

THE
AMAZING
COLLECTION™

HELPS AND HINTS
FOR
USING THE STUDY

AND

SMALL-GROUP LEADER'S
TRAINING GUIDE



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Creative Team: Kathy Mosier, Pat Reinheimer

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HELPS
AND
HINTS
FOR USING
THE STUDY

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SO WHAT'S THE POINT?

WHY USE *The Amazing Collection*?

The Bible is a library of sixty-six books, each book building on the previous ones; it is truly an Amazing Collection. *The Amazing Collection: The Bible, Book by Book* is a unique collection of Bible studies because you will work through the entire Bible from beginning to end.

It is a creative study that is interesting, informative, and developed with students of all walks of life and levels of spiritual maturity in mind. As you study, you will learn the purpose, theme, history, and spiritual application of each book of the Bible.

Whether studying on your own, in a small group, or as part of a large ministry, you will be pleased with the simple format, excellent teaching, dynamic personal stories, and inspiring music that speaks to everyone.

How will *The Amazing Collection* help you?

- It will cause you to know and understand the big picture of God's Word.
- It will acquaint you with the entire Word of God, not just bits and pieces.
- It will make every other Bible study you do more meaningful.

- It will give you confidence in the truth of God's Word so you won't be deceived.
- It will open your eyes to God's work throughout history and in your life today.
- It will lay a spiritual foundation that will benefit you for life.
- It will equip you to share your faith simply by turning on a DVD and taking part in a discussion of the homework.

The goal of this study is to learn for life about every book in God's Amazing Collection. So let's get started!

IN A CLASS BY YOURSELF

STUDYING ALONE

There is just one student in your class, and you are it. You will have the challenge of pressing on to the end, but you will also have the great advantage of moving from book to book at your own pace.

Here are a few ideas that might be helpful:

- *Choose a definite, set time* and try to keep it sacred. Set aside a time when you are most alert in order to make this appointment with God productive and enriching.
- *Choose a place* that is free from distractions.
- *Write out answers* to both the homework questions and the *Learning for Life* questions so that you can later review what you have learned.
- *Enlist a friend, spouse, or other family member* to hold you accountable.
- *Share what you learn* with someone else. It is a great way to review what you have learned.
- *Pray for perseverance* to enable you to stay the course, retain what you learn, and gain greater knowledge of God and His ways.
- *Enjoy the process* and reward yourself at the end of each set!

MY FRIENDS AND ME

SMALL-GROUP STUDY — UNDER 15

Doing this study as part of a small group is a wonderful way to build friendships while making a difference in lives for time and eternity! Invite your friends, family, neighbors, or coworkers to spend an enjoyable time each week discovering real answers for today's problems.

BEFORE YOU START

- *Pray, pray, pray.* If you lack wisdom, ask! Pray about who to invite, when and where to meet, and that lives will be changed.
- *Choose a time.* Pick a convenient time of day. If possible, allow two hours, such as 9:30–11:30 a.m. or 7:00–9:00 p.m. If you are meeting over a lunch hour, watch the teaching one week and discuss the homework the next week, as each DVD is about forty-five minutes long.
- *Choose a place.* Any quiet place with a DVD player can become a holy place. If possible, sit around a table to provide a place for coffee, workbooks, and Bibles. Tables, however, are not necessary.
- *Choose a study format:*
 - I. *Number of weeks:* You can study just a set:
 - The Pentateuch: 5 weeks

- The Kingdom Books: 7 weeks
- The Post-Exilic Books: 5 weeks
- The Poetical Books: 5 weeks
- The Major Prophets: 5 weeks
- The Early Minor Prophets: 6 weeks
- The Later Minor Prophets: 6 weeks
- The New Testament Historical Books: 5 weeks
- Paul's Letters to the Churches: 9 weeks
- Paul's Letters to Pastors: 4 weeks
- Other Letters and Revelation: 9 weeks

Or you can study the entire Bible:

- 22 books a year for 3 years (see Suggested Three-Year Calendar, pages 27–32)
 - 33 books a year for 2 years
2. *Length of weekly study:* You can meet for:
- 1 hour: 45 minutes DVD; 15 minutes discussion of DVD
 - 1 ½ hours: 15 minutes refreshments; 20 minutes discussion of homework and brief review; 45 minutes DVD; 10 minutes discussion of DVD
 - 2 hours: 15 minutes refreshments; 30 minutes discussion of homework; 15 minutes review; 45 minutes DVD; 15 minutes discussion of DVD
- *Invite friends.* Use phone calls, flyers, or written invitations. (For a sample of a written invitation, see pages 35–36.)

