



HOW TO LEAD A

SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY

Leading a Small Group Bible Study

Lesson 1: What's the BIG deal about SMALL group Bible study?

Small group Bible study is a great way for people to grow in Christ.

- Gets people studying the Bible
- Builds community
- Interacting with the Scriptures together is helpful
- Creates a place for discussion where everyone can participate

Small Groups move us toward accomplishing our Mission and Vision at Spring Run

Our Mission: Why do we exist?

to be an authentic, worshiping community
proclaiming and embodying the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our Vision: What do we hope to accomplish?

to make growing followers of Jesus who influence others with the gospel
for the good of individuals, families, our community, and the world.

A small group Bible study is an integral part of the overall discipleship process. People are interacting regularly with others who will encourage them, help them understand the Bible, process the gospel of grace, and walk alongside them as they follow Christ in their everyday lives.

What are some of the outcomes of Bible Study?

- People will understand their role in the larger redemptive story of the Bible
- People will want people to “grow as followers of Christ who influence....”
- People will understand that the gospel changes everything. The gospel will change and transform hearts and minds.
- People will actually study the Bible (the Scriptures actually do change and transform people's lives with the Holy Spirit)
- People will be actively involved in Community (sharing life together)
- People will be praying for one another

What should we study?

To some extent the answer to this question may be determined by the leader or the group. Some small groups are created around a common issue that they would like to learn more about, such as parenting or marriage. Other small groups like to hit on a variety of things, while others will just stick to a particular book of the Bible. Since the possibilities are endless here are some principles to consider when choosing a study:

- The study should be Biblically based and gospel centered. Do not get tricked into thinking that a curriculum is based on the Bible just because it has verses sprinkled throughout. Many topical studies rely more on social science than on the Bible.
- The study should allow time for discussion not just lecture. You want people to be involved, ask questions and wrestle with the material.
- The study should mirror the spiritual barometer of the group. Is the group mainly new believers, mature believers, unbelievers? If it is a mixed group then stick with the basics of the faith, the gospel and following Jesus. These cover everyone on their spiritual journey.
- When in doubt you can ask your pastor. We are always available to help you in any way we can.

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Lesson 2: What do I need to know about the Bible?

An overview of the Bible, theology and studying the Bible

Overview of the Bible

CREATION

FALL

REDEMPTION

CONSUMMATION

The story that the Bible tells is the drama of redemption. God created the universe, the earth and all that is in it. God created man in His own image to live in a perfect relationship with Him. Man chose to reject this relationship and attempt to live life on his own, apart from God. The consequences of man's rejection of God have spiraled the cosmos into utter chaos and left man to face the judgment of death. God chose not to leave man in this hopeless situation and sent His son Jesus Christ to come and redeem the world back to Himself. Jesus' life, death and resurrection have accomplished this mission for those who repent and believe in Jesus as their Savior. At a time of God's own choosing Jesus will return and make all things new. At this time God will take believers with Him to heaven to enjoy eternal fellowship with Him.

Jesus Christ is the Central Figure

Christ is the central figure in the drama of redemption. In Luke 24: 44-45, Jesus said these words,

"Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures..."



Inspired:

II Timothy 3:16-17, *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*

II Peter 1:21, *"For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*

Inerrant: The Bible is completely truthful and accurate in every respect about all it affirms.

Psalms 12:6, *"The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times."*

Proverbs 30:5, *"Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him."*

Infallible: The Bible is utterly trustworthy and will not deceive or lead to error.

Numbers 23:19, *"God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?"*

Quick Facts:

- The Bible contains a total of 66 books.
- The Old Testament contains 39 books and the New Testament contains 27 books.
- It was written over a span of 1,500 years.
- The Old Testament was written between 1400BC and 400BC.
- The New Testament was written between 40AD and 95AD.
- It was written mostly in Hebrew and Greek with a little Aramaic.
- It was written by over 40 different authors.
- It contains many different types or genres of literature including; history, poetry, wisdom, letters, prophetic and biographical.

Thoughts from last week:

Elements we said make a good Bible Study

- Not too intense, not too shallow but just right
- Opportunity to bring non-Christians
- Time to share personally
- Prayer time

How to get a more diverse group?

- Personal invitation
- Pray that God would move in people's hearts
- Try and dismantle any obstacles (like you've done with babysitting)
- Help them see the value of them coming, they get but they give as well

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Lesson 3: How do I PREPARE for the Study?

Personal Preparation

Having a consistent and growing walk with Christ is vitally important. A major aspect of preparing for a study is realizing that God has been at work in your life for years. These years of personal growth in the gospel have a tremendous impact on your teaching.

God will teach you something every day when you study and listen to His Word.

