



# How To Lead A Life Group Bible Study

## Facilitating A Meaningful Discussion

*The aim of any Bible study should be to gain fresh knowledge and insight about Jesus Christ in a life-changing way. Your basic responsibility as a Life Group leader is to enable the group to discover for themselves what the Bible says and means. From this understanding meaningful application can be made for their lives.*

### What is an Inductive Bible Study?

An inductive Bible study is a simple way of studying Scripture that seeks to answer three questions about a given passage:

1. Observation: What does the passage say?
2. Interpretation: What does the passage mean?
3. Application: What does the passage mean for my life?

As Scripture can never mean something for us today that it never meant to its original audience, this is a way of studying Scripture that is helpful in discovering the true meaning of a passage. It is the method that you will use the most often in a Life Group setting.

### The Purpose:

The inductive Bible study method has been chosen for specific reasons:

1. It places the authority in the Bible and not in the Life Group leader.
2. It teaches group members a way to study and understand the Bible for themselves, not only in Life Group, but in their personal times of study as well. *“If you give a man a fish he can eat for a day. But if you teach him how to fish, he can eat for a lifetime.”*
3. It removes the Life Group member from dependence upon a pastor, Bible teacher, or author and builds confidence in them that they can understand the Bible for themselves.
4. It shows them how to teach others how to study the Bible.

Staff teaching is left for the weekly service; Life Groups are to be a place where Life Group members learn from one another. Although you have a leadership role, you are also a learner. Your main tools are good questions (and good ears!)—wise use of them will enable the group to study together.

### The Life Group Leader’s Responsibilities:

- The best Life Group leader is not a teacher, but a moderator. The real teacher is the Holy Spirit, and you must not get in His way. You should talk sparingly. If a group member asks a question, throw it back to the group. If the question is off the subject, weed it out—gently, but firmly.
- Your Life Group may be quite slow to respond, especially at the beginning. It’s better to pray silently with a smile on your face until the Holy Spirit prompts someone to answer than to get impatient and answer the question yourself.
- In order to draw out shyer members or quiet talkative ones, you might ask, “Can we hear from someone who hasn’t spoken up yet?” or “What does someone else think . . . (pause 3 long seconds) . . . Jeff?” Be sensitive to everyone in the group. They will enjoy the Bible study time more and learn better if they participate.
- *Relax!* Remember to keep your sense of humor; be ready to laugh at yourself, too. Be enthusiastic without being irreverent or overpowering. Lead in such a way as to encourage honesty and confidence in Life Group members.
- Be ready with questions that will stimulate discussion and not simply require one-word answers. You should include questions that lead the group members to **observe** the situation the passage describes, questions that draw out what the passage **means**, and questions that lead Life Group members to see how the truth of the passage can be **applied** to their own lives (observation, interpretation, application). Encourage questions from others, but refer them back to the group.



- It is not enough to listen to people. We must *hear* what they are really saying. As a group member yourself, comment on their contributions or ask questions for clarification or elaboration, as you would in a natural conversation.
- Allow freedom of expression so anyone in the group can say what is on his/her mind, but keep to the passage. Carefully challenge superficial answers by asking others to suggest additional ones. Finally, at the end, summarize into one or two clear points of fresh knowledge, insight, and challenge.

### **The Life Group Member's Responsibility:**

#### **In Preparation:**

- Use a good basic translation such as the NLT, NIV or NASB. It is best if all members use the same translation.
- In prayer, ask the Lord for wisdom before you begin your study. He promises to give it if you ask (James 1:5)! Also, when you pray, ask the Lord to show you what he has for *you* personally in the passage to be studied. The goal of the study is changed lives!
- Work through the scripture being careful to follow the inductive method and write down what you are learning.
- Pray for the other Life Group members as well. Ask the Lord to give them spiritual wisdom, love and joy in the Spirit, and changed lives as you begin to know them better you will become aware of other needs for prayer.

#### **In Discussion:**

- Even if you are a quiet person, what you have to say is important. If you are naturally talkative, deliberately control yourself to give the shy members a chance to contribute.
- As the discussion progresses, questions that are off the subject will undoubtedly come to mind. Save these for afterwards—if the group stays on the subject, you will learn much more quickly.

#### **In Summary:**

##### **A sensitive Life Group leader should:**

- Create an honest, open atmosphere of acceptance.
- Encourage free expression and questions, usually referring them back to the group.
- Give people time to think.
- Base authority on the Bible.
- Seek several viewpoints on significant questions.
- Distinguish between general knowledge, opinion, and Biblical fact.
- Summarize briefly and effectively.
- Be prepared to show Life Group members how to use extra-Biblical resources, e.g., New Bible Dictionary, [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com), concordance, and commentaries.

##### **Life Group members should:**

- Search the text and think together about what the text really says and what it means.
- Come expecting God to speak to them, desiring to learn and be transformed.
- Be humble and ready to listen and share with one another.
- “Think and link” → Listen to who’s speaking; then link your thoughts to theirs.
- Ask questions for clarification or deeper examination of a significant point.