

WHAT COULD I STUDY WITH MY GROUP?

– Updated August 2017 –

Group Leader,

Let's find your group a great study option! My goal here is to make you aware of some amazing resources and options, not to give an exhaustive or "authorized" list of study options. If you come across something others would benefit from, be sure to let me know so I can add it next time!

Thanks! – John

OPTION 1 – LEAD A REALLY GOOD BIBLE STUDY

I know, I know, this is a wild and crazy idea, but let's not forget how even the simplest study of the Bible can be life-changing. Below are some different ways to approach a group Bible study.

Rooted in Scripture Studies

This is a brand new resource that I think is a perfect fit for our home groups. Select a multi-week study of a biblical book or topic, and each week the lesson fits on 1 sheet of paper, two sided. On one side is the text to read together. On the other, a handful of discussion questions, take-aways, and a prayer prompt. I think the author of these studies has found a great balance of simplicity/brevity and depth/challenge. Available studies (and number of lessons) include - Genesis (10), Exodus (9), Psalms (7), Matthew (15), Luke (14), John (10), Acts (7), Romans (6), Galatians (4), Ephesians (5), Philippians (4), Hebrews (4), James (6), The Life of Jesus (12), and Life of Paul (14).

Half & Half

In preparation for group study, read a short section of scripture for that week 2 or 3 times. Then write down 6-10 questions, making sure that for every fact-finding question (clarifying what the text is about, for example: *Who was Herod? What kind of town was Bethlehem?*) you have at least one open-ended, application-oriented question (*How would you have reacted to the Magi's announcement? Can you recall a time you felt disturbed?*). As another option you can ask every group member to read ahead and come with one question of each type.

What. Why. How.

A form of Lectio Divina, this approach merges prayer and study, emphasizing God's desire to speak to us through Scripture. Slowly read the passage aloud three times, pausing to allow everyone to pray privately after each reading before discussing. During the first reading, ask listeners to ask the question "What?" – *"God, what word, person, or phrase would you have me see in this passage?"* During the second reading, ask the listeners to ask the question "Why?" – *"God, why did this word or phrase jump out at me?"* During the third reading, ask the listeners to ask the question "How?" – *"God, how should I respond to this prompting you given?"*

Everyone's Favorite

Taking turns, have a different group member come prepared to share a favorite passage or story, say a few words about why they picked those verses, and ask 2-3 discussion questions. Not only is this a good way to study the Bible, it's a great way to get to know those in your group.

The Story

If you'd like to gain an understanding of the overall story told in Scripture, Zondervan has published a great tool for exactly that purpose called *The Story*. It contains 31 readings arranged chronologically that trace the story from creation to Revelation. It is based on the recently updated NIV, which is very similar to the translation of our giveaway Bibles (TNIV). ([Click to Preview](#))

The Message

Eugene Peterson's paraphrase has a way of breaking through our familiarity with Scripture and bringing new things to our attention. Using this by itself or in concert with a more literal translations should make for a great study. ([Click to Preview](#))

The Voice

Not to be confused with NBC's reality competition, *The Voice*, is a recently completed translation of the Bible done in the format of a screenplay, with dialogue assigned to the appropriate characters in each story. ([Click to Preview](#))

Other Study/Discussion Guides

Want to study through a specific book of the Bible? Pick one of the options below to help you understand the text and assist you in leading discussions.

Rooted in Scripture

See recommendation/description on page 1. Great option for groups.

How to Read the Bible Book by Book by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart.

Written by two scholars, this reference tool gives a brief introduction to each book, including major themes, sections, and background. ([Click to Preview](#))

The Bible for Everyone and **N.T. Wright for Everyone** by N.T. Wright.

N.T. Wright has provided two amazing resources for studying a book of the New Testament. First, *The Bible for Everyone*, is a series of short commentaries covering the New Testament. Second, *N.T. Wright for Everyone*, is a small group guide full of great questions based on those commentaries. ([Click to Preview](#))

Bringing the Bible to Life.

Developed by Zondervan, these study guides strike an even balance between understanding the original context and applying the text today. Really good option. ([Click to Preview](#))

New Community Series by Bill Hybels and John Ortberg.

