

TEACH YOURSELF BIBLE READING GROUPS

A new resource for leaders of small groups of young people. Designed to let the Bible speak to your young people, and to allow you to train yourself to be an excellent Bible Mentor. For use in . . .

SCHOOL SU GROUPS
PRIMARY or SECONDARY
SU HOLIDAY GROUP-TIMES
BIBLE CLASS GROUPS
SEEKER GROUPS

Jesus replied, (to the Saducees in Matthew 22:29) "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God."

The Lord told Joshua in Joshua 1:7-8 . . .

"Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸ Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."

The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 119:105

"Your Word is a Lamp to my feet and a light for my path"

READ THE BIBLE WITH YOUR GROUP!

Paul wrote to Timothy in First Timothy 4:13...

“Devote yourself to the public reading of Scriptures”

After Ezra opened and read from the Book of the Law, Nehemiah said in Nehemiah 8:10...

“This is a Holy Day to The Lord Your God. Don’t be sad or cry...go and enjoy”

Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16...

“All Scripture is God breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

THE “WOW” FACTOR

If you are leading a group of young people every week, or you’re leading a small group of young people at some sort of residential activity, then have confidence and open the Bible with them, ensuring they have their own copy. Make it your aim to read a chapter or less together, and use the questions in this booklet to allow people in your group to begin to explore the bible for themselves. It may take just 20 minutes at a time. It may take more time. There is no other material! We’re not messing around. Expect someone in your group to respond with a “wow!” at some point.

YOU ARE THEIR MENTOR

Resist the temptation to preach, teach, or be a priest/go between – your job is to guide, to show the young people how to handle their own bibles, and over time, to give them the confidence to engage with the Bible for themselves, and to love doing it!

YOU ARE THEIR LEADER

If you believe and have confidence in the power and trustworthiness of God’s Word, then be their most excellent Christian role model, and open the Bible with them, and let them see that you are serious about reading the bible yourself! Role modelling is a key learning method for young people. Be a good one. Your aim is simply to show young people how to find their way around their Bibles, and help them to develop a way in which to engage with it. The rest is up to God.

BELIEVE in the POWER of GOD’S WORD

As you lead your group, the task is simple – Let the Bible speak! Make sure everyone has his/her own Bible, find the chosen text, pray, read it together, briefly outline the context, ask the questions, allow the young people to comment with

their own answers, and be prepared to be surprised by God! You never know – it may lead to young people asking their own questions; it may lead to prayer; it may lead to a hunger for more; it may lead to praise – it all depends on the Holy Spirit, not on you!

SOME USEFUL TOOLS

It's useful to have an SU Bible Timeline displayed somewhere in the room. It's also useful to have a displayed copy of the Bible Library or contents page of the bible for reference.

CHOOSING CHAPTERS

You can start anywhere, but I'd recommend starting with Luke's gospel for first encounters. Whichever chapters are chosen, select the relevant set of questions contained in this booklet for the type of writing and fire ahead.

EXPECT GOD TO SPEAK TO YOU TOO!

You are not the world's leading authority on the bible and how it applies, so read it with your group with a real attitude of humility, and don't go in there ready to preach, teach, rebuke, guide, or convict. Let the Holy Spirit teach you! Let the Holy Spirit guide you!
Let Him convict you!

YES! ENJOY ALL THOSE GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

We must spend a lot of time building relationships with the young people in our cell group – games, adventures, new experiences, fun, laughter, listening, etc, but we cannot afford to neglect opening the bible with our group. If we are to be Christian leaders or youth workers who aspire to be effective for the Kingdom of God, the 2 things we need to cultivate are a love for young people, and a confidence in God's Word – obeying it and believing in its' power.

"I've taken time out to reflect on over 30 years in children's and youth ministry in Scotland, having led many school SU groups and church youth groups, weekend camps, SU Holidays, missions, Christian Focus Weeks etc. I've reflected on the people I've met and worked with in Scotland, England, Zimbabwe, Australia and other places. I've considered all the International conferences and consultations I have been involved in, including recent reports, and I'm grateful to writers of a number of books I have now read.

I believe we should re-commit ourselves to relational ministry with open Bibles, and I want to invite all who are involved with young people to live by the Book and to open it with young people throughout our Scotland in. I want to offer this simple tool to encourage volunteers and "professionals" alike to spend good quality time mentoring regularly with groups of children and young people, by simply opening the Bible, reading it together, and asking one another some good questions.

I believe that Bible reading, and responding to it, are the key ingredients to God bringing revival."

Go for it!

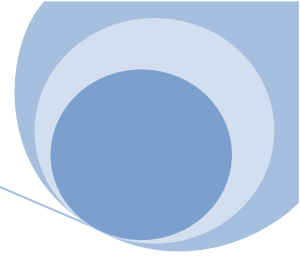
Kenny McKie

HERE'S WHAT TO DO!

“Now don't get me wrong – I love using and seeing good and powerful presentations for young people – DVD clips, Youtube downloads, etc. We use them at SU Holidays and in schools and in church all the time. But all that without sitting down in a circle with bibles open and expecting God to speak is really limited!

