



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 every believer. As followers of Jesus, it is essential to maintain an ongoing relationship with God through His Word, one of the primary ways He speaks to us. No matter where you are on your journey with the Lord—whether just starting with Jesus (**Seeker**), beginning to grow in faith (**New Believer**), learning to live out your discipleship more deeply (**Follower**), or practicing a mature walk of faith and holiness (**Practitioner**)—engaging in Scripture is imperative at every stage. These categories are simply a way to describe different points along the journey, and you may find yourself identifying with more than one. What matters most is the desire to go deeper into God's Word. If you find yourself challenged by the content, that is perfectly okay—ask questions of your leader or Corps Officer to grow in understanding.

One proven discipline for staying rooted and growing in God's Word is through small-group Bible study. Studying Scripture together creates a safe and welcoming space for learning, asking questions, and building authentic relationships. The key, however, is creating quality, intentional groups that foster both spiritual growth and community.

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)

Spiritual Growth: To grow deeper in your relationship with Christ, becoming more like Him in love and holiness.

Community & Fellowship: To walk with others on the journey of faith, building authentic relationships and accountability in grace.

Outreach & Invitation: To create a welcoming space for seekers to explore the Scriptures and encounter the living Christ.

Discipleship & Mission: To be equipped for living out God’s word in daily life, serving both neighbor and community.

Encouragement & Support: To provide a safe place for prayer, guidance, and sharing life together.

- Who is it for? (New believers, mature Christians, mixed groups, 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: to practice accountability, confession, and encouragement toward entire sanctification 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 with insight, wisdom, direction, and encouragement found in the Word of God.

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?

Simple Bible Study Methods

SOAP Method

Scripture

Observation

Application

Pray

HEAR Method

Highlight the verses that stand out (Scripture/READ)

Explain what this passage means

Apply what God is saying in these verses to your life

Respond to what you've read

Inductive Bible Study (simple version)

Observation

Interpretation

Application

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.

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

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

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

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

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)

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

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

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.

- Is the group cultivating accountability and holy living in daily life? (related to their spiritual growth- the way of Salvation/Holiness)
- 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, PROVISIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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™
- Old Testament Survey Course
- New Testament Survey Course

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



Scan this QR Code to see some available resources.

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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- CFOT Brengle library issues a library card to active officers in the territory. The library service includes book checkout and scanned resources.
- Local seminaries such as Robert Wesleyan usually issue library cards to clergy at no cost.

NOTES

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SPIRITUAL LIFE DEVELOPMENT

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