

# LEAD

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We at Tyndale are honored that your church desires to encourage members to faithfully read through the Bible in 2014! We're especially grateful for small-group leaders like you who will be at the forefront of this ministry effort. We know you'll prayerfully lead your group and watch as God's Word changes lives.

With the support of your pastor and other leaders, please lead by example. Commit to faithfully reading God's Word daily. Then you can lead with confidence. REFLECT is not a curriculum that requires significant preparation, but it does depend on leaders and participants diligently reading the Scriptures. Doing so will open the door for God to lead you and others to discuss the Scriptures in ways that will be spiritually rewarding.

Thanks for your commitment and leadership example with REFLECT small groups. Remember to inspire others to REFLECT on God's Word so it can be reflected in their lives!



**PREPARE**

As you plan each week's discussion, select a passage from that week's reading that you want to focus on. Let everyone know ahead of time what passage you'll be discussing together. You can inform them at the previous meeting or email, call, or text them a few days prior to the meeting.

**OBSERVE**

As you prepare, read the passage you've chosen for the week. Take time to jot down your observations and the connections you make with other passages.

**ASK**

On the participant's Discussion Guide, questions are included to help you and your group get the conversation started. But the best questions will be the ones you come up with yourself. Write down as many questions as you can think of about the passage. You don't have to use them all, but this way you can refer to them and decide whether to pursue them as the discussion progresses.

Each question is like opening a door and inviting others to come in. Some doors will be really inviting; others may not be. But the more doors you open, the more room people have to explore the passage. The more questions you ask, the more you'll figure out which doors your group really wants to walk through.

Here are some different types of questions that can open up a conversation.

**OBSERVATION QUESTIONS**

Group discussion often takes time to warm up. Asking participants about their general impressions and observations is a great place to start. What were their reactions? What did they find confusing? What insights did they have? Did they react strongly to any part of the reading?

These questions don't have right or wrong answers. Rather, they are good to get people talking and thinking about the passage. This practice helps them recall the passage they read, and familiarizes those who didn't read it.

**OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

Continue by asking some open-ended questions that can have many answers; this will allow the participants to explore the passage together. Do you think Jesus really meant "gouge out your eye," or could it mean something else? Why do you think God lengthened the day for the Israelites to win a battle? How would you apply Paul's command to accept believers who are weak in the faith? Be sure to allow everyone to share their opinions, even if you disagree with them. You as the facilitator always have the opportunity to share your own opinions, and participants will pay close attention to your opinions simply because you're leading the discussion. But affirming the voice of each participant will encourage them as individuals; they will also feel more freedom to speak up. That will make for good discussions.

**FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS**

Follow-up questions help the group to think together. When someone offers an observation or shares their opinion, ask questions to clarify what they mean. If the relevance of their comments isn't clear, ask them how they connect them back to the passage or discussion. Or ask them how they would apply what they just said. You could also ask them to explain their ideas further and expand on them. If a passage comes to mind that seems to challenge what they're saying, ask them how they explain that passage in light of what they're saying. The best thing you can do is to be curious; if you are, you'll naturally ask follow-up questions.

**PARTICIPANTS' QUESTIONS**

Encourage participants to ask their own questions about the passage. Give them time to do so. If they know you expect them to have questions, they'll probably start showing up with some. When they do, that means they're spending time on their own asking questions of the Bible. That's a good habit! You'll probably even find they are asking some of the questions you had written down yourself.

When participants do ask questions, they'll probably direct the question at you as the facilitator. But avoid being the first person to give an answer. Instead, redirect the question to the rest of the group. You can do this by saying, "That's a great question—what do the rest of you think?"

# CHALLENGES

## TALKERS

Some people can tend to dominate conversations. For a facilitator, this can be one of the biggest challenges to address. It's important for you to care for the whole group, and to advocate for it. That can be hard. As the facilitator, you'll have to stand up where others can sit back.

One good way to deal with someone who dominates the conversation is to direct questions to specific participants. If you leave a question open to the group, the talker will typically speak up fast. It is important for him or her to be heard as well, but you can affirm others in the group by calling on them specifically to share their thoughts. This will help to even out the conversations and keep it from becoming lopsided.

## SILENCE

Silence is essential to a good discussion. Don't be afraid of it. Silence is an indicator that people are thinking. That is a good thing. When you ask a question, people might need a little time to formulate their thoughts or to reread a passage looking for an answer. As you wait, you can look over your own notes or anticipate your next question, or just look around for someone who might need a little encouragement to speak up. If everyone is just staring back at you, that's probably a bad sign. But it's good feedback. Don't worry. Try rephrasing your question, or just ask, "Does that question make sense?"

## DISAGREEMENTS

Some people love confrontation. Others avoid it like the plague. At some point, participants will probably disagree about something. You might find yourself disagreeing with someone in the group. That's part of being human. That's also one of the benefits of discussion. Hopefully, your group can peacefully disagree. But sometimes disagreements can get pretty lively. What do you do then?

First, love them. Love should guide every interaction. Christ calls us to this as his people. Your group is a great place for people to practice this. Don't miss this opportunity. Beyond that, here are a few ideas for how to disagree in love.

Be direct but kind; if you disagree with someone, tell them, "I disagree with that, and here's why." They'll respect your clear honesty.

Talk directly to the person with whom you disagree; don't try to win others to your side or compete for the consensus of the group. If it turns into that, it will be a power struggle, and the issue, whatever it is, won't matter at all because the focus will be on winning an argument.

Diffuse tension by asking more questions. Be curious; take time to really hear the other person's perspective and understand his or her reasons. Participants are watching you; if you're open to considering another person's view, they will be too. They will also see that disagreeing is acceptable. They want to know that they can have their own ideas and still feel accepted.

