

IMAX Extras

◆ *Supplemental resources for use in a group format* ◆

Facilitator Tips

1. **Pray for it** – You need to first till the ground before planting something. Similarly, prayer is the first step to life-changing group experiences and it is essential to the life and growth of Christian community. Ask the Lord to meet people where they're at and to draw them closer to Himself and one another. Pray for the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to His truth and apply it to your lives.

2. **Preview it** – It's well worth taking 10-15 min beforehand to...
 - **Read** the Scriptures you're studying in at least two different translations. This will prompt further insights & questions.
 - **Review** the life application guide questions and select the ones you sense your group will grab onto the best. In other words, which questions do you think will be most effective at sparking further questions and conversation? Your experience will be richer if you pay attention to your group's uniqueness.
 - **Rephrase** the questions you decide to use. Make sure the discussion material provided makes sense to you first. If something seems vague, confusing, or off-center from the focus of your discussion then restate the points. Sometimes spinning questions another direction triggers responses from participants who tend to not be 'quick on the draw' in sharing.

3. **Focus it** – Take a minute at the beginning of your study time to frame what you're studying (passage, theme, and context) and what you hope people will walk away with in terms of...
 - Education – A deeper understanding and appreciation for the meaning of God's Word.
 - Inspiration – New thoughts and new motivation for living out our faith in Christ.
 - Application – Ways to bring scripture to life's circumstances and relationships right now.

4. **Facilitate it** – Don't feel like you have to have all the answers...allow the group to work it out together. Let people raise questions and voice perspectives. Share scripture not to correct, but to inform, and to carry the conversation to new places. God is the real expert at enlightening people who are genuinely seeking Him. Also, be patient with moments of silence. It takes time for people to process and think about what they're going to say in a group dynamic. If nobody shares after a few seconds, you might just put the question in another way. Sometimes restating the same question in different ways helps people to formulate their thoughts. This is when your "preview" time pays off. Here are a few other facilitation tips that will help to accelerate spiritual conversations: 1) Be ready to be the first to answer questions briefly and naturally 2) People think primarily in pictures so try to portray a topic visually by applying questions to hypothetical situations 3) Provide guardrails to guide the discussion versus railroad tracks to govern the direction of the group. Your role as a facilitator is to create the time and space for God to do what He wants to do in the lives of the people in your group.

5. **Affirm them** – Make eye-contact with those who share and acknowledge their input with simple affirmations like, "Thanks for sharing" or "Good insight" then try to relate it back to the passage being studied or keep the momentum going by asking if there is anyone else who would like to share. When it comes to affirmation, lay it on thick! This builds the confidence of the person sharing and builds them up in front of others. It has the added benefit of building more energy into the whole discussion, which comes as a result of people feeling freer to share their thoughts.

6. **Include them** – When people feel included, they feel like they belong. When people feel like they belong, they want to engage. When people are engaged, they grow. When people are growing, they want to embrace others. The experience of bonding flourishes into the act of bringing others to God and His community when the root system of inclusion is nurtured by the facilitator. Time may not allow for every person to connect or participate in the way they would like, but you can help them feel more included by giving them...
 - Purposes to fulfill in the group that harmonize with their interests and gifting – start them off with small tasks that have a single effort or shorter-term commitment. For

example, if a question is raised during your Bible study that intrigues everyone but you have limited information on it – ask a person who enjoys research to bring back a brief explanation to share at your next gathering. You can gradually phase from delegating tasks to empowering participants to take ownership over aspects of your group-life. This strengthens their ministry skills and helps others to see they can make a difference too.

- The opportunity to share in the Bible study, e.g. come back around to people who haven't shared, but looked like they were on the verge of saying something.
- A moment of your time when you express your love for them, e.g. "I'm so glad you're a part of our group.", "It's great to see you. We missed you last week.", etc. Make it a goal to have at least one meaningful connection with each person during your group time. Simple acknowledgements go a very long way in boosting people's sense of belonging which makes for effective Bible studies in the future.

