

# ED YOUNG

COMFORTABLE



COMFORTABLE  
EXPANDING OUR COMFORT ZONE

STUDY GUIDE

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Small Groups are a vital part of how we do ministry at Fellowship Church, just as they are in many churches around the world. There are a number of different theories on how small groups should work and they are all great in different ways. The book you are holding is written with our model in mind. So take a minute to read the following explanation, then feel free to adapt as necessary.

Each of our small groups practices a three part agenda in every meeting. That agenda includes a social time, a discussion time, and a prayer time. Each of these elements share equal importance, but not necessarily equal time. To help you get the most out of this book we have included an explanation of each of the parts.

The first element of every small group meeting should be a time of socializing. This phase of the meeting should be about 30% of your time together. Welcome everyone as they arrive at the host home, and make visitors feel welcome by introducing yourself and the other members of your small group. Enjoy some snacks, or if your group prefers, a meal together.

Then move on with second part of the meeting, the lesson. The lesson itself may take as much as 50% of your group's meeting time, but remember, it is not the most important element. You may want to start this phase of your meeting with a short "icebreaker" to get everyone talking. The questions in the "Start it Up" section of each chapter are what we refer to as "level the playing field" questions that everyone should be able to participate in, regardless of their level of spiritual maturity or Bible knowledge. As your group moves through the "Talk it Up" section in each chapter, remember that it is more important to finish on time than to finish each and every question. It is okay to skip some questions to be sure you allow enough time to take care of the third phase of the small group time: "Lift it Up."

The "Lift it Up" section is a vital part of every small group meeting and should be about 20% of the meeting. During this time you will be able to share with the group what God is doing in your life as well as asking the group to support you in specific prayers. To help focus this time, there are one or two questions at the end of each study that will prompt prayers based on the material you have just talked about. There is also a space for you to write down your prayer request(s) so you don't forget them and so you can communicate them clearly when it is your turn. Below that is a place to write down the prayer requests of the people in your group so you can remember and pray for each request throughout the week.

As an additional tool to assist you in your journey of spiritual development, there is a "Step it Up" section at the end of each session. This section consists of five devotional thoughts that reinforce the lesson you've just completed and are designed to help you develop a regular quiet time with God. To get the absolute most from this study, I challenge you to take five or ten minutes a day to read and apply these devotionals to your life. If your group meets twice a month or bi-weekly, choose five of the intervening days to incorporate these thoughts into your devotional life.

In select studies, we have incorporated special notes for youth groups using this material. You will notice a special icon (Y) used several times in each session. This indicates that there is a comment or question especially for youth included in the leader's guide for that part of the study. When you see that icon, simply turn to the leader's guide for that session in the back of the book and find the corresponding (Y) and letter (for instance, (Y-a)). These notes are designed to help each discussion time connect with the unique needs and issues of youth.

I don't know about you, but I want life to be easy; I want life to be comfortable. It's easy to go through life without ever getting uncomfortable. We could easily focus on our own surroundings and forget everything (and everyone) around us.



But when we do that, we diminish all that Christ did for the world. And we miss out on all that he wants to do in our lives as well. The truth is that the Christian life was never meant to be one of complete comfort.

Yes, Jesus' goal was to offer us eternal comfort. But it cost him a very uncomfortable price—one he was willing and able to pay.

As Christ's followers, our responsibility is to follow his example. And we're to take his message to the world. Through this study, we'll discover that by stepping out of our comfort zones, we can step into God's will for our lives.

And when it comes to the tension between being comfortable and uncomfortable, it's really about experiencing all that God has in store for us. Remember, God's desire is for you to be comforted, not necessarily comfortable.

God's best,



**START IT UP**

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It was one of the most memorable prayers of my life. I was 20 years old and a sophomore at Florida State University. One night I knelt down in my dorm room, rested my elbows on the air conditioning unit, looked out over a darkened parking lot and said these simple words, “God, help me to point someone to you tomorrow.”

