

BIBLE BASICS

Know the Bible

Facilitator Guide · 10 Lessons for New Bible Readers

The Bible can feel like an intimidating book — but it doesn't have to. These ten engaging lessons are designed primarily for newer believers, helping them build confidence with God's Word one step at a time. From understanding what's in the Bible and how it's organized, to learning how to read it and why it can be trusted, each lesson is rich with content and participant involvement. The worksheets and activities are versatile enough to use across age groups.

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A NOTE ON HOW THESE LESSONS WORK:

Lesson Timing

Each lesson is designed to run 45–60 minutes and includes a facilitator script, Scripture passages, discussion questions, and a wrap-up.

Leader Script

The scripts throughout each lesson are guides, not word-for-word requirements — feel free to adapt them to your voice and your group.

Participant Guides

All discussion questions appear on the participant guide so participants can read along. Guides can be printed and stapled as a full packet at the start of the series, or printed and distributed lesson by lesson.

Scripture

All Scripture references in this guide are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

A NOTE ON TWO RECURRING ELEMENTS:

These two elements are designed to work as a pair — Going Deeper closes each session by sending participants into Scripture, and the Discipleship Check-In opens the next session by bringing the group back to what they read and discovered.

1. DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN (OPTIONAL — 5-10 MINUTES)

Each session opens with a brief Discipleship Check-In. It builds accountability, community, and a consistent rhythm of reflection. Lesson 1 uses it for connection and to gauge where each participant is spiritually. From Lesson 2 onward, the same questions are used each week — giving participants a familiar structure to share honestly about their Bible reading, what they are learning, and where they are struggling.

This element is optional but highly recommended. Even 5 minutes of honest sharing can significantly deepen community and spiritual growth in your group. To keep this time focused, consider having participants share in pairs or small groups.

Lesson 1 Check-In

Since this is your first meeting, use this time to connect and assess where each participant is spiritually. Consider asking:

- What's your name and what's a random fact about yourself?
- What is something good and challenging in your life right now?
- On a scale of 1-10, how confident do you feel reading the Bible on your own?
- What has been your experience with reading Scripture?
- What's one thing that makes you nervous about reading Scripture?

A Lesson 1 Check-In card is included at the end of this guide. Print and laminate it for your reference, and give copies to participants if you choose.

Lessons 2-10 Check-In

Use these questions each week or choose the ones most relevant to your group:

- What is something good and challenging in your life right now?
- How did reading the Bible go this past week? What challenges did you face and what good moments did you have?
- How did last week's lesson inspire or help with your Bible reading?
- What did you learn about Jesus, God, or the Holy Spirit during your reading?
- How did your reading this week shape the way you think, trust, or live?
- Did anything you read feel confusing? How did you work through those moments or how will you?

A Lessons 2-10 Check-In card is included at the end of this guide. Print and laminate it for weekly use, and give copies to participants if you choose.

2. GOING DEEPER THIS WEEK (OPTIONAL)

At the end of each lesson, assign a Bible reading passage for participants to complete before the next session. At the following session, the Discipleship Check-In gives everyone a chance to share the highs and lows of their reading week.

As the leader, you choose the passage. For newer or not-yet Christians, I recommend the Gospel of Mark — fast-paced, narrative-driven, and focused entirely on Jesus, making it ideal for anyone building confidence in reading Scripture. That said, choose whatever fits your group best.

Be realistic when assigning reading. A chapter is a good baseline, though for longer chapters a section works just as well. You may also let participants choose how much they read — what matters most is that they are in the Word. Meet people where they are and celebrate whatever steps they take.

A Reading Tips card is included at the end of this guide. Give one to each participant at Lesson 1 — print and laminate it for them to keep throughout the series.

The tips are:

- Take a moment to pray and invite God to open your eyes and heart before you read
- Read slowly — even just a few verses at a time
- Think about what the passage reveals about Jesus, God, or the Holy Spirit
- Write down one thing that surprised you or made you think
- Ask yourself: what does this mean for how I live, think, or trust God today?
- Don't let a hard question stop you. Write it down, keep reading, and look it up, ask someone, or bring it to the group later
- Don't give up. You will never regret your time in Scripture.

BIBLE BASICS — LESSON 1 FACILITATOR GUIDE

Seeking and Finding God through His Word

LESSON PURPOSE

Participants will discover that God is not distant — He is eager to be found, and His Word is one of the primary ways He has made Himself known.

LESSON 1: NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR

This first lesson sets the tone for the entire series. The banana game opens up a big idea: unlike the hidden banana, God is not hiding — He wants to be found. If the game doesn't fit your group's culture or setting, skip it. The self-assessment near the end of this lesson gives you a real picture of where each participant is starting — spiritually and in their Bible knowledge — and sets up a meaningful before-and-after moment when they revisit it in Lesson 10.

DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN (OPTIONAL — 5-10 MINUTES)

If you choose to include this element, see Before You Begin for questions and instructions. This is a brief time of connection and sharing where you can get a sense of where each participant is starting spiritually.

THE GAME — FIND THE BANANA

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

- You will begin this series with a fun game called Find the Banana. To play you will need one banana.
- When no one is in the room, hide one banana out of sight. The only catch is that you cannot place anything on top of the banana to conceal it — for example, you can hide it under a couch but not put a pillow over it.
- Once the banana is hidden, instruct the group to search for it and remind them they will not need to move anything to find it.
- When an individual finds the banana, they should discretely take a seat. Each player does the same until one person is left searching — the game is over.

Say something like:

"Before we get into our first lesson, we're going to play a quick game. Somewhere in this room, I've hidden a banana. Your job is to find it — but there are a few rules before you start.

Rule one: you don't need to move anything. The banana is in plain sight — you just have to look.

Rule two: when you find it, don't say a word. Just quietly take a seat. We'll keep going until everyone has found it. Alright — go find it."

After the game, once everyone is seated say:

"The banana was in the room the whole time. It wasn't buried. It wasn't locked away. It was findable — you just had to look. I want you to hold onto that image as we get started today, because the first question this series wants to answer is this: Is God findable? And if He is — how?"

THE LESSON — GOD IS NOT HIDING

Say something like:

"In today's lesson you will explore an important theme found in God's Word. From the Old Testament to the New, Scripture speaks with one consistent voice: God is not hiding. He has made a way for us to find Him, and He promises that those who seek Him will find Him. Let's look at what that promise says — and what God calls us to do to receive it."

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

In the Participant Guide, have the group look up each passage and fill in the command God gives and the promise He makes when we obey. Then discuss the questions that follow.

Scripture	The Command	The Promise
Jeremiah 29:13		
Deuteronomy 4:29		
James 4:8		
Acts 17:26–27		

OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

- 1. What theme is consistent across all of these verses — from both the Old and New Testament?**
- 2. What does this reveal about the character of God?**
- 3. What does this teach you about people?**

Say something like:

"Every verse we just looked at makes the same promise: seek God, and you will find Him. But here's a question worth asking — how do we seek God? One of the primary ways He has made available for us to seek Him is through His Word. The Bible isn't just a book of stories or rules. It's how God reveals Himself, His character, and His will to us. That's exactly why this series exists. If God promises to be found by those who seek Him, and if the Bible is one of the main ways He speaks — then learning how to open and understand it isn't just a helpful skill. It's one of the most important things you can do."

PERSONAL FOLLOW-UP

1. How have you sought God in the past?
2. What has been intimidating about seeking God through Bible reading?
3. How do the verses you read give you encouragement?

BIBLE BASICS – SELF-ASSESSMENT

Say something like:

"Before we go any further into the series, I want to pause and do something a little different. We're going to fill out a short self-assessment together.

This is not a test and you are not required to share your answers unless you want to. No one in this room is grading you.

