



LifeLight

"In Him was life, and that life was the light of men." John 1:4

The Bible



An Overview

LEADER

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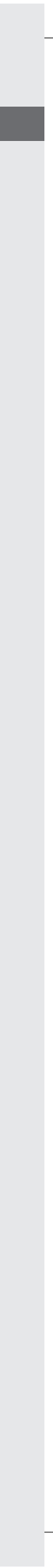
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Introduction

Welcome to LifeLight

A special pleasure is in store for you. You will be instrumental in leading brothers and sisters in Christ closer to Him who is our life and light (John 1:4). You will have the pleasure of seeing other Christians discover new insights and rediscover old ones as they open the Scriptures and dig deep into them, perhaps deeper than they have ever dug before. More than that, you will have the pleasure of sharing in this wonderful study yourself.

LifeLight—An In-depth Study

LifeLight is a series of in-depth Bible studies. The goal of LifeLight is that through a regular program of in-depth personal and group study of Scripture, more and more Christian adults may grow in their personal faith in Jesus Christ, enjoy fellowship with the members of His body, and reach out in love to others in witness and service.

In-depth means that this Bible study includes the following four components: individual daily home study; discussion in a small group; a lecture presentation on the Scripture portion under study; and an enhancement of the material (through reading the enrichment magazine) of the week's study.

LifeLight Participants

Anticipated LifeLight participants are adults who desire a deeper study of the Scriptures than is available in the typical Sunday morning adult Bible class. (Mid-to-older teens might also be LifeLight participants.) While LifeLight does not assume an existing knowledge of the Bible or special experience or skills in Bible study, it does assume a level of commitment that will bring participants to each of the nine weekly assemblies having read the assigned readings and attempted to answer the study questions. Daily reading and study will require from 15 to 30 minutes for the five days preceding the LifeLight assembly. The day following the assembly

will be spent reviewing the previous week's study by going over the completed study leaflet and the enrichment magazine.

LifeLight Leadership

While the in-depth form of Bible study employed by LifeLight begins with individual study and cannot achieve its aims without this individual effort, it cannot be completed by individual study alone. Therefore, trained leaders are necessary. You fill one or perhaps more of the important roles described below.

The Director

This person oversees the LifeLight program in a local center (which may be a congregation or a center operated by several neighboring congregations). The director

- serves as the parish LifeLight overall coordinator and leader;
- coordinates the scheduling of the LifeLight program;
- orders materials;
- convenes LifeLight leadership team meetings;
- develops publicity materials;
- recruits participants;
- maintains records and budgeting;
- assigns, with the leadership team, participants to small discussion groups;
- makes arrangements for facilities;
- reports LifeLight activities and plans to the district's board of parish education, the other congregation(s), and to the district LifeLight director;
- communicates outreach opportunities to small-group leaders and to congregational boards;
- follows up on participants who leave the program.

The Assistant Director (*optional*)

This person may assist the director. Duties listed for the director may be assigned to the assistant director as mutually agreeable.

The Presenter

This person prepares and delivers the lecture at the weekly assembly. (**Lesson material for the presenter begins on p. 9.**) The presenter

- prepares and presents the Bible study to the large group;
- prepares worship activities (devotional thought, hymn, prayer), using resources in the study leaflet and leaders guide and materials of the presenter's own choosing;
- helps the small-group discussion leaders to grow in understanding the content of the lessons;
- encourages prayer at weekly leadership team and discussion leaders meetings.

The Small-Group Coordinator

(optional; the director may fill this role)

This person supervises and coordinates the work of the small-group discussion leaders. The small-group coordinator

- recruits with the leadership team the small-group discussion leaders;
- trains or arranges for training of the discussion leaders;
- assists director and discussion leaders in follow-up and outreach;
- encourages the discussion leaders to contact absent group members;
- participates in the weekly leadership team and discussion leaders equipping meetings;
- provides ongoing training and support as needed.

The Small-Group Discussion Leaders

These people guide and facilitate discussion of LifeLight participants in the small groups. (**Lesson material for the small-group leaders begins on p. 65.**) There

should be one discussion leader for every group of no more than 12 participants. The small-group discussion leaders are, perhaps, those individuals who are most important to the success of the program. They should, therefore, be chosen with special care and be equipped with skills needed to guide discussion and to foster a caring fellowship within the group. These discussion leaders

- prepare each week for the small-group discussion by using the study leaflet and small-group leaders guide section for that session (**see p. 65**);
- encourage and assist the discussion group in prayer;
- foster fellowship and mutual care within the discussion group;
- attend weekly discussion leaders training meetings.

Leadership Training

LifeLight leaders will meet weekly to review the previous week's work and plan the coming week. At this session, leaders can address concerns and prepare for the coming session. Since LifeLight is a 1½ hour week-day program, with no possibility for it to be taught in the one hour typically available on Sunday mornings, some congregations may want to use the Sunday morning Bible study hour for LifeLight preparation and leadership training. In such a meeting, the presenter and/or small-group coordinator may lead the discussion leaders through the coming week's lesson, reserving 5 or 10 minutes for problem solving or other group concerns.