**1. What are some of the most memorable prayers you have prayed? What made them so memorable? Y-a**

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That prayer, although one of the shortest I’d ever said, changed my life almost immediately. The next day, I was walking to class with one of my basketball teammates. As we were walking, I could tell something was wrong. He just wasn’t himself; something was weighing on his mind. Finally, he turned to me and said, “Ed, there’s something different about you, man. I don’t know what it is, but I see something different, something special in your life. I want what you have.” Y-b

Right then, I knew that God was answering my prayer from the night before and presenting me with an opportunity to touch someone's life. I knew what I had to do. So I began to talk to my teammate about my life. I'd never done that before, and I have to admit that I was a little uncomfortable. But after stumbling through what to say for a while, I found myself in his dorm room, leading him in a prayer to commit his life to Christ. With tears streaming down his cheeks, I saw this guy step over the line of faith and become a believer.

That situation transformed me. And my life has never been the same since.

## TALK IT UP

Besides the feeling of excitement I had that day for my friend and the decision he made, the feeling I most remember is one of discomfort. I was uncomfortable as I stumbled through the words. I was uncomfortable with some of the questions my friend asked. And I was uncomfortable opening up in a way that was new to me.

Most of us don't want to be uncomfortable. If given the choice, we would choose comfort over discomfort. And when it comes to comfort, one thing stands at the top of the pile as far as icons—the La-Z-Boy.

You could argue that the La-Z-Boy is synonymous with comfort. Whoever invented the La-Z-Boy knew what they were doing. You can sit down and sink down deeper and deeper into its cushy embrace. It's a great experience, because you can eat mass quantities of food, sleep and watch your favorite TV shows, all in complete comfort.

I don't know about you, but in a world filled with wars, natural disasters, and financial pressures, I want some comfort. Everybody is dealing with some level of anxiety and stress. I need a La-Z-Boy. I need some comfort in my life. And so do you.

Our culture has embraced this whole comfort thing. We have this burgeoning spa industry complete with massages, facials and pedicures. We want to be in comfortable shoes, comfortable clothes, comfortable furniture, and many of us are searching to become, "financially comfortable." It's all about being comfortable.

## 2. What do you look for to bring you comfort in this uncomfortable world? -c

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### COMFORTABLY UNCOMFORTABLE

Despite our exhaustive search for comfort, somehow I don't think Jesus spent his life on earth looking for a La-Z-Boy. Think about it. Do you think he had comfort on his mind when he said, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves" (Matthew 10:16)? What about when he said, "...go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19)?

In these instances, Jesus wasn't telling his followers, "Go sit in a La-Z-Boy." Jesus was talking about getting uncomfortable. And as we unpack this study over the next several weeks, we'll see that Scripture tells believers that we're to be comfortably uncomfortable. We're to take those moments to pray high-risk prayers like the one I prayed years ago in my dorm room. And we're to make the most out of the opportunities that God provides.

Consider what God has done for each of us. God got uncomfortable for you and me. He sent Jesus Christ to live a very uncomfortable life on earth, to die an excruciatingly uncomfortable death. Then, Jesus conquered death and rose again. And because of that, we have the opportunity to live eternally with him in a life of comfort.

Everyone is facing eternity. And no matter which eternity we experience, we will spend more time on that side of the grave than on this side of the grave. -d We have a choice. We can choose a life of eternal comfort or one of eternal discomfort. It's all about what we do with Jesus.

But no matter what we choose, the facts still remain. Jesus got uncomfortable, he told us some uncomfortable stories, and did some uncomfortable things—all so we can experience eternal comfort. And his message is communicated best in and through one place, the local church.

The church should be a place where people come to find comfort. But it shouldn't be a place where we just sit in a bunch of La-Z-Boys and wait for eternity. There's this tension in the church, a balance. It should be a place of discomfort for those who are Christ followers and a place of comfort for those who are not.

If you're a Christ follower, church should be a place where you are challenged to become comfortably uncomfortable. It's a place where you should be challenged to get out of your comfort zone, as Jesus did, and share a message of comfort with others around you.

