

BESTSELLER LEADER'S GUIDE

In this six-week series, we take a deeper dive into the most famous book in the world - the Bible. There are over 100 million copies of the Bible printed every single year. It is by far the best-selling book in the world year after year. It was written over a period of 1,500 years and it is made up of 66 smaller books. In fact, the Bible is a library of books and had over 40 different human authors that were involved in the writing of this book. It's truly an astonishing work!

We have packaged this content into a six-week series that includes:

- a Sunday preach on the current topic
- a mid-week video that explores a topic on a more practical level (this is done in a LifeGroup setting)
- a weekly challenge related to the current topic
- a 36-day devotional

Our prayer is that by the end of the six weeks, you'll be ready to commit to being a lifelong reader, obeyer and sharer of God's Word!

Download the six mid-week videos at: <https://cityhillchurch.co.za/bestseller/>

SMALL GROUP STUDY

SUGGESTED MEETING OUTLINE (90 MINUTES)

TEA, COFFEE & SNACKS (15 min): This is a great way to begin a meeting and to break the ice. Once people have got something to eat or drink, they engage in conversation with others. It helps people transition from what they were doing before they arrived.

CONNECT (10 min): Open each meeting by briefly discussing an icebreaker question or two that will help focus everyone's attention on the week's topic.

VIDEO (20 min): There is a video for the group to watch together each week. Ask everyone to turn to the Small Group Session in their Best Seller Workbook. Fill in the blanks in the lesson outlines as you watch the video and be sure to refer back to these outlines during your discussion time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (25 min): Each video segment is complemented by several questions for group discussion (see the back of this guide). Please don't feel pressured to discuss every single question. There is no need to rush through the answers. Give everyone ample opportunity to share their thoughts. If you don't get through all of the discussion questions, that's okay.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE (10 min): Each week you will be challenged to commit to one goal in one area of the series.

PRAYER (10 min): At the end of each session you will find suggestions for your group prayer time. Praying together is one of the greatest privileges of small group life. Please don't take it for granted.

TIPS FOR THE LEADER

1. The study guide material is meant to be your servant, not your master. The point is not to race through the sessions; the point is to take time to let God work in your lives. Nor is it necessary to “go around the circle” before you move on to the next question. Give people the freedom to speak, but don’t insist on it. Your group will enjoy deeper, more open sharing and discussion if people don’t feel pressured to speak up.
2. Keep an eye on time during your meeting. Sticking to the agreed start and finish time is important to build trust in your group. If people want to discuss something further, they can do so after the group session has been ‘officially’ closed - by doing this it gives people who need to leave promptly a chance to do so.

NOTES:

TOP TEN IDEAS FOR NEW LEADERS

CONGRATULATIONS! As the leader of your group, you have courageously stepped out in faith to help others to grow in their faith! Thank you for the important contribution you will be making. As you prepare to facilitate your group, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind: Remember you are not alone. God knows everything about you, and He knew you would be facilitating your group. Even though you may not feel ready, this is a common feeling for most good leaders! God promises, *“Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you”* (Hebrews 13:5 NIV). Whether you are facilitating for the six weeks of the Best Seller series, or on a long-term basis, you will be richly blessed as you serve.

1. **Don't try to do it alone.** Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy team. If you can enlist a co-host to help you shepherd the group, you will find your experience much richer. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is ask people to help. You may be surprised at the response!
2. **Be friendly and be yourself.** God wants to use your unique gifts and temperament. Be sure to greet people at the door with a big smile ... this can set the mood for the whole gathering. Remember, they are taking as big a step to show up at your group as you are taking to lead a group! Don't try to do things exactly like other leaders; do them in a way that fits you. Admit when you don't have an answer and apologise when you make a mistake. People appreciate authenticity.
3. **Prepare for your meeting ahead of time.** Preview the session and write down your responses to each question.
4. **Pray for your group members by name.** Before your group arrives, take a few moments to pray for each member by name. You may want to review the **Small Group Prayer List** at least once a week. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of each person in your group. Expect God to lead you to whomever He wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead.
5. **When you ask a question, be patient.** Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes people need a moment or two to think about the question. If silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple “thank you” or “great answer”. Then ask, “How about somebody else?” or “Would someone who hasn't shared like to add anything?” Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who aren't ready to say, pray, or do anything. If you give them a safe setting, they will blossom over time. If someone in your group is very quiet and sits silently through every session, consider talking to them privately and encouraging them to participate. Let them know that they are important to you and that the group would value their input. Remember, still water often runs deep.