What this is — is a starting point. One of the most encouraging things about a journey is being able to look back and see how far you've come. If you fill this out honestly today, you'll have a real record of where you started. At our final lesson, you're going to fill it out again — and I think you'll be surprised by what's changed.

So go ahead and be honest. If you don't know the answer to a knowledge question, don't stress. If your confidence feels low, that's okay — that's what this series is for. There's no shame in the starting point. There's only the invitation to grow."

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Instruct participants to fill out the Self-Assessment from the Participant Guide and give them 5–7 minutes to complete it quietly.

WRAP-UP THE LESSON

Say something like:

"The assessment you just filled out is a starting point — and starting points are worth marking. That piece of paper isn't a record of how far you have to go. It's a record of where God is meeting you right now.

Over the next several lessons, you're going to learn what's inside the Bible, how it's structured, what the whole story is actually about, how to read it well, and why you can trust it. By the time we get to Lesson 10, you'll fill out that assessment again — and I am confident you'll see the difference.

But here's the most important thing I want you to leave with today: God is not hiding from you. Every promise we looked at today says the same thing — seek Him, and you will find Him. Your involvement in this series is one way of seeking. Show up, open the Word, and expect to find Him there."

GOING DEEPER THIS WEEK (OPTIONAL)

If you choose to include this element, see *Before You Begin* for guidance on assigning Scripture readings, equipping your group with the reference cards, and encouraging your participants to follow through each week.

BIBLE BASICS — LESSON 2 FACILITATOR GUIDE

What Will You Find in God's Word?

LESSON PURPOSE

Participants will discover what God has made available to them through His Word — not a rulebook, but a living gift that reveals His character, shapes their faith, and draws them into a relationship with Him. Seeing what Scripture actually contains gives participants the motivation to keep seeking God through His Word even when it feels difficult.

LESSON 2: NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR

Now that participants understand God wants to be found, this lesson explores the many reasons He gave us the Bible to find Him. Before handing out the worksheet, help participants think about what they already believe the Bible is for — and let the Scripture do the work of expanding that understanding.

DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN (OPTIONAL — 5-10 MINUTES)

If you choose to include this element, see Before You Begin for questions and instructions. This is a brief time of sharing how participants' walk with God and time in His Word has been going since the last session.

THE LESSON — WHY DO WE READ THE BIBLE?

Say something like:

"Last week, we learned that God is not hiding, and He promises when we seek Him, we will find Him. We also learned one of the primary ways God has made Himself available to us is through His Word. So today's question is a natural next step — what will you actually find when you open it? Before we dive into the handout, let me ask you: What do you expect to find when you read the Bible?"

Allow them a moment to share. Then continue:

"Now we're going to look at what Scripture itself says is inside. What you discover today will encourage you and give you solid reasons to keep coming back."

THE ACTIVITY — WHY READ THE BIBLE FILL IN THE BLANKS

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

- From the Participant Guide, have them work on lesson 2 fill-in the blank worksheet.
- Have participants complete it individually, with a partner, or in a small group.
- Finish by having participants discuss the personal follow-up question on their handout.

ANSWER KEY — WHY READ THE BIBLE

1. Exodus 34:6-7 — **CHARACTER**
2. 2 Timothy 3:15 — **SALVATION**
3. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 — **GROW**
4. Luke 11:1-4 — **PRAY**
5. John 3:16 / Romans 6:23 — **GOSPEL**
6. Proverbs 3:5-6 — **TRUST GOD**
7. Romans 12:2 / 1 Thess. 5:16-18 — **WILL**
8. Deuteronomy 31:8 — **PROMISES**
9. Ephesians 4:31-32 — **FORGIVE**
10. 1 John 4:7-8 — **LOVES YOU**
11. John 20:31 — **JESUS**
12. John 17:17 / John 8:31-32 — **TRUTH**

PERSONAL FOLLOW-UP

1. Based on what you just read, why would you tell someone to read the Bible?

WRAP-UP THE LESSON

Say something like:

"Every one of those twelve passages you read points to the same reality: God gave us His Word to know Him — and to be shaped by Him into people who live, love, and trust Him above everything else.

So open it this week — not as a book of information, but as a window into who Jesus is. Open it to look at Him. Because He changes everyone who really looks."

GOING DEEPER THIS WEEK (OPTIONAL)

If you choose to include this element, see *Before You Begin* for guidance on assigning Scripture readings, equipping your group with the reference cards, and encouraging your participants to follow through each week.

BIBLE BASICS — LESSON 3 FACILITATOR GUIDE

What's in the Bible – Old Testament

LESSON PURPOSE

Participants will gain a working knowledge of the Old Testament's structure, genres, and purpose so they can approach it with confidence instead of confusion. By seeing how God's story unfolds across these 39 books, participants will understand why the Old Testament remains essential — not just ancient history, but the foundation for understanding Jesus.

LESSON 3: NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR

This lesson and the next (New Testament) involve more lecture than previous lessons as you teach the structure and genres of Scripture. However, keep participants engaged by asking them observations as they highlight. For example: "How many books of the law are there?" "What do you know about any of these books?" "Have you read any of these before?" These questions help participants connect with the content and feel included in the discovery rather than passively listening.

DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN (OPTIONAL — 5-10 MINUTES)

If you choose to include this element, see Before You Begin for questions and instructions. This is a brief time of sharing how participants' walk with God and time in His Word has been going since the last session.

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Say something like:

"Today we will learn what's inside the Bible and how it's organized. Does anyone know how many books are in the Bible?" (Allow them to answer, then confirm: 66.) "And those 66 books are divided into two main sections — does anyone know what they're called?" (Allow them to answer, then confirm: Old Testament and New Testament.)

"Before we go any further — on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not confident at all and 10 being very confident, how do you feel about reading the Old Testament right now?" (Allow them to share.) "Hold onto that number. Let's see if it changes by the end of today."

Then Say:

"The Old Testament contains 39 of those books and the New Testament contains 27. And here's what's worth understanding — the Bible isn't one book you have to read front to

back like a novel. It's a collection of 66 books, written by different authors across different periods of history. That means you can open any book and encounter God there. That said, knowing how the books are organized and where a particular book fits in the overall story of Scripture helps you read it well and interpret it correctly — which is exactly what we're going to work on today. Next lesson, we'll do the same for the New Testament."

"At this time, on your Participant Guide, we're going to color-code the Old Testament by genre. As I call out each section, highlight those books in your table of contents using the color I suggest. This will help you visually see how the Old Testament is organized."

IF SOMEONE ASKS

If a participant asks how we know these books belong in the Bible, explain that councils of church leaders formally recognized which writings the Church had already accepted for generations as bearing the marks of God's Spirit. They weren't deciding what to include — they were affirming what Christians already trusted. That process actually strengthens our confidence in what we hold today.

THE ACTIVITY — WHAT'S IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Pass out the Participant Guide for lesson 3 and 5 different colored highlighters for each person. As you call out each section below, have participants highlight those books on their handout, then share the leader notes for that section.

HIGHLIGHT: THE TORAH / THE LAW (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)

Leader Notes to Share:

"These are the first five books of the Bible, likely written by Moses. 'Torah' means 'law' or 'instruction.' While there are a lot of laws in these five books, they're written like a narrative and hold many well-known historical events. The first book in the Torah is the book of Genesis. Rightfully named, Genesis means 'beginning' and it introduces creation, explains how sin entered the world, and starts the long story of God redeeming people through a specific people group that would eventually lead to Jesus the Savior of the world."

HIGHLIGHT: HISTORICAL BOOKS (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther)

Leader Notes to Share:

"These books tell the story of Israel's journey in the Promised Land after Moses died. They record the nation's kings — some faithful, some unfaithful — and show how God remained faithful to His covenant even when His people turned away. You'll read about famous kings like David and Solomon, but also about Israel's exile to Babylon when they rejected God, and their eventual return to rebuild Jerusalem. Throughout it all, God's faithfulness and love never wavered, even as He exercised His judgment when His people rejected Him. These books show us that God's love isn't conditional on our perfection —

He's always working to draw His people back to Himself."

