

# HOW-TO LEAD A BIBLE STUDY

Serving Your Group with Purpose



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# HOW-TO LEAD A BIBLE STUDY

Serving Your Group with Purpose

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How-To Lead a Bible Study

# Bible Study Vision and Goals

**GOAL**

To understand the vision and goals for leading a FOCUS Bible study.

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# BIBLE STUDY VISION AND GOALS

## Goal

To understand the vision and goals for leading a FOCUS Bible study.

## Optional Lectio

Before we get started, take some time to pray over a Scripture passage about God's word.

- **First**, read Psalm 1:1–6.
- **Second**, reflect on the words that caught your attention.
- **Third**, pray from your heart and respond to what Jesus is saying to you.
- **Fourth**, rest in what God has told you and in His presence.

**Discussion Questions** *(These are sample questions; feel free to develop your own.)*

1. What jumped out at you as you read Psalm 1:1–6?
2. What are the effects on the man who meditates on the law (God's word) day and night?
3. How do we become like this man?
4. How do we help others be like this man?

### **Vision for Leading Small-Group Studies**

Imagine you're on a college campus without FOCUS, and you want to create a new campus outreach program to reach as many college students as possible. Would you make small-group Bible studies a part of this new outreach program? Why or why not? It's an important question to ponder. Often you don't realize the importance of something until you imagine not having it at all.

There are many reasons why small-group studies are important. Jesus Himself kept a small group of men around Him during His ministry. Though he had many disciples, Jesus specifically chose these 12 to entrust with His teachings and, in fact, His very life.

Psychologists and researchers have observed that there is distinct change in the nature of communication based upon a group's size. Within larger groups, people tend to broadcast their views, with louder and more opinionated people tending to dominate the conversation. Within small groups of ten or less, people tend to engage in face-to-face conversations. They feel more comfortable expressing their viewpoints and engaging in dialogue. Small groups allow relationships to grow through direct contact and personal interaction.

Ultimately, it is through relationships that real, life-changing events can happen. In the company of friends, people are much more likely to open up and to share what is going on in their lives—difficult situations, struggles with sin, life victories, spiritual realizations, etc. Friends feel more comfortable challenging one another and keeping each other accountable to the goals they set out to accomplish. In essence, we share our lives through relationships, and this sharing provides the support we need to become better Christians who can change the world.

### **The Three Goals of a Bible Study**

Lots of things can be accomplished within a small group, but as the leader, concentrate on three specific goals: deep transformation, intimate fellowship, and spiritual multiplication.

*Deep transformation:* Through interaction with God's word and one another, the lives of your Bible study members can be profoundly changed. The purpose of a Bible study is not simply to learn information or be a part of a club, but to allow the Lord to transform our lives. We want students, through the Scriptures, to be drawn more intimately to our Lord in the sacraments and liturgy of the Church where they can most fully receive the gift of God's grace in their lives.

*Intimate fellowship:* If people are going to be deeply transformed, they will need others along the way—not only to help their transformation now but to make sure they continue this transformation in the future. Your goal as a leader is to take a group of people with various backgrounds and personalities and help them form authentic relationships with one another.



*Spiritual multiplication:* Another important dynamic of small groups is their ability to be reproduced. As you lead, pray that the Lord will raise up members of your small group to go on to witness to others and to lead Bible studies of their own.

What other indicators can help someone determine whether their study is thriving?

**Discussion Questions** *(These are sample questions; feel free to develop your own.)*

1. Has a small group (a Bible study, close group of friends, tightknit sports team, etc.) changed your life? If so, how?
2. What are some ways to ensure that Bible study members continue to experience deep transformation?
3. What can a leader do to encourage intimate fellowship in a Bible study?
4. How does your goal of spiritual multiplication within your Bible study change the way you lead?

## **Summary**

During this time, you should have:

- Read and prayed through Psalm 1:1–6.
- Reviewed the *Vision for Leading Small-Group Studies*.
- Reviewed *The Three Goals of a Bible Study*.

## **Conclusion**

Knowing the vision and goals for your Bible study is important both for developing it in the beginning and for checking in as you go along. Return to these concepts as you evaluate what the Lord is asking you to do with your group.







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How-To Lead a Bible Study

# Making Invitations to Your Bible Study

**GOAL**

To learn how to invite people to your Bible study.

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# MAKING INVITATIONS TO YOUR BIBLE STUDY

## Goal

To learn how to invite people to your Bible study.

## Optional Lectio

Before we get started, take some time to pray over a Scripture passage about God's word.

