

Guidelines for a weekly Bible study

There are many ways to organise and lead a Bible study, and the needs of every group of people who engage in Bible study will be different. What is offered here is therefore one example of what can be done using ROOTS resources. It is aimed at the non-specialist (i.e. it assumes no particular Bible knowledge or training), and the 'DIY' home group which may not have a formal leader. It should be adapted to suit local needs.

Preparing for Bible study

It is important to consider what those present want to get out of this time together. Adults learn best when they are 'in charge' of their own learning. So, don't assume you already know what is wanted; ask the members of the group. Use the insights gained to plan the session and choose from the many options available. Also, keep this principle in mind during a session. That is, allow people to ask the questions that are relevant to them, then use the resources to help answer those questions. At the end of the session, ask people what they liked, and if there is anything they would prefer to do differently next time.

A structure for Bible study

It is helpful to have a good structure – to know how you will begin, where (in broad terms) the journey will take you, and how it will end. Here is a suggested structure or shape for a Bible study lasting an hour (excluding refreshments, etc.):

- Welcome, opening prayer [5 mins]
- Read the text [10 mins]
- Explore and respond to the text [30 mins]
- Pray together [10 mins]
- End the session; final prayer [5 mins]

It is no accident that this outline mirrors the order in which resources are presented in the ROOTS magazines, which in turn reflects the fundamental shape of all worship. Bible study is worship too!

Using ROOTS resources for Bible study

The next two pages show you where to find the various resources that are useful for Bible study. They include suggestions about how to use them, what questions you may need to consider, and what alternatives there are within the resources. The examples are based on ROOTS Adult & All Age magazine, the full content of which is available to subscribers on the [WEB](#).

Producing a handout

Bible study as described here does not need any handouts. But you may decide that people need one – perhaps a copy of the Bible notes, or a prayer to use during rest of the week. All the resources described in these pages can be assembled by 'cutting and pasting' from the relevant section on the [WEB](#).

Exploring and responding

To understand the text, it is helpful to consider several contexts or layers. For example, in the four Gospels there are at least three contexts: the original events and the eyewitness accounts of them, the writing down of these accounts, and the collection and editing of them to form the Gospels as we have them now. Then there are layers of interpretation: e.g. how the Church has traditionally understood them, how we do so today, and how they relate to our own, very different, culture and context.

To untangle this complexity, we need to explore the Scriptures and respond to them – which we can do in many ways. But whichever method(s) are chosen, it will be most effective when what people are discussing resonates with their everyday lives as disciples of Christ. Therefore, encourage group members to consider questions such as:

- What does this text mean to me?
- What I have learnt?
- How can I apply it (live out my faith)?
- What, specifically, can I do this week?

Prayers

Webb adaptations

Call to worship and gathering prayer

We are named and called by God.
We respond to God's call.
We gather in God's name and meet in God's presence.
God with us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

A prayer of approach

God of awe and wonder,
worthy of honour and praise,
you know us through and through,
from our beginning to our end,
and in every day of our lives.
We come into your presence,
amazed by your love for us
and your delight in knowing us.
We come to worship you,
ready to be changed.
Amen.

A prayer of confession based on Psalm 139

"O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away" (Psalm 139:1).
Lord, we cannot avoid your presence,
and we know that we have sinned against you.
Have mercy upon us as we confess our sin.

You search out my path and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue, you know it.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Even darkness is not dark to God;
for darkness is as light to the Almighty.
May God forgive us and restore us.
In Jesus' name.
Amen.

A prayer for all ages together

Here I am, Lord, send me.
To my school and my work; send me.
To my home and my family; send me.
To those in need; send me.

With Jesus' outpouring; send me.
In the power of the Spirit; send me.
In the name of God; send me.

Here we are, Lord, in your name
send us. Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Jesus, Son of God, we pray for the world,
for those who hold power to make a difference.
In the lives of the poor and voiceless...