HIGHLIGHT: POETRY & WISDOM (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs)

Leader Notes to Share:

"These books express the full range of human emotion — joy, grief, confusion, longing, celebration. Psalms is a collection of prayers and songs written by various authors across different time periods. Proverbs offers practical wisdom for living and making good decisions. Job wrestles with the hardest question: Why do good people suffer? Ecclesiastes explores the meaning of life and concludes that without God, everything feels empty and pointless — but with God, life has purpose. Song of Songs is a celebration of love and marriage that also reflects the depth of God's love for His people."

HIGHLIGHT: MAJOR PROPHETS (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel)

Leader Notes to Share:

"Prophets were God's mouthpiece, delivering His messages to His people. The Major Prophets were active during the time of Israel's exile to Babylon and the period leading up to it — a period you read about in the Historical Books. They spoke to their own time, calling Israel back to faithfulness and warning of consequences for turning away from God. They essentially said: 'Here's why this judgment is happening — and here's God's promise of restoration and the coming Messiah.' But they also pointed forward to Jesus, the ultimate Messiah who would come to save all people. These books can feel heavy because they often address God's judgment, but they're filled with hope because they point to Jesus. The terms 'Major' and 'Minor' refer only to the length of the books — not their importance. Every word of every prophet is equally God's Word."

HIGHLIGHT: MINOR PROPHETS (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

Leader Notes to Share:

"Like the Major Prophets, these books record God's messages delivered through His chosen messengers. The Minor Prophets were active before Israel's exile to Babylon, during the exile, and after their return — periods you read about in the Historical Books. Like the Major Prophets, they called the nation back to faithfulness and pointed toward God's redemption through the Messiah. Though they're shorter books, their message is just as powerful and important as the Major Prophets. Each one addresses specific situations their people faced, but all of them reveal God's character: His justice, His mercy, His patience, and His commitment to His people."

TRANSITION TO DISCUSSION

Say something like:

"You've now color-coded the entire Old Testament and can see visually how it's organized. You can see that it's not random — it's structured by genre and tells a coherent story of God's relationship with His people. If you'd like, you can use this same color-coding system in your own Bible's table of contents to help you navigate Scripture going forward. Now let's talk about what we've learned and what it means for you as you approach Scripture."

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Have participants complete the discussion questions independently or in pairs, then lead a large group discussion.

PERSONAL FOLLOW-UP

- 1. Which Old Testament book or section are you most interested in reading? Why?**
- 2. How is knowing the different genres helpful when approaching Scripture?**
- 3. What feels intimidating about reading the Old Testament and how can you overcome those concerns or fears?**
- 4. Why do you think God gave us the Old Testament if we have the New Testament?**
- 5. At the start of today you gave yourself a number reflecting how confident you feel about reading the Old Testament. Where would you put it now?**

WRAP-UP THE LESSON

Say something like:

"Today you've discovered that the Old Testament isn't a random collection of stories — it's beautifully organized by genre, and each section serves a specific purpose. Understanding this structure removes the intimidation factor and helps you know where to start when you're ready to read."

But here's what's important to understand about these books: the Old Testament isn't just ancient history. It's the story of God revealing His character, demonstrating His love and faithfulness, and laying the groundwork for everything that would ultimately be fulfilled through Jesus Christ. And we don't have to wonder whether reading the Old Testament still matters — Jesus Himself settled that question. In Luke 24:27, after His resurrection, He walked with His disciples and 'beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.' Paul echoes this in 2 Timothy 3:16, writing that 'all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.' The Old Testament isn't separate from the gospel — it's the foundation it stands on.

In the next lesson, we'll explore the New Testament and see how these two testaments fit together to tell one unified story."

GOING DEEPER THIS WEEK (OPTIONAL)

If you choose to include this element, see *Before You Begin* for guidance on assigning Scripture readings, equipping your group with the reference cards, and encouraging your participants to follow through each week.

BIBLE BASICS — LESSON 4 FACILITATOR GUIDE

What's in the Bible – New Testament

LESSON PURPOSE

Participants will learn the structure and genres of the New Testament and see how it fulfills what the Old Testament promised. By the end of this lesson, they will have a complete map of all 66 books of Scripture and the confidence to open any part of the Bible.

LESSON 4: NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR

This lesson and the previous one (Old Testament) involve more lecture than previous lessons as you teach the structure of Scripture. However, keep participants engaged by asking them observations as they highlight. For example: "How many gospel accounts are there?" "What do you know about Paul?" "Have you read any of these letters before?" These questions help participants connect with the content and feel included in the discovery rather than passively listening.

DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN (OPTIONAL — 5-10 MINUTES)

If you choose to include this element, see Before You Begin for questions and instructions. This is a brief time of sharing how participants' walk with God and time in His Word has been going since the last session.

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Say something like:

"Today we will continue learning what's inside the Bible and how it's organized. Last lesson, we explored the Old Testament — the story of God's relationship with His people before Jesus came. Today, we're diving into the New Testament — the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, and the birth and growth of the early Church.

The New Testament was written by Jesus' followers in the decades after His ascension into heaven and focuses on how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament promises and what it means to follow Him.

Before we get started, I want to know: On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being not confident at all and 10 being very confident, how do you feel about reading the New Testament right now?" (Allow them to share.)

"Hold onto that number. Let's see if it changes by the end of today. To help you grow in confidence, we are going to color-code the New Testament by section, just like we did with the Old Testament.

As I call out each section, highlight those books in your table of contents using the color I suggest. This will help you visually see how the New Testament is organized."

THE ACTIVITY — WHAT'S IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Pass out the Participant Guide for lesson 4 and six different colored highlighters for each person. As you call out each section below, have participants highlight those books on their Participant Guide, then share the leader notes for that section.

HIGHLIGHT: THE GOSPELS (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)

Leader Notes to Share:

"The four gospels are eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Matthew was a tax collector turned disciple; Mark was a disciple of Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples; Luke was a physician and historian who interviewed several eyewitnesses to compile his gospel account; John was one of Jesus' closest disciples. Each gospel has a slightly different perspective and emphasis, so reading all four gives you a fuller picture of who Jesus is. These are excellent books to start with if you're new to reading the Bible because they focus entirely on Jesus and are narrative-driven and engaging."

HIGHLIGHT: HISTORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH (Acts)

Leader Notes to Share:

"Acts was written by Luke, the same author who wrote the gospel of Luke. It tells the story of the apostles after Jesus ascended to heaven. It shows how the Holy Spirit empowered the early Church to spread the Gospel and grow despite persecution. Through Acts, we see the birth of the Church and how ordinary people became bold witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. We also meet Paul in Acts — a man who would become one of the most influential figures in the early Church through his missionary work and his letters to churches."

HIGHLIGHT: PAUL'S LETTERS TO CHURCHES (Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians)

Leader Notes to Share:

"Paul was a Jewish leader who originally persecuted Christians, but after encountering the risen Jesus, one of Christianity's greatest missionaries and theologians. He wrote letters to churches he planted or visited, addressing specific questions, problems, and theological issues they faced. These letters are practical and deeply theological — they teach us how to live as followers of Jesus in real-world situations. Paul's letters make up a significant portion of the New Testament because his writings were so important to the early Church."

HIGHLIGHT: PAUL'S LETTERS TO INDIVIDUALS (1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon)

Leader Notes to Share:

"These are more personal letters Paul wrote to young church leaders (Timothy and Titus) and a friend (Philemon). They offer encouragement and guidance on leadership, faith, and how to handle specific challenges in ministry."