GETTING STARTED

- *Make it a party.* Enjoy a few minutes of fellowship with coffee, tea, and so forth.
- *Distribute the workbooks* and become familiar with them as follows:
 1. *The chronological relationship chart* (found on page 156 in *The Pentateuch*) shows when the books of the Old Testament were written in relation to each other. By looking at this chart, we see that all history was covered in Genesis through Nehemiah. What took place in Exodus followed what happened in Genesis, and so on. The books above or below the historical books were written during the same time period and give additional information. For example, Job was written about the same time as Genesis. Leviticus was written during the time of Exodus and gives more detail of what happened during that time.
 2. *The review cards* can be cut out, laminated, and carried with you to review the main ideas and memory verse of each book.
 3. *The overview* page for each book of the Bible is filled in while watching the videos. An *answer key* is found at the back of each workbook.
 4. Each day's reading is given as a *Complete Read* and as a *Quick Read*. The *Complete Read* is encouraged, but the *Quick Read* is available for those with little time.
 5. *Review questions* are found at the end of each lesson. Answers are found in the *Review It!* section in the margin of each day's homework.
 6. *Learn each day's purpose, such as:*
 - The Big Picture: Why God put that book in the Bible
 - A Prominent Player: Who an important character is and why

- A Notable Feature: Something unique found in that book
- A Timeless Principle: What to apply to your life
- *Watch the DVD.* Watching the DVD before doing the homework gives the students insight to better understand it.
- *Discuss the DVD.* Ask, “What is the most important thing you learned from the teaching?” or use the *Learning for Life* questions in the workbook.

KEEPING IT GOING

Leadership is crucial regardless of the size of the group. It is important for a leader to keep the discussion on track, watch the time, and avoid “rabbit trails.” The leader needs loving authority because the group will stay enthused if all the material is covered and the study finishes on time. (See Small-Group Leader’s Training Guide, pages 37–62.)

Here are some ways to make this happen:

- *Discuss the homework* done the previous week. Encourage everyone to participate. Make sure you are meeting in a quiet place.
- *Encourage* by holding each other accountable to do the homework and persevere.
- *Watch the next DVD* in the series together.
- *Discuss* (as time allows) the most important thing each person learned from the DVD.
- *Pray* for the study and for one another. It bonds a group like nothing else can, but remember that your purpose is to learn from God’s Word; therefore, keep prayer time limited.
- *Close on time.*

THE WHOLE GANG IS HERE!

LARGE-GROUP STUDY — OVER 15

You are a ministry leader at your church or have a large multichurch or community group. A good goal would be that every person in your church or those willing in your community would know about every book in the Bible within the next five years. The following can help make a large study more successful.

BEFORE YOU START

As the class leader, begin by working within the parameters of your church or community as a whole. Speak with your pastor to enlist his or her support. Talk with community leaders.

- *Pray, pray, pray.* If you lack wisdom, ask! Pray for the church or community to embrace the study, for guidance on when and where to meet, and for many changed lives.
- *Choose a time.* Which day of the week is a good fit for your church or community? What time of day is best? If possible, allow two hours, such as 9:30–11:30 a.m. or 7:00–9:00 p.m. Lunch-hour studies are also an option.
- *Choose a place.* A quiet place with a DVD player is needed. If possible, sit around a table to provide a place for coffee, workbooks, and Bibles. Tables, however, are not necessary.

- *Choose a study format.* The format is flexible to fit your calendar:

1. *Number of weeks:* You can study a set:

- The Pentateuch: 5 weeks
- The Kingdom Books: 7 weeks
- The Post-Exilic Books: 5 weeks
- The Poetical Books: 5 weeks
- The Major Prophets: 5 weeks
- The Early Minor Prophets: 6 weeks
- The Later Minor Prophets: 6 weeks
- The New Testament Historical Books: 5 weeks
- Paul's Letters to the Churches: 9 weeks
- Paul's Letters to Pastors: 4 weeks
- Other Letters and Revelation: 9 weeks

Or you can study the entire Bible:

- 22 books a year for 3 years (see Suggested Three-Year Calendar, pages 27–32)
- 33 books a year for 2 years

2. *Length of weekly study:* You can meet for:

- 1 hour: 45 minutes DVD; 15 minutes discussion of DVD
- 1 ½ hours: 15 minutes refreshments; 20 minutes discussion of homework and brief review; 45 minutes DVD; 10 minutes discussion of DVD
- 2 hours: 15 minutes refreshments; 15 minutes review; 30 minutes discussion of homework; 45 minutes DVD; 15 minutes discussion of DVD

Two-Hour Schedule Example:

- 9:30 — Welcome and fellowship
- 9:45 — Review
- 10:00 — Small-group discussion of previous week's homework
- 10:30 — Viewing of next DVD in the series
- 11:15 — Discussion of DVD teaching
- 11:30 — Closing prayer

- *Get the word out.* Promotion is key to participation!
 1. *Budget resources available.* You can invest in printed materials, such as:
 - Newspaper ads or articles (for a sample, see page 33)
 - Posters
 - Fliers
 - Mass mailing
 - Invitations or handouts to invite friends (for a sample, see pages 35–36)
 2. *No budget resources available.* You can be creative using:
 - Prayer
 - Radio— free community events announcements
 - Newspaper— community events section
 - Notices in church handouts
 - Announcements before church
 - Signs
 - Phone calls
 - Invitation cards or letters

