

## Small Group Leader's Training: 24 hours!

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### **Purpose:**

To quickly provide an overview of the skills and job description of a small group leader for students interested in leading a Bible study.

### **Goals:**

- Students will improve their inductive Bible Study skills
- Students will be introduced to the Communal Bible Discovery Method
- Students will understand that the role of the SGL includes more than leading the Bible study
- Students will be introduced to the 4 components of a good SG

When I first designed this training, the goal was to quickly develop more small group leaders who could fill some leadership gaps on campus. I used the Urbana '03 Bible study materials so that the students attending 24 hours would be prepared to lead small groups at Urbana. These materials worked well for us, and I think would continue to be helpful for introducing students to the Communal Bible Discovery method of Bible study, although certainly other passages could be substituted.

I found donors to cover the cost of the training so I could offer it for free to interested students. I was also able to give the students who attended the training copies of *The Small Group Leader's Handbook*, *Transforming Bible Study*, A GIG guide, 2+ Cards, and a Two Ways To Live pamphlet.

This training is not intended to replace the SGLT week long training held during Chapter Focus Weeks for GLW & GLE regions. It is an introduction or a refresher, but is not comprehensive. If it is paired with a mentoring program where a student attending this training is an assistant leader or co-leader with an experienced small group leader, it could become a sufficient substitution. I also developed SGLT "level 2" weekend materials that dovetail with this 24 hour training, but is aimed at students with some experience leading a small group.

## Friday

### **6:00 pm introduction to each other and the weekend:**

Prior to the weekend, sort a deck of playing cards into #/face value (i.e. all the 8's together, all the kings together, all the 3's together, etc.). Pick out sets of cards to equal the number of students in your group. If the number of students attending the training is not divisible by 4, add one extra set of 4 or toss in (from another deck of cards) doubles of 1-3 of the #/face value sets you've chosen (depending on the number of students). Every student receives a playing card as they arrive; these cards will be used to split the students into small groups through out the training.

*(Bonus idea: have the students' names and school printed on address labels. Put this name sticker horizontally on the center of the face of the card so the number and suit are still showing in the corners. Then punch a hole in the horizontal center of the card and use a safety pin through the hole to attach to the student's clothing as a name tag. These playing card nametags may also be slipped into reusable plastic name tag holders.)*

For the introduction, have students get into groups based on the following and discuss the designated question.

- ☞ **By suit (all spades, clubs, diamonds, hearts):** Introduce yourself (name, school, year, major) and briefly share your best small group experience and what made it the best. – doesn't have to be about an IV or Bible study group.
- ☞ **By even, odd, and face cards:** Introduce yourself (see above) and briefly share your worst small group experience and what made it the worst. – doesn't have to be about an IV or Bible study group.
- ☞ **By #/face value (should be in groups of 4):** Introduce yourself (see above) and tell why you want to be a SGL and/or why SGL's are important.
- ☞ **Bonus sorting option:** you could also have the students put themselves together into "poker hands" (full house, straight, flush, 2 pair, etc.) or other card game sets (i.e. a solitaire row (black-red-black-red-etc. in consecutive numbers).

Tell the group that they will have 1 minute per person to share, and closely watch the time. Give warnings every minute "move on to the next person". This will give them a sense of urgency and will get them sharing quickly. When the time is up, ask "who needs more time?" Most groups should say that they do, and then give them another 5 or 10 minutes (depending on group size) for the first two questions.

For the 3<sup>rd</sup> question, tell them that they will have 2 minutes per person to share, and only give an additional 3 to 5 minutes to discuss. It is better to stop the group while they are still interested in the topic than when they have faded and gotten off track. Encourage them to continue these discussions during free time.

After the 3<sup>rd</sup> question, gather everyone together and have them as a whole group share some of the responses to each of the questions. There are usually some strong themes that emerge – make note of these, and be sure to reference them throughout the study.

Then give a brief overview of the schedule and goals for the weekend (5 minutes)

Make everyone stretch and shake out their wiggles before moving on...

### **6:45 pm Urbana '03 Bible study #1 (led by staff)**

Go over “Guidelines for Good Bible Study” handout – talk through each step and make sure everyone understands the guidelines. Refer to them again as necessary throughout the study.