While it requires intense effort, LifeLight has proven to bring great benefit to LifeLight participants. The great effort put into this program, both by leaders and by participants, will be rewarding and profitable.

The LifeLight Weekly Schedule

Here is how LifeLight will work week-by-week:

1. Before session 1, each participant will receive the study leaflet for session 1 and the enrichment magazine for the course. The study leaflet contains a hymn, prayer, and other worship resources (for use both in individual daily study and at the opening of the following week's assembly)

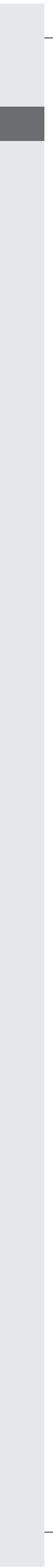
and readings and study questions for five days. Challenge questions will lead those participants who desire a greater challenge into even deeper levels of study.

2. After the five days of individual study at home, participants will gather for a weekly assembly of all LifeLight participants. The assembly will begin with a brief period for worship (five minutes). Participants will then join their assigned small discussion groups (of 12 or fewer, who will remain the same throughout the course), where they will go over the week's study questions together (55 minutes). Assembling together once again, participants will listen to a lecture presentation on the reading they have studied in the previous week and discussed in their small groups (20 minutes). After the lecture presentation, the director or another leader will distribute the study leaflet for the following week. Closing announcements and other necessary business may take another five minutes before dismissal.

In some places some small groups will not join the weekly assembly because of scheduling or other reasons. Such groups may meet at another time and place (perhaps in the home of one of the small-group members).

3. On the day following the assembly, participants will review the preceding week's work by reviewing the study leaflet they completed (and which they perhaps supplemented or corrected during the discussion in their small group) and by reading the appropriate articles from the enrichment magazine.

Then the LifeLight weekly study process will begin all over again!



Jesus Christ: The Center of the Bible

John 20:31; Genesis 3:1–15; Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Psalm 23; Hebrews 13:8

Preparing for the Session

Central Focus

The Bible is God's book. All of its writings center on Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation and the eternal life God has made available for all people in Christ.

Objectives

That the participant, as a child of God and with the Holy Spirit's help will

1. believe that the Bible is God's sure and certain revelation of our Savior, Jesus Christ;
2. know that all the writings of sacred Scripture are united by a single theme—God's plan of salvation for all people through faith in Christ Jesus;
3. rejoice that God gives us the Bible to assure us of His forgiveness, comfort, love, and peace in Jesus.

Note for small-group leaders: Lesson notes and other materials you will need begin on p. 67.

For the Presenter

What a wonderful privilege it is to present God's message to others! Although none of us is worthy of such an honor, our gracious God uses us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening saving faith through the proclamation of His Word. We will want to be as ready as possible for this task.

It is important that the leader be thoroughly prepared for each presentation in this course, especially this first one. You will want to have more than enough material. In addition to reading through the material below, we suggest consulting another source or two as well.

Reading through the section on the Holy Scriptures in a good dogmatics book can be helpful. One such book is Edward W. A. Koehler, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine: A Popular Presentation of the Teachings of the Bible* (Oakland, CA: Alfred W. Koehler, 1952). Koehler's first 19 pages deal with the subject of the Holy Scriptures.

Thorough preparation will give you confidence. You will be able to speak with an authority your listeners will likely sense, albeit unconsciously. You will not end your lecture having "pumped the well dry," left with no more to say. It may still happen that you might have to defer the answer to a question someone asks until next time. But thorough preparation gives you a confidence you cannot otherwise have. In a word, it's better to be overprepared than underprepared. Reading and studying by themselves, of course, are not enough. Nothing is more important than asking the Holy Spirit to give you His insight and to bless your every word.

Here are five steps you may want to use as you prepare for your weekly lecture:

Step 1: Pray for God's blessing and for the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit. You have a part in transmitting God's own Word! Ask for grace to speak that Word boldly, as did the apostle Paul: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

Step 2: Read and study God's Word for yourself. The Word will strengthen your own faith and life in Christ. The Word will also make you a faithful witness. Take Paul's words to Timothy to heart: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Step 3: Prepare your presentation carefully. If possible make the presentation in your own words, using the printed lecture as a guide. If you must read it, practice aloud several times so that you are thoroughly familiar with the material and can read it fluently in your own style. Say it the way *you* would say it. By all means add your own applications and illustrations. This will make

the lecture come alive for your listeners.

If your congregation conducts LifeLight classes in homes throughout the week, consider making an audiotape or videotape of your presentation so that these groups may listen to it after their discussion of the questions. A cassette tape of the lectures may also be purchased from Concordia Publishing House. This may serve either as an additional help to you as you prepare your own presentation or as a substitute for it.

Step 4: Ask someone in your audience to help you by watching and listening for ways in which you might make your presentation more effective. Choose someone who will be a positive and helpful critic.

Step 5: Pray again. Thank God for giving you this opportunity to pass His Word on to others. Ask Him to bless your effort.

Session Plan

Worship

Begin the session with the hymn, devotion, and prayer. The hymn “How Firm a Foundation” is printed in the study leaflet. Note that accompaniment for the hymn can be found on the music CD that accompanies this course. If you plan to use it, find it on the disk and cue it up for easy use.