6. **Provide transitions between questions.** Ask if anyone would like to read the Bible verse for example. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.
7. **Break into smaller circles of three or four occasionally.** With an opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply more quickly what they're learning, and ultimately get more out of their small group experience. A small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate and tends to minimise the effects of a more vocal or dominant member.
8. **Small circles are also helpful during prayer time.** People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. Also, prayer requests won't take as much time, so circles will have more time to actually pray. When you gather back with the whole group, you can have one person from each circle briefly update everyone on the prayer requests from their subgroups. The other great aspect of sub-grouping is that it fosters leadership development. As you ask people in the group to facilitate discussion or to lead a prayer circle, it gives them a small leadership step that can build their confidence.
9. **Rotate facilitators occasionally.** You may be perfectly capable of leading each time, but you will help others grow in their faith and gifts if you give them opportunities to host the group.
10. **One final challenge (for new or first-time leaders).** Before your first opportunity to lead, look up each of the six passages listed on the opposite page. Read each one as a devotional exercise to help prepare you with a shepherd's heart. With your heart prepared in this way you will be more than ready for your first meeting.

VERSES ON GOD'S HEART FOR PEOPLE

MATTHEW 9:36 (NIV)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

JOHN 10:14-15 (NIV)

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep.

1 PETER 5:2-4 (NIV)

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-5 (NIV)

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider other better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of other. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

HEBREWS 10:23-25 (NIV)

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:7-8, 11-12 (NIV)

But we were gently among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so clear to us ... For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW LONG WILL THIS GROUP MEET?

This series is six weeks long. We encourage your group to add a seventh session for celebration. In your final session:

- new group members may decide to join your existing LifeGroup on a more permanent basis
- in the case of a six-week group set up for the Best Seller series, you may decide to continue to meet on a more permanent basis
- in the case of a six-week group that is closing at the end of the series, you may need to help with connecting new group members into other existing LifeGroups.

WHO IS THE LEADER?

The leader is the person who coordinates and facilitates your group meetings. A few weeks into the series, you may want to encourage one or two members to lead one of your group discussions. Other responsibilities, such as refreshments, prayer requests, worship, or keeping up with those who miss a meeting, can be rotated or allocated to group members. Shared ownership in the group helps everybody grow.

HOW DO WE HANDLE THE CHILD-CARE NEEDS IN OUR GROUP?

Child-care needs to be handled very carefully. This is a sensitive issue. We suggest you seek creative solutions as a group. One common solution is to have the adults meet in the living room and share the cost of a babysitter (or two) who can be with the kids in another part of the house.

SMALL GROUP GUIDELINES

It's a good idea for every group to have a guide regarding shared values, expectations, and commitments. These are not a set of rules, but a guide to enable the healthy function of the group. We suggest you briefly discuss these 5 guidelines during your first meeting in order to lay the foundation for a healthy group experience.

IMPORTANT GROUP VALUES:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. CLEAR PURPOSE | To grow healthy spiritual lives and develop friendships with others. |
| 2. GROUP ATTENDANCE | To give priority to group meetings (let us know if you are unable to make it or coming late). |
| 3. SAFE ENVIRONMENT | We want to create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes). |
| 4. BE CONFIDENTIAL | To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group. |
| 5. LIMIT OUR FREEDOM | To limit our freedom by not serving or consuming alcohol during small group meetings or events so as to avoid causing someone else to stumble (1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Romans 14:19-21). |

We have also discussed and agreed on the following items:

CHILD CARE _____

STARTING TIME _____

ENDING TIME _____

SMALL GROUP CALENDAR

Healthy groups share responsibilities. Shared ownership ensures that responsibility for the group doesn't fall to one person. Use the calendar to keep track of who's bringing eats, communicating changes in venue etc. Complete this calendar at your first meeting. Planning ahead will increase attendance and shared ownership.