- **First**, read Romans 10:11–17.
- **Second**, reflect on the words that caught your attention.
- **Third**, pray from your heart and respond to what Jesus is saying to you.
- **Fourth**, rest in what God has told you and in His presence.

**Discussion Questions** (*These are sample questions; feel free to develop your own.*)

1. What jumped out at you as you read Romans 10:11–17?
2. In light of this passage, what is necessary for God’s word to be heard by others?
3. What prevents you from making invitations?

### **Vision for Making Invitations**

Before we answer that last question, let’s think a little bit about why students come to (and stay in) Bible studies in the first place.

There are lots of reasons, but let’s look at three:

- *Friendship*  
I like friends. You like friends. Students like friends. A Bible study is a great place to start or grow friendships, and students are drawn to that—plus they don’t want to miss out on something that the rest of their friends are doing.
- *Knowledge*  
You have something they don’t know. Many students on campus know that they don’t know their faith very well, and they have questions. Maybe they were challenged by someone. Maybe something in their class made them doubt their faith. Maybe they have a great relationship with Jesus but want to learn more. Bible study is a concrete way for them to move forward and gain understanding.

- *Growth/Life Change*

In a secular culture, people realize that they need likeminded friends to help them live out the Faith. They are also looking to the missionary or student leader as a spiritual guide that they need in their life.

Whether your students are well aware of these reasons or have no idea that they apply, these goals are key reasons why many people join a study—and why they stay.

*Discussion Question:* Have you been in a Bible study before? Why did you come to or stay in the study? Have you led a Bible study before? What caused people in your group to stay or leave your study?

## **Four Steps to Growing a Bible Study**

It's obvious that you need people for your study, but sometimes attracting members can be more difficult than you think. Here are four steps to getting people to join your study.

### *1. Start and build relationships*

#### ***Here are a couple of tips:***

- Learn to ask great questions

On campus, people are constantly meeting others. They get lots of bland questions and rarely have quality conversations. In your interactions, try to go beyond bland questions and get to the heart of others' lives. For example, use questions that ask why: Instead of asking, "What's your major?," try, "Why did you choose your major?"



- Think about utilizing affinity groups.

An affinity group includes people with a common interest: They could share the same major, sport, club, dorm—you get the idea. Often it is easier to invite people with similar interests into a Bible study; that way, the study becomes an extension of their friendships, rather than something completely new or foreign.

## *2. Keep track of contacts*

Use your Spiritual Multiplication Depth Chart to record and pray for the new and meaningful contacts that you have met. (If you aren't familiar with the Depth Chart, check it out at [focusequip.org](http://focusequip.org).)

## *3. Face-to-face invitations*

As you make contacts and develop relationships, eventually you will need to invite people into your Bible study. It can be easy to shoot someone a text message or email, but it is definitely worthwhile to meet with them in person to explain why they should join your study. Face-to-face invitations greatly increase the number of people who join your study and deepens their commitment to it.

When you meet with potential study members, consider sharing your testimony and telling them why you are leading a Bible study. From the friendship that you have developed, try to talk about why they might enjoy the study in terms they are familiar with. Use plain language instead of Catholic or FOCUS jargon.

#### 4. *Schedule a time and place to meet*

Use a tool like Doodle to coordinate when you will meet. Doodle allows people to mark the times they are available so you can easily see when the majority people can meet. It beats asking everyone individually, over and over, until you find a time that works.

### **Practice**

Invitations can be hard to make, so try practicing first with a friend. A few practice attempts will boost your confidence and help you make better invitations.

### **Summary**

During this time, you should have:

- Read and prayed through Romans 10:11–17.
- Reviewed *The Vision for Making Invitations*.
- Reviewed *The Four Steps to Growing a Bible Study*.

### **Conclusion**

Almost every conversion story involves an invitation. Romans 10:11–17 is so true: People cannot hear the good news unless they are invited. Work on developing not only the skill for invitations but the heart to make them as well. Good luck!







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How-To Lead a Bible Study

# Your First Bible Study and Beyond

GOAL

To help you prepare for your first Bible study through planning, hospitality, and choosing the right Bible study materials.

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# YOUR FIRST BIBLE STUDY AND BEYOND

## Goal

To help you prepare for your first Bible study through planning, hospitality, and choosing the right Bible study materials.

## Optional Lectio

Before we get started, take some time to pray over a Scripture passage about God's word.

- **First**, read John 1:1–5, 14–18.
- **Second**, reflect on the words that caught your attention.
- **Third**, pray from your heart and respond to what Jesus is saying to you.
- **Fourth**, rest in what God has told you and in His presence.

