



verses
we know
by *heart*

*discovering the
details of familiar
Old Testament passages*

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LEADER'S GUIDE

Dear Small Group Leader,

Welcome! I am so excited that you have answered God's call to teach the Word in a small group setting. I pray that God will bless you and bring you much joy. My goal in providing this study guide is simple: *to get people into the Word of God for themselves*. As you teach, encourage the participants to really jump into Scripture and study what God is saying through the pages of the Bible. I am praying that this six-week journey will help believers cultivate a deeper walk with God.

Through the next six sessions, you and your group will discover many new things about some of the more familiar Old Testament passages of our faith. As a teacher, you are more than merely a facilitator—you are a mentor, friend, and disciple. Come along side the participants in your group and support them during this season through prayer, discussion, and follow-up. I challenge you to commit to praying for each of the students. Get to know your class, and look for ways to encourage them. Pour yourself into their lives, and share your heart with each person who meets with your group. I promise that the benefits of small group gatherings far surpass the pages of a guide. Expect the unexpected, and prepare to forge new friendships. Delight in the ways that God has brought your group together for such a time as this.

I am assuming you will have to decide whether you will be meeting in a church setting, a community room, or even in someone's living room. Sometimes we have to get creative with our meeting spaces, don't we? Whatever venue you choose, the space you use can negatively or positively impact your meetings, depending on how intentional you are about providing a safe place to share feelings, desires, and questions of faith. Be sure that the phones are off, the noise is to a minimum, and you have created an appropriate environment for conversation, transparency, and prayer during each session.

Some quick questions about the overall study setting:

Have you decided how you would like the room to be set up?

Will you be in an informal setting with chairs in a circle or more formal rows of chairs? Do you prefer a classroom setting with long tables and access to a chalkboard?

Do you like to teach while standing at a podium, sitting in a chair, or leaning on a stool?

These may sound like simple questions, but they will shape the dynamics of your group interaction. Figure out which setup is most comfortable for you, and what type of teaching environment you would like to foster. Informal chair placement (circle, etc) is more conducive to discussion, and rows of chairs facing a podium provide more of a lecture setting. Both work well. This is your class—go with what God impresses on your heart, and be ready to change if necessary.

Each week, consider providing the following things:

- Nametags (they really do help foster a sense of familiarity, especially with people like me who are terrible of remembering names.)
 - Prayer list (make time each session to pray for each other, and a list helps the group keep track of how God is moving in the lives of those they pray for.)
 - Roster (do you want to keep in touch, and foster new friendships? A roster is a great way to provide the resources needed to cultivate a network of friends.)
 - A willing spirit and open mind.
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In this guide, there are some suggested questions and thoughts for you. These hints and helps are designed to complement what is provided in the study guide, but they are in no way intended to limit you as a leader. Feel free to come up with additional challenging questions and thoughts. Look up relevant news stories that relate to the passage, research commentaries on the passages, and interject your own stories when you can. God has placed you in the lives of this group for a reason—be ready to share from your heart.

You will notice that this leader resource has a supplement for each of the six sessions, and gives extra information and details to help with your planning. For each week, we will include three supplemental segments: teacher thoughts, quick questions, and suggested extras. Hopefully these added features will help you incorporate discussion points and teaching tools that will augment the study guide used by the students. I also encourage you to journal your thoughts during your preparation time. I suggest you use whatever journal is most comfortable and useable—some people use pretty books, while others use spiral or composition notebooks. Find what works for you, and use it. Journaling is a great way to process feelings, thoughts, and insights. It also gives you a glimpse into your spiritual growth journey.

If you have any questions for me, or need clarification on any part of the study material, please feel free to contact me through my website, www.ministryforlife.com. We are on this road of faith together, my friend!

Praying for you, and thanking God for your servant heart,

Jennifer

Introductory Class

If you planned an introductory session, where you will hand out books and have a welcome time, here are some hints:

- Go around the room and have each person share her name and an interesting fact about her life.
- Pass the roster around so each person can add her contact information, and have a prayer request and prayer time.
- Distribute books, and go through an overview of the study guide.
- Emphasize the fact that we will be looking into some of our favorite “sound byte” Old Testament verses, and will discover some of the background information of these passages.
- Highlight the introduction text, and set the stage for the next six sessions together.
- Looking at the chapters, ask the students which passages are most familiar to them.
- If you have extra time to prepare, you can type out the six main passage references, print out the list, and hand them out to the class.

