



# A GUIDE ON HOW TO



A SPIRITUAL LIFE DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE



# A GUIDE ON HOW TO START A BIBLE STUDY

Engaging in God's Word for information, formation, and transformation is vital for the spiritual health and growth of believers. As followers of Jesus, it is essential to maintain an ongoing relationship with God through His Word. Engaging in Scripture is one of the fundamental ways He speaks to us. It doesn't matter where you are on your journey with the Lord – whether just starting with Jesus (SEEKER) or in a relationship for many years (STUDENT), engaging in Scripture is imperative at every level of faith. We use the terms "seeker" and "student" strictly as a convenience to indicate familiarity with Scripture. You may identify with both categories and going deeper into the Word is always encouraged. So, if you feel challenged by the content, that is perfectly okay. Always ask your leader or Corps Officer questions to better understand what you are reading and comprehending.

One proven discipline for staying and growing in God's Word is through a small-group Bible study. Studying His Word in a small group offers secure and welcoming opportunities for people to learn from the Scriptures and build authentic relationships. The key, however, is creating quality, intentional Bible study groups.

## HERE ARE SOME STEPS TO CONSIDER IN YOUR PREPARATION:

### 1. SEEK GOD'S WISDOM

You may be saying, *"Of course, God wants people to study His Word."* Don't run ahead without prayer and seeking His wisdom. Seeking God's wisdom will help you clarify your vision to answer all the *"who, what, where, when, and how"* details. When we wait on the Lord, He will unfold His plan – which is always best. He will give you a focus in one direction rather than chasing off in multiple directions.

## CLARIFY THE PURPOSE

Why do you want to start a Bible study? (e.g., spiritual growth, fellowship, outreach)

Who is it for? (New believers, mature Christians, mixed group, seekers, men, women?)

## PRAY FOR GUIDANCE

- ☐ Ask God for wisdom in planning and leading
- ☐ Pray for the right people to join
- ☐ Seek God's direction in topic or scripture focus

## 2. IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET GROUP

Most of the time, you can figure out who your target audience is just by looking around your community and asking a few questions:

- Who is accessible to you?
- Who do you already know?
- In person or online?
- Can a Bible study be inserted into a night when there are already people at other corps' activities?
- Would it be advantageous to have the group meet at the corps, at someone's home, a diner, or a coffee shop?
- Do you want to offer an early morning Bible study for people before work?
- Are there young moms in your community who need a support system?
- Will childcare be needed?
- Could you organize a prayer and Bible study group where young adults hang out?

## CHOOSE THE FORMAT

- ☐ Group size (one-on-one, small group, large group)
- ☐ In-person, online, or hybrid?
- ☐ Frequency: weekly, biweekly, monthly

☐ Duration: 30 minutes, 1 hour, etc.

### 3. DETERMINE THE GOAL OF YOUR GROUP

Work around people's schedules. Think outside the box...there are endless options:

- Disciple-making groups: for believers seeking to develop spiritual disciplines and deepen their faith.
- Community Groups: for believers and non-believers, people who want to build in-depth relationships with others.
- Service Groups: for believers and non-believers who serve alongside one another in ministry.
- Seeker Groups: groups led by believers but for non-believers. Groups that spend much time dealing with the issues non-believers are considering before coming to Christ.
- Support Groups: groups for believers and non-believers that support attendees through personal difficulties.

When you decide what kind of group is needed, you can then select what resources fit your group.

### PICK A STUDY TOPIC OR BOOK

- ☐ Book of the Bible (e.g., John, James, Psalms)
- ☐ Thematic Study (e.g., prayer, grace, discipleship)
- ☐ Use a Bible study guide or devotional? (e.g., The Bible Project, Lifeway, etc.)
- ☐ Would you like to create your own study plan?

### 4. DEVELOP A STRATEGY

Think about the people in your corps. How many have been there for years? Most likely, someone has tried this before. That means some have failed, and some have succeeded. Bring together those people and other leaders who can offer fresh ideas and wisdom for creating something new.