**Discussion Questions** *(These are sample questions; feel free to develop your own.)*

1. What jumped out at you as you read John 1:1–5, 14–18?
2. What do you think about Jesus’ being called “the Word”?
3. Why is it significant that this Word became flesh?
4. Through Bible studies, how can you practice incarnational evangelization?

### **Vision for Hospitality**

As you plan your first Bible study, several questions might cross your mind: Who is going to come? Will they like the Bible study? Will they like me? What will we do? How should I prepare? This short guide to your first Bible study will give you a jump start in planning your first study. It can also serve as a great refresher for those who have already led a study.

*Discussion Question:* What is the best party you have ever been to? What made it so great?

Parties are great, but Bible studies are so much more important. They allow us to communicate God’s word to others. It’s so important to make your Bible study hospitable and take the time to create a fantastic environment.

*Consider and discuss these questions together for your Bible study:*

- When will you meet?
- Where will you meet?
- How will you connect people together in your group?
- What food and drinks will you bring?
- What Bible study material will you use?

Don't worry, you don't have to come up with all of the answers on your own. We've provided some suggestions below.

### **When and Where to Meet?**

As the day of your first meeting draws near, set up the right meeting spot for your Bible study—a place that is inviting and comfortable for your group to come each week. Here are some tips to help make this happen:

- Find an accessible and informal location that can be used or reserved each week. Dorm rooms and possibly hall lounges can work well, as long as they are free from distractions and noise (and as long as your roommates approve). Be sure there is enough room for all the members to be comfortable and to see one another.
- Schedule a time when all of your group members can attend. As a rule of thumb, Monday through Thursday nights usually work the best.



- Provide food and refreshments, especially the first few weeks. (What college student doesn't like free food?) It also gives the participants a natural activity as they begin to arrive and chat with one another.
- Bring extra Bibles in case a member doesn't have one.

### **How Will You Connect People Together in Your Group?**

You will want to arrive at the meeting room well in advance (30–40 minutes) of the actual meeting time. That way you can set up the food and drinks, pray for the study, and be available to chat with anyone who might come early.

Once people begin to arrive, use your previously gathered information about each member to connect them to other members of the group. Maybe two people both played the same sport in high school or share the same major. Work on remembering their names and give them a chance to introduce themselves to the group.

Have some discussion starters so that members of your group can get to know one another and begin to build relationships. Relationships are the glue that holds a Bible study together. People can learn information by reading a book; they come to a Bible study to meet new friends and to share their lives with one another. Here are some examples of discussion starters:

- *Best/Worst* (also known as Highs/Lows; Sunrises/Sunsets; Peaks/Valleys, etc.)  
Have each person share their best and worst moment from the past week.

- *Two Truths and a Lie*  
Have each person come up with three statements about his own life: two factual statements and one false statement. For example, “I’ve never seen Star Wars. I’ve visited Taiwan. I’ve ridden an elephant.” The group then tries to guess which statement is false.
  
- *Physical Challenges*  
Who can do the most push-ups? Who can balance a spoon on their nose the longest?
  
- *Additional Questions*
  - What do you do for fun?
  - If you could go out to lunch with any three living people, who would they be?
  - What would be your ideal vacation?
  - What is a good thing happening in your life right now? What makes it good?
  - What quality do you appreciate in a friend?

### **What Bible Study Materials Will You Use?**

During your first study meeting, you will also want to give your group a taste of the material you’ll be using. You might not finish the entire lesson, but try choosing a chapter from FOCUS’ Ignite Series to review. Be sure to prepare all of these elements well in advance of the first meeting, and prep any Bible study material the day before.

As you continue your study, you will spend more and more time on the Bible study material and less on introductions and discussion starters. At the same time, don't stop helping participants grow in their relationships with one another.

### **Sample Bible Study Timeline**

Here's a sample one-hour timeline for the first meeting:

- Have food and drink; let the members connect with one another (8 minutes)
- Introduce yourself, remembering to be personable and real (5 minutes)
- Pray: Do it yourself and keep it short and simple (1 minute)
- Have members introduce themselves (5 minutes)
- Icebreaker (10 minutes)
- Communicate purpose and expectations (5 minutes)
- Go over some Bible study material (25 minutes)
- Close in prayer (1 minute)

### **Practice**

What will your first study look like? Take some time to map out your plan. Share this plan with one another and get feedback.

## **Summary**

During this time, you should have:

- Read and prayed through John 1:1–5, 14–18.
- Reviewed *Vision for Hospitality*.
- Reviewed the answers to the following questions:
  - When will you meet?
  - Where will you meet?
  - How will you connect people together in your group?
  - What food and drinks will you bring?
  - What Bible study material will you use?
- Taken some time to map out a plan for your Bible study.