3. *Word of mouth* is also a very effective promotional tool.
 - Foster enthusiasm within your church beginning with your pastor.
 - Ask women to bring family, friends, and neighbors.
 - Have a kickoff event to introduce the study and help with promotion.
- *Recruit other helpers.* Whether you are meeting in a church, home, or community building, the more people involved, the better. The following are some positions to consider depending on the need:
 1. *Prayer leaders.* Organize prayer to uphold your study. Meet weekly before the students arrive to pray for them.
 2. *Hospitality chairperson.* Coordinate food volunteers, set up chairs, greet guests, and clean up after the study.
 3. *Child care chairperson.* Arrange for sitters, sign in children, and plan a craft or movie.
 4. *Small-group chairperson.* Discussion groups are best if kept small (8 to 10). Choose, train, and encourage small-group leaders (see *Small-Group Leader's Training Guide*, pages 37–62).
 5. *Small-group leaders.* Serve not necessarily as teachers but as caring discussion facilitators.
 6. *Administrator.* Order and sell workbooks, keep attendance records (if needed), and coordinate name tags.

GETTING STARTED

- *Sit at round tables* if possible to encourage a small-group feel (8 to 10 people at each). After a few weeks together, the participants will become an intimate group. If tables are not an option, gather in small-group circles in the large meeting room or disperse to other small rooms.

The Whole Gang Is Here!

- *Small-group leaders* for each group keep the discussion on track and nurture the participants. It is helpful if each week the small-group leader calls those who have missed a session to keep people from falling away.
- *Distribute the workbooks* and become familiar with them as follows:
 1. *The chronological relationship chart* (found on page 156 in *The Pentateuch*) shows when the books of the Old Testament were written in relation to each other. By looking at this chart, we see that all history was covered in Genesis through Nehemiah. What took place in Exodus followed what happened in Genesis, and so on. The books above or below the historical books were written during the same time period and give additional information. For example, Job was written about the same time as Genesis. Leviticus was written during the time of Exodus and gives more detail of what happened during that time.
 2. *The review cards* can be cut out, laminated, and carried with you to review the main ideas and memory verse of each book.
 3. *The overview page* for each book of the Bible is filled in while watching the videos. An *answer key* is found at the back of each workbook.
 4. Each day's reading is given as a *Complete Read* and as a *Quick Read*. The *Complete Read* is encouraged, but the *Quick Read* is available for those with little time.
 5. *Review questions* are found at the end of each lesson. Answers are found in the *Review It!* section in the margin of each day's homework.
 6. *Learn each day's purpose, such as:*
 - The Big Picture: Why God put that book in the Bible
 - A Prominent Player: Who an important character is and why

- A Notable Feature: Something unique found in that book
- A Timeless Principle: What to apply to your life
- *Watch the DVD.* Watching the DVD before doing the homework gives the students insight to better understand it. (However, we do have groups that do it the opposite way, and it works for them!)
- *Discuss the DVD.* Ask, “What is the most important thing you learned from the teaching?” or use the *Learning for Life* questions in the workbook.

KEEPING IT GOING

Leadership is crucial regardless of the size of the group. It is important for a leader to keep the discussion on track, watch the time, and avoid “rabbit trails.” The leader needs loving authority because the group will stay enthused if all the material is covered and the study finishes on time. (See *Small-Group Leader’s Training Guide*, pages 37–62.)

Here are some ways to make this happen:

- *Discuss the homework* done the previous week. Encourage everyone to participate, but don’t make the homework a burden. Some will not be able to do any homework but need the benefit of the teaching and small-group discussion. Your goal is to encourage each person to put in the time and effort.
- *Watch the next DVD* in the series together.
- *Discuss* (as time allows) the most important thing each person learned from the DVD.
- *Pray* for the study and for one another. It bonds a group like nothing else can, but remember that your purpose is to learn

from God's Word; therefore, prayer time should be limited to group members and their immediate families or areas of influence. Here are some ideas to meet prayer needs while conserving time:

1. *The leader prays* so the length of the prayer time can be controlled.
 2. *Prayer cards* are filled in as students arrive. These can be exchanged so that each person prays and is prayed for that week, or the small-group leader can gather them and pray.
 3. A *prayer list* is passed out in small groups and copied for each attendee.
- *Close on time.*

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- *New students* can join at any time. You might want to have several people prepared to meet with them to bring them up to speed.
- *Offer a new class each year* starting in Genesis. It is also helpful to offer both morning and evening classes.
- *Include teens* if you meet in the evening. Watch the DVD corporately but have a small-group leader for teens.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Round tables or chairs in a circle for cohesiveness in small-group discussion
- Small groups of 8 to 10
- Comfortable, quiet room(s)
- A study book for every attendee

- Enthusiastic discussion leaders to encourage homework participation
- Brief fellowship time
- Review using *Learning for Life* questions in workbook, flashcards, or quizzes
- Discussion as time permits of every DVD teaching

REVIEW, REVIEW, REVIEW

Remember that our goal is to learn for life! The way we learn is through repetition. Therefore, a review at the beginning of each week's study is vital. Each book builds on the one before, so it is extremely important to understand how the books fit together — to get the big picture of God and His plan. To learn for life, don't hesitate to cover the same major themes each week. The following will help with review:

- *Learning for Life* questions in the workbook
- Memory cards
- Chronological relationship chart
- Review questions in workbook
- Fun review quiz competitions in which the first table or small group to finish a review quiz correctly receives a prize, such as candy (Smarties are good!)