Originally developed for Willow Creek, these are good discussion guides aimed more at application than in-depth interpretation. ([Click to Preview](#))

OPTION 2 – TAKE A RECENT SERIES AND DIVE DEEP

If you resonated with a recent Sunday morning teaching series, why not follow-up on that with your group? In addition to the sermons themselves ([available here](#)), here are some resources that either informed or would be a great next step beyond each series.

Us vs. Us/Bodybuilders

Both of these series are about overcoming differences and the church being/becoming the model of God's power to reconcile everyone and create a diverse, united people.

- I haven't read it, but I imagine *A Fellowship of Differents* by Scot McKnight would hit on all of these ideas. ([Click to Preview](#)).
- Also, *Reviving Old Scratch* by Richard Beck is one of the more intriguing books I've read in a long time. It's a Christian psychologist's take on why we should take seriously the Bible's references to Satan/evil, but it also explores how/why we "demonize" others when we disagree with them. ([Click to Preview](#)).
- If your interest is the spiritual growth (training vs. trying) aspect of the Bodybuilders series, I recommend the video series *Five Things God Uses to Grow Your Faith* by Andy Stanley ([Click to Preview](#)) and the book or video series *The Life You've Always Wanted* by John Ortberg.

Faith & Doubt

On the topic of doubt, John Ortberg's book *Know Doubt* is really helpful. And on the essentials of faith, I made use of two great, short studies of the Apostles' Creed.

- *I Believe* by Alister McGrath, an Anglican scholar.
- *Creed* by Adam Hamilton, a Methodist pastor, available as a book and a DVD study

Create

This series defined creativity as the ability to create, something we all have within us as divine image-bearers. *How to be Here* by Rob Bell would keep this conversation going well. The enemy of creativity is shame which manifests as perfectionism, so you might also consider a study on the importance of grace, or an anti-shame book like *The Gifts of Imperfection* or *Daring Greatly* by Brene Brown.

OPTION 3 – USE A VIDEO TO START THE DISCUSSION

Video-based curriculum is another attractive option. A well-made video can communicate a lot of information quickly and add an emotional punch as well. If interested, we can purchase these for you.

TED Talks

There are dozens of fascinating talks available at TED.com. Taking turns, a different group member comes prepared each week to share a personal favorite, how that video relates to faith, and a couple discussion questions for the group. The talks by Brene Brown are a great place to start.

Q Ideas

Basically, a Christian version of TED talks. Features lots of short online videos by folks like Gabe Lyons, Bob Goff, and Rick McKinley. [Check it out.](#)

The Work of the People

A subscription-based site with video interviews of folks like Brene Brown, Shane Claiborne, Shauna Niequist, and N.T. Wright. [Check it out.](#)

North Point Resources - Andy Stanley

North Point Community Church regularly packages the teachings of Andy Stanley into small group DVDs (or streaming video) and discussion guides. Recent series include *The New Rules for Love, Sex, and Dating*, *Comparison Trap*, and *What Makes You Happy*. ([Click to Preview](#)) Do you have Netflix? Andy Stanley's videos are now available on Netflix too.

Recent Books with Video Sessions

It's becoming increasingly common for top authors to package their books with DVDs meant for small group use. Here are some good ones.

Forgiveness, Adam Hamilton, 4 sessions

Short, powerful book on asking forgiveness and forgiving others. ([Click to Preview](#))

Moses, Adam Hamilton, 6 sessions

A walk through the life of this Old Testament leader. ([Click to Preview](#))

Anxious for Nothing, Max Lucado (6 sessions)

A study about finding calm in the midst of uncertainty, based on Philippians 4 ([Click to Preview](#))

Present Over Perfect, Shauna Niequist (5 sessions)

A study about finding freedom from the pressure to be perfect. ([Click to Preview](#))

Love Does, Bob Goff, 6 sessions

Fantastic, hilarious book about putting love into action. ([Click to Preview](#))

Satisfied, Jeff Manion, 6 sessions

A look at the challenge (and joy) of contentment in an age of consumption ([Click to Preview](#))

Also see *The Land Between*, ([Click to Preview](#)) 5 sessions.

