# Bible Study Leaders

A TRAINING BOOKLET

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***Six sessions in biblical interpretation and pastoral leadership***

This workbook is designed to help Bible study leaders grow in two areas at once:

• handling Scripture carefully, faithfully, and with growing depth
• leading people prayerfully, wisely, and with pastoral grace

Each session includes a short teaching section, printed Scripture passages, table work, and space for written reflection.

**About this Workbook**

This workbook grew out of a six-month Bible Study Leader Training pilot program held at St. John's Vancouver during 2025-2026. Meeting once a month on Tuesday evenings, Bible study leaders and participants from Women's Ministry, Men's Ministry, and Community Groups gathered around a shared meal prepared by SJV volunteers, followed by teaching and interactive table work. The program was designed to bring leaders and participants from across our SJV bible study ministries together around a shared vision: learning how to handle scripture carefully and prayerfully through inductive Bible study, while also growing in the pastoral and practical skills needed to lead people well. The material in this workbook was compiled and further developed by Katharine Venour, Director of Women and Community Groups, SJV. It draws on resources gathered, and developed by Jan Hobbis, training materials used through the *Charles Simeon Trust*, and *Women in the Word* training booklets, as well as from teaching presented during the six sessions by Katharine Venour, Jan Hobbis, Canon Ben Roberts, and Rev. Jacob Vandiver. The workbook brings that teaching, table work, and some additional materials together in a revised format for possible future leader training.

The booklet describes its purpose as helping future leaders in the church grow both in handling scripture carefully and in leading others prayerfully, wisely, and lovingly in the study of God's holy and living word.

Prepared in a workbook format for interactive leader training. Scripture quotations in the session exercises are from the ESV Bible translation.

## How to Use This Workbook

• Read the short teaching section before each session begins.

• Keep your Bible open as you work through the printed passages and exercises.

• Discuss the table-work questions with the people at your table before sharing with the larger group.

• Use the reflection and prayer space at the end of each session to note one thing to keep, one thing to change, and one person to pray for.

## The SJV Four-Step Pathway

### Purpose of our Bible Study method:

- To slow down, pay close attention, and listen carefully to God's Word.
- To understand scripture deeply, accurately, prayerfully, and personally.

### Step 1 - Text | What does it say?

Mark the text. Look closely at the words and phrases. Notice repeated words, themes, and contrasts; transition words such as but, therefore, for, and so that; a truth, command, warning, or question; verbs and who is doing the action; surprises; descriptions of God - Father, Son, and Spirit; big Bible words; and theme words from the book.

Look at the structure of the whole passage. How are the ideas grouped? Where are the changes of thought? Divide the passage into its natural sections, one for each major thought, and give each section a heading. Ask what emphasis the structure reveals.

### Step 2 - Travel through Scripture | What does it mean?

Check the context to help clarify the meaning of the passage. Read the verses immediately before and after. Ask how the whole book shapes this text and how the passage fits into the author's line of argument. Use cross-references to trace threads that run through the whole Bible. Then ask: What is the author saying? What is the big idea?

### Step 3 - Thinking through the Gospel | What do we learn about the gospel?

Ask what the passage teaches about the shape of salvation, the nature of sin and its consequences, the relationship between God and man, God's person, purposes, and plan, and how Jesus is anticipated, foreshadowed, or shown to be the one we need.

### Step 4 - Today | What does this mean for me?

Reflect on the big idea of the passage and God's purpose for your life. Ask: Do I need to adjust my thinking in light of these truths? How should my attitude or actions change? Is there something specific that encourages me? How should these truths shape my prayers? Do I need to repent of any sin?

