

The Parables of Jesus SMALL GROUP STUDIES

A few words about starting a Small Group in your home

Studying the Bible in a small group can be a wonderful experience. Since this website is dedicated to Bible Study... we, of course, recommend pursuing a Bible Small Group. However, there are many kinds of Small Group meeting through a local church. Some are Bible studies; some are Fellowship oriented, Game oriented, or have a special theme in support of a local church program. Some questions come up immediately.

1. What is the purpose of your group? As mentioned above, there are many reasons to have a small group. From the start... you should have a purpose already set in your mind.

2. Is your small group plan dependent upon the connection with your local church? Many churches use small groups to give their people more time in the Word of God. Sometimes that takes the form of studying what the pastor preached the preceding Sunday, and sometimes what he is planning on preaching the following Sunday. If you meet for fellowship reasons... what are you going to do to maintain good fellowship? Whatever your direction - plan ahead.

My wife and I have had a small group in our home for the past 16 years. We've had many formats that often depended upon some larger plan provided by our church. Many of our groups met to specifically study a book of the Bible. Some of our meetings together were on a Bible theme. We have a small home but we found that with a couple folding tables and some extra chairs we could handle up to 20 people. We maxed out one year with a College & Career group at 22 members. With the College & Career nights, since we have become older, we made sure that the group had effective leadership of their own age plan and run the meetings. Joan and I provided leadership in the Bible teaching and weekly logistics.

In every case, we found that having a meal with each other was the key ingredient for group studies - no matter what the central theme was. Food definitely brings everyone together, relaxes everyone, and settles them for a rich time of Bible study, prayer, and fellowship. We often had participants remain in our home for a few hours following our meeting - just because, over time, we totally enjoyed each other.

USING THESE LESSONS IN A GROUP BIBLE STUDY OR SUNDAY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

These lessons are being developed specifically for a Small Group experience. Each meeting is designed to take about 3 hours. Let's just say 6-9pm.

6:00 to 6:30 - This plan included about an half hour of pre-dinner fellowship as everyone participates in food prep, setting up for dinner, and welcoming each other.

6:30 to 7:00 - Dinner buffet style - get your food, drinks, utensils, sit down, pray together, eat. Quick clean-up and take our places for studying. In some groups we stayed at the table to study, in others we moved to chairs and couches. We found that deeper Bible studies were more effective when staying at the table for writing space and convenience.

A typical Schedule:

7:00 to 7:10 - Prayer for each other, the study to follow, and other important issues (no dragging on about social issues or personal hobby horses).

7:10 to 8:30 - Bible Study. We have always had rules for our studies. The teacher teaches, interruptions for questions are to be kept to a minimum. We try to keep the "but, my Bible says this!" or those who have a need to be the focus of a group to a minimum of interruption. As an experienced teacher it's my job to keep the group "On Track" (without being rude or hostile - but to get the point across that the leader leads, and the teacher teaches. "Please save your discussion on that point for after the study." I have been in classes where the teacher does not quench the interrupters and anarchy blossoms and those classes fail at their purpose: To become educated in the Word of God in order to become an effective and whole Christian.

8:30 to 8:45 Corporate prayer for each other and church life. Make it known that prayer is for all, not just the sick. Prayer is also not a time for gossip and telling stories that are masquerades for gossip. It is important to remind everyone that they are in this group for Spiritual growth, for becoming more like Jesus, and for growing closer to God the Father - becoming biblically educated for a lifetime in eternity.

THE LESSONS THEMSELVES

Each of these studies exists in two from on this website. The first, like this page you are now reading, is a web document. It is possible to Cut & Paste directly from this webpage and build your own Bible study from copied

portions. Since most everything on this site is developed and written by me... I give you permission to use any and all of it for your own purposes, with the exception that you may not reproduce these materials and call them your own or publish them as your own. You may copy these pages freely for use in another Bible study in a limited number of copies. Items which are copyrighted by others must be protected and should not be copied or quoted without their permission. The second form is a PDF file of each study that can be easily downloaded. My rules are the same for those copies as well. Free - in limited numbers.

You may also notice that I use large type (Verdana 16pt). I've found over the years that most adults and young people find the larger text more readable. If you desire the document be in smaller type or font, you can simply copy each page onto your clipboard and past it into a blank document in a word processor application, change the font size and print.

Each of the studies was, by design, intended to be formatted in Four sections.

First, is a brief introduction to the verses involved. There is information about the portion of Scripture that the verses come after so that, if needed, we can understand the context of the Parable in question.

Second is the verses themselves. Sometime there is only one set of verses from only one of the Gospels, sometimes two, sometimes three (Matthew, Mark, Luke). None of the parables has its roots from the gospel of John.

Third is a set of comments concerning the Scripture verses themselves. If there are multiple lessons in a set of verses then there will be multiple commentaries to match.

Fourth, is a "wrap-up" commentary on the verses presented in each lesson.

Fifth, is Questions, followed by the same Questions with Answers.

Example: Lesson #2, "You are the Light of the World"

Introduction

Matthew 5:14-16

Commentary and applications

Mark 4:21-25

Commentary and applications

Luke 8:16-18

Commentary and applications

A Wrap-up Commentary

Follow-up Questions without Answers

Follow-up Questions and Answers

We, in this case, learn the most from Matthew's gospel. Then we look for things that Mark adds to the discussion, then we do the same with Luke's gospel. In the summaries we first seek to see what Jesus was saying through each writer and then seek to understand the whole message as revealed across all three gospels. We don't want to see the forest without also seeing the trees, we also don't want to see the individual trees - without seeing the forest.

I, when teaching a small group, typically print everything except the Follow-up Questions and Answers. We do the answers together without the answer sheet. When we're done, I hand out a printed answer sheet to go with the lesson - and I encourage each member to go back over the material and, if possible, teach it to someone - Learn one, Teach one.

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Jeremiah 18:15
"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path"
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