Jesus, Son of God, give wisdom and courage,
and hear our prayer. Amen.

Jesus, King of Israel, we pray for the Church,
for those who are exploring faith,
and for those who teach them...

Jesus, King of Israel, give unity and peace,
and hear our prayer.

Jesus, Son of Man, we pray for those in need of healing
and restoration...
and for the bereaved and those who have died in the faith
of Christ.

Jesus, Son of Man, give patients and light,
and hear our prayer.

Jesus, Lamb of God, we pray for ourselves,
for the things we worry about,
and the people we care about...

Jesus, Lamb of God, give hope and understanding,
and hear our prayer. Amen.

A reflective way into prayer
Look around you. See the people in your worshipping
community. Think about those with whom you will share time
this week. Think about where you can be a blessing to friends
and strangers in Jesus' name.

Look at your hands. Think about where and what they will be
doing this week (e.g. at home, at work, in leisure time). Think
about where you can be a blessing in Jesus' name.

Look at your feet. Think about where they will take you this
week, the places you will journey. Think about where you can be
a blessing in those places in Jesus' name.
Listen to the silence and the noises around you, sounds of God's
created world and of humanity. Listen – is God bringing to mind
people, places and journeys where he is already working?

In silence, offer all these people, places and journeys to God.
Ask that this week you can be a bringer of God's light and
blessing.

A blessing out prayer

Lord Jesus, you call us to follow you.
Go with us into the world.
Go before us in all we do.

Lord Jesus, you call us to follow you.
We go in your name
to love you and those we meet,
and to be your light in the world. Amen.

A personal prayer

Here I am, Lord.
Speak, for your servant is waiting.
Act, for your servant is waiting.
This week, I want to be attentive to you;
I am listening, watching, waiting for you.
Come, Holy Spirit. Amen.

All ROOTS magazine materials are online at www.rootsontheweb.com • 11

Opening prayer – among the options offered each week, *A gathering prayer*, *Call to worship* and *A prayer of approach* may be suitable, but others could be adapted too.

Prayers – a range of prayers in different styles is presented each week. *Prayers of intercession* may be a good place to start, but any of the prayer sections could be used or adapted. Don't forget also to look at the prayer section of *PostScript* online.

Picture pointers – some people will be helped by a visual stimulus. A carefully chosen image is provided each week, with three questions designed to help you explore the week's themes.

Active worship – each week ROOTS provides a number of ideas, in a range of styles, to help people make a personal response to the reading. Many of these ideas are designed for use in small groups.

These letters indicate **spiritual styles** or preferences. Spiritual styles help you plan a session so that everyone's needs, and the different ways in which people connect with God, are taken into account. Some people like 'doing' more than 'talking'! You can read more about spiritual styles on the **WEB** – see the link to spiritual styles in the 'Worship and learning support' menu online.

Live your faith – practical suggestions, related to the week's reading and themes, for living out your faith during the coming week. You could end your study time by spending a few moments discussing the suggestion, before saying together a final prayer. A *Live your faith* sheet – a selection of the week's resources to take home – is available online.

All-age conversation

A way for leaders to help all ages explore the reading.

Ask if people are familiar with the saying 'I've got good news and bad news'. Ask for some examples – (e.g. sales).

Samuel's calling is both good news and bad news. The good news is that God has been heard speaking to his people; the bad news is that Eli's house – that is, his family – is to be punished for their disobedience to God. And Samuel is the one who must tell Eli. How you ever had to tell someone bad news? What was it like? What was the hardest part? What about good news – have you ever given or received good news? What was that like?

Sometimes it is hard to keep good news to yourself. It is infectious – you want to share it. Jesus was the bringer of good news – that's what the word 'gospel' means. We've heard how some – such as Philip – couldn't wait to find and tell someone else, while others – such as Nathanael – were more sceptical. As Christians, we are expected to share the good news of Jesus, sometimes in unexpected settings and situations.