If you've never stepped over the line of faith, church should be a place where you are comfortable. It's not a place where you should find condemnation or judgment. It's a comfortable environment where you come to hear the message of hope in Christ.

**3. How has being involved in the church brought you comfort? At the same time, how has it made you uncomfortable?**

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Despite the fact that Christians are called to be comfortably uncomfortable, there's an interesting trend. If you do the research you will find that the longer someone walks with Christ, the fewer contacts they have with people who are far away from God. In other words, the longer a person is a believer, the less connectivity they have with people who aren't believers. ☹️-e But that's the antithesis of what Christ has called us to do. As followers of Christ, we've got to learn to become comfortably uncomfortable and continue to reach out to the world.

One day Jesus reached out to four guys with a challenge. Peter, Andrew, James and John had grown up as fishermen. And in Jesus' first encounter with them, they were doing just that. In Mark 1:17, Jesus walks up to them and tells them something that is odd when you think about it. I'm sure at first it went over their heads. He said, "Guys, follow me and I'll make you..."

Let me stop here for a second. Remember, these guys were normal, everyday people. They had jobs, families, friendships and lives. And when Jesus said this to them, they were probably thinking, "He's going to say that if I follow him he'll make me a better husband, a better father, a better fisherman, or a better businessmen."

**4. Fill in the blank with what you think many people think when they hear, "If you follow Christ he will make you \_\_\_\_\_."**

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Despite what they may have thought, Jesus said, "*Come, follow me...and I will make you fishers of men.*" Mark 1:17

For these four guys, Jesus' words were probably confusing. After all, they were already fishing—for fish! Why would they need to fish for men? It probably didn't make sense.

But Jesus was telling these guys something that you and I need to hear today. He was saying, "If you follow me, I'll show you what life is all about. And it's all about getting out of your boat, following me and getting comfortably uncomfortable enough to fish for the lives of other people."

### FOLLOWERS FISH

Followers of Christ fish for *men*. If you are a true follower of Christ, you're going to fish. You're not really following if you're not fishing.

When I became a Christian years ago, I did it because I didn't want to go to hell, plain and simple. One morning, the Sunday school teacher said, "You can either go to heaven, Ed, or you can go to hell." So, I chose heaven.

And if that's the reason you became a Christ follower, great! People start following Christ for any number of different reasons. But the reason you step over

the line isn't the same as the reason you continue to follow Christ.

When I made my decision as a kid, I didn't realize that Jesus would turn me in to a fisher of men. I didn't get that at first.

It's a lot like marriage. Lisa and I've been married for over 25 years now. But when I first said, "I do," I didn't realize the full implications of that decision. In fact, I'm still realizing the implications today. When you walk down the wedding runner and say, "I do," you don't really know what all is involved. **Y-f**

The same is true as we walk with Christ. Jesus wants to make us and change us into fishers of men. No matter why we step over the line, we've got to get and remain, here's the key word, uncomfortable. That sounds so strange, doesn't it? But you show me someone who is a deep, mature believer, and I'll show you someone who is willing to step out and become comfortably uncomfortable.

## DYN-O-MITE!

Jesus knew being fishers of men would not be a natural reaction of those who followed him. He knew that it is not something we can do on our own. We need a source of supernatural power to live the comfortably uncomfortable life. And in Acts, Jesus gives us this promise.

*...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8*

Do you remember the show, *Good Times*? Growing up, that was one of my favorite shows. Jimmy J. J. Walker had the quintessential phrase "Dyn-o-mite!" This verse makes me think about J.J. Walker, because the word "power" in the original Greek is "dunamis." We get the word dynamite from it. In other words, God offers us some serious power in order to help us become fishers of men, to become witnesses for him.

Many people hear the word "witness" and get freaky. They think it means that they have to go out to every stranger around and pound the Bible over their heads. Or they think they need to master the historicity of every Greek word or memorize every verse of Scripture in order to prove Jesus to the world. That's not what a witness is, though.