Follow these guidelines for leading the group through the Bible study:

- Give a brief introduction to Communal Discovery Method and to manuscript study. *Transforming Bible Study* by Bob Grahmann has a great chapter on manuscript study. It may be helpful to have the students read this chapter, or summarize it and point out that it where the info can be found.
- Ask the intro question from the Urbana '03 Bible Study and give 5 minutes for observation in the manuscripts.
- As a large group, have students share observations and questions. *Be sure to redirect them if they start to move into interpretation or application during this time. It's important to help the students focus on observations here!* Add in a few key observations and questions if they are not mentioned by students. Make note of any questions the students raise that are not included in the Urbana '03 notes for the Bible study.
- Have the group split into 4 groups based on suit of their cards (hearts, clubs, spades, etc.). The study is split into 4 sections. Assign each section to one of the 4 groups, and give them the questions for their section – including those the students asked. Give 20 minutes for the groups to discuss and find answers to the questions for their sections. Circulate among the groups, giving assistance, clues, and advice on where to look – make sure you have appropriate reference books handy as this is a great time to introduce students to their use!
- After 20 minutes, have the students get into their #/face value groups of 4 – there should be one person from each of the previous 4 suit groups in these face value groups. Each person should, in order of verse #, go through what they have discussed in their suit group, giving opportunities for the other people to ask questions. This should take about 20-30 minutes.
- Call the group back together and tell the students to summarize each section in 1 word to 1 sentence, and then summarize the entire passage in 1 sentence – not a run on sentence, either! Give 5 minutes for this, then have some students share with the whole group (volunteers). Share your sentences as well, then share the summary paragraph.

- Ask 2 of the application questions, and give students 5 minutes to journal in response. After 5 minutes, have students get into pairs and pray for each other. Tell them to very briefly share their prayer request before praying, and if they want to share more to do so after their prayer. After they pray, students should leave the room and take a brief break.

### **8:30 pm debrief Bible study – evaluate staff leader**

**Ask** – What did you like about the study? What would you like to be improved? Have copies of a SGL/SG evaluation form, and walk through it together. Give the students permission to critique you, and model how to accept critique!

### **8:30 pm SGL job description**

- Have the students get into their “suit” groups again. Give each suit group a set of the “characteristics of SGL’s” (*I typed up some key characteristics of small group leaders taken from a “small group leader job description” handout I have. I think I used 12-15 characteristics. I typed them in a large font, and printed out 4 copies. I cut apart all the characteristics, and then glued one complete set on red construction paper, then another complete set on blue, etc. until I had 4 different color sets of SGL characteristic cards.*) and tell them to keep the stack turned upside down (don’t read them yet!).
- Tell the groups that they will have 5 minutes to rank these characteristics of a SGL in order of importance. They should be prepared to defend their decisions to the rest of the group after the time is up.
- Give them warnings when time is half up, when 1 min. remains, when 30 seconds remain, and do a 10 second countdown to time up. Then ask “who needs more time?” – most groups will say they do – give them another 5 minutes, and do the same thing with the countdown.

*(note: this little trick of telling them they have less time than you are actually going to give them and then doing a countdown and giving more time is a way of getting the students to more quickly discuss. If you tell them they will have 10 minutes, they will waste some of that time. When you tell them they only have 5 minutes and then do a countdown, you create an artificial sense of urgency that jolts them to action. Just don’t overdo this – it loses its effect if you use this trick too frequently!)*

- Have each group read out the order of their list and explain why they put the characteristics in the order they chose. Give groups an opportunity to defend their positions to the other groups and discuss between themselves.
- **Ask:** “Did any of you feel overwhelmed looking at this list of characteristics? Anyone wonder how you could ever fit all of this into your schedule? Even feel resentful of these “demands”? Too often we view our lives like a train – we are the engine, the Holy Spirit is a coal car that powers us (maybe – some

of us operate like we power ourselves!), and everything else is a car attached to that train. We end up feeling like we have so much that we have to pull around after us that when we get tired, we think the solution is to shorten our train and cut things out of our lives.”