For other ideas go to www.theamazingcollection.org.

DREAM BIG!

Whether you are studying on your own, in a small group, or with a large ministry, the goal is the same: to grow in the knowledge of God through His Word. In other words, your goal is to become *theologians* — people well versed in the knowledge of God! *The Amazing Collection* is a great tool to bring that big dream to reality.

God has chosen to reveal Himself to us in a very special way that can only be found in the pages of the Bible. Aim for nothing less than to become very familiar with the theme, purpose, characters, time, geography, and timeless principle of every book. Encourage one another to not grow weary, because the rewards are “amazing” and eternal.

Our big dream is that you will indeed learn for life the purpose of every book in God’s *amazing* Word! If there is any way Big Dream Ministries can be of assistance to you, please don’t hesitate to contact us:

Big Dream Ministries, Inc.
P.O. Box 324
12460 Crabapple Road
Suite 202
Alpharetta, GA 30004
1-678-366-3460
www.theamazingcollection.org

SUGGESTED THREE-YEAR CALENDAR

YEAR ONE

Begin registration four weeks in advance. *Order set one workbooks.*

SEPTEMBER:

Week Two: *Introductory Special Event (optional)* — may include a coffee or brunch, a drama and/or concert, or a speaker. Introduce *The Amazing Collection*; sell workbooks

Week Three: *Genesis (*Indicates new set/workbook)

Week Four: Exodus

OCTOBER: ORDER SET TWO WORKBOOKS.

Week One: Leviticus

Week Two: Numbers

Week Three: Deuteronomy

Week Four: *Joshua

NOVEMBER:

Week One: Judges

Week Two: Ruth

Week Three: *Break for Thanksgiving*

Week Four: I Samuel

DECEMBER: ORDER SET THREE WORKBOOKS.

Week One: *Christmas Tea* — Celebration with refreshments and a concert, worship time, or personal testimony for evangelistic outreach

Break for Christmas holiday

JANUARY:

Week Two: 2 Samuel

Week Three: 1 Kings

Week Four: 2 Kings

FEBRUARY: ORDER SET FOUR WORKBOOKS.

Week One: *1 Chronicles

Week Two: 2 Chronicles

Week Three: Ezra

Week Four: Nehemiah

MARCH:

Week One: Esther

Week Two: *Job

Week Three: Psalms

Week Four: Proverbs

APRIL:

Week One: Ecclesiastes

Week Two: *Spring Break*

Week Three: Song of Solomon

Week Four: Review of first 22 books

MAY:

Week One: *Spring Fling Special Event Luncheon (optional)* — individuals share what the study has meant to them

YEAR TWO

Begin registration four weeks in advance. *Order set five workbooks.*

SEPTEMBER:

- Week Two: *Special Event Brunch or Coffee (optional)* — concert and review of first 22 books
- Week Three: *Isaiah
- Week Four: Jeremiah

OCTOBER: ORDER SET SIX WORKBOOKS.

- Week One: Lamentations
- Week Two: Ezekiel
- Week Three: Daniel
- Week Four: *Hosea

NOVEMBER:

- Week One: Joel
- Week Two: Amos
- Week Three: *Break for Thanksgiving*
- Week Four: Obadiah

DECEMBER: ORDER SET SEVEN WORKBOOKS.

- Week One: *Christmas Tea* — celebration with refreshments and a concert, worship time, or personal testimony for evangelistic outreach
- Break for Christmas holiday*

JANUARY:

- Week Two: Jonah
- Week Three: Micah
- Week Four: *Nahum

FEBRUARY: ORDER SET EIGHT WORKBOOKS.

- Week One: Habakkuk
- Week Two: Zephaniah
- Week Three: Haggai
- Week Four: Zechariah

MARCH:

- Week One: Malachi
- Week Two: *Matthew
- Week Three: Mark
- Week Four: Luke

APRIL:

- Week One: John
- Week Two: *Spring Break*
- Week Three: Acts
- Week Four: Review of first 44 books

MAY:

- Week One: *Spring Fling Special Event Luncheon (optional)* — individuals share what the study has meant to them

YEAR THREE

Begin registration four weeks in advance. *Order set nine workbooks.*

SEPTEMBER:

Week Two: *Special Event Brunch or Coffee (optional)* — concert and review of first 44 books

Week Three: *Romans

Week Four: I Corinthians

OCTOBER:

Week One: 2 Corinthians

Week Two: Galatians

Week Three: Ephesians

Week Four: Philippians

NOVEMBER:

Week One: Colossians

Week Two: I Thessalonians

Week Three: *Break for Thanksgiving*

Week Four: 2 Thessalonians

DECEMBER: ORDER SET TEN WORKBOOKS.