HIGHLIGHT: GENERAL LETTERS (Hebrews, James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude)

Leader Notes to Share:

"These letters were written by various apostles — James (Jesus' brother), Peter, John, and others — to churches and communities in the early Church. They were written to encourage believers, correct theological errors, and offer practical guidance for living faithfully in their culture. Together, they address real challenges the early Church faced and give us timeless wisdom for our own faith journeys."

HIGHLIGHT: PROPHECY (Revelation)

Leader Notes to Share:

"Revelation is an apocalyptic book — the word 'apocalyptic' literally means 'revelation' or 'unveiling.' It was written by the apostle John as a letter to seven churches who were either drifting into unfaithfulness or enduring persecution under Rome and needing encouragement to stand firm. Through vivid visions rich in symbolic imagery, the curtain is pulled back on the cosmic battle between God and evil. The purpose: to assure believers of Christ's ultimate judgement of all evil; that God is faithful to His people, and Jesus will forever reign in His Kingdom."

TRANSITION TO DISCUSSION

Say something like:

"You've now color-coded the entire New Testament and can see visually how it's organized. You can see that it's not random — it's structured by purpose and tells a coherent story of Jesus and the birth of His Church. If you'd like, you can use this same color-coding system in your own Bible's table of contents to help you navigate Scripture going forward. Now let's talk about what we've learned and what it means for you as you approach Scripture."

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Have participants complete the discussion questions independently or in pairs, then lead a large group discussion.

PERSONAL FOLLOW-UP

- 1. Which New Testament book or section are you most interested in reading? Why?**
- 2. How is knowing the different genres helpful when approaching Scripture?**
- 3. What feels intimidating about reading the New Testament and how can you overcome those concerns or fears?**
- 4. How does understanding the New Testament help you see how it connects to the Old Testament?**
- 5. At the start of today you gave yourself a number reflecting how confident you feel about reading the New Testament. Where would you put it now?**

WRAP-UP THE LESSON

Say something like:

"Today you've discovered that the New Testament isn't a random collection of writings — each section has a distinct purpose and together they tell one complete story. Understanding this removes the intimidation factor and helps you know where to start when you're ready to read.

But here's an important truth: the New Testament matters because it shows us who Jesus is and what He came to do. Everything in the Old Testament pointed to Him, and the New Testament reveals His fulfillment of those promises. Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the world. In Luke 24:44-45, after His resurrection, Jesus told His disciples: 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then it says He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. The Old Testament and New Testament work together to tell one unified story of God's redemption through Jesus.

Now that you understand the structure of both testaments, you have a complete map of Scripture. Next lesson, we'll explore how all these different books fit together to tell that one big story."

GOING DEEPER THIS WEEK (OPTIONAL)

If you choose to include this element, see *Before You Begin* for guidance on assigning Scripture readings, equipping your group with the reference cards, and encouraging your participants to follow through each week.

BIBLE BASICS — LESSON 5 FACILITATOR GUIDE

What is the Story of the Bible?

LESSON PURPOSE

Participants will discover that the Bible tells one unified story — from Genesis to Revelation, every book, genre, and person points to the same through-line: God's relentless pursuit of people and His faithfulness to restore what was broken through Jesus.

LESSON 5: NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR

This lesson ties together Lessons 3 and 4 by showing how all 66 books tell one coherent story. Throughout this lesson, emphasize that the Bible's story is ultimately about trust — will humanity trust God and His good plans, or go their own way? And how God, in His faithfulness, provides the answer through Jesus. Keep participants engaged by asking them to fill in the movement names and take notes as you walk through the story.

DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN (OPTIONAL — 5-10 MINUTES)

If you choose to include this element, see Before You Begin for questions and instructions. This is a brief time of sharing how participants' walk with God and time in His Word has been going since the last session.

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Say something like:

"Today we're going to see something amazing: even though the Bible is organized into 66 books written by different authors across thousands of years, it tells one unified story. A story about God's love for people, humanity's failure to trust Him, and what God does about it.

Before we dive in, I want you to write down your best attempt at answering this question: **How would you describe the story of the Bible in one or two sentences?** Don't overthink it — just write what you think." *(Give them 2-3 minutes to write.)*

"Keep that answer — we're going to come back to it at the end and see if you want to add or change anything. Now, the story of the Bible unfolds in four movements. As we go through each one, fill in the movement name on your handout. Let's dive in."

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Handout the Participant Guide for Lesson 5 and something to write with. On their guide they will fill in the movement names, have space to take notes, draw a symbol for each movement, and have the discussion questions available to them. At the start of each movement, announce the movement name so participants can fill it in, then share the script. After the script, give them a brief moment to draw their symbol before opening up the discussion question.

MOVEMENT 1: CREATION

Participants fill in: Movement 1 = CREATION

Say something like:

"The Bible begins in Genesis 1-2 with God creating everything — light, land, oceans, plants, animals — and calling it good. But the most significant moment is when God creates humanity. Unlike everything else He made, God creates people in His own image. That means something remarkable: out of everything in creation, human beings are uniquely designed to reflect who God is to the world.

And God doesn't just create people and step back. He invites them into partnership with Him — to care for creation, to cultivate it, and to reflect His love and goodness into the world. This is God's original design: not people straining to reach a distant God, but people walking closely with Him, trusted with a meaningful purpose, and deeply loved by their Creator."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it tell you about God that His first act toward humanity was to create them in His image and invite them into partnership with Him?

MOVEMENT 2: REBELLION

Participants fill in: Movement 2 = Rebellion

Say something like:

"But then humanity faces a choice. In Genesis 3, a dark and mysterious creature approaches and plants a lie — that God is holding out on them, that He can't really be trusted, that they'd be better off deciding for themselves what is good and what isn't. And they believe it. Instead of trusting God and His good plans, they go their own way. The Bible calls this sin — and it's not just a behavior problem. It's a broken relationship. And sin has a consequence: death. Not just physical death, but spiritual separation from the God they were created to walk with.

What's sobering is that this isn't a one-time failure. As we read through the rest of the Old Testament — through the stories of kings and nations, of people who knew God and people who didn't — the same pattern repeats. Humanity keeps facing the same choice: trust God or go our own way. And again and again, we choose ourselves. The

consequence is always the same. It doesn't matter who they are or what they've been given — the cycle continues."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where do you see this same pattern — choosing your own way over trusting God — showing up in your own life or in the world around you?

MOVEMENT 3: REDEMPTION

Participants fill in: Movement 3 = Redemption

Say something like:

"God doesn't give up on His plan. In Genesis 12, He calls a man named Abraham and his wife Sarah and makes an extraordinary promise — that from them will come an entirely new people, a nation called Israel, who will have another chance to make the right choice. But Israel faces the same temptation humanity always has. Despite God's guidance through the Law and the prophets, Israel's leaders and priests lead the people astray again and again, choosing their own way over God's. The prophets warn them, and eventually, it leads exactly where they said it would."

So the question becomes: if even God's chosen people can't pass the test, who can? The answer is Jesus. He faces the same temptation in the wilderness that humanity has always faced — and He holds firm. Where we doubted God's goodness, Jesus trusted completely. Where we chose our own way, He walked in full obedience, even to the cross. He takes the full weight of our sin onto Himself, and His resurrection proves that faithfulness to God is stronger than sin and death. And through faith in Him, we receive new life — and the Holy Spirit to help us walk by faith, love, and obedience the way He did."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jesus passed the test that humanity could not and traded scores with us. What does it mean to you that He did that on your behalf?

MOVEMENT 4: RESTORATION

Participants fill in: Movement 4 = Restoration

Say something like:

"Now humanity is presented with a new choice. Will we continue going our own way, or will we step into the new way Jesus opened up — a life of trusting God, loving others, and following Him? In the book of Acts, we see what happens when people say yes. Ordinary men and women, filled with the Holy Spirit, begin living differently — loving their neighbors, forgiving their enemies, and forming communities built on faith and sacrifice rather than selfishness."

