

THE
PIETIST
OPTION



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SMALL GROUP BOOK STUDY

INTRODUCTION

In the late seventeenth century, when there was a rising suspicion among European Christians of faith that was too intellectual or too institutional, a movement flared brightly in response. Pietism is credited with warming the cold, bickering Christianity of its time, yet few know about it today. Maybe you feel as though we are in that same place now. Use this study guide to help you journey with a small group through *The Pietist Option* by Christopher Gehrz and Mark Pattie III, as we look to our history to see new possibilities for the future.



This six-week study guide accompanies [The Pietist Option](#). Each week, participants are invited to engage with a Scripture passage and 1-2 chapters of the book, and then engage with one another in conversation rooted in Highrock's [values](#) (honesty, humility, hospitality, curiosity, and solidarity). The questions have been adapted from questions the authors themselves created. At the end of the study, participants will have a deeper understanding of Pietism and will be encouraged towards action in living it out in a new way.

Reading Schedule

Week 1: Introduction & Introduction to the Group

Week 2: Chapters 1 & 2

Week 3: Chapters 3 & 4

Week 4: Chapters 5 & 6

Week 5: Chapters 7 & 8

Week 6: Benediction & Final Thoughts

Overview

We don't expect that everyone will come to this study with the same background, or that we will land in the same places at its conclusion. We do expect all participants to commit to the journey together, seeking to hold fast to Highrock's values of honesty, humility, and curiosity, while offering hospitality and solidarity to others in the group. This study does not exactly follow Highrock's *Centered: Moving Towards What Matters Most* sermon series on the Covenant Affirmations (Summer of 2022), though it serves as a helpful tool for small groups wrestling with the practical implications of the sermon. Although the questions provided should serve as a guide for your discussion, they should by no means limit it. Please honor the Conversation Covenant listed on the next pages. If you are using this guide with a group and can't attend one of the sessions, consider sharing a reflection with your Small Group members about what questions or thoughts the material raised for you that week. Consider creating a way people can share relevant articles, videos, or books that will help connect your group throughout the week and allow your meeting time to be more focused. Examples of this might be a Slack channel, a Facebook group, an email, or a text thread.

SELF CHECK-IN

Before you begin this series, take 10-15 minutes to complete this short self check-in.

1. What do you hope to get out of this series?
2. List some of the ways you are feeling stagnant or stalled.
3. In this season of life how would you rate your feeling of busyness? What are some ways you cope with being hurried or overextended?
4. List some dreams of what it would be like to experience new life/wholeness as part of a church community.
5. What is your current relationship with Scripture? If applicable, how have you previously participated in a small group?
6. As you think about your relationship to your faith, the church, and God, are there any topics that could be difficult for you to discuss in a group setting? Note here for yourself some helpful boundaries or reminders for when that topic is discussed.

FACILITATOR NOTES

Looking for some tips on how to help facilitate a productive conversation? Try employing some of these tools when appropriate.

Allow everyone space to share.

It's ok to ask what people are thinking even if they don't volunteer to share right away. But always give people the option to decline to share. Example: "Hey, Fred, you've been a little quiet and I'm curious to know what you think. Would you like to share anything?"

Remember there aren't necessarily "right" answers.

Encourage participants to simply be curious about what came up for them or others without the pressure of feeling like they "should" have thought or felt anything in particular. Example: Instead of asking "what is this story supposed to be communicating?" ask "what did you notice?"

Embrace the differences.

Affirm that different people can come to different conclusions regarding the same thing. Example: "It is really interesting that the text reminded Susie of ABC, while it reminded José of XYZ. Both can be present and true."

Adapt to suit your group's needs.

Sometimes conversation is free-flowing and sometimes it's easier to move through discussion questions one at a time. Do what feels right for your group, but don't feel pressured to answer/discuss every single question.

Encourage curiosity by modeling curiosity!

Asking someone "Tell me more about XYZ" can be a really simple but effective tool to go deeper in conversation.

Don't be afraid of silence.

It's natural to want to fill silences or pauses in a conversation. But don't be afraid to sit in silence with your group members. Sometimes thoughts just need time to percolate, so don't feel like you have to rush to another question if no one shares immediately.

Refer back to the Conversation Covenant.

This is the posture that we as Highrock hold as we gather in groups. When the conversation gets tough, you can always refer back to the Conversation Covenant to remind the group that everyone has agreed to abide by this covenant in small group meetings.

Conversation Covenant

Any member of the group can refer back to this promise that we make to each other to help reorient us back to the group's intention & expectations for healthy community at any time.

I pledge:

To act in good faith, with curiosity. *I will assume the best about my conversation partners when entering into our groups. I will give the benefit of the doubt, recognizing that they may know something I don't.*

To show respect. *I will show respect. I will be polite and give due regard to the feelings and traditions of others. I understand that I do not have to agree with someone to show them respect.*

To speak the truth. *I won't use rhetorical tricks to try to win an argument. I will speak what I genuinely believe is the nuanced truth.*

To aim to discover the truth. *I will not enter into a conversation with the purpose of changing the mind of anyone to my way of thinking.*

To focus on what we can change. *I will focus on what we can do differently in the future since we cannot change what we did in the past.*

To take responsibility for the conversation. *I will take responsibility for the quality of the conversation and the abidance of the rules both in principle and in spirit.*

To follow the covenant even when others fail to do so. *I will abide by the rules regardless of whether another person breaks them.*

To lighten up and approach the conversation in good humor. *I recognize that humor is a hallmark of a constructive, generative conversation and take the conversation in good humor.*

WEEK 1

Introduction

READ THE BIBLE & REFLECT | Ask questions of God around [John 14:1-7](#).

What was surprising to you?

Was there anything you saw for the first time?

Anything you want to ask your group about?