7. **Open up** – Not enough can be said about the importance of authenticity. This is essential to healthy leadership and healthy Bible studies. Be ready to be the first to share on the discussion questions and err on the side of risk in sharing your personal response to God's Word. The more open you are, the more open others will be. You help to make the group feel safe to people when you are real. It also makes the group more appealing...people want to go to a place where they can be themselves.
8. **Listen up** – One of the best ways you can *love* on the people in your group is to *listen* to them. This will probably mean you lay aside your own interests, agenda, or things you'd like to say. Give people your full attention and reflect back to them that you understand by nodding or putting what they said into your own words to make sure you heard them correctly. When people see that others are being heard, they will feel more secure about opening up and sharing things on their heart with the group. If somebody is sharing something tough they're going through...be careful not to offer quick fixes. When we attempt to offer good advice to solve problems, it can come across as minimizing a person's struggle. You might even pause the discussion and take time to pray for a person, especially if they're emotional while sharing.

9. **Lighten up** – People tend to be more reserved when there is a serious edge to the study. A light-hearted atmosphere actually encourages more involvement. It's not realistic for things to always have this tone, but it can be the dominant one. Sometimes leaders need to “lighten up” on what they expect or hope to ‘accomplish’ in a Bible study. A life group needs to run on some kind of track so it can go somewhere and grow together spiritually. What helps facilitators to keep things on track in a light-hearted way is to lay track before the group gathers. A track needs to be in place before something can travel down it. Group leaders are primarily responsible for laying the track; they just need to make sure they're laying optical fiber and instead of railroad tracks. The difference is one is rigid in terms of where it goes and what can go down it. Whereas optical fiber is flexible and more versatile in terms of the direction it goes and what you can send down it. Just remember that if you have fun with it all, others will too.
10. **Wrap-up** – Factor in a “cushion component” to your group format. Typically, group format involves various elements like Bible study, prayer, worship, etc. The “cushion component” is equivalent to a shock-absorber set between two elements. It smoothes out the flow of the group and helps you to keep time better, which tends to be a challenging thing to do in most life groups. This also helps to dissipate the negative energy that can come with trying to honor your group's start and end time. It's okay to wrap things up and offer for people to take a little extra time *after your group*. This frees up people who need to go in order to take care of their other responsibilities. It is important to stick to your group's start and end time as closely as possible, but you don't want to be rigid or driven on how much you want to cover in a given period of time.
11. **Follow-up** – If somebody asks a question or shares a personal prayer need during your group time, be sure to follow-up with them. Also, be sure to contact people who said they were going to join you for your life group, but didn't show. Tell them you just wanted to let them know they were missed and if there is anything they need. This kind of care goes a long way in showing appreciation for that person's place in the community and making them feel loved, especially for those who are newer to the group.

12. **Offer up** – Let your group be used by the Lord to reach others for Christ and to be a place where group participants can include their unreached friends. Encourage them to engage in “+1 thinking”. That is, if they’re going to invite a friend – tell them they should welcome that person to invite *their* friend too. This increases the probability of them coming to the group and connecting with more people who have not yet begun a relationship with Jesus Christ. Community is not something that needs to be protected. It is something that is meant to be shared (Acts 2:47). God always makes room for the lost so expand your group circle as much as possible (Luke 15). He will provide the time and space for additional members if our hearts are seeking to extend His grace to those who have yet to come home. You can offer up your group for the Lord to use in furthering His mission in the world by...

- **Turning** your group’s attention to lost people during your time of discussion and prayer.
- **Telling** group members that you would LOVE for them to invite the people they’re reaching out to.
- **Thinking** together about how your group can share the love and message of Jesus Christ with spiritually empty people.
- **Traveling** to locations beyond your normal meeting place, e.g. hold your study in a public space or go on a mission trip together.
- **Transitioning** your group into new seasons by including others in responsibilities you carried out toward the beginning of the group’s life together. This will help you to identify and develop a co-leader who will help you and your group to continue growing and impacting our world with the love and message of Jesus Christ.

Tips for Effective Bible Study

◆ *Tips for how you can bring God's Word to life in your personal study and application* ◆

Pray and ask God to enlighten your understanding of His Word.

Read the passage through several times.

You may even consider reading it in a few different translations.

Reading it again, observe the obvious aspects of the passage and write down any notable impressions, thoughts and feelings evoked from what you've read.

Consider the meaning and message of the passage in light of surrounding chapters or verses. Then, write down any questions you may have about the passage.

Next, look up the text in a Bible Commentary to answer your questions in context (what was happening at the time of the author's writing) according to the intent of the author (what the author meant by what was written).