In our Bible studies, these four steps help us move carefully from observation to meaning, from meaning to the gospel, and from the gospel to faithful application.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Step 1** | Text - What does the text say? Mark up the biblical passage, notice structure, and make careful observations about what's on the page. |
| **Step 2** | Their story - What does the text mean in context? Consider immediate, book, and whole-Bible context. |
| **Step 3** | His story - How does this passage stand in relation to Christ and the gospel? |
| **Step 4** | Our story - What does this mean for us today? What response, prayer, repentance, or trust is called for? |
| **Aim** | To come under the text, let the meaning arise from the text, and then lead others to do the same. |

## Six-Session Map

- Session 1 - Why Study the Bible? | What is a Bible Study Leader?
- Session 2 - Staying on the Line | Building a Healthy Small Group
- Session 3 - Biblical Genre | Leading Discussion with Grace and Truth (Part 1)
- Session 4 - Context | Leading Discussion with Grace and Truth (Part 2)
- Session 5 - Text and Framework | Pastoral Care in the Group
- Session 6 - Taking the Passage through the Gospel | Navigating Group Dynamics

# Session 1

## Session 1: Why Study the Bible? and What Is a Bible Study Leader?

| | |
|---|---|
| **Hard skill** | Setting the vision; understanding why the Word must remain central. |
| **Soft skill** | The character, posture, and responsibilities of a Bible study leader. |
| **Aim** | To begin with love for God, love for His Word, and a sober joy in the privilege of leading others into scripture. |
| **Key passage(s)** | 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 4:1-5 |

### Foundational conviction

Bible study is not an academic exercise detached from worship. We come to scripture to attend to the living God, to be shaped by His Word, and to help others do the same. Leadership begins with humility, prayer, and a willingness to be formed by the truth we teach.

**Helpful practices:** Pray before study. Prepare carefully. Remember that scripture equips God's people. Lead from repentance, not from self-importance.

## Bible Passage

*2 Timothy 3:14-17; 4:1-5*

**14** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing
from whom you learned it **15** and how from childhood you have been acquainted
with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in
Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for
reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may
be complete, equipped for every good work.

**4** I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living
and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: **2** preach the word; be ready in

season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. 5 But as for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

## Table Work

**1.** What does this passage say scripture is able to do? List the verbs and effects you notice.

**2.** What pressures in Bible study leadership might tempt someone to move away from the Word as central?

**3.** What qualities of leadership are implied by the command to preach the word with patience and teaching?

**4.** What might it look like in practice to prepare for Bible study devotionally rather than merely academically?

## Case Study Table Work

| Scenario | How would you respond as a leader? |
|---|---|
| A leader is warm and capable, but often comes to study underprepared. What conversation is needed? | |
| A group loves discussion, but the Bible itself is receiving less and less time. How would you gently reset the culture? | |

## Personal Reflection and Prayer

| | |
|---|---|
| **One thing I want to keep doing as a leader:** | |
| **One thing I need to grow in or change:** | |
| **One person or group need I want to pray for this week:** | |

# Session 2

## Session 2: Staying on the Line and Building a Healthy Small Group

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|---|---|
| **Hard skill** | Learning to say no more and no less than what scripture says. |
| **Soft skill** | Establishing healthy expectations, trust, confidentiality, prayer, and shared commitment in group life. |
| **Aim** | To lead groups that are shaped by the text rather than by extra-biblical pressure, personal preference, or drift. |
| **Key passage(s)** | Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6 and Mark 7:1-13 |

### Key principle: Staying On The Line

As teachers of God's Word, we must stay on the line of scripture, never straying above it or below it. We can go above the line by adding requirements God has not made, or below the line by subtracting what God has clearly said. Faithful leadership requires humble submission to the intended meaning of the text.

**Helpful practices:** Prayer. Welcome accountability. Test your reading by the rest of scripture. Be alert to legalism, pragmatism, and personal preferences that masquerade as biblical authority.

## Bible Passages

*Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6*

**6** And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, **17** but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

**3** Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" **2** And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, **3** but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" **4** But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. **5** For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." **6** So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

*Mark 7:6-9,13*

**7:6** And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

"'This people honours me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
**7** in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'
**8** You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men."**9** And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!

**7:10** For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' **11** But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban"' (that is, given to God) - **12** then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, **13** thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do."

## Principle

We must stay on the line of scripture, never straying above it or below it.

### Explanation

Bible study leaders are often tempted in two directions. We may require more than scripture requires, drifting into religious pressure and a zeal that goes beyond the text. Or we may require less than scripture requires, softening what God has clearly said. Faithful leaders resist both errors. We serve our groups best when we stay on the line of the Word and help others stay there too.