But it isn't easy, and the apostles know it. Paul, James, Peter, John, and others write letters to these young communities — encouraging them, correcting them, and calling them to stay faithful. And they point everyone toward a future hope: the day Jesus returns, makes all things right, and what God intended from the very beginning — humanity partnering with Him in a restored and beautiful world — is finally and fully realized."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it look like for someone who has received the new life Jesus offers to begin reflecting that in the way they love and relate to others?

CLOSING ACTIVITY: REVISED SUMMARY

Say something like:

"So the story of the Bible can be summarized like this: God creates people out of love and invites them into partnership with Him. Humanity breaks that partnership by choosing not to trust God. But God never gives up — He pursues, He promises, He sends prophets, and finally He comes Himself in Jesus to do what we never could. And now, through faith in Jesus and the help of the Holy Spirit, we're invited back into the life we were always meant to live.

Now, revisit the summary you wrote at the beginning. Based on what we've explored today, do you want to adjust, expand, or rewrite it? Take a few minutes."

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Give participants 3-5 minutes to write quietly. Then invite them to share their revised summary with a partner or with the full group — use your judgment based on time and how your group is engaging.

ROMANS 5 CONNECTION ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL)

Say something like:

"Before we wrap up, let's look at how Paul summarizes this same story in Romans 5:12-21. Read through these verses and as you do, see if you can spot the four movements we just walked through — Creation, Rebellion, Redemption, and Restoration. What does Paul say about sin, death, grace, and new life?"

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Only include this activity if you have 10 or more minutes remaining. If time is short, move directly to the Wrap-Up. Give them 5 minutes to read quietly, then discuss as a group. Guide the conversation toward how Paul traces the same pattern: humanity's inability/failure to trust God, the consequences of that failure, and God's faithful response through Jesus.

WRAP-UP THE LESSON

Say something like:

"Today you discovered that the Bible isn't a random collection of stories — it's one unified narrative about God's faithfulness and love. From the very first pages of Genesis to the last pages of Revelation, God is pursuing people, making a way back to Himself, and refusing to let the story end in brokenness.

That matters for how you read Scripture. When you encounter any story in the Bible — whether it's about Abraham, Moses, David, or anyone else — you're watching people face the same choice humanity has always faced: trust God or go our own way. And when you read about Jesus, you're seeing God's answer. He lived the life we couldn't live, died the death we deserved, and rose to offer us something entirely new. As you read this week, remember — you're not just reading ancient history. You're reading the story you're already part of."

GOING DEEPER THIS WEEK (OPTIONAL)

If you choose to include this element, see *Before You Begin* for guidance on assigning Scripture readings, equipping your group with the reference cards, and encouraging your participants to follow through each week.

BIBLE BASICS — LESSON 6 FACILITATOR GUIDE

How Do I Read the Bible?

LESSON PURPOSE

Participants will walk away with a simple, repeatable approach to reading Scripture — one that keeps them focused on who God is and gives them the confidence to open the Bible on their own.

LESSON 6: NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR

Many participants have never been shown how to actually read the Bible — they pick it up, feel lost, and put it down. This lesson gives them a framework they can use every single time they open Scripture. The Sword Questions are the heart of it — take time with the Hebrews 4:12 imagery before introducing the handout, and keep coming back to the emphasis that Scripture is primarily about God's character, not personal self-help.

DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN (OPTIONAL — 5-10 MINUTES)

If you choose to include this element, see Before You Begin for questions and instructions. This is a brief time of sharing how participants' walk with God and time in His Word has been going since the last session.

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Say something like:

"In the last lesson, we discovered that the Bible tells one unified story — about God's love for people, humanity's failure to trust Him, and God's faithful response through Jesus. Today, we're going to learn how to actually read it. Let's learn three essential practices for reading the Bible well."

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Give participants their Participant Guide for Lesson 6 and something to write with. On their guide, have them first fill in the skill for reading the Bible, read the verse(s) corresponding to that practice, fill-in the blank notes, and direct them to the discussion questions.

SECTION 1: PRAY

Participants fill in: PRAY

After reading Matthew 7:7-11, say something like:

"Jesus tells us to ask, seek, and knock. He promises that God will give good gifts to those who ask. This is the posture we bring to Scripture: a posture of asking, of seeking, of knocking on the door of God's Word."

As you approach Scripture, here are three things to pray for. Follow along on your guide and fill in the blanks as we go through them together.

First, approach God with a spirit of **humility** — recognizing that you don't have all the answers and that God's ways are higher than yours.

Second, ask Him to give you **wisdom and understanding** — pray that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to see what God wants to show you.

Third, ask for a heart open to His **will** and to **live** for Him — pray that you're not just gaining knowledge, but that God will transform how you live."

SECTION 2: ENGAGE

Participants fill in: **ENGAGE**

Say something like:

"The second practice is to engage the text. This means actually diving deep into what Scripture says, not just skimming it. Let's look at 2 Timothy 3:16-17 to understand why this matters."

After reading 2 Timothy 3:16-17, say something like:

"Paul tells Timothy that all Scripture is 'breathed out by God' and is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. This means Scripture is alive and active. It's meant to change us. So when we engage with it, we need to be thoughtful and mindful of how we engage and take in all that it has to offer. Follow along on your handout and fill in the blanks as we go through how to engage well.

STEP 1: Before you read, take a moment to **gather context**.

Ask yourself: What book of the Bible is this from? What genre is it — history, poetry, prophecy, letter, gospel? Who wrote it? Who was it originally written for? What was happening at that time? You can do a quick search in a study Bible or online to find this information. It only takes a few minutes and will completely change how you understand the passage.

STEP 2: **Summarize** what you read.

After reading the passage, summarize it in your own words. For narrative passages, retell who is in it, what happens, and the sequence of events. For non-narrative passages — letters, poetry, prophecy — ask yourself: What is the main point? Who is the author writing to and what does he want them to understand or do?

STEP 3: **Ask** good questions.

Here is a simple way to remember three simple questions to ask yourself as you read. In Hebrews 4:12, the Bible describes itself as a sword — living, active, and sharp enough to cut to the very core of who we are. With that picture in mind, imagine a sword held upright: the blade pointing to heaven, the handle pointing to the earth, and the hilt connecting the two. Each part of the sword represents a question you should bring to every passage you read.

THE BLADE — pointing up toward God: What do I learn about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit? The blade points upward, reminding us that every passage of Scripture reveals something about who God is — this is always the primary question. As you ask it, consider: What does this passage reveal about His character? What does it show you that He values? What does it tell you about how He sees or relates to people?

THE HANDLE — pointing down toward people: What do I learn about people? The handle points downward, reminding us that Scripture reveals what people are like. As you ask this question, think about it in three layers: What do I learn about the specific people in this passage? What does this reveal about humanity in general? And what does it show me about myself?

THE HILT — connecting the two: How is God calling me to respond? The hilt connects blade and handle — it's where what you've learned about God and people meets your actual life. A helpful way to ask this question is: How should I think, act, or trust God differently because of what I just read? You might also ask: How does God want me to pray differently? Not every passage will move you in the same direction, but every passage is asking you to respond somehow.

As you read any passage, ask yourself these three questions and write down what you discover.

To help you remember the Sword Questions, here are three simple hand motions you can use: arms toward the sky for the Blade, hands flat against your legs for the Handle, and both hands on your hips for the Hilt. As we do these motions, let's repeat the questions that stand for: What do I learn about God? What do I learn about people? How is God calling me to respond?"

SECTION 3: ASK FOR HELP

Participants fill in: **ASK FOR HELP**

Say something like:

"The third practice is to ask for help. Reading the Bible was never meant to be a solo endeavor — God designed us to grow in His Word together, in community. Let's look at what Proverbs 12:15 says about the value of seeking wise counsel."

