is not the most important thing. Relationships are.
- We are not individually responsible for relationships as "it takes two to tango".
- Have occasional celebrations, just for the sake of it.
- Get together informally in the weeks in between meetings for coffee, activities, etc.
- A lot of what we say about faith is pretentious nonsense.
- There is nothing too terrible to speak about.
- Share your own struggles and shortcomings.
- Be light-hearted. This is supposed to be enjoyable.
- Ask questions. The first step toward learning is to admit that you don't have all the answers.
- Don't assume that your quotes from scripture are always the right or the complete answer. Do not use proof texts as weapons against discussion.
- Let others lead the discussion.
- Join in when you have something to say.
- Don't worry about always being right. You won't be and even if you are, nobody apart from you will care.
- Do not always have the last word.
- Support each member of the group.
- Accept that God is numinous. Not unknown, but almost unknowable other than how he presented himself to the patriarchs, prophets and in Jesus.
- Accept that the most we will ever know about God, was revealed in Jesus.
- Singing, however badly, stimulates the soul.
- Our personal work and duty is to do what we are responsible to do and passionate about "with all our might", accepting responsibility for both success and failure.
- Pray for one another, as soon as the need is known (the need could be to give thanks).
- Prayers should always be first person, present tense expressions of what we hope for, rather than what we can accomplish ourselves.
- The person with the need should start the prayer, and then others should join in as they have something to contribute.

## Observations

The charge against Christians that we are hypocrites is very telling. This malaise is due to an improper understanding of several basics of Christian faith as follows:

- We are all sinners whose righteousness is “as filthy rags”.
- We are in need of transformation, if not redemption.
- While we have been arguing about the inerrancy of scripture, we have not properly understood its most basic teachings.
- We know that we cannot keep the Ten Commandments so let’s start with the Golden Rule.
- Then consider “why was Christ crucified”?

Faith in God requires meekness and humility, not being insecure in who you are.

Humility recognises the difference between human passions and ego and does not allow ego to predominate our character. It is being right-minded as Paul tells us to be, by sharing the mind of Christ. This comes not through more Bible teaching. It is the result of good relationships in which we seek to encourage one another to love and good works. This requires:

- Admitting our sins and flaws.
- Learning from others with different views.
- Acknowledging that “we’re all in this boat together.”
- That we take some risks of faith and being vulnerable together.

All of us being in the same boat requires that we share the journey of life together. None of us have all the answers.