When I was 20, I didn't know all the answers my teammate wanted about the Christian faith. I didn't know every angle of Scripture. I still don't. All I could do was tell him what had happened to me. I said, "Here's my life before Christ; here's my life after Christ." And because I simply told him what happened to me, it gave him the opportunity to see that it could happen to him as well. **Y-g**

In that situation, was it my superb vocabulary or knowledge of Scripture that helped change his life? No way! It was the Holy Spirit of God using me as a witness to tell my friend how God had transformed my life. That's the dynamite power God has for each and every one of us.

## 5. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit work through you in a way that demonstrated God's power?

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Being a fisher of men can change the mundane into the miraculous. We have an opportunity to bump up against people and to help change their lives. We have an opportunity to speak with them, to serve them, to pray for them and to alter their forever.

When we begin to do that, things take on a whole new meaning. It's not just the boring, predictable, same-old, same-old routine anymore. When we're buying the latte at the coffee shop, we can look at the person and see them the way the Holy Spirit wants us to see the person. We can engage them in conversation and allow God to use us to reach them in miraculous ways.

It's not about targeting people like a hunter. Based on Scripture, it's all about love. Once you've been ambushed by the love of God, you cannot contain that love anymore. You begin to share that love by getting out of your comfort zone and talking with people about what God has done and is doing in your life.

God has placed everyone in unique situations for a reason. We all know people who others don't know. We're there to influence others for Christ by

being witnesses for what he has done. But that doesn't happen by sitting in your La-Z-Boy and watching the world pass by. It comes by embracing the truth of Scripture, allowing that truth to transform you and communicating that truth to those around us.

## SOWING SEED

*Then [Jesus] told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Matthew 13:3-8*

Here's a paraphrase of what Jesus said: "You should be sowing seed. In other words, you should be telling others about God. But not everyone you te will accept it. Some people simply will not listen. Some will listen, but then quickly forget what you tell them. Others, though, will listen to what you have to say and ultimately be transformed by God's love."

Jesus said we should be into sowing seed wherever we are. That's why we are on that block, in that complex, working in that store, selling that item, taking that test, shooting that basket, scoring that touchdown. We are there for a reason.

A lot of believers are fired up for the first few years of their relationship with God. They are sowing seed to those around them. They are telling others about what God has done in their lives and they are reaching out of their comfort zones. But all of a sudden, they get a little comfortable. And if they aren't careful and intentional about staying comfortably uncomfortable, the Christian subculture begins to suck them into the La-Z-Boy.

## CHRISTIAN SUBCULTURE

It's very easy to get sucked into a Christian subculture that isolates us from everyone else who is not a Christ follower. We can get this "us vs. them"

mentality. And we look at the world like it is the white hats against the black hats. We surround ourselves with all things Christian—Christian music and Christian friends and Christian books and Christians plumbers and Christian mechanics and Christian clothing and Christian schools and Christian paper and Christian pens.

And we get so sucked in to the comfort of the Christian subculture that we ignore everyone else around us who are in jeopardy of spending eternity in hell. We just sit in our La-Z-Boys and refuse to get uncomfortable enough to talk with them about what Christ has done in our lives. But don't for one minute think that this is God's desire for our lives. In fact, it's just the opposite. It is Satan gently rocking us to sleep in our comfortable, La-Z-Boy lives.

## 6. How have you been tempted to get sucked into the Christian subculture and become isolated from those who do not know Christ?

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There's a tension as a Christ follower because there is an element of comfort in the Christian life. We're comforted by Jesus. Jesus lived an uncomfortable life, died an uncomfortable death and offers us true, lasting comfort. Once we receive the comfort of Christ, though, we must get uncomfortable enough to sow seed to the rest of the world.

Many believers say, "You know, sharing my faith and praying high-risk prayers is for other people. That's not for me."