For an extra challenge, have the class memorize the passage or the verses you select from that passage each week. Give incentives or make up songs or clever ways to help the verse memorization. For your convenience, I have listed one memorization verse at the end of each week’s teacher guide for you to use. You will notice that sometimes it is not the sound byte verse but a different part of the passage. This is intended to help cultivate a new perspective in the student—but you are welcome to use which ever verse you like for your memorization activity.

You may want to suggest that each person in the group use a journal in addition to the study book. You could also invite them to journal extra thoughts in the margins of the study guide. There are many ways to encourage learners to track their thoughts and Scripture discovery—and this is a good thing.

Week One

Welcome to the first week with your class. I trust that your time of preparation has gone well, and that you are ready to jump into this study with enthusiasm and excitement. I pray that you will have an awesome class session this week, and that God will speak to each person in your group in a special way.

Did you decide which kind of room setup suits your teaching style? Are you prepared with nametags, class syllabus with dates and your contact information, and extra pens and pencils?

Teacher Thoughts:

As you study the creation account in Genesis, journal the ways that your Creator God has blessed you. What parts of creation thrill you the most? I delight in seeing a beautiful sunset, while my husband enjoys watching the waves of the ocean crash against the shoreline. When your group gets together, you may want to ask your group this same question as an opening exercise. Engaging the group in discussion right from the start will foster a deeper relational setting for the duration.

*** Take your time to nurture discussion and budding friendships. Be mindful that everyone has a chance to participate, and that no one dominates the discussion. This is a fine art, so be patient with yourself and others.*

Quick Questions:

1. In Day One, we talk about Jesus being present in the creation story. Ask the group if they are surprised by this, and how they reacted to this truth in their time of study.

2. In Day Three we talk about the misplaced worship of stars, sun, moon, and celestial beings. In Day Four we discuss the issue of animal worship, using the story of the Israelites. Ask the group where we see this kind of false worship in today's culture. (Look for discussion points about astrology, pagan sun and moon worship, animal worship, etc.)

Suggested Extras:

In today's culture, the opposing views of creation and evolution clash in heated discussion. In our study this week, we see that God's Word clearly positions the Father as creator of all things. Your class may enter into a dialogue about the contrasting views, and I encourage you to use Scripture as the ultimate answer for this question. As you go through the study segments, you'll be able to point out details that confirm God's presence in the creation of the world, sun, moon, and stars. There are some terrific resources that discuss the issue of creation. A website that is useful for shedding light on a biblical perspective is *Answers in Genesis* (www.answersingenesis.org).

Memory Verse:

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” – Genesis 1:1

Week Two

Congratulations! You've made it through the first lesson, and have established the flow of your small group experience. Are you praying for your attendees? Are you praying for God to use you in mighty ways in their lives? Times of small group interaction are rich in relationship as well as learning. Take time to minister to the needs and hearts of your group; showering them with the love of Jesus.

Teacher Thoughts:

The Ten Commandments can become a legalistic set of rules, or an overlooked gem from Scripture. Our goal in this week's lesson is to understand the role of the Law in the life of today's believer. Jesus fulfilled the Ten Commandments; He didn't abolish them. Encourage your participants to embrace the teachings found in this week, and to make the connection between the "ten" from the Old Testament and the "two" from the New Testament. The New Testament "two" are found in the Great Commandment: love God and love others.

Quick Questions:

1. Ask the group which one of the Ten Commandments is the most difficult one for them to keep. Then, in relation to God's grace through Jesus Christ, explain how even in our weakness, Jesus forgives.
2. In Day Two we talk about the Sabbath rest. Ask the group how they spend their Sunday. Is it restful? Do they feel refreshed? Discuss ways that we can intentionally become more restful on the Sabbath.
3. Have someone in the class read Mark 12:30-31. Explain that this is called the Great Commandment. Compare this to the Ten Commandments from the Old Testament. Show how the ten from the Old and the two from the New are related.

Suggested Extras:

Many scholars have provided commentaries on the Ten Commandments, and there are extensive books and study guides that address the issue. Check and see if your church or library has resources on the Ten Commandments that you can use for a more in-depth look. Also, consider displaying a poster of the Ten Commandments in your small group setting as a reminder.

The Way of the Master ministry has excellent resources on how to use the Ten Commandments as an evangelistic tool (www.wayofthemaster.com).

