



Initial Leadership Guide

Getting Started

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 be transformed to live a full and satisfying life.

We envisage that in most cases, BunchOBlokes groups will form because a couple of blokes think it is a 'good idea' and work together to establish a 'bunch' (group). In such cases, the registration process is described in the Brochure and on the website www.bunchoblokes.org.



Initially, to see what is available you will be able to download *from the website, free of charge, the table of topics in the Guide for BunchOBlokes: Men Building Men*. You may also download the Initial Leadership Guides, of which this is one. Further Guides are available in exchange for your registration details and your group's agreement with the Principles of Informal Association & Cooperation.

The BunchOBlokes: Men Building Men Manual, available on the BOB website, includes the rationale and core values of the project. Guides attempt to outline either a problem and/or a solution in practical terms. Although we will try not to be too theoretical or abstract, at times we will clarify a concept by explaining principles or stating definitions. Generally, we think that our generation already has more knowledge than we can usefully handle. We are trying not to impart a whole lot of new information, nor are we endeavouring to seek acceptance of a raft of new principles. Usually, we try to restate things men already know to make them clear in their mind and easy to remember. This is called the KISS principle: Keep It Simple, Stupid.

KISS

This Getting Started Guide outlines the steps you could follow to get your group up and running. The Initial Leadership Guides are intended for you to read by yourself in preparation to leading a group.

We are very committed to the idea that the format for BOB groups should be a discussion, which by definition will not always reach logically, theologically or technically perfect answers. This is not a discussion group about theology, philosophy, science, or sociology. It is “menology” about: How to be a Good Bloke!

Theology

We recognize the Bible as the primary means by which God has revealed himself and his relational purposes for us. As such, the Bible is the final authority relating to doctrine and knowledge of God and his purpose for humankind given to us via the prophets, Jesus, teachers, and apostles of faith according to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Despite the primacy of scripture and the importance of knowledge, BOB: MBM theology is essentially practical, seeking to engage the mind, soul and spirit in an effective balance, rather than to over-emphasize the intellect to the exclusion of the other. By this we mean that we want to encourage sound, non-dogmatic scholarship. In keeping with this emphasis, you will find frequent reference or allusion to writers including CS Lewis, Timothy Keller, NT Wright and similar streams of current Biblical thought and interpretation.

The Guides will include reference to Judeo-Christian wisdom. By this we mean a contemporary approach to orthodox, non-dogmatic, non-denominational evangelical Christianity, according to the Nicene Creed, usually presented conceptually, in what we call a heuristic or an approximate approach. BunchOBlokes is evangelical in the sense that we believe the good news, proclaimed by Jesus, is utterly practical and meant to be applied to real life for the benefit of anyone who is so inclined to respond to the message at the invitation of God’s Spirit. Hence, the Guides and the discussion within groups will not satisfy all denominational or other religious or philosophical criteria. This is not to say that it cannot be discussed. If it is of relevance and interest to a group, then of course it should be discussed.

Using the Bible as a weapon

The Guides will often present well known Biblical concepts without references. Our purpose in doing this is to keep the discussion on a widely accepted conceptual and a practical level, and to avoid dogmatic points of view being “proof texted” (which means using one text to trump all other texts) to the exclusion other points of view. We specifically ask leaders not to allow dogmatic interpretation of the Bible to be used as a weapon to win arguments. When contentious issues arise and participants use Bible references to support their point of view, please encourage them, but also encourage other points of view, without necessarily looking for an immediate resolution among the group. We are strongly encouraging men to engage in a process of telling the truth about their experience and learning together, rather than to have a theoretical answer.

We believe that when divisive issues do arise, it is always better to defer discussion until the next meeting, to allow participants to research the topic if they want to, and to allow the Holy Spirit to let them process the topic, and to either pursue it, or not. (Our proof text for this, by the way, is John 10:29 😊)

Provocative material

BunchOBlokes material will often present Biblical concepts provocatively. Our purpose is not to be unorthodox or controversial for the sake of a dogmatic point of view. On the contrary, we are looking to raise issues of faith, hope and love instead of allowing dogmatism or unbiblical views to go unchallenged.

Learning process

We much prefer that Groups explore subjects, rather than to insist on always coming to perfect answers. We take Jesus' teaching method of parables as our justification for this approach. On many occasions, what Jesus did was more instructive than what he said, and when he did make statements, both his words and his actions often contradicted conventional religious meanings. When his disciples asked him why his words were obscure, he pointedly said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand." Luke 8:10.