### Biblical Support

Deuteronomy 4:2 warns us not to add to God's word or take from it. Revelation 22:18 gives the same sober warning. From the beginning, the serpent distorted God's command by twisting it, and in Mark 7 Jesus rebuked religious leaders for setting aside the commandment of God in order to establish human tradition.

### Ministry Support

2 Corinthians 4:1-2 reminds us to renounce underhanded ways and to commend ourselves by the open statement of the truth. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 6 describes ministers as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. A steward is not free to edit the message; a steward is called to be faithful.

### Strategies for Leaders

Pray for humility. Welcome accountability and input. Submit to the intended meaning of the text. Test your reading for consistency with the rest of scripture. Refuse both novelty and timidity. Let the authority of the passage, not the personality/opinion of the members, govern the room.

## Table Work: Staying on the Line

1. In Genesis 3:1-6, who goes above the line and who goes below it? How do they do that?

2. Who in the garden knew the line and could have corrected the error? What does that teach us about responsibility in Bible study leadership?

3. In Mark 7, do the religious leaders tend to live above the line or below it? How does Jesus expose their error?

## Table Work: Building a Healthy Small Group:

1. What are the consequences, in a Bible study group, of not holding to the line of scripture?

**2.** Why is it spiritually dangerous for us to add to scripture? Why is it dangerous to subtract from it?

**3.** What commitments help a small group remain under the Word rather than under the loudest personality in the room?

**4.** What simple expectations should be made clear at the beginning of a term so that trust and participation can grow?

## Case Study Table Work

| Scenario | How would you respond as a leader? |
|---|---|
| Someone regularly corrects other members with strong opinions that go beyond the text. How would you respond? | |
| A group shares openly, but confidentiality is not being honoured. What should a leader do next? | |

## Personal Reflection and Prayer

| | |
|---|---|
| **One thing I want to keep doing as a leader:** | |
| **One thing I need to grow in or change:** | |
| **One person or group need I want to pray for this week:** | |

# Session 3

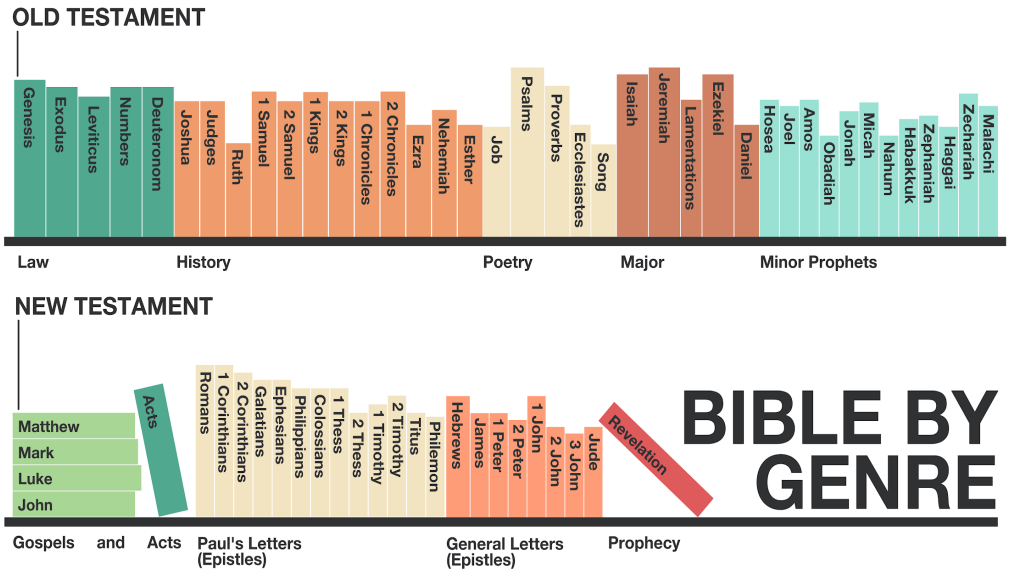
## Session 3: Biblical Genre/Structure, and Leading with Grace and Truth (Part 1)

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|---|---|
| **Hard skill** | Learning to read poetry, narrative, and discourse according to the way each text communicates. |
| **Soft skill** | Asking clear questions, welcoming participation, and using silence well. |
| **Aim** | To become more attentive readers and more deliberate discussion leaders. |
| **Key passage(s)** | Psalm 1:1-3; Luke 15:11-24; Titus 2:1-8 |

### Reading according to Genre

Every text has a God-given form. Poetry uses imagery and parallelism. Narrative moves through scene, character, and plot. Discourse often unfolds by argument, grammar, and flow of thought. Good leaders notice the kind of text before deciding what questions to ask.