## **Conclusion**

Being good at hospitality is worth it. It helps you develop relationships and honor those in your study. Take the time to do it right!







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## How-To Lead a Bible Study

# Asking Great Questions and 3 Roles

### GOAL

The goal of this article is for you to know how to facilitate a Bible study well by asking questions and knowing the 3 roles of a facilitator.

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# ASKING GREAT QUESTIONS AND 3 ROLES

## Goal

The goal of this article is for you to know how to facilitate a Bible study well by asking questions and knowing the 3 roles of a facilitator.

## Optional Lectio

Before we get started, take some time to pray over a Scripture passage about God's word.

- **First**, read Matthew 6:25–33.
- **Second**, reflect on the words that caught your attention.
- **Third**, pray from your heart and respond to what Jesus is saying to you.
- **Fourth**, rest in what God has told you and in His presence.



**Discussion Questions** *(These are sample questions; feel free to develop your own.)*

1. What jumped out at you as you read Matthew 6:25–33?
2. In the Gospels, Jesus asks more than 100 questions. Why do you think He uses this method so often?
3. What do you think about the questions He asks here? Did they have an impact on your own life?
4. What are some ways that you can use questions with others?

### **Vision for Asking Great Questions**

Proverbs 20:5 tells us, “The purpose in a man’s mind is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.” One of the best ways to draw out the thoughts of your group is to ask good questions. As a student leader, your goal is to facilitate a conversation with your group. Questions encourage this facilitation because they help the group members respond and interact with each other.

At times, it can be tempting to simply act like a teacher and lecture to your group, but one of the best ways people learn is by discovering the answers for themselves (also known as self-discovery learning). Asking questions allows the members to reflect on the information and retain it in a personal way.

As the leader, try not to simply tell information that could be learned through questioning. For example, someone might ask you, “What do you think this passage is saying?” Turn the question back to the group by asking, “That’s a great question. What do *you* guys think this passage is saying?” While certain topics or situations will call for you to

do some teaching—whether it be clarifying the Church’s teaching on a subject or moving the group through the material—you ultimately want your group to feel like it is *their* study, not your study. Asking good questions will help you achieve that goal.

### **Four Types of Questions**

As you prep your study, you will want to brainstorm what questions to ask. First, identify the goal of the study. FOCUS materials have questions to guide your reflection, but you are free to ask the questions in ways that might be more meaningful for your specific group. Try to avoid rhetorical questions and yes-or-no questions (an example of both: Did John the Baptist baptize people?). You can find more information on how to use FOCUS materials within each study.

Here are some ideas of what questions to ask:

- *Launching Questions*

How do I begin? Launching questions are designed to get the discussion started. It can be something as simple as, “What stood out to you in this chapter?”

- *Observation Questions*

What are the details? These questions help to recall what was read. You might ask: “What story did the author use to open up this chapter?”

- *Understanding Questions*

What does it mean? These types of questions will help the reader understand the ramifications of what they are reading. For instance, “How would you state the theme of this chapter?”

- *Application Questions*

How should I respond? These questions help apply the material to their lives. For instance, “How do you see yourself in the story we just read?”

Guiding the group discussion is like a captivating, well-played volleyball game: As the leader, you serve the ball by asking a good question. Then someone answers, setting the ball up for someone else in the group, who then passes it along to another. When the volley is dead, you serve up another question. The goal is not to simply keep the discussion going but to achieve the goals of deep transformation, intimate fellowship, and spiritual multiplication.

### **Three Roles of a Facilitator**

Guiding your group through a Bible study is an art form, and difficulties may arise. Some people in your group won't participate; others participate too much. Perhaps you have a hard time engaging the members of your study with the material. Here are three roles of a facilitator that will help you lead your Bible study effectively.

### *Cheerleader*

This role is fairly simple: Be excited to lead your study and to encourage your group's participation. Leading a study takes energy, especially when you feel like you're the only one excited about it. If you aren't excited about the material or the group, chances are your members won't be, either. As a cheerleader, show enthusiasm when people participate, especially those who don't normally do so. It will encourage them to engage and participate more.

### *Trail Guide*

If you've ever hiked before, you know how helpful it can be to have a guide who has been on the trail before: They know which way to go, when to stop, and where all the good views are. With your Bible study, you need to be a trail guide—someone who has been through the material before and who knows where to go. You won't be able to lead a good discussion if you haven't studied and applied the materials to your own life.

When looking over the material, ask God to teach you about your own relationship with Jesus. When you are personally involved with the material, two things happen: First, you are more aware of how to apply the materials to someone else's life. Second, your Bible study members will be more open to sharing their own lives when you share yours.

