

‘Meet-ups’ are a spiritual development process

In this case they work with the 2020 BRF book *Seven Sacred Spaces* [7SS]

Do any of these questions ring bells for you?

- Have you noticed that many Christians get stuck in their spiritual development?
- Have you wondered why home groups also reach a similar plateau?
- Have you sometimes wanted to take deeper steps yourself in following Jesus?

What is a meet-up for?

A ‘meet-up’ assists closer following of Jesus and encourages the development of Christian character. It isn’t discussing a book. It is a deliberately slow way of reading and, with others, making oneself accountable for applying what has been read.

1. A meet-up using 7SS is best thought of as a process. It’s not a programme or a course. It is about learning to be attentive to fellow members and the Holy Spirit.
2. Engaging with the 7SS facilitates personal and spiritual *transformation*. It is not mainly about new information, though gaining knowledge can disclose what God may be saying to each person.
3. The process is not ‘formal education’ like a course. It is more like learning through ‘socialisation’ as the members interact with one another. It involves ‘non-formal learning or apprenticeship’.¹ Thus *skills* of Christian spiritual life are acquired, and become *habitual* through practice.

How do meet-ups actually work?

1. The meet-up process is unlike most small-groups in church life. So they are not called ‘groups’.
2. The meet-up size is small. (5 to 6 people). This gives time for vital mutual listening and careful responses. Larger groups easily become unapplied discussions, or turn into a lecture.
3. There is no ‘leader’, only a ‘host’, who models and enables this mutual learning and support.
4. Meeting new content from the 7SS book occurs slowly. Only one chapter is read each month by participants between the meet ups. This slow pace avoids trying to learn too much too soon. ‘Information-overload’ hinders sustaining recently acquired spiritual habits. All new spiritual habits need time to put down roots.
5. Members do that slow reading at home across the month beforehand, assisted by the questions at the end of each chapter. They then write a short account [4 minutes] of this inner journey. During the meet-up they speak it out to the others. Other meet-up members then respond briefly with encouragements and insights into what that person has shared.
6. Each member takes responsibility for what they are putting into practice. This might include lessons they are learning, mistakes made, creative practices and discoveries found.
7. For all these reasons, meet-ups are a month apart and they last for 90 minutes. The overall process can include breaks for the summer holidays and for major festivals like Christmas. This gives people time to assimilate and put their learning into practice.

This whole approach also draws on the much older Early Church process called *catechesis*. This was a period of years, which did include teaching the Christian faith, but it was more about acquiring and demonstrating a Christian character, lifestyle and habits.²

Seven Sacred Spaces and other resources to work with the book are available online at BRF Ministries <https://www.brf.org.uk/what-we-do/living-faith/>

¹ *Seven Sacred Spaces* pp 169-171 unpacks the relationships of these three types of learning, and which Jesus used.

² A source to understand *catechesis* is Alan Kreider’s book *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* chapter 6.