Week One: *Christmas Tea* — celebration with refreshments and a concert, worship time, or personal testimony for evangelistic outreach

Break for Christmas holiday

JANUARY: ORDER SET ELEVEN WORKBOOKS.

Week Two: *I Timothy

Week Three: 2 Timothy

Week Four: Titus

FEBRUARY:

Week One: Philemon

Week Two: *Hebrews

Week Three: James

Week Four: I Peter

MARCH:

Week One: 2 Peter

Week Two: 1 John

Week Three: 2 John

Week Four: 3 John

APRIL:

Week One: Jude

Week Two: *Spring Break*

Week Three: Revelation

Week Four: Review of all 66 books

MAY:

Week One: *Spring Fling Special Event Luncheon (optional)* — individuals share what the study has meant to them

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE SAMPLE

The Amazing Collection: The Bible, Book by Book is a creative new study for women. Whether you know a lot about the Bible, have a little knowledge of the Bible, or have never opened a Bible, this sequential study will enable you to get the big picture of God and His Word.

Four dynamic teachers, inspiring personal stories, and original music videos bring each book of the Bible to life. The workbook, written for people with busy lives, makes God's Word applicable for today's living. You will understand the purpose, theme, history, and spiritual application of each book.

The study, produced by Big Dream Ministries, Inc., in Alpharetta, Georgia, was formed to help people understand God's character and how His Word is relevant today.

Darlene Marie Wilkinson, author of *The Prayer of Jabez for Women*, says, "*The Amazing Collection*, with its powerful testimonies, inspiring music, and Christ-centered teaching, is a wonderful tool to help women of all ages become better equipped to make a difference in their generation."

Dove Award-winning singer and songwriter Babbie Mason says, "*The Amazing Collection* offers the exciting opportunity for women to find answers to life's deepest questions by discovering Jesus, the Truth incarnate."

INVITATION SAMPLE

You may know a lot about the Bible . . .

Or you may have just a little knowledge of the Bible . . .

Or you may have never opened a Bible.

Please join us for an exciting new study:

The Amazing Collection:

The Bible, Book by Book

This outstanding video series presents a dynamic, sequential overview teaching of each book of the Bible, with personal stories and inspirational music. The workbook was written for busy lives. See how God's Word fits together and applies to your life today.

September 19–May 1 (for a study of 22 books)

(or September 19–October 17 for a study of 5 books)

9:30–11:30 a.m.

XYZ Community Church

Fellowship Hall

121 Main Street

Anytown, USA

We will study Genesis–Song of Solomon

(or We will study The Pentateuch: Genesis–Deuteronomy)

Set 1: The Pentateuch	September 19–October 17
Set 2: The Kingdom Books	October 24–January 23 (with a break for Christmas)
Set 3: The Post-Exilic Books	February 6–March 13
Set 4: The Poetical Books	March 20–May 1

Child care by advanced reservation: (706) 757-0854, ext. 2122

SMALL-GROUP LEADER'S TRAINING GUIDE

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*“Teaching them to observe all that I have
commanded you . . .”*

MATTHEW 28:20

Welcome to the exciting journey of studying God’s Word through *The Amazing Collection*. Thank you for your willingness to lead others to know God’s Word and to obey His commands. God will supply all your needs as you become a vital part of this life-changing study. This guide will help you prepare to lead.

WHO ME? AM I QUALIFIED TO BE A SMALL-GROUP LEADER?

No one is truly qualified to share God's Word. But God is faithful to empower those He has called and those who are available and yielded to Him.

Your success in leading also depends on preparation and training. Part of your preparation should be a time of personal reflection. Please take time to honestly answer the following questions and reflect on the Scripture references. Your answers are for your private evaluation.

- Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior? Do you remember a time when you received Christ and became His child? Has there been a change in your life since that decision? (See John 1:12; 3:1-21; 2 Corinthians 5:17.)
- Scripture cautions that leaders are not to be new converts. Have you taken enough time to grow as a believer? (See 1 Timothy 3:6.)
- Every Christian receives at least one spiritual gift to be used for the common good. Regardless of your gift you can lead as God empowers, but your manner of leading will be different from those with another gift. For example, one with the gift of exhortation will lead by encouraging; one with the gift of prophecy will be motivated to ensure that everyone is right with God. Do you trust God to use your spiritual gift as

you lead? (See Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 12:4-7; I Peter 4:11.)

- Marriage and the family were the first institutions God made. It is clear in His Word that we are to make our family relationships a priority above all else. Is your family in agreement that you should accept the responsibility to lead? (See Ephesians 5:22-24.)
- Taking into account other time commitments you have, are you in a position to devote the time necessary to prepare and lead a discussion group? (See Ephesians 5:15-16.)