You'll Get Through This, Max Lucado, 6 sessions

Using the biblical story of Joseph, Max assures us that God is with us "in the pits" of life, and that ultimately God will triumph over evil. ([Click to Preview](#))

Also see *Before Amen*, 4 sessions, on the power of simple prayers. ([Click to Preview](#))

The Reason For God, Tim Keller, 6 sessions

Really good, substantive apologetics book (14 chapters). ([Click to Preview](#))

Also see *Prodigal God*, 6 sessions, a great book on Jesus' parable in Luke 15. ([Click to Preview](#))

Who Is This Man?, John Ortberg, 5 sessions

Wonderful resource that highlights the incredible, unique, and unexpected ways Jesus and his church have changed the world. ([Click to Preview](#))

Also see *The Me I Want to Be*, ([Click to Preview](#)) 5 sessions.

Altar Ego, Craig Groeschel, 5 sessions

Each of Craig's books presents a topic clearly, with humor and a good mix of grace and truth. ([Click to Preview](#))

Also see *Soul Detox*, *Weird*, and *The Christian Atheist*, 5-6 sessions each.

Too Busy Not to Pray, Bill Hybels, 4 sessions

Hybels' book is a classic on prayer, and a new video series for it has just been released.

Also see *Simplify*, 4 sessions ([Click to Preview](#))

The Power of a Whisper, 4 sessions ([Click to Preview](#))

And *Just Walk Across the Room*, 4 sessions ([Click to Preview](#))

Surprised by Hope, N.T. Wright, 6 sessions

Wright is a top-notch scholar who focuses in these videos on the hope of resurrection. This is a more advanced study than most of the above. The leader, and perhaps the group would want to read the book too. ([Click to Preview](#))

OPTION 4 – DISCUSS AN INTERESTING BOOK

The 2 keys to doing a book study are to make sure you have buy-in from your group first (i.e. Will they actually read it?) and to pick a book that will generate discussion (i.e. interesting, short chapters or sections, etc.) . Here are some of the authors and books I think could work well in a group setting (some of these are also mentioned under options 2 and 3).

Rob Bell

What We Talk About When
We Talk About God
How to be Here

David Benner

Surrender to Love
The Gift of Being Yourself
Desiring God's Will

Richard Beck

Reviving Old Scratch

Nadia Bolz-Weber

Accidental Saints

Greg Boyd

Letters From a Skeptic

Brene Brown

The Gifts of Imperfection
Daring Greatly
Rising Strong

John Eldredge

Beautiful Outlaw

Bob Goff

Love Does

Craig Groeschel

Divine Direction
Christian Atheist

Adam Hamilton

Enough
Forgiveness
Why?

Gary Haugen,

Just Courage

Bill Hybels

Too Busy Not to Pray
Power of a Whisper
Just Walk Across the Room
Holy Discontent
Simplify

Reggie Joiner & Kristen Ivy

Think Orange
It's Just a Phase

Tim Keller

The Reason for God
Counterfeit Gods
Jesus the King
Every Good Endeavor

Anne Lamott
Help. Thanks. Wow.

C. S. Lewis
Mere Christianity
Screwtape Letters
The Great Divorce

Max Lucado
take your pick...

Brennan Manning
Ragamuffin Gospel
Abba's Child
Ruthless Trust
The Signature of Jesus

Rick McKinley
This Beautiful Mess

Scot McKnight
One.Life
The Heaven Promise

Erwin McManus
Chasing Daylight
Soul Cravings

Donald Miller
Blue Like Jazz
A Million Miles in a Thousand
Years

Shauna Niequist
Present Over Perfect

John Ortberg
Know Doubt
Who Is This Man?
The Me I Want to Be
All the Places to Go

Eugene Peterson
Living the Resurrection

Francis Spufford
Unapologetic (*adult
language)

Andy Stanley
Enemies of the Heart
How to be Rich

Jarrett Stevens
The Deity Formerly Known as
God

John Stott
Basic Christianity

Lauren Winner
Wearing God

Rowan Williams
Being Christian
Being Disciples

N. T. Wright
Simply Christian