**Helpful practices:** Read and reread. Look for structure. Let the text type shape the discussion. Ask questions that help people see what is actually there.




## Bible Passages

*Psalm 1:1-3*

**1** Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
**2** but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
**3** He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.

*Luke 15:11-24*

**15:11** And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. **12** And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. **13** Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property

in reckless living. [14] And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. [15] So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. [16] And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

[17] "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! [18] I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. [19] I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' [20] And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. [21] And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' [22] But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. [23] And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. [24] For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

*Ephesians 4:1-16*

**4:1** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2]with all humility and gentleness,
with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3]eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [4]There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call - [5]one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6]one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. [7]But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. [8]Therefore it says,

"When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."
[9](In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? [10]He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) [11]And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12]to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13]until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [14]so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. [15]Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16]from whom the whole body, joined

and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

## Table Work: Genre

**1.** What features of Psalm 1:1-3 show that it is poetry? How should that shape your questions?

**2.** What features of Luke 15:11-24 show that it is narrative? Where are the major turns in the scene?

**3.** What features of Ephesians 4:1-16 show that it is discourse or instruction? What words or ideas carry the argument forward?

## Table Work: Leading with Grace and Truth

1. When discussion goes quiet, how can you tell the difference between thoughtful silence and confused silence? What can you do next without answering your own question?

## Structure

### Principle

Every text has a structure. The structure reveals an emphasis, and that emphasis must shape our message.

### Explanation

We must apprehend how the author has organized the text and let that organizing principle dictate the shape and emphasis of our teaching. We might think of structure as the skeleton of the text. We must get the bones straight in order for the body of our message to be healthy. When we see the structure clearly, we are better able to teach the true emphasis of the passage.

### Diagnostic Question

How has the author organized this text?

### Strategies

Read and reread the passage. Read out loud. Look for repetitions, thesis statements, transitions, comparisons, contrasts, and major shifts. Then ask what those features reveal about the movement and emphasis of the passage.

For discourse, look for grammar, key words, transitional words, main verbs, and the flow of ideas. For narrative, look for plot, characters, scenes, dialogue, pace, and literary devices such as contrast and repetition. For poetry, look for stanzas, dominant images, parallelism, and shifts in voice or imagery.

## Structure in Poetry, Narrative, Discourse

## Poetry

**Psalm 1** invites us to watch for dominant images, repeated contrasts, and parallel lines. Structure helps us see what the poem is emphasizing, not just what words it uses.

Exercise: What are the two dominant images in Psalm 1? What contrast do those images create?

## Narrative

In narrative, structure is often uncovered by tracing the plot carefully. Watch for scenes, rising tension, turning points, dialogue, contrasts, and the way the author slows down or speeds up the action.

The five elements of plot are exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

Example: Think of the plot arc in **Luke 15:11-24**. Where do you see the tension rise? Where does the turning point come? How does the resolution clarify the emphasis of the account?

What reading strategies assist you in uncovering structure in narrative texts?

## Discourse

The key to finding structure in discourse is grammar.

Exercise: What structure does the grammar and repetition reveal in Ephesians 4:1-16? What commands, contrasts, or repeated purposes organize the paragraph?

## Table Work: Structure

1. Looking at Psalm 1:1-3, where do you see the poem divide naturally? What images, repetitions, or contrasts help you see the structure?

2. In Luke 15:11-24, what are the major movements in the narrative? Where does the tension rise, and where is the turning point?

3. In Ephesians 4:1-16, what repeated words, grammatical links, or purpose statements help you trace the flow of the passage?

## Table Work: Leading with Grace and Truth

1. Why does structure matter for leading a Bible study? How can a wrong sense of the structure distort the emphasis of the text?