Our prayer is that God has confirmed you as an *Amazing Collection* small-group leader. You may want to save this personal evaluation to reassess again at a later time.

Remember, God doesn't choose the qualified but rather those who know they need to depend on Him.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME?

Leading a small group can be one of the most delightful, joyful, and rewarding experiences, but it can also be one of the most challenging. As you lead, the joy of seeing your group grow in their love for God and His Word will keep you motivated; however, proper preparation is vital.

SUBMIT TO JESUS AS LORD

- Confess and turn from any known sin.
- Ask the Lord to fill or empower you with His Holy Spirit and allow Him to work through you (see Ephesians 5:18).
- Be sensitive to His leading and wisdom as you guide your group.

PRAY

- For undistracted time to prepare to lead your small group.
- For God to speak to you personally as you study and grow closer to Him.
- For each member of your group. Contact them regularly to ask for prayer requests and to pray with them for specific needs.

LOVINGLY LEAD

- Complete the daily homework lessons. Reflect on them before leading to have a good understanding of the main themes and questions.
- Faithfully attend the weekly studies.
- Exhibit enthusiasm for the course and for God's Word.
- Encourage group members to complete their homework for their own spiritual growth and to enhance class discussion.
- Keep the focus on God's Word and His work in your lives.
- Guide the discussion using the homework questions. Encourage the class to share biblical truths discovered through their personal study that week.
- Create an atmosphere of love, concern, support, and acceptance.
- Encourage prayer for one another and work to build relationships.

HOW DO I PREPARE TO BE EFFECTIVE?

Leading a group discussion not only requires God's calling and spiritual provision, but it is also a learned skill.

LEARNING TO LEAD

THE GOALS OF AN EFFECTIVE LEADER

(Adapted from "Appendix A: The Effective Discussion Leader: A Worthy Goal," Leader's Guide in *The Amazing Collection* workbooks)

The following is a model for the effective discussion leader (EDL). You may not demonstrate every characteristic listed, nor do you need to. Some of these things you will do very well; others you will do okay; still others may be a weak area for you. That is just fine. Consider this list simply as an ideal to aim for. Our hope is that it will motivate you to grow as a small-group leader by revealing your areas of strength and highlighting your areas of weakness for which you may need help. God never said He could use only perfect people in ministry. In fact, your limitations in one or more of these areas may allow for others in the group to come alongside and complement you by contributing their strengths.

What key characteristics make an effective discussion leader?

- I. EDLs have a good grasp of the material to be discussed.
 - They have studied the material in advance.

- They have a clear purpose for the meeting.
 - They have an introduction planned.
 - They have questions planned.
 - They have a tentative conclusion in mind.
 - They have examined their own life in relation to the truth of the study.
 - They seek to be diligent workers who accurately handle the word of truth (see 2 Timothy 2:15).
2. EDLs are skilled in organizing group thinking.
- They know how to use questions.
 - They can detect tangents and gently but firmly bring the discussion back on track.
3. EDLs are open-minded.
- They encourage consideration of all points of view.
 - They are able to handle incorrect answers by inviting further discussion.
4. EDLs are active participants.
- They talk frequently yet not excessively.
 - They are not defensive or sensitive to disagreement or criticism.
5. EDLs are facilitators.
- They encourage participation by all and interaction among all.
 - They are able to manage members who tend to dominate discussion.

- They stimulate and involve shy or reticent members in nonthreatening ways.
6. EDLs have respect for and sensitivity to others.
- They are empathetic.
 - They do not attack others or cause them to “lose face.”
 - They are patient.
7. EDLs can assume different roles.
- They can give encouragement.
 - They can give direction when necessary.
 - They can insert humor to break the tension when appropriate.
 - They can lead the group in prayer to seek wisdom.
 - They can give personal attention to needy members.
8. EDLs give credit to the group and its members.
- They stress teamwork, praising the group for insights and progress.
 - They make all the members feel important.
 - They “do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit” but regard others as more important than themselves (Philippians 2:3).
9. EDLs are authentically transparent.
- They share personal illustrations.
 - They share personal weaknesses, frustrations, pressures, and failures without seeking undue personal attention.
 - They share personal feelings and requests.

- They plan ahead so all this can be done with taste and genuineness.
10. EDLs are enthusiastic.
- They pour themselves into the subject and the discussion of it.
 - They allow the subject to be poured into them by God prior to the discussion.
 - They recognize that genuine enthusiasm is a powerful motivator for others.
11. EDLs are properly critical and evaluative of their leadership.
- They constantly look for ways to improve.
 - They regularly seek feedback and advice.
 - They consistently evaluate the various aspects of their leadership role.
 - They remember that evaluation is not comparing themselves with others but is seeking the Holy Spirit's input on possible improvement.
12. EDLs know that leadership is a spiritual endeavor.
- They regularly admit to God that apart from Him they can do nothing (see John 15:5).
 - They confidently say "I can do all things" and then humbly add "through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).
 - They never forget God's promise that "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

VALUE OF DISCUSSION

(Adapted from the Leader's Guide in *The Amazing Collection* workbooks)

The words *small-group Bible study* are almost synonymous with the term *discussion*. While there are very significant places and purposes for lecturing (one-way communication), for the most part a small group is not one of them. Therefore, discussion is an essential component of a successful small-group experience.