Memory Verse:

"You shall have no other gods before Me." -- Exodus 20:3

Week Three

Welcome to Week Three! Hopefully the class is getting to know each other, and you are forming a bond and a friendship that will last long after our six weeks together are finished. This week, we will move away from the familiar foundations of creation and the Law, and catch a glimpse of a familiar sound byte about our relationship with God.

In my house, I have Proverbs 3:6 on a plaque hung over my sunroom's doorway. It serves as a reminder to our family that as we acknowledge the Lord, He will guide our steps and keep us in His perfect will. What portions of this week's Scripture passage are posted in your home, church, or mind? What impact does that reminder have?

Teacher Thoughts:

Proverbs 3:5-6 is seen on posters, key chains, t-shirts and artwork all over our country. I challenge you to really dig into the passage and find new life application thoughts for this truth found in Proverbs. Use your journal this week to write out ways that you have leaned on your own wisdom, and to record ways you would like to lean on the Lord more fully. As you read through the entire passage, what key points do you learn?

The takeaway for the group this week is the magnitude of God's role in our lives. He is our Savior, Redeemer, and our source for daily wisdom. We can get into a lot of trouble doing what is right in our own mind. By keeping in step with the Lord and His commands, and living each day in obedient surrender to Him, we experience confidence, wisdom, and intimate relationship with the Father.

Quick Questions:

1. Ask the group to share a story about a time when they, or someone they knew, messed up while trying to be "wise in their own eyes." Use Day Three's story as an example.
2. Use Day Four's reminder of Noah to talk about how Noah's wisdom was from God. Compare that to how the people around him would have teased and taunted him, relying on their own wisdom and understanding in the situation and times they were in. What was the result? Whose wisdom was correct, and what understanding prevailed? Talk about how God's ways are so different from our ways, and how important it is to stay focused on the Lord's leading in every situation—no matter what it may look like to others.

Suggested Extras:

Ask the group to describe where they have seen this verse written, whether in devotions, gift items, artwork, etc. Consider bringing in examples of these items for display. Talk about how this week's lesson has given them new insight into the passage, and what impact that will have on them the next time they see the sound byte verse.

Memory Verse:

"For the Lord will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught." – Proverbs 3:26

Week Four

This lesson will draw from more emotion and experience of the small group participant than the last three sessions. Inevitably, this study of Psalm 23 will create a mood of reflection, respect, and nostalgia. Embrace the mood of the class, and take this week to nurture each individual where they are and in what they have experienced. This week will give you a glimpse into the lives of your group that might otherwise be hidden from view. Again, I encourage you that this journey together is building relationships, and authentic community, as well as Bible knowledge. At the end of the session, I pray that every head will be held high, and each heart will be comforted with the understanding that God is with them . . . no matter what they experience this side of eternity.

Teacher Thoughts:

In the midst of this study on Psalm 23, keep in mind the victory we have in Jesus. When students share about a loss or hardship, validate those feelings and expressions, and encourage the group that believers who pass from this life enter into a glorious rest without pain or hurt. They enter the rest of the Lord. When stories are shared that reveal hardship and suffering, try and sweetly mention that God is our Comforter, and that He will be with us even in our times of desperate need. Using David's story as a teaching outline, we can keep focused on the context, and away from an overwhelming reliance on emotion and opinion.

Quick Questions:

1. Talk with the class about this passage's use during funerals, etc. Ask them if they have lost a loved one, and if this psalm was quoted in that time of sorrow. How does this week's lesson build on that previous exposure to the words of Psalm 23? Get them to the next step in their understanding of Psalm 23.
2. Discuss David's story as studied in this session. What new understanding has the group gained in light of the passages you have read? How does understanding David's story help us deal with our own lives today?
3. In Day Two, we talk about David praising God no matter what he faces. Ask people to share how they have praised God in difficult circumstances.

Suggested Extras:

In Day Five, we mention a list of truths tucked into this psalm. If you have time, type this list out, and give each person a copy to post in her home as a reminder of God's love and active role in her life. If you are crafty, use rubber stamps, or other creative items to decorate this list. You could even make small magnets with this list for the participant to post on her refrigerator. Take time to pray at the end of this group session, praising God for His presence, protection, and provision in our lives.

Memory Verse:

**“Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” – Psalm 23:6**

Week Five

On the heels of Psalm 23 comes the timeless truth of Ecclesiastes 3. The seasons of life come and go, but our God remains forever. This week's lesson will draw the participant into an introspective look at the emotional and physical seasons we experience.