There is a cumulative effect in our spiritual lives (Bible reading, prayer life, giving spiritual guidance, etc)

Organize Yourself:

Set aside some time

Utilize study tools and resources (Study Bible, Commentaries, etc)

Remember: The Main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing

You are trying to communicate one main truth of the gospel

You want people to be confronted with their sin and how the gospel is the answer

Study:

Review the material

Make sure you understand the redemptive focus of the study

Begin to think about how you will communicate this redemptive focus

- Stories & illustrations
- Cross reference of other Scriptures. One rule of interpretation is that "Scripture interprets Scripture".
- How can you frame or outline the key aspects of the study
- Get the group to discover some truths on their own through questions and discussion
- Summarize at the end
- Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you just told them

Utilize the 5 Keys to Studying a Passage of Scripture

1. Context

Looking at the context of a passage is critical in understanding it. The context will allow you to see where it is in relation to its surroundings. In order to understand the context of a passage you must find out where the passage is. I know, this sounds elementary, but I mean, you need to know what comes before it and what comes after it. What book is this passage located in? The reason for this is because, each passage stands not alone, but in the middle of various themes, purposes and continuing stories of a much bigger picture. Each passage also has verses before and after it that will shed light on its meaning.

I was studying the book of Philippians with some high school friends. Each week I would ask them what the key word to the book was. They would correctly answer "joy". Then I would ask them where Paul, the author was when he wrote the letter to the Philippians. They would correctly answer, "prison." We would then review what we had learned in last week's passage before we began to discuss the next verses. This process is critically important to gaining a solid understanding of the current passage you are studying.

Also, don't forget the overarching context of the Scriptures is God's redemptive work through Jesus Christ for His glory.

2. Content

What is going on in this particular passage? What is the story here? Or simply, what message or theme is this passage trying to convey? It is important to pay attention to the words of Scripture, after all they are “God-breathed.” So, the words are important, some of the details make all the difference in understanding God’s message. You usually have to break down a passage into parts. For instance, a story in Genesis about Abraham can be broken down into stages or a timeline. A passage in an epistle may need to be broken down into phrases that are linked together. Each phrase in and of itself can have a powerful message.

Think about Philippians 4:6-7, “do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” These two verses are about not being anxious but trusting in the power of Christ to give us peace. But a closer look at each phrase brings out more and more riches of God’s grace to us. Do not be anxious about *anything*. Anything encompasses everything, we are not to worry about anything at all. The answer to our anxiety issues is in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Think about the phrase that says God’s peace *surpasses our understanding*. God’s peace is so powerful, so intense, so strong, so deep and exhaustive, it goes beyond what our finite minds can comprehend. We don’t want to miss out on the riches of God’s Word so take a close look at the content.

3. Condition

Each passage of Scripture reveals a *fallen condition focus*. Don’t let this phrase scare you and no I did not make it up. One of my seminary professors made it up. It means that each passage reveals a sinful (fallen) condition of our human nature in which we have failed to love and glorify God the way we were originally intended. For instance, going back to Philippians 4:6-7, the fallen condition is anxiety. We are anxious about something and therefore are not trusting God to meet our needs.

Sometimes it is more difficult to find the fallen condition. Notice we are not saying that each verse has one but each passage does, especially as it relates to the context of the book it’s in. The passage will reveal an area where we have either blatantly sinned against the Lord, our hearts have turned away to other idols, our motives are impure, or simply the human condition of sin and rebellion is exposed. In the words of my professor, Bryan Chapell,

“The main reason to ask why the Holy Spirit inspired any text is to expose what fallen aspect of the human condition need to be addressed in order for God’s glory to be properly recognized and honored. The fallen condition focus exposes the necessity of a divine solution to the human dilemma and necessarily makes God the hero of the text as he displays his redemptive provision for his people. God rescues his people from their broken nature and world by his grace alone in order for them to experience his goodness and express his glory.”

4. Christ

The next key follows in answering the question, “How do we fix the fallen condition?” We don’t fix anything, Christ does. Each passage will not only reveal the fallen condition but it will also reveal God’s redemption through Jesus Christ. We are not necessarily looking for Jesus hiding under every rock in the Old Testament. But we are seeing Scripture for what it is, God’s story of redeeming His people back to himself through the life, death and resurrection of his Son Jesus.

John chapter one says that Jesus is the Word, the *logos*. Jesus is the embodiment of *all* the Scriptures (see Luke 24:27) and we need to understand and interpret the Scriptures according to its redemptive focus. All of the Scriptures are saturated with God’s grace through Jesus Christ. Man has fallen and sinned against a holy God (fallen condition). Man’s only hope is for God to redeem man back to Himself by sending Jesus Christ to die in our place. This is the story God is telling us in all the Scriptures. Before you begin to read and study the Scriptures make sure you pray that God will use His Holy Spirit to illuminate His Word in your heart so that you can understand the love of Jesus.