BENEFITS OF DISCUSSION-STYLE LEARNING:

- Keeps every member more involved in the learning process
- Allows for self-disclosure, enabling the participants to get to know each other
- Helps crystallize the thinking of each group member by creating a venue in which topics can be investigated at deeper levels
- Creates a more informal atmosphere, encouraging a sense of relaxed learning
- Provides the potential of uncovering misconceptions and correcting misinformation
- Fosters more permanent learning and change because people tend to better remember what is said rather than what is thought
- Builds a sense of community as participants cooperate in their search for truth

POTENTIAL HINDRANCES TO DISCUSSION-STYLE LEARNING:

- One or several people monopolize.
- Leader has not prepared questions that stimulate discussion.
- Leader does not listen to understand the real meaning of what is being said.

GETTING STARTED

It is important to get off to a good start and to clearly communicate what is expected of the group. Therefore, the first time you meet you might share the following guidelines:

- Though your leader, I too am a learner and look forward to learning from you.
- I will be here to help you and to pray for you.
- Please help me. If you tend to talk a little too much, please be mindful of that; if you are more timid, please step out of your comfort zone and be willing to share.
- Help us get to know you without sharing anything that might embarrass a family member or friend.
- Don't confess anyone's faults but your own.
- Never discuss other churches or groups to avoid offending.
- Ask God to provide time for you to complete your daily study.
- Ask God to speak to you personally and help you grow closer to Him through the course.
- Be committed to attend weekly sessions.
- Help create an atmosphere of love, concern, support, and acceptance by respecting the comments of others and being sensitive to them.

ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

(Adapted from the Leader's Guide in *The Amazing Collection* workbooks)

Good questions can spell the difference between success and failure in a small-group setting. Good questions are easily understood, relevant to people's needs, interesting, and based on the material being studied. There are three types of questions:

LAUNCHING QUESTIONS:

- Are intended to stimulate meaningful discussion on a subject
- May be prepared ahead of time
- Must be based on the participants' previous study to enable quality contributions

Examples:

- "What did you discover in this passage about . . . ?"
- "What impressed you most about how God . . . ?"
- "What thoughts do you have about Moses after this study?"
- "Why do you think God included this passage in the Bible?"
- "How would you describe the holiness of God?"

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Keep the discussion moving, drawing out the most important ideas and refocusing a wandering discussion
- May be prepared ahead of time as you anticipate the subjects that will be raised by the group
- May be crafted as the discussion is in high gear (this takes practice)
- Take the participants beyond initial observations and more deeply into the meaning of the material

Examples:

- "Sally just mentioned the concept of obedience. How does that fit with what this passage seems to say?"
- "Who else would like to comment on that?"

- “We’ve said a lot of things about grace in our discussion. If you had to boil it down to a sentence, what would you say?”
- “What we’re discussing is interesting, but we’ve wandered from where we want to go. Can someone take us back to where we veered off the subject?”

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

- Are supplied for you in *The Amazing Collection* workbooks
- May be difficult to formulate but serve as the bridge from Bible study to daily living — from the head to the heart
- Do not always involve something concrete to do or to change
- Could include reflection, remembering, or simply waiting on God
- May be questions that will encourage the group to share their answers aloud or may suggest a more private response
- May be specific or general
- Must relate to the truth the group has just studied

Examples:

- “Write a prayer pouring out your heart to God in response to what He has been teaching you this week.”
- “Do you know someone who models well what we have just studied? How could you affirm that person this week?”
- “What do you sense God is asking you to do in response to your study?”
- “What do you see in this character’s life that you would like to imitate? What would that look like? What is the first step?”

LEADING FOR LEARNING

One of your most important goals for each session is to meaningfully lead the members of your group through that week's homework. You will strive to help them:

- Draw the right conclusions
- Apply God's Word to their lives
- Learn it for life

STUDENTS NEED TO TALK

Members need to share, especially if they have taken the time to do their study. As the discussion leader, you should give each person the opportunity to share what the Lord has revealed to them, as time allows. With verbal clues you can draw out those who are timid and gently restrain those who tend to share too much. Never pressure anyone to share. Ask for volunteers and call on them by name (name tags will help).

People learn by talking, not just listening. It is usually more important for the class to verbalize than for you to talk or "teach." *Discussion leaders tend to talk too much!* Listen intently, sincerely, and enthusiastically to the group member who is sharing. Smile, look the person in the eye, and lean forward to show interest. Please keep your comments to a minimum.