After reading the scripture, say something like:

“Asking for help is part of faithful stewardship of God's Word. You don't have to figure it all out alone. Here are three tips for asking for help:

First, ask a **godly person**. Find someone in your faith community who knows Scripture well and ask them questions. A pastor, a Bible study leader, or a more mature believer can help you understand difficult passages.

Second, use a **Study Bible**. A Study Bible has notes and explanations that help you understand the context and meaning of passages. It's like having a wise teacher with you every time you read.

Third, consult **commentaries**. Commentaries are often written by biblical scholars who explain passages in detail. You can find them online or in your church library. Ask someone you trust to point you toward a reliable one.”

PERSONAL FOLLOW-UP

1. Which of these three practices — Pray, Engage, or Ask for Help — do you most need to develop?
2. How do you think consistently using this framework will change the way you approach reading the Bible?

WRAP-UP THE LESSON

Say something like:

“Today you've learned a simple framework you can use every time you pick up the Bible: Pray, Engage, Ask for Help. And within the Engage section, you have the Sword Questions — an approach to help you get the most out of your Bible reading. And remember — you don't have to figure it out alone. God gave you community, wise teachers, and good resources for a reason.

Here's what I want you to remember: the Bible is God's living Word. It's not a self-help book or a fortune-telling guide. It's about God and His character. But as you faithfully learn who God is, you'll discover how He wants you to live. And when you face struggles or need wisdom, Scripture will speak to you powerfully because you're encountering the eternal character of God revealed in His Word.”

GOING DEEPER THIS WEEK (OPTIONAL)

If you choose to include this element, see *Before You Begin* for guidance on assigning Scripture readings, equipping your group with the reference cards, and encouraging your participants to follow through each week.

BIBLE BASICS — LESSON 7 FACILITATOR GUIDE

Practice Reading the Bible

LESSON PURPOSE

Participants will apply the Pray, Engage, Ask for Help framework and the Sword Questions to two real passages — one from the Old Testament and one from the New — building confidence and habit through hands-on practice.

LESSON 7: NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR

This lesson is dedicated to hands-on practice of the framework from Lesson 6 — participants will work through two passages, one from the Old Testament (history) and one from the New Testament (letter). Encourage participants to work individually or in pairs, then share discoveries with the larger group. This reinforces learning and builds community. Practice 2 should only be attempted if time permits after Practice 1 — otherwise assign it as a take-home exercise and discuss it briefly at the start of Lesson 8.

DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN (OPTIONAL — 5-10 MINUTES)

If you choose to include this element, see Before You Begin for questions and instructions. This is a brief time of sharing how participants' walk with God and time in His Word has been going since the last session.

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Say something like:

"Last lesson, we learned a framework for reading the Bible: Pray, Engage, Ask for Help. And within the Engage section, we learned the Sword Questions that help us understand what Scripture is teaching us about God, about people, and about how to respond.

Today, we're going to practice. We're going to work through two passages — one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament — using the framework we learned. The goal is not perfection — it's developing a habit of engaging Scripture thoughtfully every time you read."

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Give participants their Participant Guide for Lesson 7 and something to write with.

PRACTICE 1: OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY — RUTH 1:1-18

Say something like:

"Our first passage is from Ruth. This is a history book in the Old Testament, and we're starting at chapter 1, verse 1 — the very beginning of the book. That's worth noticing, because in a history book, the opening usually gives you what you need: where we are, who's involved, and what problem is driving the story. Before we read, here's a little context: Ruth takes place during the time of the judges, before Israel had kings. A famine drives one Israelite family out of Bethlehem and into Moab, a neighboring country. What happens to that family in Moab sets the rest of the book in motion."

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Walk participants through the first part of their Participant Guide together before releasing them to work on the Sword Questions independently.

PRAY — Open with a brief group prayer asking God to open everyone's eyes and hearts to what He wants to show them.

ENGAGE — Work through the context questions together, having participants fill in their Participant Guide as you go. As you do, point out that most of this information can be found with a quick search in a study Bible or online:

- What book of the Bible is this? (Ruth)
- What genre is it? (History)
- Who wrote it? (The author is unknown)
- Who was it written for? (The people of Israel)
- What is the book about? (Ruth tells the story of a Moabite widow who leaves her homeland to stay with her Israelite mother-in-law, Naomi — and becomes the great-grandmother of King David, placing her in the family line of Jesus.)

Then **read Ruth 1:1-18** aloud together. Invite a volunteer to **summarize** — who is in the passage, what happens, and the sequence of events.

Release participants to work through the **Sword Questions** on their Participant Guide individually or with a partner. Give them about 10 minutes and circulate to help if needed. Then bring the group back together to share what they discovered.

When participants share, remind them that similar answers are a good sign — it's confirmation that what they're seeing is true. We're not looking for originality; we're here to seek the God who is already in the text. Affirm their observations, add any insights they may have missed, and let their discoveries lead the conversation.

TIMING NOTE

If you have 15 or more minutes remaining after Practice 1 sharing, move into Practice 2. If time is short, assign Practice 2 as a take-home exercise and briefly discuss it at the start of Lesson 8.

PRACTICE 2: NEW TESTAMENT LETTER — PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

Say something like:

"This passage is from Philippians, a letter in the New Testament written by Paul to a church in the city of Philippi. We're starting at chapter 1, verse 1 — the very beginning of the letter. That's worth noticing, because in a letter, the opening usually tells you who is writing, who they're writing to, and why. Paul wrote this letter while he was in prison, and he's writing to a church he loves deeply and is thankful for.

You're going to work through this passage using the framework."

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Walk participants through the first part of their Participant Guide together before releasing them to work on the Sword Questions independently.

PRAY — Open with a brief group prayer asking God to open everyone's eyes and hearts to what He wants to show them.

ENGAGE — Work through the context questions together, having participants fill in their Participant Guide as you go. As you do, point out that most of this information can be found with a quick search in a study Bible or online:

- What book of the Bible is this? (Philippians)
- What genre is it? (Letter / Epistle)
- Who wrote it? (Paul, an apostle)
- Who was it written for? (The church at Philippi)
- What is the book about? (Philippians is Paul's letter of thanks and encouragement to a church he loves. Writing from prison, he urges them to stand firm, live in unity, and find their joy in Christ.)

Then **read Philippians 1:1-11** aloud together. Invite a volunteer to **summarize** — What is the main point? Who is the author writing to and what does he want them to understand or do?

Release participants to work through the **Sword Questions** on their Participant Guide individually or with a partner. Give them about 10 minutes and circulate to help if needed. Then bring the group back together to share what they discovered.

When participants share, remind them that similar answers are a good sign — it's confirmation that what they're seeing is true. We're not looking for originality; we're here to seek the God who is already in the text. Affirm their observations, add any insights they may have missed, and let their discoveries lead the conversation.

WRAP-UP THE LESSON

Say something like:

“Today you've practiced the framework we learned in Lesson 6. You read two passages from different parts of the Bible and asked the Sword Questions. Notice what happened: you didn't just skim the verses. You thought about context. You summarized. You asked what God was teaching you, what you learned about people, and how God was calling you to respond.

From this point forward, every time you pick up the Bible, use this framework. Pray. Engage the text — understand the context, summarize, ask the Sword Questions. And ask for help when you need it. If you do this consistently, I am confident that Scripture will become alive to you in ways you never expected — not in strange or magical ways, but in the powerful, transformative way that comes from truly encountering who God is.

This is faithful Bible reading. This is how you encounter God's living Word.”

GOING DEEPER THIS WEEK (OPTIONAL)

If you choose to include this element, see *Before You Begin* for guidance on assigning Scripture readings, equipping your group with the reference cards, and encouraging your participants to follow through each week.

