

Bible Studies

Prayerfully Prepare

If you have a desire to lead a Bible study, consider this desire to be a gift from God. "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps. 37:4). God never gives you a desire to do a task for Him without providing all you need to accomplish it. Your most important qualification for this role is a sense of dependence on the Lord for His perfect provisions.

Lorne Sanny said, "Prayer is the battle; witnessing is taking the spoils." It's just as true to say, "Prayer is the battle; leading a small group is taking the spoils." You lead with more confidence if you have prayed until you are trusting God to do His work in the class. Through prayer you gain sensitivity to the Holy Spirit so you can allow Him to guide the discussion according to the needs of the group.

If the truths you share have only reached your intellect, they will likely only reach the intellect of those in your group. But if the truths have reached your heart and changed your life, then there is a great chance they will reach their hearts and be life changing for them too.

Rely upon the Lord to be the teacher, because the Spirit must teach spiritual truths. Isaiah 55:10 promises that the Word will be "seed to the sower, and bread to the eater" (KJV). Your role is simply to sow the seed. As you do, God promises to provide the miracle of turning it into bread for those who receive it. Before every group meeting, ask God to provide spiritual bread for each one coming.

Lead with Confidence

Be willing to share how God has worked in your life. Paul asked that his listeners follow him as he followed Christ. "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice" (Phil. 4:9). As you allow the group members to see how you follow Christ, you not only show them how to follow Him but also provide the motivation. Many times Christians know what they must do to follow Christ but simply need the leadership of one who is wholeheartedly committed to obedience. Be that person for those in your group.

Keeping the Bible study open and friendly is imperative. Your own attitude is a key factor in the group's enthusiasm. Develop a genuine interest in each person's remarks, and expect to learn from them. Concentrate on developing acceptance and compassion in the group.

Don't be afraid of silence after asking a question. Give everyone time to think. Use "What do you think?" questions. These can help keep the discussion from seeming pressured or unnatural, since there is no such thing as a wrong answer to such a question.

Remember that your goal is not simply to lead an interesting discussion but also to help your group understand and apply God's Word so it becomes life to them. "These are not idle words for you; they are your life" (Deut. 32:27).

Occasionally suggest, "Next week, let's bring to class the verses that have especially ministered to us." Usually a verse becomes special when it meets a personal need, so class members will often share their needs as well. Studying Scripture develops bonds of true friendship.

Practical Tips

When selecting your study book, consider the women who will be attending. Some books present the plan of salvation, while others assume the readers are Christians. After the book is selected, however, welcome all that wish to join you.

Unless you are meeting as a Sunday School class or other regularly scheduled meeting at church, the ideal setting is often the home of a hospitable woman. Trust the Lord for details regarding time of meeting and place for weekly classes. Perhaps you could meet once when everyone can come and then determine the details.

If you, as the leader, come early, you do more than set a good example. You also communicate your enthusiasm and delight in the group.

Begin on time, even if not all members are present. Be sure chairs are set up so latecomers can easily join you. Don't ignore latecomers, but don't let them disrupt the session. Greet them warmly, then return to the study.

If you decide to include refreshments, a sheet can be available at the first meeting inviting those to sign up who would like to provide refreshments.

Begin with prayer. Prayer is more than a transition from small talk to Bible study. You are providing the class with a consciousness that they are in God's presence.

Give time for prayer requests either before the opening or closing prayer. If someone has a special need, ask for volunteers who will spend 5 or 10 minutes during the next week in prayer for that person. Twelve segments of five minutes of prayer make an hour of prayer! Perhaps at times you will want to send around a sheet of paper with the prayer request written down and ask them to write down how many minutes they will pray. This will help the members feel that they have indeed committed themselves to prayer.

You may want to begin each session by reviewing memorized Scripture. Encourage them to write down either the suggested verse or a passage that challenges or encourages them and reflect on it during the coming week. They will find it beginning to affect motives and action. We forget quickly what we read once, but remember what we ponder and act upon.

Keeping in contact between weekly meetings is important. Make their burdens your own, and let them know that you are praying for them. When they are absent, call to tell them you missed them, but don't pressure them to attend.

Types of Bible Studies

There are several types of Bible Study groups. Each has its unique ministry opportunities and goals.