Circle Time in Scotland's Primary Schools is very often the most important time of the day, and the most effective tool for communication and sharing! Don't you just love the idea of Circle Time with God at the centre, ready to speak, ready to listen?”

- ✓ **Sit in a circle**, everyone comfortable, making sure that each has his/her own copy of the Bible. They may have brought their own (preferable), but you may have provided a copy from your resources.
- ✓ **Open the Bible** at the selected passage, and help young people to find the passage, using the contents page, or using a Bible library chart.
- ✓ **Pray** that God will speak to us from the passage we are about to read. Ask a child to pray.
- ✓ **Expect God to speak** from His Word! Explain to the group that we are here to listen to what God is saying to us.
- ✓ **Read the selected passage.** Some young people may volunteer to read it, or you can read it yourself. Make sure that everyone is able to find the place before you start.
- ✓ **Ask** the group to keep their Bibles open and then simply begin to ask the questions (on the following pages) for this type of passage.
- ✓ **Encourage the group to participate**, and resist the temptation to answer yourself.
- ✓ **Pray again.** Thank God for what He has said in this passage.
- ✓ **Finish.** But be prepared to answer some good questions from your group members as you participate in the rest of the group's activities!



QUESTIONS FOR JESUS' TEACHING PASSAGES

(Parables and sermons in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.)

1. Can someone point out (on the timeline), when this took place?
2. Who was listening to Jesus?
3. If this is a parable, can you work out what Jesus is teaching the listeners and us?
4. If this is straight teaching from Jesus, can you put into your own words something that Jesus was telling His listeners?
5. What do you feel about what Jesus says?
6. What do you find hard about what Jesus says?
7. Is there something in what Jesus says that you think would change the world or change you?
8. Is there something here you'd like to put into practice in your own life?
9. How much do you believe what Jesus says?

“Don't be tempted to go straight into questions that the young people want to ask – leave that till after the 20 minutes with the Bible open, and concentrate on showing them around the Bible, and giving them access to the Bible. You don't have all the answers – God does, and this is His Word! We've got plenty of time to discuss questions that arise during the rest of the activity programme, or during lunch, or whatever.”

QUESTIONS FOR NEW TESTAMENT NARRATIVE PASSAGES

Did you know that a growing number of “New Generation” churches are setting up Bible Reading Groups and are meeting in places like Costa and Bean Scene?

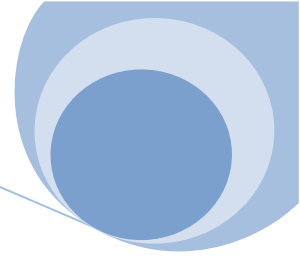
Brian Ingraham, pastor of RE:Hope church in the Hillhead area of Glasgow, has committed his church to setting up these groups as a means of encouraging a love for God’s Word.

They are a bit like Book Reading Groups except they’re reading the Bible.

Having a Bible Reading Group over lunch in school is not as old fashioned as it sounds!

(Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts)

1. Can someone point out (on the timeline), when this took place?
2. Can someone describe what happened as if he/she were there?
3. Who were the main characters involved?
4. How would you feel if you were there and why?
5. What do you think is the most important thing that happened, and what does it show us?
6. What do we learn about what God is like?
7. What might Jesus be telling you to do?
8. Is there someone in this story that you want to be like? Why?
9. What’s your favourite bit? Why?



QUESTIONS FOR OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE PASSAGES

1. Can someone point out (on the timeline), when this took place?
2. Can someone describe what happened as if he/she were there?
3. Who were the main Characters involved?
4. How would you feel if you were there and why?
5. What do you think is the most important thing that happened, and what does it show us?
6. What do we learn about God from what you've just read?
7. What is God telling you to do?
8. Is there someone in this story that you want to be like, or don't want to be like? Why?
9. What's your favourite bit?

The Old Testament is a must for studying, because God doesn't change, and Jesus knew His Scriptures. You may be tempted to think that the only place to read with young people is in the Gospels, but the whole of Scripture is God's Word, and God's dealings with His people show us so much about His patience, intolerance of sin, desire for a relationship with His created people.

Sure, the world of the Old Testament is far removed from the world of today's young people, but there are so many similarities – gossip, bullying, dysfunctional families, murder, wars, natural disasters, immorality, etc. God's way of dealing with and instructing His people brings many insights into the way He thinks of us today.

QUESTIONS FOR READING NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

These letters to people in the early Christian Church and to their leaders give us clear instructions in belief and how to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. They have to be read as letters, so knowing the context in which they are written is vital to our understanding of them, and to our application of the teaching.

It would be a good idea, if you are going through a particular book, to spend a bit of time explaining who wrote it, what circumstances he was in, what life was like for the hearers when some of these letters were read out. Make up some sort of permanent visual aid to which people can refer as you go through the book.