Are you praying for each person in your group? Be sure to take time for prayer requests and prayer time during each session. If someone has not been to class in a few weeks, take time to call them or write them a quick email to see how they are doing. You never know what season of life they might be experiencing!

Teacher Thoughts:

Taking a look at Ecclesiastes will be a great journey for you and your group. Many times I have quoted from this book of the Bible, especially the revelation that there is nothing new under the sun! Take time to share with each other about the various seasons you experience in life, and how these seasons work together to provide a colorful journey of faith. Explore how these seasons cause spiritual growth and understanding.

Be sure to talk about the last quote of the chapter—Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. Read it out loud, and sum up the discussion of the day with the confidence and assurance that no matter what seasons we face, God is God, and we are not. Encourage the participants to focus on the Lord, to obediently follow Him, and to understand that God is the final judge.

Quick Questions:

1. In Day One we talk about appointed times. Ask the group to share the dates they remember during the year, whether it be birthdays, anniversaries, or other significant events. What happens if someone forgets this appointed day?
2. In light of Day Two, ask the group to describe a season where God turned their mourning into dancing or weeping into laughing.
3. Take a moment to review the story for Day Four. Ask if anyone can relate to Sister Sally Sue, or if they have seen her in their own church experience. Relate the discussion to the dynamic of being busy versus being obedient to God.

Suggested Extras:

Take a few minutes to lightheartedly discuss the popular song from the 60s that set this passage to music. If you have a willing group, you may even want to bring a CD player and play the tune as people are coming into class.

Memory Verse:

“There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1

Week Six

Welcome to Week Six. How does it feel to be on your last session together? Thank you for your commitment to this study material, and to the group the Lord has given you in this class. May He bless you for your obedience to His call, and your delight in His Word.

Teacher Thoughts:

This last passage is a great one to finish with. God is our strength, and an overwhelming majestic Lord of all. None compare to Him, and none is greater. In my stories this week I talk about Moses again, and also go back to the wonder and miracle of creation. This passage of Isaiah kind of sums up and relates to our entire journey, as it points out the God who comforts us, redeems us, and compares to none.

Quick Questions:

1. As we begin our lesson of Isaiah 40, I talk about God proclaiming His glory to Moses. Share this passage with the group (Exodus 33:6-7) and discuss how the passage impacts you. Is this how you imagine God describing Himself? How does His description differ from your impression of Him?
2. In Day Two we talk about idols made of wood, clay, and other materials. Discuss religions of the world that worship idols, and how these idols fall short of the God of the Bible.
3. In light of the first four days of our study time, how does the sound byte verse in Day Five have new meaning for you and the group? Share the ways this lesson has magnified the assurance we have in the One True God and in our strength as we wait for Him.
4. End the class with a praise-filled thought on how we are truly living this life with a hope of eternity. Share how wonderful it is to know that as a believer, we will escape the perils of hell, and enjoy eternal fellowship with God through His Son Jesus Christ. If you have anyone in your group who is not a believer, or you are not sure if she has truly made Jesus Lord of her life, take time to present the gospel—this is the perfect segue to do so. Give an opportunity for questions and for a prayer of commitment.

Suggested Extras:

Do some research on the Internet or in books about other religions and idols that are worshiped. Bring in photos, printed material, or books that will show the group what idols look like, and how they are dependent on man to create them, keep them from falling, and to preserve them. Talk about how these idols cannot speak, move, or do anything . . . see them for the true material they are, simply wood, stone, etc.

Memory Verse:

**“Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundation of the earth?” – Isaiah 40:21**

Final Thoughts

If you are going to teach another class right after this one, take time either at the beginning or end of the last session to share what study material you will be using, and ask people to sign up for the next study. Believe me, sign up sheets work, and they help people stay motivated in their pursuit of small group interaction.

You may want to arrange for a social or potluck gathering to follow the last class. Such closing activities help nurture an ongoing relationship between class members. Take time to enjoy each other and the trek you have been on together. If you do have a special time of fellowship, be sure to tell the group that I praise God for you and for them. Your dedication to Jesus and His Word is a joy to my soul.

Thank you for joining me on this journey. Be sure to check out my website, www.ministryforlife.com for information on my speaking ministry, my twelve week Bible study, *Life Principles for Christ-like Living*, and updates on upcoming books and studies.

Much love in Christ,

Jennifer