## *Traffic Cop*

Several difficulties can occur during a small group. Perhaps someone in your study rarely participates, or another participates too often. What can you do? As the facilitator, your job is to direct the conversation. Imagine yourself as a traffic cop: At times, you will need to hold off certain traffic, especially if one or two members are dominating the conversation. You can say something like, “We’ve heard from this side of the room; what does this side of the room think about the question?”

At the same time, just like a traffic cop, you can use one hand to “stop” one side of the room and the other to invite someone else to “go.” This allows quieter members the chance to speak up, which can help balance out the group. You may also want to take a more vocal member of the study aside, telling him how much you appreciate his participation and asking if he would be willing to hold off on some of his comments to help you encourage the others to participate more.

If you experience a total lack of participation, try to keep a few things in mind. As the leader, don’t be afraid of silence; people need time to process the question and think about what they will say. If you are always quickly answering your own questions, the group will get used to not having to participate. Feel free to count to 15 or say a slow Hail Mary while you wait for a response. After waiting, ask the question in a different way or make sure everyone understood you.

Also, use discussion starters and time outside of the study to build up the relationships within it. People are more comfortable sharing when they know one another. The skill of effectively leading a conversation does not happen overnight. Continue to work hard, practice, and read up on how you can do a better job.

**Discussion Questions** *(These are sample questions; feel free to develop your own.)*

1. What methods for leading a discussion stood out to you?
2. Why is self-discovery learning so effective? How can a leader promote this type of learning?
3. What fears do you have about leading a Bible study discussion?
4. What can you do to help build your confidence in leading a study?

### **Optional Practice**

Use the “Understanding the Four Types of Questions” worksheet to practice how to write the four types of questions.

### **Summary**

During this time, you should have:

- Read and prayed through Jesus’ words and questions in Matthew 6:25–33.
- Reviewed *Vision for Asking Great Questions*.
- Reviewed *The Four Types of Questions*.
- Reviewed *The Three Roles of a Facilitator*.
- Practiced writing the four types of questions (optional).

## **Conclusion**

We didn't cover every technique or address every difficulty in this short article; you can find more tips in the recommended readings listed below. We also strongly encourage that you attend the Bible study of a FOCUS missionary or an older FOCUS student leader. This will give you some real-life examples to emulate.

## **Recommended Resources**

*A Facilitator's Guide*, by Rich Cleveland

*The Ultimate Road Trip: A Guide to Leading Small Groups*, by CruPress

# UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR TYPES OF QUESTIONS

## #1: LAUNCHING QUESTIONS

### Definition

How do I begin? Launching questions are designed to get the discussion started.

### Example

After reading through this chapter, what stood out to you?

### Your Example

*If you could ask God one question, what would it be?*

### Notes



## #2: OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

### **Definition**

What are the details? These questions help recall what was read.

### **Examples**

What story did the author use to open up this chapter? Who is Jesus speaking to in this parable? What was St. Paul doing when God spoke to him?

### **Your Example**

### **Notes**

### #3: UNDERSTANDING QUESTIONS

#### **Definition**

What does it mean? These types of questions will help the reader understand the ramifications of what they are reading.

#### **Examples**

How would you state the theme of this chapter? What is the relationship between sin and pride?

#### **Your Example**

#### **Notes**

## **Types of Understanding Questions**

- a. Questions of Value – What is the most important aspect of evangelization?
- b. Questions of Feeling – What was your reaction to the story of the son’s disobedience?
- c. Questions of Relationship – What is the relationship between forgiveness and bitterness in the text?
- d. Questions of Identification – Who do you identify with in the Prodigal Son story?
- e. Questions of Example – Can someone give me an example of loving your neighbor?
- f. Questions of Similarities or Opposites – What is the difference between grace and works?
- g. Questions of Summary – Who can sum up this paragraph?
- h. Questions of Definition – How would you define fruitfulness?
- i. Questions of Explanation – Explain what you think is meant by the quote on p. 16.

## #4: APPLICATION QUESTIONS

### Definition

How should I respond in light of this information? These questions help the group apply the material to their lives.

### Examples

How do you see yourself in the story we just read? After going through this chapter, what's one way you want to live out these principles this week?

### Your Example

### Notes



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## **FOCUS Equip**

'FOCUS Equip' is based on Ephesians 4:12 "for the equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ." These materials seek to equip you for lifelong Catholic mission. We would love to hear your feedback at: [focusequip@focus.org](mailto:focusequip@focus.org)



# HOW-TO LEAD A BIBLE STUDY