## Case Study Table Work

| Scenario | How would you respond as a leader? |
|---|---|
| You ask a question and the room goes silent. Name two helpful follow-up moves and one unhelpful move. | |
| One person answers every question first. How can you widen participation graciously? | |

## Personal Reflection and Prayer

| | |
|---|---|
| **One thing I want to keep doing as a leader:** | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **One thing I need to grow in or change:** | |
| **One person or group need I want to pray for this week:** | |

# Session 4

## Session 4: Context and Leading Discussion with Grace and Truth

| | |
|---|---|
| **Hard skill** | Using immediate context, book context, and whole-Bible context to clarify meaning. |
| **Soft skill** | Guiding discussion without hijacking it; helping people discover rather than merely be told. |
| **Aim** | To slow down, read the passage in its setting, and lead others into thoughtful engagement with the text. |
| **Key passage(s)** | Philippians 2:1-11 |

### Context clarifies meaning

A passage is never floating on its own. Immediate context helps us see what problem, argument, or event surrounds the text. Book context shows how the passage contributes to the author's purpose. Whole-Bible context helps us notice themes, promises, and patterns that deepen understanding without replacing the passage's own meaning.

**Helpful practices:** Read what comes before and after. Ask why this is here. Notice repeated themes in the book. Use cross references to serve the text, not to bury the text.

## Bible Passage

*Philippians 2:1-11*

2:1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love,
any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, [2] complete my joy by
being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one
mind. [3] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more
significant than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but
also to the interests of others. [5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in
Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with
God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of
a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he
humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a
cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is
above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven
and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

## Table Work: Context

**1.** How does Philippians 1 help prepare us for Philippians 2? What pressures or concerns seem to be present in this church?

**2.** Why does Paul move from exhortation in verses 1-4 to Christ's example in verses 5-11?

## Table Work: Leading Discussion with Grace and Truth

1. What would be lost if we turned this passage into a vague message about being nice, without attending to its context in Christ and the gospel?

2. How can a leader help group members make observations from context before moving to application?

## Case Study Table Work

| Scenario | How would you respond as a leader? |
|---|---|
| Your group jumps quickly to personal sharing before anyone has looked at the passage in context. How would you bring them back helpfully? | |
| Someone raises a good theological question that would take fifteen minutes to answer. How do you honour the question while protecting the group's flow? | |

## Personal Reflection and Prayer

| | |
|---|---|
| **One thing I want to keep doing as a leader:** | |
| **One thing I need to grow in or change:** | |
| **One person or group need I want to pray for this week:** | |

# Session 5

## Session 5: Text and Framework and Pastoral Care in the Group

| | |
|---|---|
| **Hard skill** | Learning to notice the frameworks we bring to the text and to let scripture reshape them. |
| **Soft skill** | Caring for people wisely in the group while keeping the Bible study a Bible study. |
| **Aim** | To grow in self-awareness, humility, and pastoral steadiness. |
| **Key passage(s)** | Luke 18:9-14 and selected leader-care scenarios |

### Let the text be sovereign

All of us come to scripture with habits, assumptions, theological emphases, fears, experiences, and preferred outcomes. Some frameworks are helpful; some are distorting. Faithful leaders keep bringing those frameworks under the authority of the text. Pastoral care requires the same humility: we listen carefully, we love people genuinely, and we do not use the Bible study to control, impress, or flatter people.

**Helpful practices:** Identify your assumptions. Approach the text with fresh eyes. Consult context and structure. Distinguish between biblical authority and personal preference. Know when a pastoral situation needs follow-up beyond the group setting.

## Bible Passage

*Luke 18:9-14*

18:9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: **10** "Two men went up into the temple to

pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself,
prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust,
adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I
get.’ 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven,
but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ 14 I tell you, this man
went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts
himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

## Table Work: Text and Framework

**1.** What assumptions or frameworks might cause someone to misread this parable?

**2.** How does the text itself expose pride, self-justification, and contempt for others?

## Table Work: Pastoral Care

1. What kinds of pastoral situations belong inside normal group care, and what kinds require follow-up with a staff leader or pastor?