DATE	SESSION	SNACKS	NOTES
	Session 1		
	Session 2		
	Session 3		
	Session 4		
	Session 5		
	Session 6		

ANSWER KEY

SESSION ONE

- ... but on **every word** that comes from the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4.
- To keep **growing** in our **faith** and our **relationship with God**.
- All Scripture is **God-breathed** and is **useful** for teaching... may be thoroughly **equipped** for every **good work**. 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
- To bring peace in our **thoughts** and our **emotions**.
- Do not be **anxious** about anything, And the **peace of God**, ... guard your **hearts** and your **minds**...
- It is good for your **physical health**.
- ... forget my **teaching**, ...they will **prolong** your **life** ...
- To receive **forgiveness** and to keep us from **sinning**.
- ...forgive us our **debts (sins)**. Matthew 6:12.
- I have hidden your **word** ... not **sin** against you...
- To receive **guidance** from Him.
- Your word is a **lamp** for my feet, a **light** on my path...
- ... Spirit **lead me** on level ground. Psalm 143:10.
- Have a **plan**,
- If you fail to plan, you **plan** to **fail**.
- Find a regular **time** and **place** ... time with God.
- Find a **Bible** and a **reading plan** that works for you.

SESSION TWO

- Choose a Bible that **works** for **you**.
- There are different **versions** of the Bible.
- Many publishers have added **resources** ...
- ... Holy Spirit to help you **understand** the **words**.
- ... he will **guide you** into all the truth." John 16:13.
- Find a **reading method** that works for you.
- Make **notes** while reading the Bible.
- **Write down** key verses, thoughts, questions...
- Prioritise **Sunday services** and **small group** ...
- designed to be understood in **community**.
- ...to the apostles' **teaching** and to **fellowship**...
- The fact that you are in a group now is **fantastic**.
- **Memorise** special Bible verses.
- I have **hidden** your **word** in my heart...
- Undertake occasional special **study projects**.

SESSION THREE

- ...yet you refuse to **come to me** to have life...
- Prayer is **two way** communication with God.
- It involves **speaking and listening**.
- ... and to fellowship ... and to **PRAYER**. Acts 2:42
- ...withdrew to lonely places and **PRAYED**. Luke 5:16
- "... how you should pray: “**our Father** in heaven, hallowed be your name, **Your kingdom** come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. **Give us** today our daily bread. And **forgive us** our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And **lead us** not into temptation...
- My sheep **listen** to my voice... John 10:27
- Thinking about God's **character** and **actions**
- It involves focused **thought** and **contemplation**.

- ...and who meditates on his **law** day and night.
- ...O God, we meditate on your **unfailing love**.
- ... that I may meditate on your **promises**.
- I meditate on **all your works** and consider...

SESSION FOUR

- What did this passage mean to **those people** ...
- What does this passage teach me about **God**?
- What does it mean for **me now**?
- What **action** ... to become more like **Jesus**?
- help to know what a **priest**, **Levite** and **Samaritan**...

SESSION FIVE

- Look for the most **obvious** literal meaning first.
- The use of **figurative** language in scripture...
- ... speck of **sawdust** in ... the **plank** ...
- Look at the **passage** to understand the **verse**.
- ... 'plans to **prosper** you... **hope** and a **future**.
- Look at the **book** to understand the **passage**.
- ... it's actually a **collection** of **66** different... books.
- It is made up of different **types** of
- ... "What **type** of literature is the ..."
- ... example of the need for **context** ... book of Job.
- Look at **passages** through a **God-centred** lens.
- What could **God** be trying to say to the **world** ...
- e.g. I will make **justice** ... and **righteousness** ...
- Make use of other **study** resources
- e.g. **study** Bibles
- Bible **commentaries**
- Bible **handbooks**
- Bible **dictionary** etc.

SESSION SIX

- The Bible is a **manual** for **life**.
- God-breathed and is **useful**... thoroughly **equipped**
- **The Bible is a love letter from God to me**
- **The Bible is a powerful gift that will change me.**
- For the word of God is **alive** and **active**.
- **Commit to being a lifelong student of God's Word.**
- ... bread alone, but on **every word**
- Open my eyes that I may **see** wonderful things in
- Bible **paraphrases**
- Bible **software**
- Bible **apps**
- The **Bible Project**
- Commit to being a lifelong **obeyer** of God's Word.
- ... of mine and **puts them** into **practice** is...
- ...Anyone who loves me will **obey** my **teaching**.
- Commit to being a lifelong **sharer** of God's Word.
- The **unfolding** of your words gives light...
- make disciples of all nations... **teaching them** ...

WEEK 1 – 5 Reasons to Have a Regular Devotion

TEA, COFFEE & SNACKS (15 min)

START TALKING (10 min)

1. If this is your first time meeting as a group, or if you have any new group members, introduce yourselves, if you haven't already.
2. Share with the group what you hope to get out of the Best Seller series.