Know the difference between essentials and nonessentials of Christian belief. Essentials include things like Christ's divinity, and nonessentials are issues like whether women should pray wearing head coverings. It is okay to have strong opinions about nonessentials, but be flexible about letting others disagree on them. Again, be direct but kind when there's disagreement about essentials. Make it clear that the church affirms only one view, but don't demand adherence; the other person may need time to consider what they've heard and said.

If the disagreement continues for too long, look for a way to get back into the passage. You could say, "This is a good discussion, but let's keep moving in our passage," or "Let's table this discussion, and maybe the passage will shed more light as we go along." This allows people time to cool off and collect their thoughts.

Finally, love them. Love is firm and flexible. Truth and love are equally important, but Paul says, "While knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens the church." So err on the side of love.

**LEARNING**

You don't have to know everything when you start your group, either about the Bible or about facilitating a discussion. Trying to know everything puts a lot of pressure on you. Take it off. Be open to changing and growing in the process. Let the group know that you don't know everything. That's a lot easier than trying to pretend you do.

You'll learn a lot from facilitating a group discussion. It can be challenging. Some weeks the discussion may feel flat, and that will be discouraging. It's also normal. Just get up and try it again. Take time to reflect after each week's discussion. What worked? What didn't? Go back and review the suggestions above as you think it through. Different things might seem more useful after you've had a few meetings with your group.

Discussions can be a lot of fun. The Bible can really come alive as you talk about it. Conversations are new and changing all the time. Give up trying to make them go where you want. You'll enjoy them a lot more. And you'll probably grow a lot more too.

**THE PARTICIPANTS' DISCUSSION GUIDE**

Your group wants to talk about the Bible, not work through a handout. Use the Discussion Guide if it helps propel the discussion forward, but don't feel bound to "complete" it. If the guide is helpful, that's great. If you forget about it after 5 minutes, even better.

On the Discussion Guide, there are a few elements for you to familiarize yourself with: Opening Prayer, Questions, Talking Points, and Reflection.

**OPENING PRAYER: PRAYING THE PSALMS**

As your group gets to know each other, they will become more talkative at the start of each meeting. Sometimes letting them chat for a while will help them to settle in before getting into a guide discussion. Enjoy some casual conversation, and let people talk about their weeks. Then consider how you'd like to open your time together as a group.

There are many ways you could do this. You can read aloud the selected psalm as a prayer to open your time together. You can use the written prompt to pray for some aspect of our world. You can simply ask if anyone has prayer requests, and pray for them. Or you can skip over the prayer and jump right in to the discussion. You'll find what works best. Whatever you do, try to be consistent; the group will learn when to quiet down and focus.

In any case, as the leader, make time to personally pray for your group. Ask God to be present in the hearts of the participants and active in the conversation each week. He promises to be there, and without him no amount of discussion will be of any worth. If nothing else, prayer will help you as the leader to prepare your own heart and to sense God's Spirit as he moves in your group.

**QUESTIONS**

Questions are the centerpiece of the Discussion Guide. They can get your conversation moving. Use the questions on the Discussion Guide where they fit. But be sure to add your own.

**TALKING POINTS**

Talking Points help participants remember what they read over the past week. The Talking Points highlight popular passages and summarize some of the major themes or events they read about.

Talking Points will also give background to participants who didn't finish all the reading that week. With the Talking Points they can get up to speed and contribute meaningfully to the discussion. Participants don't need to finish the week's readings to contribute to the conversation. Talking Points can help.

**REFLECTION**

On page two, participants will find a brief reflection taken from *The One Year Study Bible*. Participants can read this later on their own, or you as the facilitator can incorporate it into the discussion. Do whatever seems to make sense to you for your group.

**BIG QUESTION**

In addition to the Reflection, the Big Question touches on potentially confusing passages from the previous week. These questions address common issues that people raise about God or the Bible. Over the past week's reading, this question may have arisen for some participants; this feature aims to help them understand the issue and hear what the whole Bible has to say about it.

## YOUR FIRST MEETING

At your first meeting, find out why people have joined. Why do they want to read through the Bible in a year?

Take some time to get to know everyone. Even if you know everyone, they might not know each other. Ask some fun questions, such as *What did you eat for breakfast this morning?* or *What was a childhood book you remember reading?* Having small things like this in common can get your group started off on the right foot.

## GETTING THE WORD OUT TO YOUR CHURCH

Pastors everywhere agree that getting more people to read the Bible will greatly benefit the life of the church. Reflect PS119 was created to empower pastors and leaders like you to help people do just that. Thanks for your passion for that, and thanks for giving your time to make it happen.

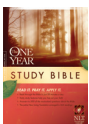
In cooperation with Reflect's year-long reading plan, we've encouraged pastors to do a series of messages at the beginning of the year that focus on the value and importance of reading God's Word regularly. This series, we hope, will motivate more people to read Scripture. We hope this also generates interest in joining your group for a year-long discussion of the Bible.

To help you get the word out about your group, we have provided printable half-page program inserts and large posters. The inserts will give participants a preview of the upcoming readings each week. The posters will let participants know about Reflect.

At the bottom of each poster there is a place to include information about your group. Under "Find Out More," write in the day, location, and time that your group meets. Include information that a new person can use to contact you about joining the group.

The inserts and posters will help get the word out to your church about the discussion group and the Bible reading you're doing. If your pastor is willing to also do a series of messages on the value of Scripture, that will also greatly help people who want to read the Bible to find a like-minded group.

May God bless you as you lead others in your church through his Word!



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