2. How can a leader be warm and transparent without making the group revolve around the leader's own story?

## Case Study Table Work

| Scenario | How would you respond as a leader? |
|---|---|
| A member begins sharing at length every week, and the group is starting to feel crowded out. What gracious boundary might you set? | |
| A painful personal disclosure is made that suggests more care may be needed than the group can provide. What do you say in the room, and what do you do afterward? | |

## Personal Reflection and Prayer

| | |
|---|---|
| **One thing I want to keep doing as a leader:** | |
| **One thing I need to grow in or change:** | |
| **One person or group need I want to pray for this week:** | |

# Session 6

## Session 6: Passage through the Gospel and Group Dynamics

| | |
|---|---|
| **Hard skill** | Learning to move from the passage to Christ and the gospel without allegorizing, moralizing, or flattening the text. |
| **Soft skill** | Recognizing group stages and responding wisely to conflict, disengagement, and uneven participation. |
| **Aim** | To help leaders show how each passage stands in relation to Christ and then shepherd real people through the dynamics of group life. |
| **Key passage(s)** | Mark 1:1-15 |

### From text to Christ to life

Christian Bible study should not stop at observation or historical explanation. We want to understand the passage in its own setting and then show how it stands in relation to Christ and the gospel. From there we move to faithful application. At the same time, leaders must remember that real people are in the room: groups form, strain, settle, and sometimes struggle. Wise leadership serves both the passage and the people.

**Helpful practices:** Follow the pathway: text, their story, His story, our story. Avoid shortcuts. Keep the application tethered to the text. Be patient with group development, and intervene early when trust or clarity begins to fray.

## Bible Passage

*Mark 1:1-15*

**1** The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

**2** As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

"Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way,
3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,'"

4 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism
of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And all the country of Judea and all
Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river
Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a
leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And he preached,
saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not
worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize
you with the Holy Spirit."

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the
Jordan. 10 And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens
being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from
heaven, "You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased."

12 The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13 And he was in the
wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals,
and the angels were ministering to him.

14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of
God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and
believe in the gospel."

## Table Work: Taking Passage through the Gospel

1. What does this passage teach about who Jesus is and why He has come?

2. How does Mark 1 move beyond bare information and call for a response?

3. How would you connect this passage to the gospel clearly and legitimately, without forcing the connection or skipping the text's own emphasis?

## Table Work: Group Dynamics

1.What are some things you can do as a leader to ease the first few meetings with a group?

2. What are the advantages and challenges to forming a second group for one that has grown large?

## Case Study Table Work

| Scenario | How would you respond as a leader? |
|---|---|
| A group is stuck in the polite stage: answers are brief, people are guarded, and prayer is thin. What could a leader do over the next month to help trust grow? | |
| A group is now comfortable, but conversations keep drifting away from the passage. How do you preserve warmth without losing focus? | |

## Personal Reflection and Prayer

| | |
|---|---|
| **One thing I want to keep doing as a leader:** | |
| **One thing I need to grow in or change:** | |
| **One person or group need I want to pray for this week:** | |

## Leader Development Plan

Use this page at the end of the course to note next steps for growth, further training, or follow-up conversations.

### Closing Review

**1.** Which interpretive skill do I most need to keep practising?

**2.** Which aspect of pastoral leadership feels most natural to me? Which feels least natural?

**3.** What support, feedback, or mentoring would help me grow in faithful leadership?

**4.** What one prayer do I want to keep before the Lord as I lead others in His Word?

# Appendix: Supplemental Resources

1. Bible Study Commitment Document

2. Leading a Discussion with Truth & Grace (by Rev. Jacob Vandiver)

3. Text and Frameworks (by Canon Ben Roberts)

# Bible Study Commitment

We are committed to loving and serving our small group peers by:

- Pointing each other lovingly to Jesus
- Pray together.
- Listen well to one another and seeking to enable and encourage the participation of each member.
- Keep everything that is shared in our small group times confidential.
- Attend regularly.
- Look for opportunities to use our gifts to support, strengthen, and serve the members of our small groups.

**Our larger community:**

Is first and foremost a discipleship community. This isn't a program we attend each week, but a Christ-centered community gathering to hear from and respond to Jesus as we study His word.