LEADERS NEED TO CONTROL THE DISCUSSION

Encouraging the group to share and keeping them focused on the subject is a learned skill. The following questions and responses to answers will help foster discussion or bring the group back if they have gone down a "rabbit trail." Spend time becoming comfortable with these techniques.

1. "Would several of you share what you wrote down for this question?"

- This question emphasizes the importance of completing the homework without putting pressure on specific individuals.
 - It makes the point that you want the things shared to be kept current and fresh — what they learned from their study this past week, not in a seminar ten years ago.
 - It communicates to them that because of time constraints, not everyone can contribute to every question.
2. “Will one more person please comment on this?”
- This keeps you in control of the time, as you may need to wrap up and move on to the next question or the next day in the homework.
 - It allows another class member an opportunity to bring up a point or principle that may have been missed and needs to be brought out.
3. “Thank you for sharing something that may have been difficult.”
- They may share something personal God has been doing in their lives that will encourage the group. Be sensitive and lovingly show appreciation for those who open up.
 - Be sure members know not to share anything that would embarrass someone else.
4. “Thank you for that insight.”
- A leader should be careful to encourage those who share without making an immediate judgment about what they say. It may be right on track, or it may not be. “Thank you for that insight” is encouraging without necessarily giving a stamp of approval on what was said.

- If you feel the right conclusion still needs to be made, ask for a few more comments. Then, as needed, wrap up with a summary based on the Word that helps the group draw the right conclusion.
 - Avoid saying, “You are wrong; we now vote you off the island!” or something to that effect. We can trust the study as a whole, the teaching and review time, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God to correct wrong ideas. You may meet with someone privately to discuss a point if needed.
5. “Would someone who hasn’t shared yet please help us with this question?”
- This is a good verbal clue to balance things. It draws out a timid person and alerts the talkers to give someone else a shot.
6. “Anyone else?”
- This is a quick way to get more responses if you have time.
 - It helps if another point needs to be shared or you sense someone else really wants to comment but needs a little encouragement.
 - This may be a question you consider important and want to spend more time on.
7. “What a helpful way to explain that!”
- Some questions may be difficult or complicated. If you can tell that someone has worked hard and has done a great job explaining the answer, this “praise” comment allows for special encouragement without saying, “Yes, right answer!,” which makes a judgment.
8. “I appreciate that encouragement for the group; thank you.”

- This is another way to say thank you to group members for their sincerity and meaningful comments. Let your own personality shine through with comments like this!
9. "I'd like to share what the Lord has shown me."
- There will be times when questions go unanswered. Be ready to take these opportunities to share your heart.
 - Be real and vulnerable.
 - Try to keep this to a minimum so you don't monopolize the time.

Keep track of the time, moving from question to question and day to day in the homework as smoothly as possible. For example, if you have thirty minutes for discussion, you may want to spend approximately six minutes on each of the five days in the homework material.

Allow some time after asking questions to let volunteers gather their thoughts before they answer; silence can be golden.

EVALUATING YOURSELF

Be sure to evaluate your performance regularly. Every now and then you might have someone in the group evaluate you as well. Make adjustments as needed. Here are some questions to ask:

- Did we begin and end on time?
- Did everyone get an opportunity to talk? Did I talk too much?
- Did the class see how to apply or live out God's Word in their lives?
- Did I show acceptance of those I disagreed with?
- Were my questions thought provoking, open-ended, specific, brief, and clear?
- Did I allow the group to correct any obviously wrong conclusions?
- Did I keep the group from going down "rabbit trails"?
- Was I adequately prepared to lead the class?
- Do I see freedom and friendship developing among the class members?

SHARING THE GOSPEL

Thank God for each person who participates in *The Amazing Collection!* Only He knows where they are spiritually, but pray He will lead you to know how to best support them.

Some attendees may be mature believers needing encouragement. Others may be new Christians needing growth. Many come to a Bible study to find answers to life's questions. They may need to begin a personal relationship with God.

Jesus' final words to His disciples before ascending into heaven were "Go therefore and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19). We have the same awesome privilege and responsibility today.

It is our prayer that no one would complete *The Amazing Collection* without having a personal, saving knowledge of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, at an appropriate time please share with your group how they can know God personally. You might briefly share your own personal story during class time, or you may choose to speak with each person individually. What a joy it will be to know that the Lord is using you to help someone know Christ for all eternity. Be sure to include these truths:

- God loves you and has a plan for your life.
- You are separated from God and His plan by your own sin.
- Jesus died to provide forgiveness for that sin. He suffered and died to pay the penalty you owe and then conquered sin and death by rising again!

- This gift of forgiveness must be received by you in order to be your own.

There are many wonderful booklets available to help you share the good news. Find one that is meaningful to you or check your church or local Christian bookstore. Here are some options:

- *The Four Spiritual Laws* (Campus Crusade for Christ)
- *Steps to Peace with God* (The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association)
- *My Heart — Christ's Home* (InterVarsity Press)

May God bless you abundantly as you lead!