## SELECT MATERIALS

- ☐ Bibles (same translation or a variety?)
- ☐ Study guides, notebooks, pens
- ☐ Optional: commentaries, dictionaries, concordances
- ☐ Access to online resources or apps (e.g., The Bible Project, YouVersion, Blue Letter Bible)

## DECIDE THE LOGISTICS

- ☐ Meeting location (home, church, café, Zoom)
- ☐ Day and time (consistent and convenient for most)
- ☐ Childcare needed?
- ☐ Provide food, coffee, or snacks?

## INVITE PEOPLE

- ☐ Make a list of people to invite
- ☐ Send personal invitations (text, call, email, social media)
- ☐ Share expectations and the purpose clearly

## PREPARE FOR THE FIRST MEETING

- ☐ Icebreaker or short intro activity
- ☐ Share the vision and structure of the study
- ☐ Distribute materials and resources
- ☐ Set group expectations (respect, confidentiality, participation)

## 5. TARGET AND TRAIN LEADERS AND FACILITATORS

Once you've targeted someone who has leadership potential, please don't assume they don't need some training, guidance, or direction.

- Identify their strengths and equip them based on their leadership needs and the needs of their group.

### *o Spiritual Preparation*

- ☐ Encourage consistent personal prayer and devotional life
- ☐ Emphasize dependence on the Holy Spirit for guidance and wisdom
- ☐ Cultivate a heart for service and humility

### *o Biblical Knowledge*

- ☐ Provide sound training in interpreting Scripture (basic hermeneutics)
- ☐ Offer an overview of key biblical themes and narratives
- ☐ Ensure familiarity with the specific study material or curriculum

### *o Leadership Skills*

- ☐ Train in group facilitation and active listening
- ☐ Teach how to ask open-ended, thought-provoking questions
- ☐ Develop conflict resolution and pastoral care skills

### *o Practical Tools*

- ☐ Supply resources such as commentaries, study guides, and outlines
- ☐ Recommend tools for time management and lesson planning
- ☐ Provide a structure for each session (e.g., opening prayer, discussion, application)

### *o Community Building*

- ☐ Encourage hospitality and creating a welcoming environment
- ☐ Foster accountability and follow-up among group members
- ☐ Promote a culture of encouragement and spiritual growth

### *o Ongoing Support*

- ☐ Offer regular check-ins or mentorship from a more experienced leader
- ☐ Create opportunities for leader training and peer learning

Provide space for feedback and reflection

- A facilitator can be just as valuable as a leader. Facilitators can initiate discussion and serve as the prime mover of conversation.
- Identify good listeners. Avoid those who love the sound of their own voice.

## LEAD WITH HUMILITY AND OPENNESS

- ☐ Encourage questions and discussion
- ☐ Facilitate rather than lecture
- ☐ Be okay with not knowing all the answers
- ☐ Keep the focus on Scripture and God's truth

### *• Monitor the Progress*

Periodically evaluate the group's dynamics.

- Are relationships developing?
- Does everyone participate, or is one person monopolizing the conversation?
- Is the curriculum chosen meaningful and applicable to the group's needs?
- Is the venue working for the group?
- Is the group ready to apply what has been studied through some service in the corps and/or community?



## FOLLOW UP AND STAY CONSISTENT

- ☐ Remind group of upcoming meetings
- ☐ Check in with participants
- ☐ Be flexible but consistent
- ☐ Gather feedback and make improvements

## 6. RESOURCES AND PROVISIONS

### RESOURCES

There is a myriad of resources available to help guide leaders and facilitators in answering questions that arise in Bible study.

- Holman Bible Atlas: A Complete Guide to the Expansive Geography of Biblical History
- Holman Illustrated Bible Handbook
- Ultimate Bible Dictionary: A Quick and Concise Guide to the People, Places, Objects, and Events in the Bible
- Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words
- Bible Project Study the Story of the Bible With Free Tools | BibleProject™

Of course, the internet is filled with resources that can help with factual answers to what is being studied as well.

Click on the provided QR Code to see some recommendations available to you



**RESOURCES HERE**

## PROVISIONS

Don't underestimate the importance of food! This is a welcome addition to any gathering. Consider a mealtime study or snacks and beverages for non-mealtime hours.

Lastly, settling on time, place, people, and resources can be a fluid journey. It may take time to find the exact ingredients that work for a thriving Bible study. Perseverance is key.

*"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching."* Hebrews 10:24-25



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