BIBLE BASICS — LESSON 8 FACILITATOR GUIDE

Why Can I Trust the Bible? – Historical Evidence

LESSON PURPOSE

Participants will examine two lines of historical evidence for trusting the Bible — eyewitness testimony and the integrity of the Gospel writers — so their faith is grounded in good reasons, not blind belief.

LESSON 8: NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR

This is the first of two lessons addressing doubts about Scripture's reliability. Many believers have heard objections to the Bible and don't know how to respond. Acknowledge that doubt is normal and healthy. Keep the lesson conversational and allow space for real questions. The goal is not to win arguments but to help participants see that there are good historical reasons for their hope in Jesus. Save the intellectual and spiritual balance discussion for Lesson 9.

DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN (OPTIONAL — 5-10 MINUTES)

If you choose to include this element, see Before You Begin for questions and instructions. This is a brief time of sharing how participants' walk with God and time in His Word has been going since the last session.

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Say something like:

"Peter writes: 'Always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that you have.' (1 Peter 3:15) That's what today's lesson is about — not winning arguments, but having real, honest reasons for the hope we have in Jesus and in Scripture.

Many of you have questions about whether the Bible can be trusted. Maybe someone has challenged your faith and you didn't know how to respond. Doubt is normal — it shows you take Scripture seriously. Over the next two lessons, we're going to look at historical reasons why we can trust the Bible because we do not have blind faith, but faith with good reasons.

Before we dive in, I want you to write down your own questions."

OPENING ACTIVITY: "WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE ABOUT SCRIPTURE?"

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Distribute the Lesson 8 Participant Guide. Let participants know they will use it throughout the lesson to read Scripture, respond to discussion questions, and build their Reasons for Hope tracker.

Give participants 3–5 minutes to write down questions they have about whether the Bible can be trusted — questions they've heard from others or doubts of their own. Remind them that no one else needs to see what they write.

Let them know you'll return to those questions at the end of Lesson 9.

SECTION 1: EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

Say something like:

"Let's start with one of the most important pieces of historical evidence we have. Paul, writing in 1 Corinthians 15, records what many scholars believe is an early creed — possibly dating within just a few years of the crucifixion itself." (Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

"Paul names specific witnesses — Peter, James, the Twelve, and more than 500 people at once. And then he says something remarkable: many of those 500 are still alive. He's not just making a claim — he's pointing to living people who can be questioned.

Luke does the same thing at the start of his Gospel." (Read Luke 1:1-4)

"Luke isn't recording rumors. He's saying, 'I did my homework. I talked to people who were there.' Peter makes the same kind of claim." (Read 2 Peter 1:16)

"Peter says they were not following cleverly devised myths — they were eyewitnesses of Jesus' majesty. They saw this with their own eyes."

OBSERVATION QUESTION

1. In your own words, how does this give you a reason for your hope in Scripture?

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Give participants a moment to write in their Reasons for Hope tracker under "Eyewitness Accounts" — what they want to remember from this section before continuing.

SECTION 2: THE HONESTY TEST

Say something like:

"Now let's look at something equally important — the honesty of the Gospel writers. One of the ways historians test whether an ancient source is reliable is by looking for details the author would have had every reason to leave out. If they included something embarrassing or culturally costly, it's usually because it actually happened.

Look at who the Gospels name as the first witnesses to the empty tomb." (Read Matthew 28:1-10 and John 20:11-18)

"In first-century Jewish culture, a woman's testimony was not legally valid in court. If the Gospel writers were inventing this story, they would never have chosen women as the first witnesses — it would have hurt their case. The fact that they included it anyway tells you something: they were committed to telling the truth, even when it was costly.

And that pattern shows up again and again. Look at what Matthew records about Peter." (Read Matthew 26:69-74)

"Peter denies Jesus three times — cursing and swearing. This is embarrassing. And Mark 14:50 tells us that when Jesus was arrested, every single disciple fled." (Read Mark 14:50)

"If the disciples were inventing a religion to gain power or influence, these details would be gone. But they're not. And here's what makes that even more compelling: all of them except John were eventually killed for their faith in the Resurrection. Tortured. Executed. And not one of them ever recanted. People do not die for something they know is a lie."

OBSERVATION QUESTION

1. In your own words, how does this give you a reason for your hope in Scripture?

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Give participants a moment to write in their Reasons for Hope tracker under "Honesty Test" — what they want to remember from this section before continuing.

PROCESSING ACTIVITY

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS:

Ask participants to review their completed Reasons for Hope tracker individually for 2–3 minutes. Then have them share the strongest reason they encountered with a partner. Invite 1–2 pairs to share briefly with the group.

WRAP-UP THE LESSON

Say something like:

"We've looked at eyewitness accounts and the honesty of the Gospel writers — including their willingness to die for what they saw.

Next lesson, we'll look at one more line of evidence — how we know the Bible we have today matches what was originally written. Then we'll talk about something equally important: the difference between historical evidence and faith. Because facts alone

don't create faith. But these good reasons help clear away barriers so people can encounter Jesus with an open heart.

For now, hold onto what you built today. Those are your reasons for hope."

GOING DEEPER THIS WEEK (OPTIONAL)

If you choose to include this element, see *Before You Begin* for guidance on assigning Scripture readings, equipping your group with the reference cards, and encouraging your participants to follow through each week.

BIBLE BASICS — LESSON 9 FACILITATOR GUIDE

Why Can I Trust the Bible? – Reliability & Faith

LESSON PURPOSE

Participants will add two final lines of evidence for Scripture's reliability — manuscript evidence and Jesus' own affirmation of the Old Testament — and then explore the difference between knowing evidence and having faith, so they are equipped to share good reasons while remaining open to genuine encounters with Jesus.

LESSON 9: NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR

This is the second of two lessons on Scripture's reliability. Lesson 8 covered eyewitness testimony and the integrity of the Gospel writers. This lesson adds manuscript evidence and Jesus' affirmation of the Old Testament, then shifts from evidence to faith — helping participants see that good reasons can clear away barriers, but faith itself is a gift from God that requires humility and openness. Allow space for lingering doubts in the closing activity, and be honest when you don't have answers.

DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN (OPTIONAL — 5-10 MINUTES)

If you choose to include this element, see Before You Begin for questions and instructions. This is a brief time of sharing how participants' walk with God and time in His Word has been going since the last session.

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Say something like:

"Last lesson, we looked at eyewitness accounts and the honesty of the Gospel writers. Today we're going to add two more pieces of evidence — how we know the Bible we have today is the same as what was originally written, and how we know we can trust the Old Testament too. Then we're going to talk about something equally important: the difference between knowing facts about the Bible and actually having faith in Jesus. Let's get started."

SECTION 1: THE MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE

Say something like:

"How do we know the Bible we have today is the same as what was originally written? It's been 2,000 years. Lots of copies have been made. Didn't the message get corrupted along the way?"

This is where the Manuscript Test comes in. When you play the game "Telephone," a message gets passed from person to person and usually comes out garbled at the end. But with ancient documents, we can actually check the transmission — by asking two

questions: How many copies survived? And how close are those copies to the date of the original? More copies means more ways to cross-check the text. A shorter gap means less time for errors to creep in."

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Point participants to the chart on their guide. Ask: "What do you notice when you compare the NT row to the others?"

Give them a moment, then explain that the chart compares three ancient documents historians already trust with the New Testament: the number of surviving copies and the time gap between the original writing and the earliest surviving copy for — Caesar's Gallic Wars, Plato's writings, and Homer's Iliad.

Make sure participants notice the gap column: the short time between the NT originals and our earliest copies is what makes the manuscript evidence so strong.

Say something like:

"Caesar and Plato each have a handful of surviving copies and gaps of over a thousand years. Historians accept them as reliable without question. The New Testament has thousands of manuscripts, with some fragments dating within decades of the original writing. By the same standard historians already use, the New Testament isn't just reliable — it's the most well-supported ancient document we have."