And they try to bargain with God. "God, I'll tell you what. I'm not going to share my faith. I'm not going to pray high-risk prayers. I'm not going to invite people to church. But here's what I will do. I'll become the ultimate Bible Boy or Bible Girl. I will learn the Bible inside and out. But share my faith? No thank you."

They become immersed in the Bible. But here's what they fail to see. The Bible was not meant to be worshipped. It's not written for information; it's

written for transformation. It's great to go to a Bible study, but allow the Bible to challenge you enough to get off of your rear and into the game. 📖-h

The same temptation can happen when it comes to any number of other good things offered in the church—youth programs, men's groups, women's groups. Satan can actually use those good things to pull us away from the best thing, which is sowing seed to a lost and dying world.

If you call yourself a Christ follower and yet are not scattering seed, how do you reconcile that? Knowing the Bible is awesome. But what's the main thing? The main thing is communicating God's truth with others. That's why we're here.

Don't allow the Christian sub-culture to suck you into the La-Z-Boy mentality. After a while, some believers just get tired of being uncomfortable. They get tired of being challenged. So they find a La-Z-Boy church with lazy boys and girls and they just eat the comfort food and look around and all they can see is other people's feet. They are insulated and isolated from the world.

## GETTING OUT OF THE LA-Z-BOY

I want to talk to you about doing several things to get out of the La-Z-Boy:

**Number one:** Realize that you've been strategically placed where you are by the God of the universe.

God has given you your personality, your talent and your ability to sow seeds in someone else's life. That could manifest itself in an act of kindness. It could be an encouraging word. It could be inviting someone to church. It could be sharing your story or a number of things. God has placed you where you are for a reason.

**7. What strategic location has God placed you in to scatter seed?** 📖-i

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**Number two:** Pray a Colossians 4 prayer.

*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ.... Colossians 4:2-3*

You pray that verse for the next thirty days and I'm telling you, it will change your life, just like it changed my life all those years ago. Simply say, "God, crack open doors and I'm going to walk through them. God, I'm fearful; it's going to make me uncomfortable. But God, I'm willing to walk through the door and to ride on the ragged edge of maturity and depth." 📖-j

That is something that will help you experience the full life God has in store for you. I've been to seminary. I've studied the Hebrew and Greek. I've spoken with countless theologians. I've debated different aspects of Scripture. I've gotten to experience a lot of amazing things as a Christ follower. But if you ask me, "Ed, what is the one thing that causes you to grow in your faith more than any other?" The answer is easy, it's praying that Colossians 4 prayer and seeing God use a sinner like me to help change someone's forever. Because when that happens, the mundane becomes miraculous.

**Number three:** Use the church as leverage. Invite people who are not Christ followers to come to church with you. Let them experience the love of Jesus in the church and see the lives that have been transformed. Bring them so they can experience the comfortable message of good news.

**8. What keeps you from inviting more people with you to church? What could you do to overcome that obstacle?**

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## STEP IT UP

Take a step further over the next few days and spend some time reflecting on the following devotional thoughts that reinforce the previous session. Use these as reminders to take what you've learned and apply it to your everyday life.

### DAY 1

*Luke 11:46*

Imagine relaxing by a pool while watching some children play in the water. One child catches your attention as you notice she is struggling to swim in the deep water. Her struggle catches the eyes of the lifeguards. One lifeguard runs to her side, only to start splashing more water in her face. In shock you look to the other lifeguard who will not even lift a finger to help the drowning girl. How could the very people who were trained to save people watch this helpless girl fight for her life without helping her?

That is the picture in Luke 11:46. The experts in the law were watching people drown in religious requirements. Some of the experts went to these desperate people and only weighed them down with more rules and regulations. Others would not even lift a finger to help those who desperately needed it. These experts were supposed to be trained to save, but they were actually contributing to the spiritual decline of their community.

When you see someone drowning in their sins, do you rush to them only to weigh them down with a bunch of rules? "Stop doing... so you can come to church with me! Start doing... so you can get out of your mess!" What we offer with good intentions can actually weigh people down. What they need in that moment can be as simple as an introduction to Jesus that will lead to change, not change that will lead to Jesus.

