



MESSY & FOOLISH

THE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

BY MATTHEW WARNER

INTRO TO THIS STUDY GUIDE

Dear mess-makers,

This group study guide will not only assist your group in reading the book (*Messy & Foolish*) together, but it will also help facilitate a unique discussion that challenges you to take action.

This guide is for any group of people interested in evangelizing the world. Whether that group is your church or ministry leadership team or just a handful of passionate fools who yearn to more boldly carry the torch handed down to us by our founder, Jesus.

The six sessions are designed to last 40-60 minutes each (depending on size/length of discussion) and work best for groups of up to 10 people (though it can work with larger groups). The best part? The reading assignments for each session are short enough that you can do the reading together as a group during each session (so no homework!).

Regardless of how you use this guide, I challenge you to think big. Be bold. Get messy. Get foolish. And go evangelize the world.

Thank you for all you do for our Church,

Matthew Warner
Author



READING SCHEDULE

SESSION ONE

What's the problem?

Pages 8-22

SESSION TWO

Making good messes

Pages 23-34

SESSION THREE

The foolishness of God

Pages 35-46

SESSION FOUR

Answering the radical call

Pages 47-57

SESSION FIVE

Evangelizing the world

Pages 58-68

SESSION SIX

The most foolish act of all

Pages 69-75

WHAT'S NEXT?

Messy & Foolish Challenge

MessyAndFoolish.com

SESSION ONE

What's the problem?

- Open with a prayer thanking God for each person in the group and asking him to open our hearts and minds to what he wants us to learn from these group discussions.
- Read pages 8-22 as a group (9 mins)
- Discussion questions:
 1. Do we grasp the gravity of the problem? Do our actions reflect this?
 - a. For every 1 person that joins the Church, more than 6 are drifting out the back door.
 - b. Only 85% of those baptized make it to First Communion. Only 58% make it to Confirmation. Only 9% are still practicing the faith at age 22.
 2. What are the biggest problems in the Church?
 3. What has caused the current crises?
 4. What does Christianity have to offer the world?
 5. Why haven't more people accepted this offer?

6. What is our church or ministry offering our community?

7. Why haven't more people accepted our offer?

8. What's something we're doing (in our church or ministry) right now that could really use radical improvement? How can we make a mess of it? What are we waiting for?

- GROUP GOAL: Write down one action item for our group as a result of this discussion:
- Ask for a volunteer from the group to close with a simple, unrehearsed, honest prayer.
- Our next gathering will be (date, place, time):

SESSION TWO

Making good messes

- Open with a short, sincere prayer thanking God for all the ways he brings good from a messy world.
- Read pages 23-34 as a group (8 mins)
- Discussion questions:
 1. Do you struggle with considering your work *the work of an artist*? Why or why not?
 2. Considering the problems we face, are we (as a group) thinking big, bold and messy enough?
 3. Great art changes the way people see the world. How is our work helping others to see the world differently?
 4. How can our community be more vulnerable and authentic to those we are trying to reach? Do we have faith that God wants to use our authentic, broken, messy, foolish selves?
 5. How would we do things differently if we had *zero* fear of criticism or failure?

6. When asked "What's wrong with the world?" what were your first thoughts?

7. How powerful is the personal witness of our members when compared to the other activities of our church or ministry? Why?

- GROUP GOAL: Write down one action item for our group as a result of this discussion:
- Ask the person feeling most talkative to close with a short prayer asking God to help us be more vulnerable, humble and authentic in our ministry and witness.
- Our next gathering will be (date, place, time):

SESSION THREE

The foolishness of God

- Ask somebody who is feeling particularly helpful to open with a short, spontaneous, heartfelt prayer.
- Read pages 35-46 as a group (8 mins)
- Discussion questions:
 1. In what ways do others outside our ministry or church see our community as foolish?
 2. Do we love our enemies? Where's the proof?
 3. Who in our community is currently uncared for? How can we care for them?
 4. People, no matter their state in life, are searching for truth, goodness and beauty. In what ways can we make our work more beautiful? More true? More good?
 5. What inspires people to join us on our mission?