OBSERVATION QUESTION

1. In your own words, how does this give you a reason for your hope in Scripture?

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Give participants a moment to write in their Reasons for Hope tracker under "Manuscript Evidence" — what they want to remember from this section before continuing.

SECTION 2: WHAT ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT?

Say something like:

"We've focused mostly on the New Testament — the eyewitness accounts, the manuscripts. But what about the Old Testament? How do we know we can trust that?"

Here's where the evidence connects. If the NT is reliable — and we've established that it is — then it also confirms the OT. Here's why: Jesus quoted and affirmed the Old Testament. Look at what He says in Luke 24:44." (Read Luke 24:44)

"Jesus himself is treating the entire OT as authoritative Scripture. And the NT writers do the same — they constantly point back to the OT and say, 'This happened to fulfill what was spoken.' If Jesus is who He claimed to be — and the Resurrection evidence says He is — then His affirmation of the Old Testament carries enormous weight."

OBSERVATION QUESTION

1. In your own words, how does this give you a reason for your hope in Scripture?

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Give participants a moment to write in their Reasons for Hope tracker under "Jesus and the Old Testament" — what they want to remember from this section before continuing.

SECTION 3: FAITH COMES THROUGH HEARING

Say something like:

"We've now looked at several strong lines of historical evidence: eyewitness accounts, the Resurrection, the honesty of the authors, the manuscript evidence, and how Jesus himself confirmed the Old Testament. These are good reasons to trust the Bible. But I want to share something important: you cannot argue someone into heaven. Facts alone don't create faith. Listen to what Paul writes in Romans 10:17." (Read Romans 10:17)

"Faith is not just intellectual agreement with facts — it is a spiritual awakening. It comes through encountering God's Word with an open and receptive heart.

Our job is not to force belief. Our job is to present the evidence, answer questions, and help remove barriers so people can encounter Jesus with an open heart. But the actual awakening — the faith itself — that's God's work. Faith is a gift from God, and it requires something from us: humility, openness, and a willingness to let God change us.

Remember, Peter's words from 1 Peter 3:15: 'But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to everyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.' The evidence we've covered gives you good reasons to share. But how you share matters just as much. You're not trying to win an argument — you're trying to help someone encounter Jesus."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between knowing facts about the Bible and having faith in Jesus?

2. What barriers might keep someone from truly encountering Jesus even if they agreed with all the evidence?

RETURNING TO OPENING QUESTIONS (FROM LESSON 8)

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Invite participants to take out the questions they wrote at the beginning of Lesson 8.

Ask follow-up questions like: Did any of the evidence address your questions? Are there still doubts lingering? What was most helpful? Do you have new questions? Take these seriously.

If you don't have answers, say so honestly. Some helpful resources to point participants toward: Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christ* and C.S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*.

WRAP-UP THE LESSON

Say something like:

"Over these two lessons, we've looked at eyewitness accounts, the honesty of the Gospel writers, the manuscript evidence, and how Jesus himself confirmed the Old Testament. There are good, honest reasons to trust the Bible. Your faith is not blind.

But knowing the evidence is not the same as knowing Jesus. Faith requires surrender — coming humbly to God's Word with an open heart and being willing to let Him change you.

When someone asks you why you believe, you now have good reasons to share. But more than the evidence, you'll be able to point to your own encounter with Jesus — how you've met Him through His Word and how He's become real to you. That's faith with good reasons. And that's what these lessons have been building toward."

GOING DEEPER THIS WEEK (OPTIONAL)

If you choose to include this element, see *Before You Begin* for guidance on assigning Scripture readings, equipping your group with the reference cards, and encouraging your participants to follow through each week.

BIBLE BASICS — LESSON 10 FACILITATOR GUIDE

What Now? — Living Out What You Learned

LESSON PURPOSE

Participants will reflect on their growth over the series, make a simple plan for continued Bible reading, and consider how what they are learning can be shared with others.

LESSON 10: NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR

This final lesson is less about new content and more about consolidation and sending. The goal is not to introduce one more concept but to help participants see how far they've come and leave with a clear next step. Keep the pace unhurried — this is a session for reflection and honest conversation.

DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN (OPTIONAL — 5-10 MINUTES)

If you choose to include this element, see Before You Begin for questions and instructions. This is a brief time of sharing how participants' walk with God and time in His Word has been going since the last session.

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Say something like:

"I want to take a moment to recognize how much growth has happened over this series. You've learned what's in the Bible, how it's structured, what the big story is, how to read it, and why it can be trusted. That's a lot worth celebrating.

Today you will reflect on what you have learned, make a simple plan for applying it, and consider how you can share it with others."

SECTION 1: LET'S REFLECT

Say something like:

"To begin, you are going to reflect on what you have learned during this series. In Lesson 1, you took a self-assessment about your Bible knowledge and confidence. I'm going to give you a few minutes to retake it. Don't look at your original answers yet — just answer as you would today."

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Give participants their Lesson 10 Participant Guide and something to write with. Allow 3–5 minutes for them to complete the retake quietly. Then invite them to look back at their Lesson 1 assessment and compare.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What surprised you when you compared your answers?**
2. **What is one thing you understand now that you didn't when you started?**
3. **Where do you still feel uncertain or want to keep growing?**

Say something like:

"You have grown in your understanding of Scripture. And while there is so much more to discover and learning never stops, I hope this series has given you some confidence when opening up God's Word to hear from Him."

SECTION 2: LET'S APPLY

Say something like:

"Now that you have some understanding of how to approach God's Word, the real question is — will you? It is one thing to know facts and understand the value of something, and another thing to put it into practice. The Pray, Engage, Ask for Help framework is a valuable tool, but it doesn't work if you never open your Bible.

So before we leave today, we're going to make one simple plan — not a rigid schedule, but a starting point to help you develop the life-giving, relationship-driven habit of meeting with God through Scripture."

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Walk participants through two decisions on their Participant Guide. Give them 2–3 minutes to write, then invite a few people to share.

Decision 1: What book of the Bible will you read first?

If participants are unsure, suggest starting with Mark — it's short, fast-paced, and narrative — or Philippians, which is brief and easy to read in one sitting.

Decision 2: When is a realistic time in your day to read, even just 10 minutes?

Say something like:

"Those two decisions — a book and a time — are enough to begin. You don't need a yearlong reading plan. You need a first step. And if you miss a day — or several — don't be discouraged. God's grace is sufficient. Come back to Him and ask for the hunger and desire to meet with Him daily."

SECTION 3: LET'S SHARE

Say something like:

"The last thing I want to leave you with is this: what you've learned is not just for you.

Every time you open your Bible and really read it — with the framework you've learned — you are being shaped. And what shapes you comes out of you. It comes out in the way you talk about life, about hard things, about what you believe and why. When conversations come up — about faith, about suffering, about whether the Bible is real — you'll find you have something substantial to share. Not because you memorized the right answers, but because you've been in the Word.

The second thing is this: find someone to read with. It might be a friend who is curious about faith, or someone newer to the Bible than you are. You now have a framework you can hand to someone else — you know how to ask the Sword Questions, you know the shape of the Bible's story, and you know why it can be trusted. You don't have to be an expert. Simply invite someone to read the Bible with you and share what you've learned along the way."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Who in your life is curious about faith or the Bible?**
- 2. What would it look like to invite them into what you've been learning?**

WRAP-UP THE LESSON

Say something like:

"My hope is that through your Bible reading you find joy and confidence as you meet with God. Remember — knowing about the Bible is only the beginning. The goal was never just to learn about the Bible — it was to meet God in it. That is a lifelong journey, worth taking."

GOING DEEPER THIS WEEK (OPTIONAL)

If you choose to include this element, see *Before You Begin* for guidance on assigning Scripture readings, equipping your group with the reference cards, and encouraging your participants to follow through each week.