Or, are you the person that sees someone drowning in their sins and won't even lift a finger to help them? You might offer a cursory prayer for God to help them, but you don't want God to involve you. They got themselves into that mess, and if you try to help them, you might get messy.

Both approaches come from a La-Z-Boy attitude. It is the mindset that Christianity should be comfortable and clean. Who knows where the religious

experts of Jesus' day got that mindset? Who knows where we get that mindset today, but it is not from the Bible. The Bible paints a picture of followers that live a comfortably uncomfortable life, helping those in need.

***Spend a minute being vulnerable with God. Ask him to show you if there is any part of your mindset that is like the religious experts of Jesus' day. If you discover any similarities, ask God to show you the first steps of change.***

#### Notes:

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#### Prayer Requests:

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## DAY 4

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*Mark 4:1-20*

We are a culture that likes the sure thing. We want investments that guarantee a certain return. We want iron clad contracts that guarantee we will get what is coming to us before we ever put any work in. We want to know as much of the outcome before we ever start. And, the reality is we want the outcome to be what we want before we are willing to invest anything.

That mentality is self-centered. We want to make sure we are going reap a satisfactory reward before we invest because our time, talents and treasures are too valuable for us to waste.

The problem is that sewing seed is not a sure thing. We can share the love of Jesus with others, but they do not have to accept it. There is no amount of practice, no perfect presentation, no overwhelming sales pitch that will guarantee someone accepts Christ. Each person is a different type of soil and we will not know what type until we sew the seed.

Maybe that is one reason we are tempted to stay in our La-Z-Boys instead of sharing with others. It goes against our self-centered attitude that keeps us from wanting to do anything that is not a sure thing. We have to invest in others with no guarantee that it will pay off in the way we want.

In such an unstable proposition, it can be tempting to back away. We can be tempted to hold on to the seed instead of casting it into the lives of others. But God did not cast the seed into our lives so we could hold on to it. God gave us the seed to produce fruit that would cast seed into the lives of others.

***Are you waiting for the sure thing? Or are you sewing seed no matter what the probability and letting God determine who will receive it?***

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### Prayer Requests:

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## LEADER'S NOTES

### 1. What are some of the most memorable prayers you have prayed? What made them so memorable?

*Tip: As members of the group share their memorable prayers, ask them to share how God blessed them, and how they felt. Remember that some members of the group may not have had these experiences yet: assure them that as they grow in their faith, God will give them these opportunities as well. Affirm that our God blesses our high-risk prayers and he is always with us as we step out of our comfort zone to share his love with others.*

#### Y-a

*Pass out blank sheets of paper, magazines, markers and other supplies. Have each student make something that would look like a yearbook page highlighting the most memorable moments of their lives. Let the students share their pages once they finish, describing those pivotal moments in their lives.*

#### Y-b

*There are some people who just have something about their personality, character or lifestyle that makes them stand out from the rest. Who are some of the people that have that something. What is it? Why does that make them stand out?*

### 2. What do you look for to bring you comfort in this uncomfortable world?

Many people look for “things” – big houses, new cars, leather La-Z-Boys – to bring comfort. Others look to people – family, friends, children – to bring comfort. But things get old and wear out. Since “people are people” and not perfect, they can

often disappoint us. God is our “perfect” comforter in this imperfect and uncomfortable world. He comforts us through Scripture, his church, and the Holy Spirit.