WATCH THIS WEEK'S VIDEO (20 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (25 min) (Pick at least one question from each section)

START THINKING

1. Every one of us has exactly 168 hours in a week. We don't have time for everything - we have to make time for the things that really matter. What three things currently take top priority in terms of your time each week?
2. What do you think of the idea of setting time aside for a devotion time each day?

START SHARING

1. Steve spoke about five reasons to have a regular devotion:
 - a. To keep growing in our faith and our relationship with God.
 - b. To bring peace in our thoughts and our emotions.
 - c. It is good for your physical health.
 - d. To receive forgiveness and to keep us from sinning.
 - e. To receive guidance from Him.

Which of these spoke to you the most? Which of these was most surprising for you?

2. If we don't have a plan for reading the Bible, we often find it difficult to know where and how to start, and how to keep the momentum going. What has your approach been to reading the Bible up until now? Has it worked well or not? What changes do you need to make to have a meaningful daily devotion?

START PRAYING (10 min)

Does anyone in the group have a prayer request? Use the SMALL GROUP PRAYER REQUEST page to write these down and then pray for them.

START DOING (10 min)

This week set your devotional times in your calendar (like you would a doctor's appointment) and do your best to keep those daily devotional appointments.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE:

Have a devotion time on at least four of the next seven days. If you can do all seven – even better!

WEEK 2 – 7 Ways to Study the Bible more effectively

TEA, COFFEE & SNACKS (15 min)

START TALKING (10 min)

1. Is there something that stood out to you from last week's devotional that you can share with the group? And how did your weekly challenge go?
2. How did (or didn't) you tackle studying for tests and exams at school/university?

WATCH THIS WEEKS VIDEO (20 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (25 min) (Pick at least one question from each section)

START THINKING

1. What stood out most to you from this talk?
2. Steve shared about a United States Airforce Study which showed that the average person forgets 90% - 95% of everything we hear unless we write it down. Do you agree with this research finding? How much of what you read (in the Bible or other information) do you feel you retain?
3. Think about a Bible verse that you've memorised. Why is it special to you? What helped you commit it to memory?

START SHARING

1. What Bible reading methods have you used? What about those methods have made it difficult for you to keep up with regular Bible reading? What has worked well for you?
2. Steve spoke about prioritising LifeGroup meetings because the Bible was designed to be understood in community. What do you think of this idea? If you have been part of a LifeGroup before this series - how has it helped you to dig deeper into God's word and understand it better?

START PRAYING (10 min)

Re-visit the prayer requests from last week. Have any prayers been answered? Does anyone have something more to add to the list? Spend some time praying for these things.

START DOING (10 min)

Steve shared three Bible reading methods. Which one are you going to put it into practice this week?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE:

There are a number of good reasons to memorise Scripture - one being that it renews our minds and transforms our lives. This week, your challenge is to memorise Philippians 4:6-7 - *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

WEEK 3 – The Importance of Prayer & Meditation

TEA, COFFEE & SNACKS (15 min)

START TALKING (10 min)

1. Is there something that stood out to you from last week's devotional that you can share with the group?
2. How did you do with last week's challenge to memorise Philippians 4:6-7?

WATCH THIS WEEKS VIDEO (20 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (25 min) (Pick at least one question from each section)

START THINKING

1. What stood out to you from today's talk?
2. Biblical meditation includes thinking about God's character and actions in the context of His Word. What three words would you use to describe your current view of God's character?
3. Think about the Lord's prayer (Our Father...). Up until now, have you viewed it (and used it) as a model for prayer, or has it been just a prayer that you recited at school or other occasions?

START SHARING

1. Steve said that it's possible that you may have been participating in this Bestseller group and you have thought to yourself over the last couple of weeks, "I am not sure I have got a relationship with God - I am not sure I am a Christ-follower." Is there anyone in this group that said the sinner's prayer for the first time (or made a re-commitment) tonight? *Note to leaders: please make a special point of celebrating anyone who made a commitment!*
2. John 10:27 says: *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.* Share about a time that you've heard the Shepherd's "voice"? What took place?

START PRAYING (10 min)

Re-visit the prayer requests from last week. Have any prayers been answered? Does anyone have something more to add to the list? Spend some time praying for these things.