1. Neighborhood Bible Class is largely comprised of unsaved people. This type of class is evangelistic. The members come from various backgrounds, denominations, and some may not be active in any church. They have the common need of knowing Christ. It is good to limit the number of mature Christians attending this class. A ratio of six to eight non-Christians to two or three Christians works well. Too many mature Christians tend to stifle the openness and participation of the group. Members of this group discover the power of God's Word to change their lives. provide an opportunity to reach working women not attending a church. These groups offer an alternative to evening Bible Study for working women.
2. Bible Class for New Christians helps new believers to discover the riches and challenges of God's Word. They learn that the Bible is the source for Christian growth and development. They begin to see the need for holy living.
3. Bible Studies for Working Women meet regularly during lunch. These may be "brown bag" lunches in a conference room or held in a meeting room of a restaurant. These Bible studies provide an opportunity to reach working women not attending a church. These groups offer an alternative to evening Bible Study for working women.
4. In-depth Bible Studies are designed for those needing the challenge of a deeper study of the Word. These groups will explore the cultural setting for the first hearers and study word origins and evolution to understand the impact the Word had for the first audience.
5. Talk-it-Over is an alternative to the lecture-type Bible study. Its main purpose to providing a solid Bible study with active discussion involving the entire group with the emphasis on relating the lesson to everyday life.

Procedural Suggestions

1. Provide comfortable seating. Circles work well since they allow everyone to see other members of the group.
2. Tables provide advantages for note taking. Arrange them to allow visibility for the entire group.
3. Unless the groups are structured, leave extra seats by the door so late arrivals can join with little disruption.

4. Encourage everyone to bring a Bible. Provide extra Bibles for those who forgot or do not own a Bible.
5. Assign reading prior to beginning the study. This avoids embarrassing or intimidating adults who do not read well or are uncomfortable speaking in a group.
6. Begin with group conversation, allowing time to share the events of the week and prayer concerns.
7. Make newcomers feel comfortable. Take time for the group to become acquainted with new people.
8. Maintain a list of the members' names, addresses, and phone numbers.
9. Provide time for the group to pray together.
10. Include praise in each session. This may be a song, testimonies, and response to a question such as "What was one positive experience for you this week?"
11. Stress the confidentiality of the group. This insures a safe place to break down walls and remove masks. "What's said here, stays here!"
12. Allow individuals to choose to or not participate. Be aware of individuals who tend to dominate the discussions. Addressing questions to specific persons may help to draw others into the discussion.
13. Give opportunity for members to tell how the lesson related to them, something new, and how they can apply the lesson to their lives.

Scripture Memorization

Memorizing scriptures should be part of every Christian's life. However, it is more frequently stressed with children than adults. When God's Word is part of our hearts and mind, it becomes alive and active. It is always present to guide actions and reactions.

Memorizing scriptures as adults may require a greater investment of time than it did as children. It is, however, an attainable and necessary life goal. Here are some tips for assisting in the memorization process.

1. Have a definite daily time for study:
 - While applying makeup or drying and curling your hair
 - Print the verse on cards and place them over the sink to study while doing dishes or preparing meals
 - Study and recite verses while ironing
 - Carry cards to use while exercising or while waiting
2. Note the key words and their position in the sentences.
3. Learn what triggers your recall of Scripture - key words? first word? situation?
4. For some, visualizing the position on the page helps trigger recall.
5. Memorize scriptures from the version of the Bible most comfortable for you. Understanding the passage makes memorizing much easier. Memorization confronts us with God's Word. It must be understood and applied to life to retain the meaning.

6. Form a system of review to maintain the knowledge of previous work. Review the verses memorized regularly.

Prayer Groups

Guarding the Flock

To ensure that every member of the local church is prayed for by name, prepare a list of the church members' names. Date each list so that there is a list for every day of the month. Find those who are willing to take a list and commit to pray for every member out loud by name on the designated day. Also suggest specific scriptures to be prayed so all can pray effectively. Scripture suggestions include:

"Strengthen and protect him (her) from the evil one....Direct his (her) heart into God's love and Christ's perseverance" (2 Thess. 3:3, 5). "Ransom him (her) unharmed from the battle waged against him (her)" (Ps. 55:18). "Supply all his (her) needs according to your riches in glory through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). "Make all grace abound to him (her), so that in all things at all times, having all that he (she) needs, he (she) will abound in every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8).

Pastors are under severe attack from the enemy and need intercessory prayer. Each pastor needs someone who will "pay the price" for their success. The excellent book *The Prayer Shield* by C. Peter Wagner will help in the recruitment of intercessors for spiritual leaders.

Corporate Prayer

Corporate prayer is the prayer of a group meeting together or scattered about. It is a focused prayer by a number of people interceding in line with the heart of God. In earlier days the Wednesday night prayer meetings served as a corporate prayer time.