Devotion

Note to the leader: Each of the nine consecutive devotions in this course will be drawn from a text taken from one of the nine consecutive divisions of the Bible: (1) the Pentateuch (the Five Books of Moses); (2) the Old Testament Historical Books; (3) the Poetical Books; (4) the Major Prophets; (5) the Minor Prophets; (6) the Gospels; (7) Acts; (8) the Epistles (New Testament Letters); and (9) the Revelation. These divisions will be discussed in the second session. Explain this briefly to your group. Your goal is to help everyone get acquainted with the various parts of Scripture and with the major styles of writing (genres) included in the Bible.

As you begin, read Deuteronomy 31:6: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; He will

never leave you nor forsake you.”

These words are taken from one of the closing chapters of the last of the five books of Moses. For 40 years, Moses had led God’s people, the Israelites. He had served as their guide, their pastor, their judge, as God’s prophet, and as their friend. Together they had traveled from Egypt where they had lived as slaves and had now come to the brink of the land God had promised them. They were encamped on the Jordan River; across the river was the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey.

But across the river there would also be hard work. And there were enemies, who would try to destroy the Israelites. More than that, Moses had told them he would not cross the Jordan with them. The days of his earthly pilgrimage were fast drawing to a close. So the people needed to hear these words of encouragement: “Be strong and courageous. . . . For the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Like the Israelites, we are also on a journey to our Promised Land. Through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are assured that a glorious home in heaven lies ahead for us. Even so, we might feel afraid. Everyday life now is often difficult and discouraging. We think of the condition the world is in. We think, too, of the spiritual enemies we face—the devil, the world system of values and ideas contrary to God’s Word, and our own sinful nature. These daily conspire to lead us astray, to destroy us.

So we, too, need God’s encouragement. We find that in one place only—in God’s Word. There our Lord assures us of His forgiveness, comfort, love, and peace. There we hear our Savior’s own promise, “I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20). Built up in that confidence we need never lose heart. And we can have the joy of encouraging one another, “Be strong and courageous!”

Prayer

Jesus, still lead on

Till our rest be won;

And although the way be cheerless,

We will follow calm and fearless.

Guide us by Your hand

To our fatherland. Amen.

trans. Jane L. Borthwick

Lecture Presentation

The CD-ROM that accompanies this course has an outline of each lecture. You may want to display it if your computer equipment will allow. Or develop your own PowerPoint presentation. Note that the “Time Chart for the Writing of the Bible” that appears at the end of this lecture can also be found on the CD-ROM. You may wish to display it at the appropriate place in the lecture. For a “low-tech” approach, consider copying the outline each week on a chalkboard, overhead transparency, a sheet of newsprint, or some other place where your audience can see it. Point to each division of the outline as you come to it in the lecture presentation.

Introduction

“To know the contents of the Bible,” someone once wisely observed, “is far more important than to know things about the Bible.” How true that is! Yet, it is also true that knowing a few things about the Bible can help us better understand the Bible itself. As that same writer quickly added, “Nevertheless, a knowledge of the history and make-up of the Bible will be an inducement to Christians to read the Bible with greater absorption and will help them to study its contents with more purpose.”

This is the goal of our nine-week LifeLight study of the Bible. We want to come to a deeper appreciation of what makes the Bible so special and to grow in our ability to read and correctly interpret it. To this end may God bless us!

1 One Book, Yet Many

The word *Bible* comes from the Greek word *biblos*, which means “book.” This book is *the* Book above all others, simply because it is *God’s* Book.

The expression “thus says the Lord” or its equivalent occurs more than 2,000 times in the Bible. Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of our Christian faith, often equated the written Scripture with God’s Word. Referring to an Old Testament text, for instance, He declared, “Have you not read what God said to you?” (Matthew 22:31). It contains the Good News of salvation in Christ, the Gospel, which is “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). Indeed, Christ Himself—His person and His work for our salvation—is the central message of the Bible. “Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets,” the resurrected Lord “explained to [His disciples] what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27).

As God’s Word, the Bible is unique, one of a kind. In many different ways it sets itself apart. For one thing, it is unique in its composition. The Bible, also known as *Scripture* or the *Scriptures* (Latin for *writing*), was not written in a day. Nor was it penned in a month, or even a year. Scripture was written over a period of some 1,500 years, from about 1400 B.C. to A.D. 100. It is easy to understand this when we recognize that the Bible is really not just one book. Although we think of it as one volume, actually it is a collection, or library, of 66 separate volumes.

Some of these books are quite long, others are very short. For instance, the Psalms cover about 70 pages in a typical Bible, while Philemon takes up only one. The 66 books are divided into two groups: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament includes the 39 books that were written before Christ came into the world. The 27 New Testament books were written after His ascension into heaven.

The entire Bible, Old and New Testaments, comes to us as God’s gift. Because of our sin, we are spiritually blind. We could not know God, we would not know God unless He had chosen to come to us, to reveal Himself to us. He has done this in His Son! And He has done it in the written Scriptures. “All Scripture is