START DOING (10 min)

Work on your prayer habit this week. If you're not used to praying, start by using the Lord's prayer as a model for how to pray.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE:

Steve shared a practical example on how to meditate on God's Word. This week, make a point of choosing one Scripture, write it down, and use what you've learned to meditate on the Scripture. Be sure to make notes on what you discover and anything that God highlights for you. If in doubt, use Psalm 23.

WEEK 4 – How to Apply the Bible to My Daily Life

TEA, COFFEE & SNACKS (15 min)

START TALKING (10 min)

1. How did last week's challenge to meditate on a Bible verse go? What did you learn? Is there anything that you came across that you didn't understand?
2. Are you a rule follower or do you have a tendency to break the rules?

WATCH THIS WEEKS VIDEO (20 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (25 min) (Pick at least one question from each section)

START THINKING & SHARING

As a group, using the method Steve shared in the example of the good Samaritan, answer these four questions about the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32):

1. What did this passage mean to those people at that time?
2. What does this passage teach me about God?
3. What does it mean for us now?
4. What action should we be taking to become more like Jesus?

START PRAYING (10 min)

Re-visit the prayer requests from last week. Have any prayers been answered? Does anyone have something more to add to the list? Spend some time praying for these things.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE:

This week, apply these four questions to one of your Bible readings (make notes of your thoughts)

1. What did this passage mean to those people at that time?
2. What does this passage teach me about God?
3. What does it mean for us now?
4. What action should we be taking to become more like Jesus?

WEEK 5 – 5 principles to understand difficult Bible verses

TEA, COFFEE & SNACKS (15 min)

START TALKING (10 min)

1. Last week's challenge was to apply the four questions to one of your Bible readings. How did it go?
2. How did you study difficult topics at school/university? Did you learn the work "parrot fashion" or did you have another method to help you understand the topic better?

WATCH THIS WEEKS VIDEO (20 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (25 min) (Pick at least one question from each section)

START THINKING

1. What stood out to you from today's talk?
2. It was 5 weeks ago that we started this series. What has impacted you most about reading the Bible through the series so far?
3. Have you come across any difficult Bible verses in your readings? What were they? And how has today's talk helped you approach difficult verses in the future?

START SHARING

1. Read Luke 9:23-26. This is a challenging verse to understand and obey. What do you think Jesus means when He says these words? What do they mean to you at this time in your life?
2. Have you made use of any of the additional study resources Steve mentioned? Which have you found most useful and why? (Study Bibles, Bible commentaries, Bible handbooks, Bible dictionaries etc.).

START PRAYING (10 min)

One of the most powerful forms of prayer is thanks. Spend a few minutes thanking God for as many things as you can think of before heading to the PRAYER REQUESTS list.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE:

Memorise Psalm 23. It is only 6 verses long, but it is very profound!

WEEK 6 – Being a Life-long Student of the Bible

TEA, COFFEE & SNACKS (15 min)

START TALKING (10 min)

1. Did anyone manage to memorise Psalm 23? And what stood out to you from your readings this week?
2. When you get a new appliance, are you the kind of person that reads the manual first to figure out all the functions and how it works or are you a “I’ll figure it out as I go” kind of person?!

WATCH THIS WEEKS VIDEO (20 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (25 min) (Pick at least one question from each section)

START THINKING

1. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. How do you see the Bible being useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness? Give a practical example or two of how it has helped you.
2. Steve said that the Bible is a love letter from God to us. How have you seen God’s love through the Bible during this series?

START SHARING

1. What one thing from the Bestseller series has had the biggest impact on you?
2. Matthew 28:19-20 tells us to: *go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.* Have you ever shared about your faith with anyone else? How did it go? Who could you invite to church or LifeGroup with you once the series has finished?

START PRAYING (10 min)

1. Father God, we commit to being lifelong students, obeyers and sharers of Your Word. Create a burning desire in us to know and understand the Bible better, and a passion to share Your Word with others.
2. Do a final review of your prayer requests. Thank God for prayers answered!

START DOING (10 min)

Steve asked us to make three commitments. If you’re committed to these three things, make a note of your commitment somewhere (put today’s date on it!) and go back to it regularly to remind yourself of what you committed to.

1. Commit to being a lifelong STUDENT of God’s Word.
2. Commit to being a lifelong OBEYER of God’s Word.
3. Commit to being a lifelong SHARER of God’s Word.

THIS WEEKS CHALLENGE

Join a LifeGroup to continue growing in your faith with other believers!

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