5. Application

God expects his scriptural truths to transform us. When Paul writes to his young protégé Timothy he says, “All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17) The writer of Hebrews says, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12 The Holy Spirit will apply God’s Word to us, but we have to listen and be responsive to His will.

Application is taking the truths of Scripture and incorporating them into our daily lives. It is asking the question, “So what, how can I use this doctrine, command, principle, promise, etc.?” Application should always show how God heals some part of our sin and brokenness. We look at the characters in the Bible and see how their situation relates to our own. Even though they lived in a completely different culture and time the lessons still carry over to us today because we are still sinful and Jesus is still the Redeemer.

Understanding all of Scripture is Christ-Centered

As we study the Scriptures it is important for us to understand that all of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments are centered on the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Many people understand the obvious prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament. However, “to see the [entire] Old Testament in relation to Christ is to see it in its larger context, the context of God’s purpose in revelation.”¹ “The comprehensive purpose of the Scriptures is to reveal the glory of Christ’s person and work.”²

¹ *Christ Centered Preaching*, Bryan Chapell

² *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*, Edmund P Clowney

Jesus himself told the men on the road to Emmaus,
“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Luke 24:27 (ESV)

John chapter one says that Jesus is the Word, the *logos*. Jesus is the embodiment of all the Scriptures and we need to understand and interpret the Scriptures according to its redemptive focus. All of the Scriptures are saturated with God’s grace through Jesus Christ. Man has fallen and sinned against a holy God. Man’s only hope is for God to redeem man back to Himself by sending Jesus Christ to die in our place. This is the story God is telling us in all the Scriptures. Before you begin to read and study the Scriptures make sure you pray that God will use His Holy Spirit to illuminate His Word in your heart so that you can understand the love of Jesus.

Therefore, when you get to a passage of Scripture you will be looking for at least two components. The first is the *fallen condition focus*. This is where the passage reveals man’s sin and shortcomings in living life to the glory of God. The second is where this passage reveals the redemption of God through Jesus. How does this passage point me to Christ and his work on the cross. This is simply applying the gospel to every area of our lives. The gospel changes everything and should impact every square inch of your life.

Christ-Centered Teaching does not teach *Moralism*

Moralism basically says, “I don’t need God or Jesus because I am moral (I am basically a good person). Morality breeds moralism which is really its own religion. It counts the morals of a person on level ground with the moral Jesus. It does not expose our need for Jesus only our need to “do better” and “be better people.”

We cannot teach people to be good Christians...we need to teach people that they are Christians not because they are good and righteous but because God is good and He has saved us based on the righteousness of Christ.

Moralism leaves people frustrated and doubting their faith because they are trying to live a righteous life but constantly fail. The gospel says that we cannot act righteously in our own power and that we need to believe and accept the way God sees us, which is righteous based on the imputed righteousness of Christ. From that point we begin to live out who God has created us to be by the power of Christ living in us.

What is good? Good is when I do something that is morally correct (the rich young ruler was good, but unless he did what Jesus told him to do he was not getting eternal life) [Moral Faith]
What is Biblical goodness? When I do something by the power of Christ living in me that pleases and glorifies God. [Godly Faith]

Christ-Centered Teaching does not teach *Legalism*

Legalism basically says, “I can work my way to God by doing the right things.” Legalism excludes faith and attempts to reach God by our own works.

Legalism means treating biblical standards of conduct as regulations to be kept by our own power in order to earn God's favor. In other words legalism will be present wherever a person is trying to be ethical in his own strength, that is, without relying on the merciful help of God in Christ.

Legalism is the erecting of specific requirements of conduct beyond the teaching of Scripture and making adherence to them the means by which a person is qualified for full participation in the local family of God, the church.

Christ-Centered Teaching teaches the Redemptive power of Christ

Christ centered teaching gets to the “heart” of the issues. The heart is the primary target you are trying to get to. Lasting change only comes when the heart is changed first, not behavior. The teacher’s goal is to open and unfold the meaning of the Scriptures. Since their culminating and comprehensive purpose is to reveal the glory of Christ’s person and work, then teaching cannot avoid Him without abandoning Scripture’s aim.

When looking at a passage of Scripture ask some questions:

What in this passage exposes my sin?

What in this passage reveals that the answer to my sin is the redemptive power of Christ?

How can I communicate these two truths to my hearers so they avoid moralism and legalism and understand the gospel of grace?