The question is: will we? Are we willing, like Philip, to say to other people, 'come and see'? And even if we say 'yes', what does it mean in practice? Ask people to suggest ideas so that church members could put into practice in their own daily lives.

Summarise what has been said throughout, you could end with *A prayer for all ages together*.

Active worship

Idea to engage different ages, learning and preferences and spiritual styles. *Key: Word, Emotion, Symbol, Action. Find out more* [in Worship and learning support](#).

A simple worship activity for all ages

This 'call and response' – based on Philip's 'come and see' – can be used in a variety of ways. You could ask for pairs or small groups of volunteers to interpret and mime each call and response. You could project images showing examples of each response (sharing his work, living generously, etc.). You could demonstrate and then invite everyone to use Maltese-style signs (or create your own) – there is an example on the [WEB](#).

Sharing good news

In today's readings, we see two characters sharing messages. In one case, it's the Lord (Samuel), in the other, it's the Lord (Philip). Sharing good news is a biblical command (Matthew 28:19-20). In small groups, discuss how difficult or easy this is for us to do in our everyday contexts. What ideas or suggestions do people have? What help might they need? Gather feedback on a large sheet of paper that can then be used as inspiration for the prayer or an agenda to follow up. [WEB](#)

Jesus is calling

Music has the unique ability to make us 'sing' when we listen to it. [WEB](#) Play some stirring hymns or worship songs (for suggestions, you could look to TV presenter Alastair Jones who has listed his 10 most stirring hymns and worship songs). Invite people to respond to these songs in any way that they feel is appropriate, or as they 'feel led to do'. [WEB](#)

Straight outta

Nathanael asked if anything good could come from Nazareth. In popular culture, the phrase 'Straight outta' denotes a horrid town or city from which nothing positive is meant to come. Ask people to think of a place anywhere in the world that fits that description. Give out small pieces of paper, and pens. Invite people to write the name of their place, then an arrow, and then a cross. Draw the outline of a large arrow round all of this, making it look like a road sign. Invite people to spend time praying for this place. [WEB](#)

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Picture pointers

Questions for reflection

What might this woman be surprised about?
When did God last surprise you?
How might you surprise God?

Hymns & songs

Some of the lyrics are suitable for all ages.

Music links on [WEB](#)

All I am, I lay down
Are you ready?
Before the day, before the light
Be still and know that I am God
Faithful one, so unchanging
I am not mine own
I cannot tell why he whom angels worship
The Lord of sea and sky
Jesus Christ is waiting
Let our lives become a song for you
Let there be light!

Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
O God, you made us all unique
O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
Sometimes a light surprises
Startles us, God, by the signs of your spirit
Take my life, Lord, let it be
Will you come and follow me
Your love is deep, your love is high

Send out

Live your faith

Encourage everyone to put their faith into action. Use the suggestion below or distribute the *Live your faith* sheet. [WEB](#)

Listen attentively for God calling you to do something specific this week. Write down any thoughts that come to you in this way, and share them with someone. [WEB](#)

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Copy and paste text and images from the ROOTS website.

All the text and images from the magazine are available to subscribers on the **WEB** to help you prepare Bible studies, worship and other activities.

The screenshot shows the ROOTS website interface. At the top, there's a header with the ROOTS logo and navigation links. Below that, a main content area features a grid of resource boxes. The 'Open the Word' box is highlighted with a blue dot. Other boxes include 'Gather', 'Explore & respond', 'Send out', 'Bible notes', 'Prayers', 'Hymns, songs & music', 'Young People', 'Bible study', 'Children's Sheets', 'This week's images', and 'Live your faith'. A 'From the resources bank' section is at the bottom left.

Introductions and themes

**Images and
Picture pointers**

Open the Word
Ideas for reading the texts

Explore & respond
Sermon ideas
Active worship ideas

Send out
Live your faith

Live your faith is a selection of the week's resources, in a printable form, to encourage everyone to read, pray, reflect and live their faith.

Bible notes

PostScript

Prayers