1. Can someone point out, on the Bible Time-Line, when these words were written?
2. Who wrote these words? Do we know? What do you know about the writer?
3. To whom were these words written?
4. What was the world they lived in like? How does it compare to your world?
5. Can you summarise what he is saying?
6. What is the main thing he is saying to the people?
7. What is God saying to you?
8. If you are a follower of Jesus, is there something you should be doing or not doing?
9. What bit challenges you most?
10. What bit excites you most? Why?

QUESTIONS FOR BOOKS OF PROPHECY

1. Who wrote this passage and why?
2. Point out, on the Bible timeline, when it was written.
3. What things were happening at this time?
4. What is God saying to His people?
5. Is there a warning in this passage? What is it?
6. Is there something God wants His people to do?
7. What do you learn about what God is like?
8. Does God say the same things to us today?
9. What bit challenges you most?
10. Is there a promise here?

The Old Testament Prophets, and John who wrote Revelation, spoke words on behalf of God to His own people in their situation at various times. God speaks to His people with words of warning, of encouragement, and ultimately of His plans for rescuing His people.

It's really important to research who wrote the book you are studying, and what are the circumstances around which the words were written, BEFORE you embark on a study, and to put up some sort of visual aid in the room for reference.

And of course, there are all the references to salvation and the coming Messiah in the Old Testament prophecies, and to Heaven and the reign of the Lamb over all creation in Revelation.

Present situations may be difficult, but God has plans!

QUESTIONS ON BOOKS OF POETRY

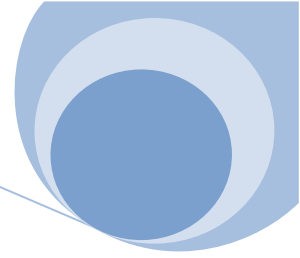
Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon are all poetic books which give response to God and which show us how we should worship Him with all our lives.

The writers' experience of God is very personal at times, and allows us to compare our experience of God with theirs, and even allows our complaints to God to be expressed!

It may be appropriate to allow members of your group to consider their response to God at this point in their lives, and to allow them to express it in some way, through prayer or through writing their own song to God, or even praying the psalm

Why not be creative and put up a blank sheet for people to write up their thoughts and songs to God?

1. Who wrote this passage and why?
2. Point out, on the Bible Timeline, when it was written.
3. What sort of things were happening at the time?
4. What was the writer feeling about God at this time?
5. What do these words say about God?
6. What do these words say about the writer?
7. Is there a good example to follow?
8. What excites you most in this chapter?
9. What challenges you most from these words?
10. What does the text say about what it means to be human?
11. Could you say these things about God today?
12. How do you feel about God at the moment?



QUESTIONS FOR BOOKS OF THE LAW

1. Who wrote these words?
2. To whom were they written?
3. Point out on the Bible Timeline, when they were written.
4. What do you think their world was like?
5. In what ways is their world similar to yours?
6. Is there a command to obey?
7. What do these words tell us about God?
8. What do these words tell us about what people are like?
9. Are there words here which could apply to you?
10. What excites you about this passage?
11. What puzzles you about these words?

You may not find a lot of joy in Leviticus, but you will find some incredible insights into God's expectations of His people, and therefore into the mind of God! It could blow away the idea that some young people have, that God is made in their image! He is an awesome God, and He means business with His people.

These books have always to be read with close reference to the New Testament and to the work of Christ, and they give essential teaching on many of the great themes of the Bible, and it is certainly true that you can barely understand Christ's mission without some understanding of these books!

3 Really Useful Resources



A 16 panel timeline each illustrating a key person or event in Bible history - from the creation of the world in Genesis 1 to the promise of a 'new heaven and a new earth' in Revelation 21. Underneath each picture, key dates and events are highlighted. Bible references will help you locate the stories in the Bible quickly and easily.

Four-part A4 illustrated Bible Timeline laminated cards with adhesive strips to assemble into a single poster if required. It would make an ideal poster for a child's room, children's room at church, or a school classroom or library.

The timeline is used to help children locate individual Bible stories within the bigger history of God's people. **£11.99**

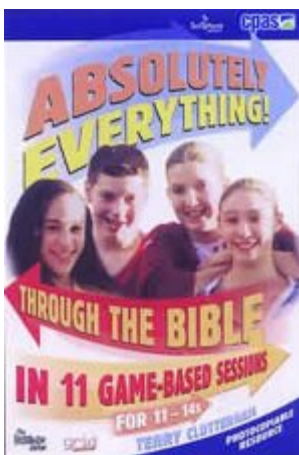
Readership: Children's group leaders

Author: Rachel Coupe

Author Profile: Rachel Coupe is a church worker in Derbyshire and was involved in the development of Light for Scripture Union.

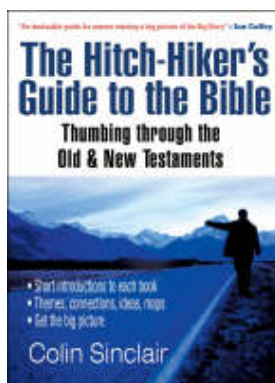
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