Resources:

Crosstalk, Michael Emler

Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind,

Tremper Longman

Getting the Message, Daniel Doriani

Christ Centered Preaching, Bryan Chapell

Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson & Boa

Foundations of the Christian Faith, Boice

Now, That’s a Good Question, R.C. Sproul

New Bible Dictionary

Knowing Scripture, R.C. Sproul

The New Geneva Study Bible

The Life Application Study Bible

The NIV Study Bible

ESV Study Bible

The Gospel Transformation Study Bible

Now that’s a Good Question, R.C. Sproul

Bible Speaks Today Series, Ed. John Stott

New Testament Commentary,

Hendricksen & Kistemaker

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

Understanding and Applying the Bible, J.

Robertson McQuilkin

Preaching Christ in All of Scripture,

Edmund P Clowney

Biblical Studies Bibliography:

The Westminster Confession of Faith

Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem

Concise Theology, J.I. Packer

Calvin’s Institutes

Calvin’s Commentaries

Fundamentalism and the Word of God, J.I.

Packer

The New Testament Speaks, Barker,

Lane, Michaels

Talk Thru the Bible, Wilkinson and Boa

Institutes of the Christian Religion, John

Calvin

God’s Inerrant Word, Montgomery

An Introduction to the New Testament,

Carson, Moo, Morris

Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free, F.F. Bruce

Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary

Nave’s Topical Bible

Biblical Theology, Geerhardus Vos

New Bible Dictionary

The Canon of Scripture, F.F. Bruce

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

Apologetics Bibliography:

The Reason for God, Tim Keller

Basic Christianity, John Stott

Who is this Jesus?, Michael Green

How To Be Your Own Selfish Pig, Susan

Schaeffer Macauley

The God Who is There, Francis Schaeffer

He Is There and He is Not Silent, Francis

Schaeffer

The Universe Next Door, James Sire

Can Man Live Without God, R. Zacharias

Deliver Us From Evil, R. Zacharias

True For You, But Not For Me, P. Copan

Introduction to Philosophy, Geisler &

Feinberg

Know Why You Believe, P. Little

Classical Apologetics, Sproul, Lindsley,

Gerstner

Reason to Believe, R.C. Sproul

God In the Dock, C.S. Lewis

The Abolition of Man, C.S. Lewis

Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis

More Than a Carpenter, J. McDowell

Existence and Attributes of God, Stephen

Charnock

Reason for the Hope Within, Murray

I'm Glad You Asked, Boa & Moody
How Now Shall We Live, Charles Colson
The Case for Christ, Lee Strobel

Leading a Small Group Bible Study

Lesson 4: How do I PRACTICALLY lead the Study?

Group and Room Dynamics

Room dynamics may sound trivial but you really want people to be as comfortable as possible. Lighting, chairs or floor space, room temp., refreshments, etc. Pets are annoying to have in the room.

Start the study with an Introduction or Icebreaker

- Somehow you have to get the study rolling and begin to get people into it. This is usually something directly relevant to the main point of the study. Think about how we start our sermons, usually with some illustration or story that points us in the direction we are going.
- It is also good to start a study with a brief summary of what you did last week.
- Opening in prayer is a great way to move from chit chat to the study.

During the Study

- Eye contact, conversational dialogue.
- Try to involve as many people as possible in the discussion. If someone is quiet but you are pretty sure they know the answer then ask them directly or ask them a simple question or get them to read a passage. This may help them overcome their fear of talking out loud in a group.
- You have to ask leading questions that have more than a “yes” or “no” answers. “What do you think? How does this apply to you? What has God been teaching you lately?”
- If someone is dominating the discussion:
 - ❖ Thank them for their answers and then ask the group, “What do others think about this question?”
 - ❖ Sit next to them, it’s harder for them to make eye contact with you and then just answer questions
 - ❖ You may need to talk with them outside the group. “Hey, you seem to know a lot about this study, could you help me with getting the others to get in on the discussion?”
- Be patient with people and their wacky ideas. If someone is saying something that is not true then you need to be able to speak the truth in love. If you are not sure how to answer them then just say that you would like to put off that discussion for another time. You can always ask your pastor about difficult issues.
- Try to keep the discussion focused, save rabbit trails or other important but not pertinent questions for another time.
- Get people to say one “take-away” from the day’s study.
- Write down prayer requests and keep a journal to watch God answer prayers.

Other Considerations:

- Keep things relational by spending time with people outside the study, send them an encouraging email, note or phone call.
- Make sure people know the expectations of the study (homework, reading, commitment level, etc)
- See your Bible study as a ministry, not just a meeting.
- Look for people who are natural leaders or who have potential leadership ability. Begin to work with them, help them grow spiritually, spend lots of time with them outside the study, give them things to do, let them lead a study or two. Alert the pastors as to their leadership potential. When people have ministry gifts they need to be using them or else they are wasting their life.
- Pray for your group during the week