READ THE BOOK & REFLECT | Introduction to *The Pietist Option*

The introduction ends with a question that the Pietists of the authors' experience have often asked each other, "How goes your walk with Christ?" Start your time by sharing a story of your walk with Christ, if applicable to you.

Why are you participating in this group?

Which of the four Pietist instincts resonates most strongly with you?

How important is denominational identity or religious tradition to you? What is your experience with them? If you don't come from a Pietist background, what is different about it from your previous experience?

PRAY | Start and close with the following "Serenity Prayer", adding additional prayers that the group requests in between.

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

WEEK 2

Chapters 1 & 2

READ THE BIBLE & REFLECT | Ask questions of God around [Jeremiah 9:1-6](#).

What was surprising to you?

Was there anything you saw for the first time?

Anything you want to ask your group about?



READ THE BOOK & REFLECT | Chapters 1 & 2 of *The Pietist Option*

What kinds of things can make you feel like a “functional atheist”?

Are you more likely to be “too heavenly minded to do earthly good”, or the other way around - “too earthly minded to do heavenly good”?

Mark shares the story of his Armenian grandmother, who fled genocide, as an example of someone from whom he learned about the power of hope. What are some stories from your family, church, or community that help you understand what it means to live as a person of hope?

Where do/did you see fear show up in your church community? Where do/did you see hope?

PRAY | Pray the following breath prayer. As you inhale, breathe in the sins of the world, and breathe out corrections. You are the hands and feet of God in the world, working, with each breath, to right wrongs and bring love and justice.

INHALE: Injustice and suffering

EXHALE: be now a beloved community

WEEK 3

Chapters 3 & 4

READ THE BIBLE & REFLECT | Ask questions of God around [Psalm 1](#).

What was surprising to you?

Was there anything you saw for the first time?

Anything you want to ask your group about?



READ THE BOOK & REFLECT | Chapters 3 & 4 of *The Pietist Option*

How do you currently present yourself “to the Scriptures’ powerful influence”? Where or to whom can you look for ideas and encouragement to do so more fully?

Why do you think reading and studying the Bible with others is important, even transformative? Is this something you do? If not, how might it be beneficial to do so?

What are some key theological, biblical, and social issues on which Christians are divided? Which are essential to salvation? Which are important, yet not essential to salvation? And which do you think are a matter of personal preference or perspective?

Does “common priesthood” as Spener meant it describe your congregation? If not, where does the ideal get lost? What would it take to recover this priesthood in your faith community, and what benefits would that bring?

Pietists often use the language of seeking “God’s glory and neighbors’ good”. Do you think Carl Lundquist is right that “social action” flows out of “personal devotion to Christ”? How do the two goals of God’s glory and neighbors’ good relate to each other? Can one distract from the other?

PRAY | Spend time praying with one another, as entrusted priests through Christ. Remember, there is no perfect prayer! Trust your community to walk with you in this exercise.

WEEK 4

Chapters 5 & 6

READ THE BIBLE & REFLECT | Ask questions of God around [Colossians 3:1-17](#) & [John 17](#).

What was surprising to you?

Was there anything you saw for the first time?

Anything you want to ask your group about?



READ THE BOOK & REFLECT | Chapters 5 & 6 of *The Pietist Option*

According to Pietists, a living Christian faith is one in which the head, heart, and hands are fully engaged. Do you tend to lean towards one more heavily than the others? Is there one you could engage more fully?

How does following Jesus' path of love "entail more vulnerability, not less"? What are ways Jesus' example and teaching challenge you to risk going beyond what is comfortable to love God and neighbor?

Chris wonders whether "common experience and common activity are healthier bases for unity than common belief". Do you agree? What would a unity centered on experience or activity look like?

What's an example of an issue where you feel that it's appropriate for a Christian to say, "Here I stand; I can do no other"? On what issues do you think Christians can do other - or at least continue to patiently engage in conversation with a fellow believer who holds a different viewpoint?

PRAY | In your prayer, hold the things you just spoke about and shared, and express what you hope might be.

WEEK 5

Chapters 7 & 8

READ THE BIBLE & REFLECT | Ask questions of God around [Romans 12:1-2](#) & [Acts 10:34-43](#).

What was surprising to you?

Was there anything you saw for the first time?

Anything you want to ask your group about?



READ THE BOOK & REFLECT | Chapters 7 & 8 of *The Pietist Option*

What would it mean to live a life centered on Jesus Christ? Would you answer this question differently if you emphasized the word Jesus more than the word Christ, or vice versa?

What is your reaction to Chris' assertion that there are aspects of formational ministries that, while necessary and important, can distract from a centering focus on Jesus? Do you agree? If so, what are some examples, and what could be done about them?

How have you experienced God's love in your life? Do you find it easy or difficult to talk about it with others?

Whom could you try to love better by choosing to listen more, without being anxious or judgmental or trying to fix anything?

Who in your circle of relationships is God nudging you to pray would awaken to God's love? What are some ways you could be a part of the answer to that prayer?

PRAY | Offer prayers together for the people that are the hardest to love, and for those that you are hoping might awaken to God's love.

WEEK 6

Benediction & Final Thoughts

READ THE BIBLE & REFLECT | Ask questions of God around [Jeremiah 17:5-8](#).

What was surprising to you?

Was there anything you saw for the first time?

Anything you want to ask your group about?



READ THE BOOK & REFLECT | The Benediction of *The Pietist Option*

Where do you see God's "great river of grace" running in your life? How do you feel you participate in this river? Who are other people that you are learning from as they participate in this?

What is something that you are taking away from this study?

What is something you are going to do as a response to God's invitation in this study?

PRAY | Spend time praying with each other and make a plan to follow up with one another in one month, asking about each other's actions of response to God.