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## How-To Lead a Bible Study

# Investment

**GOAL**

To understand how to invest in your small group.

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# INVESTMENT

## 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?

## **Raving Fan**

I recently saw a video of Hungarian soccer fans. As the match ended and their team came over to their section, they exploded with cheering. The fans, almost all of them dressed in the rich red and green of the Hungarian flag, waved flags and banners for their team as they clapped and chanted to show their deep admiration. By the looks of it, you would think that they had just completed an amazing victory or that they won a tournament. In reality, they had just lost a soccer game 4 – 0 and had been knocked out of the tournament they were playing in.

These fans had paid good money on travel, lodging and tickets. They had taken time out of their work schedules and family life to travel across the continent to see the match. They were decked out in the colors of their country and they cheered as loud as they could for the entire match and even afterwards as well. These fans were invested in their team through thick and thin.

As Bible study leaders, we want you to invest in the members of your group. We aren't primarily talking about a financial investment as much as an investment of your time, energy and care for the people who find themselves in your group. The members of your group should know that you'd go to great lengths for them, just like these Hungarian fans did for their team. They should know that you believe in them and are cheering them on.

In this article, we are going to look at several ways you can invest in the members of your Bible study. Specifically, we will cover the following:

- Why people come (and stay) in your Bible study to begin with
- How to start, grow and invest in your Bible study

- How to connect Bible study participants with one another
- How to reinforce truths from your study outside of formal Bible study time

### **Why People Come (and Stay) in Your Bible Study to Begin With**

Let's think a little bit about why people 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. Everyone likes friends. A Bible study is a great place to start or grow friendships, and people 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 people recognize 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 like-minded friends to help them live out the faith. They are also looking for a spiritual guide for their life.

Whether your participants are aware of these reasons or have no idea that they apply, these factors are key reasons why many people

join and stay in a Bible study. Now, how do you become an raving fan of the members in your study? Check out the three ways below.

## **How to Start, Grow and Invest in Your 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. All these tips work for growing your study later on and investing in your Bible study as you go.

### *1. Start and build relationships*

- 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?" Instead of asking, "Where are you from?" try, "What do you like about being where you are from?"
- 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've met. (If you aren't familiar with the Depth Chart, check it out at [focusequip.org](http://focusequip.org).) Get phone numbers

and email addresses to stay in contact. You can also use social media. Keep praying for these people and ask the Lord how you can continue to invest in them outside of your Bible study.

### *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 it 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.

You may need to be persistent. Don't worry if someone can't attend the first gathering or seems too busy to find time for your study. Keep praying for that person. Invite them to attend each week and try to develop a friendship with them outside of Bible study.

### *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.

Also, it often helps to give people a reminder about when study is happening. Try contacting participants the morning of the study or a few hours before, reminding them where you are meeting and what time to be there. It can also be helpful to meet with participants for other events before and after study to encourage attendance. You can ask if someone would like to get dinner together before Bible study or attend a social event afterward.

### *5. 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.

All these steps also work for making invitations to other events outside of Bible study, such as a conference or a mission trip. Don't underestimate the power of a face-to-face invitation!

## **How to Connect Bible Study Participants with One Another**

Remember one of the three goals of a Bible study is authentic friendship. If you help the members of your Bible study become friends, you are much more likely to have people stay in your Bible study and even to bring their friends as well. So, how do you connect people?

Making connections between people many times comes down to asking good questions to learn about the members of your study, remembering the information and then putting two and two together when you are interacting with them. Maybe two people both played the same sport in high school or share the same major.

Also, use some discussion starters so members of your group can get to know one another and begin to build relationships. Here are some examples:

- *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?

## **Reinforce Truths**

As you get to know the members of your study — and as they get to know one another during and outside of formal Bible study time — it is also your job as a leader to reinforce what they have learned. Oftentimes, we separate our lives into different spheres. In *this* part of my life, I have my friends; in *this* part of my life, I have my school work; in this part of my life, I go to Church and Bible study; etc.

When you are investing in the members of your study outside of your formal Bible study time, it is important to show them and discuss with them how the truths you have learned within the study affect their daily lives. Truth has consequences. We don't want our members to simply learn information or to think profound thoughts in our Bible studies; we want them to learn how to take these truths and apply them to how they think about the world and live their lives. As you invest in them, as you get to know them, as you live life with them, take moments to talk about how the truths from your study affect how you live your life and ask them how they are connecting the dots as well. This can make all the difference in having a Bible study that is truly transformative.

## **Conclusion**

Investing in your study is hard work. You don't always see the fruit right away, but it is important to take the chance in investing in those around you and seeing what God can do in their lives during your time with them. Being a Bible study leader can often be a ministry of unrequired love. Don't be afraid to give of yourself!

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

1. What does it look like to be an raving fan of the people in your Bible study? What's one thing you can do to help encourage and support the members of your group?
2. What can you do to invest in your group outside of formal Bible study time?
3. How are you at making invitations into your Bible study? Are there any ways you can improve?