6. Are we meeting people where they are, holding their hands and helping them slay their dragons together? How?

7. Do others see our faith and teachings dramatically transforming our own lives?

8. Would an outsider say we are a people passionately in love with Jesus? With people in our church? With others outside of it?

- GROUP GOAL: Write down one action item for our group as a result of this discussion:
- Closing prayer: Pray privately for somebody specific who is persecuting you and ask God to increase your love for that person and for all those we serve.
- Our next gathering will be (date, place, time):

SESSION FOUR

Answering the radical call

- Ask somebody who's feeling energetic and enthusiastic to open with a short, spontaneous, heartfelt prayer.
- Read pages 47-57 as a group (7 mins)
- Discussion questions:
 1. What does it mean for us to "drop our nets"? Have we done so? In what ways?
 2. Name a person you know whose faith is "contagious." What makes them this way?
 3. Do others see us as sinners set on sainthood? In what way?
 4. How can we help each other make the daily, courageous choice to drop our nets and follow Jesus?
 5. What are the urgent things that are keeping us (both personally and organizationally) from doing what is most important right now? How can we fix this?

6. What are the top three things we need to accomplish as a ministry or church this year? What if we said no to #2 and #3. How much more fully could we embrace doing #1? How much more exciting, remarkable, bold and messy might that be?

7. Are we doing our work in complete peace and joy? Do we doubt that God has already given us everything we need to accomplish all he is asking of us?

8. Instead of planning a talk, lecture, or lesson to teach everyone, plan something to **do** together with everyone instead.

- GROUP GOAL: Write down one action item for our group as a result of this discussion:
- Invite somebody who feels so moved to please close with a prayer asking God for the daily courage to drop our nets and follow him.
- Our next gathering will be (date, place, time):

SESSION FIVE

Evangelizing the world

- Ask somebody who's feeling particularly brave to open with a short, spontaneous, heartfelt prayer.
- Read pages 58-68 as a group (6 mins)
- Discussion questions:
 1. If I completely trusted the One who made me, how would my life look differently?
 2. If a jury examined my life, would I be found guilty of loving God with **all** my heart, soul, mind and strength? If not, why (since this is the most important commandment)?
 3. Have each person share something about their next-door neighbor (i.e. *not their favorite neighbor*, but the person/family whose front door is literally closest to theirs). What's the neighbor's name? What's going on in their life *this month*? What are they struggling with? How can you better love them as *yourself*?
 4. What should we (both personally and as a group) be doing less of so that we can more fully embrace the two greatest commandments?

5. How can we help our people more fully live the greatest commandments in their lives? How would that change our community?

 6. How can we as a ministry/church take on the burdens and troubles of our neighbor and love them as ourselves?

 7. Are we listening to the people we want to serve? What are some ways we could better listen to those we want to serve?

 8. Radical service is inspiring. What are some radical ways we can serve our people that will dramatically delight and surprise them? Thing big.
- GROUP GOAL: Write down one action item for our group as a result of this discussion:

 - Ask whoever is feeling most talkative to close with a simple, unrehearsed, honest prayer.
 - Our next gathering will be (date, place, time):

SESSION SIX

The most foolish act of all

- Ask a daring person in the group to open with a short, spontaneous, heartfelt prayer.
- Read pages 69-75 as a group (5 mins)
- Discussion questions:
 1. Are we more concerned with having lots of relationships? Or with having deep, meaningful relationships? Why?
 2. Is it more important for each of us to try to evangelize *everyone*? Or to primarily evangelize the few people God has placed most closely to us? How do we balance the two?
 3. When we try to evangelize people, should we take the long view (thinking in baby steps and building a relationship over months and years)? Or should we try to convert them quickly? Why?
 4. What metrics should we pay more attention to as a ministry or church?

WHAT'S NEXT?

Join the movement at
MessyAndFoolish.com
where you can:

- Take the Messy & Foolish Challenge
- Hear some messy & foolish interviews from the best and well-known evangelizers of our day.
- Receive other free messy & foolish essays from the author, Matthew Warner.