**Y-c**

*As a group, come up with uncomfortable “would you rather” questions. Let each person come up with their own uncomfortable situations for the group to discuss. For example: Would you rather walk 10 miles with sharp pebbles in your shoes or walk 10 miles on hot sand? Would you rather have to confess your most personal secrets to a classroom of students from your school or to the person you would like to date?*

**Y-d**

*As a way to illustrate how much more time we spend on that side of the grave than on this side of the grave, get a sheet of poster board and put a tiny dot on the poster board. Explain how that tiny dot represents our lives on this side of the grave and how the rest of the unmarked space is only a fraction of eternity. We must realize the extent of our eternity and make decisions based on this realization.*

**3. How has being involved in the church brought you comfort? At the same time, how has it made you uncomfortable?**

The church is a place of comfort for those who aren't yet believers and for those who need comforting. The church should be comfortable to non-believers in the sense that it is welcoming, relevant and offers them the truth. It should also be comfortable to believers by offering relationships, hope and encouragement. But, there is a point that God expects believers to get comfortably uncomfortable and reach out to share his love and his comfort with others. The Apostle Paul tells us that God comforts us so we can comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

**Y-e**

*Have you seen Christians start to isolate themselves from people who are not? For example, are there sections in the cafeteria where the Christians sit together? Or, if you don't notice Christians forming isolated groups, are there any groups of people that Christians rarely if ever try to build relationships?*

**4. Fill in the blank with what you think many people think when they hear, “If you follow Christ he will make you \_\_\_\_\_.”**

Some might say that Christ makes you healthy, wealthy, and wise: They think Christ followers don't have any problems. Others may say, “If you follow Christ, you don't drink, you don't chew, and you don't hang out with those who do.” Christ calls us to reach out and share his love with others regardless of their health, wealth, wisdom or sins. He calls us to accept others and share his good news with them. He expects us all to use our talents and abilities to be “fishers of men.”

**Y-f**

*Sometimes it is hard for us to accept that we don't know all the answers or to follow someone without them giving us all the answers. Discuss the pros and cons of the following two scenarios:*

1. To know all the answers to be on your own (no God).
2. To have none of the answers but to have God.

**Y-g**

*When you picture someone sharing their faith, what does it look like? If your group likes to be extra creative, let them act out what they picture.*

**5. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit work through you in a way that demonstrated God's power?**

*Tip: For this question, you might ask members of the group to write down one experience. Collect their answers, list their experiences anonymously, and then send the list to all members of the group. These reminders of God's power can encourage those who are still building their experiences with the Holy Spirit.*

**6. How have you been tempted to get sucked into the Christian subculture and become isolated from those who do not know Christ?**

Because churches and Christian small groups are a place of comfort, we are easily tempted to form a “holy-huddle” of the “frozen chosen” and stop reaching out to others. It's easy to get caught in this trap because we can get lulled into always being around people who share our beliefs. We can easily become “lazy boys” and “lazy girls” and start to think, “Oh, we're so busy ‘reaching in’ to comfort each other, and ‘reaching up’ to pray and study God's Word, surely someone else in the church can ‘reach-out’ to all the lost and dying souls around us...we just don't have time!”

**Y-h**

*Rank the following things in the order of most to least important: Prayer, Bible Study, Worship, Evangelism and Discipleship.*

*Don't miss that all these things work together to make us healthier believers. Prayer works with evangelism to produce disciples who study their Bibles, leading us all to worship God for what he has done. We can't just pick the individual parts we want like iTunes. God has called us to be a part of all of it with the desire that we would effectively communicate his love to others.*

**7. What strategic location has God placed you in to scatter seed?**

God has placed each of us in families, activities, and work places to share the Gospel with others. Even with people that live in the same general area, our influence can be

widespread. For example, you might have family members and friends that live across the country. Or, your job might have you travel hundreds if not thousands of miles away to interact with others. When you add it up, your small group probably have a large sphere of influence than what you first imagined.

### Y-i

*Compare the class schedules of the students in your group. Think about each class and how many students are in each class. Add up how many students have the potential to be influenced by just the students in your group.*

### Y-j

*Dedicate a page in your journal or a sheet of paper to recording how God uses you as you ask him to use you in the lives of others over the next 30 days.*

## 8. What keeps you from inviting more people with you to church? What could you do to overcome that obstacle?

*Tip: First, work with your group to quickly make a list of all the obstacles that keep us from inviting others to church. Then, as a group, brainstorm possible solutions for each obstacle. For example, if someone is afraid to tell a co-worker in the next cubicle about church because others might hear and complain, she could give her cubical neighbor a card or an e-mail invitation to church. Close your discussion of this question by encouraging everyone to invite one person to church next weekend.*

