

Description

The Bible can feel intimidating if you haven't spent much time reading it. It was written long ago by many authors in times and places you may not know much about. Learn to read and interpret Scripture so that God can speak into your life in immediate and powerful ways.

Goals

1. Help participants feel accepted, safe, and able to ask questions and grow spiritually.
2. Create a safe environment to explore the Bible.
3. Give participants a transformational and exciting experience with the Word of God.
4. Familiarize participants with two Bible study methods.

Outline

Starter: "The Skinny on the Bible"

Story Part 1: Daniel (alternate story: Dora)

Bible Encounter: Psalm 23:1-6 (supplies needed: colored pencils or markers)

Story Part 2: Daniel (alternate story: Dora)

Experience: "Sixty-Six Clouds," Lectio Divina

Opening

Give a sincere and warm welcome to each person, letting them know you are glad they chose to come to the session. Share the vision for the group, then feel free to use the following language to open the session:

Sometimes when you start exploring Scripture, it can be very challenging to understand what you're reading, to put it into context, and to apply it to your life. After all, the stories were recorded thousands of years ago. It's hard to know what to take literally, especially when some things don't make obvious sense.

But when we learn how to study the Bible and apply what it says to our lives, it becomes an anchor to our faith and the source of our hope. That's why we're about to learn how to study Scripture in life-giving and life-changing ways.

We'll start by watching a skit. We'll look at a personal story of a college student who wondered what the Bible had to offer him during college. Then, we'll explore a popular Bible passage using two Bible study methods. Hopefully, when we're done today, you'll feel more equipped and inspired to dig into the rich stories and lessons of the Bible for yourself.

Starter: “The Skinny on the Bible”

Each of the characters in this skit had a unique take on how the Bible fit into their lives. How about you? What is your experience or perspective with the Bible?

Be sensitive to the fact that some participants may have little or no experience with the Bible yet. Demonstrate acceptance of whatever their past experience may be, and affirm their openness to learning more about the Bible.

Story Part 1: Daniel

Has the Bible helped you through any tough times yet? If so, how? If not, have you ever found a particular story, poem, or song lyric that really encouraged or inspired you? What was it about those words that helped you?

The Bible is similar to a really great story, with poems and songs in it too, which are inspiring, emotional, and exciting. The only difference from the stories and poems each of us mentioned is that, as Christ followers, we believe the Bible is 100% true and authoritative to our lives. And every story in the Bible is relevant to our lives in some way.

Bible Encounter: Psalm 23:1-6

Observation, Interpretation, Application (OIA) Overview: To help group members feel more comfortable as new students of God’s Word, extend the following affirmation. Then, as the group moves through the Observation, Interpretation, Application (OIA) process, provide a lot of positive reinforcement, especially when members ask questions.

You’re like most people if you think you’ll have a hard time understanding the Bible because you think you don’t know enough coming into it, or you feel like you’re missing “insider information.”

The best way to address this barrier is to start seeing the Bible as a narrative. As you read it over time, you’ll get to know the characters in the Bible and...

LAUNCH

How do I learn something from the Bible?

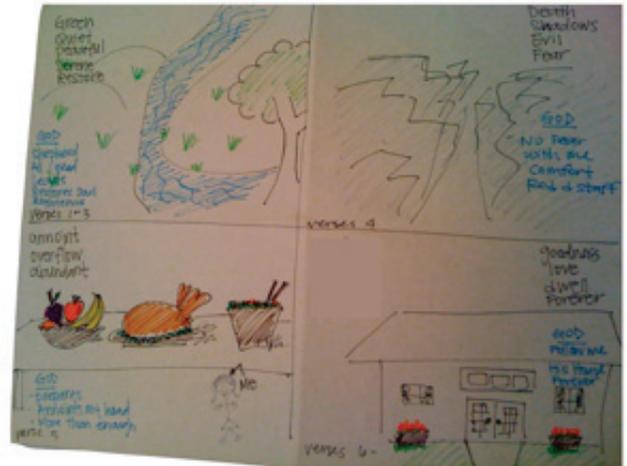
...ultimately the character of God. In fact, if you're brand new to the Bible, your fresh eyes to the Bible may actually allow you to see things others might miss.

We'll be using a model called Observation, Interpretation, Application, or OIA, that you can use on your own too. OIA is a great tool for studying the Bible and it encourages asking and working through your questions. Don't hold back any questions that might come up—try to squeeze every drop out of the text with your questions and observations.

Context: Psalm 23 may be a familiar passage, even for new Christians; encourage participants to use fresh eyes to uncover what God is saying in the passage. Psalm 23 is one of the best-known Psalms. It was written by King David who had been a shepherd boy. He was likely writing this Psalm in the midst of a crisis or dark period of his later years.

Observation: You will want to do each step of the drawing exercise ahead of time, being prepared to share your own observations.

1. On your sheet of paper, take a few minutes to draw these four scenes: verses 1-3, verse 4, verse 5, and verse 6.
2. List the main need or life challenge addressed in each scene, and what meets that need or challenge.
3. Who is the main character in each scene and what do you notice about this person?
4. Imagine yourself in those scenes. Write down what you'd observe with your five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch), and how you'd feel if you were in those settings.
5. Write down what you notice about God (referred to as "You") in these scenes, especially what God's relationship with the main character seems to be.



Your notes:

LAUNCH

How do I learn something from the Bible?

Interpretation: The notes below will help you prepare and facilitate the discussion; add any interpretation notes of your own.

1. Why do you think these particular challenges or needs stood out to the writer?

Your notes:

2. In some ways, God was the source of both the trials mentioned (shadow of death, rod, and staff) and the pleasant things in the passage (quiet waters, anointing oil, goodness, and love). How does the psalmist make sense of these tensions and complexities in his relationship with God?

- David was led—presumably by God—through the valley of the shadow of death, a dark and fearful place.
- The rod and the staff were what shepherds used to guide and discipline sheep.
- The experiences of being protectively guided and also being disciplined and kept in line come from the shepherd who loves the sheep. But the sheep experience both pleasant and painful actions from the shepherd, and don't always know why.
- 1 Samuel 24 is an example from David's life that shows him trusting God even though God seemed to both protect him and put him in dangerous situations.

Your notes:

Application: To encourage people to share, be ready to show the group your drawing and explain your own answers to the following application questions.

1. Draw yourself in one particular scene you fit into as of today. Why did you choose that one?
2. Look at the list of God's characteristics you wrote for that particular scene. Are there ways you can see God doing those things for you today?
3. How do you make sense of God being able to both give you good things, but also seem to lead you through hard places?
4. (Optional) Write a short letter to God asking him to meet you in the scene you find yourself in today.

Your notes:

Story Part 2: Daniel

Experience: "Sixty-Six Clouds," Lectio Divina

"Sixty-Six Clouds" What words stood out most to you in the Bible word cloud?

Lectio Divina It will be crucial to lead this segment well, so participants avoid misinterpreting Scripture. As people share, avoid correcting or criticizing them. If someone's reflection seems far off, affirm anything they've shared that seems correct and move on.

After everyone has shared, summarize some of the things heard and mention that God's Word will not contradict itself or God's character. That can be a good rule of thumb when they reflect.
