How to Use this Leader’s Guide

Every group meeting is an improvisation. No matter how much you prepare, there’s always a chance that someone will ask a question you can’t answer, or that the discussion will go in an unforeseen direction. Maybe someone in the group has a crucial need you have to address. Maybe the Spirit gives you a new understanding of how a biblical teaching applies to the lives in your group.

This Leader’s Guide is a tool that helps you unpack a text. But it can be more than that. We’re giving you a document full of possibility.

If you’re new to group leading, you can simply follow along step by step. Remember that your job is to ask questions, not necessarily to give all the answers. It’s okay to let silence stretch its arms as your group thinks through the discussion. As you honor participant’s answers—even the half-baked ones—they’ll be encouraged to participate even more. Some of those answers may get fully baked in the group oven.

If you’re accustomed to doing your own thing, go for it! This guide provides ideas to help you do your job even better. Whether you’re a novice or a veteran, read through each lesson in advance. Know your options. Plan out those parts you’re likely to use. Develop a game plan.

We’ve provided handouts to use with each lesson. You’ll need to make enough copies for your entire group beforehand so participants can make notes along the way and remember the Scripture used in the Bible study. The handouts also include activities for further study during the week.

With that in mind, let’s preview the guide. The main body of the Leader’s Guide is written as a conversation you would have with your group. When there’s a specific question to ask, it appears in bold type. When we want to whisper directions in your ear, we’ll get your attention with Leader: then use italic type. (If you’re looking for a quick answer, the suggested answer sometimes appears in parentheses after the question or in an italicized list.) But many of the questions are open for discussion, so they have no suggested answers in parentheses. Instead, the paragraphs that follow after might include thoughts you could add to the discussion.

Each lesson has particular sections:

OPEN

This is an icebreaker. Adjust it to the character of your group, but don’t skip it, for several reasons. (1) Every group needs some transition time. (2) The people get to know each other. (3) The introductory questions draw out practical connections between the subject matter and their lives.

VIEW

Now it’s time to watch the video. Make sure to set the audio at a comfortable level before beginning the session and everyone can see the screen. You don’t want your group to miss anything.

REVIEW

People can forget what they see unless they review it right away. The discussion questions in this section help your group remember what they just viewed from the teaching and real-life stories. But other questions try to connect the video to their emotions or experience. How did you feel when he said that? Is that true in your life? Do you have the same issue?

You, as the leader, will set the tone. If you offer a comment that’s authentic, vulnerable, or a bit challenging, then others will feel that they have permission to do the same—and you will have meaningful discussion and growth.

BIBLE EXPLORATION

This is a Bible study, so each session is grounded in Scripture. Within your group, you may find different levels of faith. This is a time to open up the Bible and help them grow in their faith.

LAST WORD

This is an opportunity for your group to be challenged to do something with what they’ve learned. This section will direct the group to reflect on how they live out their faith in their daily lives.

DEEPER WALK

These are suggestions for individuals to do, read and reflect on their own during the week for further study. Encourage your group to dive deeper, but don’t demand it.