Sample Guidelines for Corporate Prayer include:

1. Be sensitive to pray under the Spirit's guidance.
2. Pray the promises of Scripture.
3. Be listening, affirming, and agreeing with the one praying.

Neighborhood Houses of Prayer (NHOP)

Concerned Christians are taking back their "lost" neighborhoods as Christian neighbors meet together weekly to invite the presence of Jesus into their neighborhoods. They are intent on showing God's love to hurting households up and down neighborhood streets.

Christ does not merely bless individuals in areas; He blesses whole areas of people--households, neighborhoods, and communities!

Each meeting contains four parts:

1. With-ness--Fellowship limited to about ten minutes so priority can be given to prayer
2. Worship--Singing, Scripture reading, and prayers of praise
3. Wonder-working--Prayer for specific needs of the neighborhood. Larger groups may subdivide into clusters of three or four.
4. Witness--Discuss deeds of kindness you should show. Set goals.

You are invited to join this movement. Write NHOP, PO Box 141312, Grand Rapids, MI 49514, or call 1-800-217-5200.

Prayerwalking

Prayerwalking is called "praying on site with insight." It can be done alone, as families, in small groups, or large groups. Sites can include workplaces, neighborhoods, sites of consecrated use, overlook points, sites of past sin, sites of ongoing sin in the community. Prayerwalking helps us agree in prayer and focus our faith.

Prayer Vigils

Prayer vigils are organized to focus intense prayer on a particular situation to win a breakthrough. They can be scheduled to last a few hours, all night, all day, or for several days. Vigils can be more effective if coupled with a time of fasting. It is important to publish the results of the vigil and celebrate answers. A schedule for an all night vigil might include worship, prayer for specific needs, teaching, testimonies, quiet individual prayer and reflection, and a prayerwalk.

Prayer Triplets

A prayer triplet is a group of three Christians committed to praying together regularly for the lost. Each chooses three non-Christians for whom all will pray to find Jesus as Savior. They can also select a country or people group where they know missionaries.

1. Pray once a week for fifteen minutes. Don't spend time chatting or eating. It is not a social gathering with prayer at the end, but a deep, disciplined time to pray for those needing Jesus.
2. Decide in advance how many months you will promise to pray together. Renew your commitment at the end of that time.
3. Select a chairperson to keep track of who is praying in triplets, and report all victories to the chairperson.

Moms In Touch

The purpose of Moms In Touch is to intercede for our children, and to pray that our schools will be guided by biblical values and high moral standards. The founder, Fern

Nichols, says, "Our desire is for God to raise up moms to intercede for every school across the U.S. and around the world."

To begin, pray for other moms to join you. Order a Moms In Touch book by writing to Moms In Touch, PO Box 1120, Poway, CA 92074-1120 or call 619/486-4065. It is important to be in contact with the national headquarters, so if others in your city want to be a part of Moms In Touch, the headquarters can tell them of your group.

Commit one hour each week to Moms In Touch.

More and more churches are encouraging fasting, One prayer coordinator has as one of her prayer goals to have someone in the congregation fasting each day of the month for the church.

Fasting & Prayer--a call to repentance, prayer and fasting by Campus Crusade for Christ and other organizations is seeking revival for our nation. To participate in this annual event, contact Campus Crusade, 100 Sunport Lane, Orlando, FL 32809. The three-day annual event in November is both attended by thousands and viewed on satellite by additional thousands.

Resources on Prayer

Books

Partners in Prayer, John Maxwell, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1996

Prayer Shield, C. Peter Wagner, Regal Books, Ventura, CA 93006, 1992. Also available is his video series titled "Warfare Prayer."

Breaking Strongholds, Tom White, Servant Publications, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1993.

A Study Guide for Evangelism Praying, Evelyn Christenson, produced for the use of AD 2000 International Women's Track by Modern Press, New Brighton, MI 55112.

The Coming Revival, Bill Bright New Life Publications, A Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, 100 Sunport Lane, Orlando, Florida, 1995.

Resources for Bible Studies

Experiencing God, Blackaby & Claude V. King., Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1994. Workbooks and videos are available.

The Satisfied Heart Topical Bible Study Series: *Simply Trusting, Boldly Asking, Joyfully Following, and Quietly Resting*, Aletha Hinthorn, Beacon Hill Press, Kansas City, Missouri, 1996.

A Study Guide for Evangelism Praying, Evelyn Christenson, produced for the use of AD 2000 International Women's Track by Modern Press, New Brighton, MI 55112.

Wisdom of the Word, Jeanne McCullough, 6789 Northwest 39th Expressway, Bethany, OK 73008 (405/789-5812 extension 237)