Our intention is to challenge conventional understandings, when we believe that Jesus' teaching was intended to do so. Jesus did not rely upon abstract concepts much at all. Most of the time he said "look for evidence that what I say is true". He tried to ensure that what he said had an immediate practical application that challenged his learners to work out for themselves in practical terms.



What faith is not

Faith is not looking for proof from the Bible, archaeology, science, politics or your personal opinion, although all of these things are valid sources of evidence for faith. Faith, is what you hope is true on the basis of rational observation and experience from the whole of life including your mind, the passions and feelings of your soul and the encounters of your spirit with the spirit of God. Having made an expression of faith implies that your intention is to test this idea in your life.

Dealing with SSD

You will at times come up against blokes like Deadly Ernest, who have a deadly SSD (Sanctimonious Statements Disorder). This is where people make very grand statements, usually

about themselves, saying how truly they believe, how humble they are or how much you really need to believe in the same things as they do.

One example of this is the statement that *"I only love in me what the Lord has done"*. What they really mean is that they used to be very sinful, and now they are not. The fault with this thinking is that scripture is clear when it says *"our righteousness is as filthy rags"*. It means that if we claim righteousness, we are guilty of pride and claiming entitlements with God. It is not that we are totally unrighteous, but that all of our righteousness, from God's point of view, is a result of what he has given us, in exchange for our faith in him, which he also gave to us. This is not an intellectual trick, it is simply the be-attitude that Jesus told us we must have, to be worthy of his Kingdom.

When you are confronted with SSD, we should not engage in theories or abstractions, but say: *"I missed what you said. Did you say "....."?"* Then clarify, *"is that what you meant?"* If you are very confident and prepared for the discussion to go his way, you could say *"what has brought you to that conclusion?"*

Usually, proof texting will be the primary SSD strategy, with the SSD individual making assumptions about themselves or the audience [comma] or otherwise making dogmatic statements, which by themselves, often lack humility or verification.

In most cases, you could say *"For the sake of this discussion, can I ask that you suspend any authoritative/dogmatic statements for the time being"* or quote Isaiah 64:6, the Beatitudes or something similar, with the warning that any claim of self righteousness is suspect, and therefore is fair game.

Or you could just do what one of our leaders did in their men's group, which was to say *"I think that is a sanctimonious statement"*, which sort of stopped the conversation for a little while, but once the group had clarified what "sanctimonious" meant (by Google), they made some real progress, because the blokes knew that they were not going to get away with spiritualising or trying out some sort of superior logic.

We think that there is a big difference between loving yourself, and thinking that you are righteous, which we will deal with in the Guides.

Overview of the Guides

The Guides follow a process that assumes a certain amount of knowledge within the group or within the lived experience of individuals. Often, the leader will need to test those assumptions by making statements and asking *"Do you agree?"*, or *"What is your experience?"* or *"How do you know this to be true?"* Try to bring the group along with you, but if someone lacks the basics, they should be encouraged to ask for clarification.

Series 1 Participant Guides cover the current situation that we assume many men, or others that they know, are experiencing. These ideas need to be tested in discussion and the major points of agreement or disagreement identified, rather than resolved. If the majority disagree consistently, then you probably do not have a BunchOBlokes group, unless there are other guide topics that are of interest. Series 2 Guides include an introduction to the Golden Rule, which we will continue to return to in future Guides, as we believe it to be a foundational principle or a maxim for life and healthy relationships.

We recommend that you present all the Guides in both Series 1 and 2, to flesh out the points of agreement that your group is interested in discussing.

Series 2 Participant Guides cover the concept that the whole of life is not just what we already know, or what we can determine by rational/scientific thinking; that in fact, we need to also consider our souls (hearts) and spirits in relationship to others, to be whole individuals. We say in the Guides, that a false image of ourselves (which we describe as narcissism) is the root cause of much of our dysfunction and dissatisfaction. This, along with the statement that “we are all made in the image of God”, is a foundational concept which some will strongly disagree with. At this stage of forming the group, those that disagree primary premises will either leave the group if they are not interested, or become your greatest advocates, because you have allowed them to test their ideas, without judging them.

Further Reading

Servant Leadership Initial Leadership Guide

Mere Christianity, CS Lewis