**Discussion Guidelines:**

Small groups go better when *each member:*
Respects the value of everyone's observations or insights.
Does not monopolize the conversation but allows everyone the opportunity to speak.
Focuses the discussion on the passage being studied.
Shares freely but refrains from correcting or giving advice.

**Weekly studies:** Come a bit early before study to visit

Welcome and opening prayer: 10 min.

Step 1 and 2 of study: 35 min.
Step 3 and 4 of study: 30 min.

Looking forward to praying and studying God's living Word with you!
Katharine Venour
*Director of Women, and Community Groups, SJV*

# Leading Discussions with Grace and Truth

## Preparing to Lead

**Prepared by: Rev. Jacob Vandiver**

### Pray

### Understand the Text

- What does the passage say?
- Why does it say this?
- Why here?
- Why in this way?
- How does it apply?

### Develop a Strategy for Leading

### Consider Implications & Applications

## Principles to Keep

- **Order**
  - Establish_____.
  - Manage_____.
  - Create_____.
  - Maintain_____.
  - Focus_____.
  - Encourage_____.

- **Patience**
  - Set_____.
  - Abide_____.
  - Invite_____.

- **Care**
  - Remember_____.
  - Model_____.
  - Practice_____.

## Practices to Develop

- Introducing and Summarizing
- Asking Questions
- Engaging Responses
- Remaining Under the Text

## Bible Study Leader Training : Text and Framework – April 21st 2026

**Prepared by: Canon Ben Roberts**

**A framework is:** A set of ideas that we believe are true.

**Shared Conviction as Bible Study leaders:**

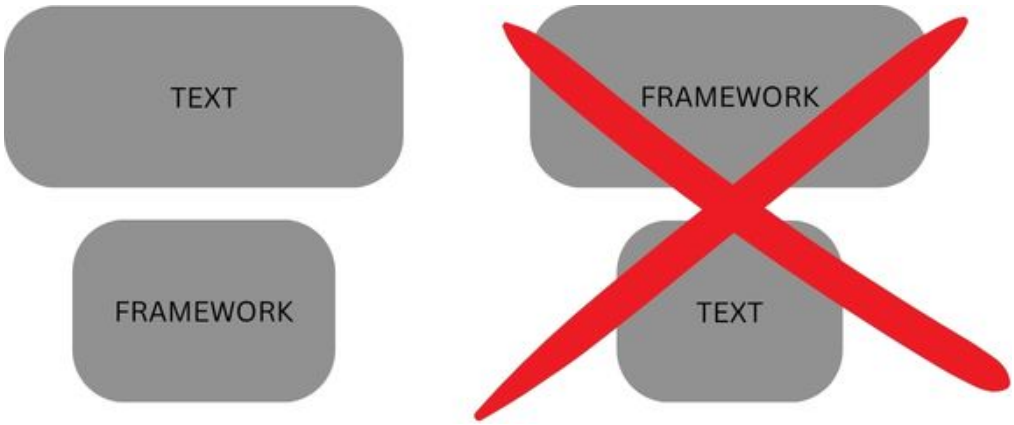
We must let the Bible shape our frameworks, rather than letting our frameworks shape our interpretation of the Bible.

Not inherently bad – they can be good or neutral.

But they can be unhelpful when they shape or distort our understanding of the text.

When we come to the Bible we want to be curious, observant, and careful. We don't want to impose what's convenient or normal to us. We want to hear and understand what God is speaking to us.

This is allowing the text to come above our framework, sometimes challenging or shaping them.




**Types of frameworks: Which are you or others in your study bringing to the study?**

Theological:

Political:

Experiential:

Cultural:

**What NOT to do: Imposing a framework on Jeremiah 29:11**

> *11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

What frameworks could lead to an *unfaithful* interpretation of this verse?

**What TO do: Jeremiah 29:10-14**

*10 "For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. 11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. 13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.*

What's a more *faithful* interpretation?

What are some strategies we can use to help us keep the text above our framework?

1. Pray! Ask the HS to help us interpret
2. Be Self-aware
3. Be humble and curious
4. Pinpoint irritations
5. Read in community

# The 4-Step Pathway to bible study