### Y-k

*Have your group think about their own what if's:*

- *What if I got uncomfortable in my school?*
- *What if I partnered with the church to share Jesus with others?*
- *What if I lived a lifestyle that looked like Jesus?*

## CREATIVE NOTES

### ICEBREAKERS

#### Most Common Prayers

Brainstorm a list of what you think might be the most common prayers. For example: “God if you will get me out of this jam I will...” Then discuss which of those common prayers you have prayed.

**BRIDGE** – There are many common prayers, but every now and then there are prayers that change our lives. This study is the result on an uncommon prayer.

#### Lap of Luxury

Take turns describing some of the most luxurious and comfortable vacations you have taken. What made those trips so memorable?

**BRIDGE** – Living in the lap of luxury can be a nice vacation, but adopting that as a lifestyle can be damaging. It can lead to being selfish and spoiled. God wants us to experience comfort, but he does not want us to fall into the trap of only seeking comfort.

#### Special Seats

Set out enough chairs in your room that some people will get to sit in comfortable seats like couches and recliners, while others will have to sit in less comfortable seats like folding chairs. Once everyone has chosen their seat, let people describe why they chose the seats they did.

**BRIDGE** – Some people sat down without thinking about it. Others chose the seat that looked the most comfortable. Some probably even chose the uncomfortable seats so others would not have to sit in them. God wants us to choose moments of discomfort so others can experience his true comfort.

#### Comfort Food

Serve all comfort foods for the first night. Or, ask everyone to bring their favorite comfort food.

**BRIDGE** – It is okay to eat comfort food every now and then, but only eating them can be unhealthy. Trying to always live a comfortable life can also be unhealthy. God created us to get uncomfortable and share his love with others.

## HAND-ON ACTIVITIES

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### Planting the Seed

As a group, plant a few seeds in a pot. Take care of the pot between meetings, allowing it to grow. Keep the pot out where everyone can see the progress of the growth throughout the study.

**BRIDGE** – It takes time for seeds to grow. We can plant them and care for them, but only God can make them grow. We must learn to let God use us to plant seeds and care for them as God makes them grow.

### Fishbowl

Place a fishbowl in the middle of the room. Pass out index cards and write the names of people you think God wants you to fish for. Place the index cards in the fishbowl, and pray for those people each week. At the end of the study, tell how God has used you in the lives of those whose names are written on the index cards.

**BRIDGE** – God wants us to partner with him fishing for men. It is an incredible opportunity to be a part of God changing lives.

## VISUAL REINFORCEMENTS

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### Get Comfy

Encourage everyone to bring things that represent comfort to them. For example: pajamas, favorite sweatshirt, pillow, etc.

**BRIDGE** – Comfort comes in many forms. Christ wants to offer us comfort in the midst of living an uncomfortable life.

### Fish Food

Serve goldfish crackers, gummy fish and gummy worms.

**BRIDGE** – God has called us to get comfortably uncomfortable and fish for men.

## MEDIA REINFORCEMENTS

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### “Should I Tell Them” by Shaun Groves

The song describes an internal struggle to share God’s love with others realizing how imperfect he is.

### “If We Are the Body” by Casting Crowns

## TAKE HOME OBJECTS

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### Sewing Seed

Send home small packets of seeds with everyone as a reminder to sew the seeds of the gospel.

### Goldfish

Pass out individual packages of goldfish crackers as a reminder to go fishing this week.

## OTHERS

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### Our Stories

Let everyone who is willing share how they became a Christ follower. Encourage them to point out specific people (family, friends, pastors, etc.) who influenced their decision as well as any events (tragedy, birth of a child, etc.) that played a part.

**BRIDGE** – God uses many different people and events to lead us into a relationship with him. As we are getting uncomfortable, we must remember that God can use many different things to communicate the truth of the gospel.