Use any other tools necessary to understand the text and answer your questions (Key Word Study, Concordance, Bible Map, Bible Handbook, Bible Dictionary, etc.).

Be sure to write down any commands or promises you find in the passage. This will be helpful as you determine how to apply the text to your own life.

Write down your response to the passage. How will you apply it to your own life today? What does God want you to do now?

Write down any verses from the passage that could be memorized.

Ask God to use what you've learned to help you fulfill your mission to reach others with the love and message of Jesus Christ.

Online Growth Tools

◆ *A variety of web-based resources that will help you to grow deeper in God's Word* ◆

Online Growth Tools

www.biblegateway.com
Search in Multiple
Translations,
Key Word / Topical Searches

www.bible.org
Online Bible with Study Tools,
Articles

www.biblemaster.com
Bible Studies

www.crosswalk.com
Bible Studies / Devotionals

www.leaderu.com
Apologetics / Theology /
Current Issues Articles

www.christianitytoday.com
Christian Articles/Resources

www.rbc.org
Devotionals / Topical Bible
Studies

www.studylight.org
Bible Study Tools –
Encyclopedia, Concordances,
Parallel Bibles

www.blueletterbible.org
Search in Multiple
Translations, Key Word

www.youversion.com
Discuss Bible with others

Books

Grasping God's Word: A
Hands-On Approach to
Reading, Interpreting, and
Applying the Bible by, J. Scott
Duvall and J. Daniel Hays
(Zondervan, 2001).

How to Study Your Bible by Kay
Arthur (Harvest House, 1994).

How to Read Your Bible for All
it's Worth by Gordon D. Fee
(Zondervan, 2003).

Rick Warren's Bible Study
Methods: Twelve Ways You
Can Unlock God's Word by Rick
Warren (Harper Collins, 2006).

The Wiersbe Bible Commentary

by Warren Wiersbe (David C.
Cook, 2003).

The Life Application Bible
(Tyndale)

The NIV Study Bible (Zondervan)

Haley's Bible Handbook
(Zondervan)

Baker Commentary on the Bible
(Baker)

The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands
(Moody)

Strong's Exhaustive
Concordance

Celebration of Discipline: The
Path to Spiritual Growth by
Richard Foster (Harper, 1988).

Conversational Prayer

Conversational prayer allows each person in the group to freely participate in prayer without intimidation. Conversational prayer is also called “sentence prayer.”

Just as in private prayer, conversational prayer should begin with a time of quiet worship and thanksgiving, usually done by the group host. This is done in short sentences: *“Thank you Lord, for....”* Two or three in the group may want to mention some things they are grateful for.

1. Pray in simple, conversational tones, direct brief, and to the point. Pray two or three sentences maximum. Your turn will come back around if you have more to pray.
2. Pray for one another in the group. You may know that someone in the group is going through something and needs to be lifted up in prayer. The details do not need to be shared if they are personal, but simply ask the Lord to strengthen “Tom” and give him wisdom in his decision or situation, or to comfort “Jane” in her grief.
3. Pray for those not in the group. Remember friends, family, and neighbors who do not yet have a relationship with Christ. This will help the group to think ‘outwardly’ & encourage outreach.
4. Prayer time is not a “round the circle” prayer, but spontaneous. No one will be “called on” to pray.
5. Listen to each person who prays. Be in quiet verbal agreement with the person who is praying.
6. Allow for reflective silence. Give other members of your group time to gather their thoughts on the prayer requests.

GOALS OF CONVERSATIONAL PRAYER:

1. That every person will learn to take part in prayer so every group participant will grow.
2. That everyone present will have the opportunity to be prayed for.
3. That we learn the meaning of “love one another” as we learn to care through prayer for one another.

Prayer&Praise

❖ *Record prayer requests and how the Lord answers them* ❖

Here you will record those items, people, and upcoming plans that you are praying for. Enter the date that you began praying for this; and when God answers it, enter that date as well. When you complete one journal, transfer those prayers yet to be answered to your new one. Pray until God answers! Reinforce your prayer by submitting prayer requests to www.worldprayerteam.org.

Prayer Request	Praise Report
Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:

Prayer Request	Praise Report
Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:

Life Group Roster

Name	Contact Information (e-mail & phone numbers)