- Now have the students put “has regular time with God” in the center, and fan all the other characteristics around the center like the petals on a flower or rays of the sun.
- **Say:** “When we put God at the center of our lives, all the rest gets ordered around Him. He directs us, our time, our resources, our money, our energy – we don’t have to “pull” everything after us – God carries everything and gives to us the “next thing” we need to be focused on in each moment.” – etc., **but don’t talk for more than 10 minutes.**

### **9:00 pm “How Not To Lead a Small Group” video**

#### **How Not to Lead A Small Group**

##### **Humorous and practical training for your small group leaders**

By Laurie Polich



This video is from Youth Specialties ([www.youthspecialties.com](http://www.youthspecialties.com)) and is aimed at adult leaders of youth groups, but it has some very funny scenes and some great principles. It is a little bit cheesy, but that just adds to the fun! The video features “Eddie”, the adult leader, with his small group of high school students. There are 5 segments where Eddie leads the group poorly – he’s too talkative, he’s unprepared, he’s insecure, he’s inflexible, and he’s walked on by the students. Then there’s a segment where Eddie leads the

group well, followed by a discussion of what he did well this time.

- Watch the 30 minute video together
- **Ask:** “Which of these leaders have you experienced in the small groups you’ve been in? Which of the pitfalls are you most likely to experience yourself?” Talk more about the video – what did they like? What didn’t they like?
- Give instructions for the rest of the evening and the next morning – Breakfast & QT at 8am – use “Daily Passion for the Word” as guide – the passage is the Urbana ’03 Bible study #4. Tell students they should get to bed in time to get up and have a QT in the morning as their personal study will be crucial for the group study later in the morning.

### **9:45 pm Games & Fun! (Pizza)**

Have games and pizza – encourage students to have chapter (or small group) prayer time for part of the next couple hours. Have some rooms available for prayer, and give some suggestions on how to use that prayer time.

Have games available that can involve more than 4 players

Some suggested games:

- Christian-ese Taboo (make your own game – have “Christian-ese” words that students have to define/get the group to name without using any other “Christian-ese” words)
- Pictionary
- Outburst
- Pit
- Yhatzee
- Uno

### ***12:00 pm Quiet hours***

I’ve found it helpful to designate some areas “quiet zones” starting at 10:00 for people who want to go to bed early. Make sure these “quiet zones” are the farthest from the game zones and encourage the students to be respectful of each other’s desired noise level.

## **Saturday**

### **8:00 am breakfast & Quiet Time**

Set out Bagels, cream cheese, juice, fruit, etc. – students use the “Daily Passion” Day 1 guide with the Urbana ’03 Bible study #4. (*I formatted the “Daily Passion” guide to be a half-page, 2 sided handout printed on card stock and laminated – that way it could fit in the students’ Bibles.*)

### **8:45 am gather for prayer, reading psalms, pray through hymns, singing, etc.**

I tried to model an “alternative” worship – something that a “non-musical” person could lead. I used the daily plan for that day from *A Guide to Prayer* from Upper Room Resources. It includes an opening prayer, a psalm, a scripture reading, some readings for reflection (I picked out 2 to read), prayer for ourselves, our community, and our world, a hymn to read or sing, and then a closing benediction all centered around one theme that corresponds with the liturgical calendar.

### **9:15 am Inductive Bible study:**

#### ***Walk through a Communal Discovery Method***

**9:15-9:35** - Walk through “Bible Study Prep 101”, explaining Observation, Interpretation, and Application. Be sure to get questions from the group and make sure everyone understands the importance of each step. I have the students look at the “Ask Not” sign during the discussion on application. I use *the SGL Handbook* to show the students where they can find more info in the book.

- I like to model OIA visually with unit blocks. Unit blocks are those wood blocks used in so many preschool classrooms. I bring in a whole bunch of one-unit blocks,  $\frac{1}{4}$  as many two-unit blocks, and one 4-unit block. I represent observations with the one-unit blocks, interpretations as the two-unit blocks, and application as a 4-unit block. I build a wall with the blocks, with observations on the bottom, followed by interpretation, then the application as a capstone. I point out how unstable the interpretations & applications will be if you base them on only one or two observations. I explain that Deductive study is more like putting the application as the base, followed by the interpretation, then the observation units. Note that with Deductive study, you only use the interpretations of observations that can follow the application. If the observation/interpretation doesn’t match the application, you discard it. This can lead to a pyramid shape rather than a “wall”.

**9:35-9:45** - Next, define Communal Discovery Method. Show the students how OIA fits into the CDM. Use the *Transforming Bible Study* book at this point – be sure to highlight the outline for a 1 hour CDM study. Explain that after the break, you will once again work through an Urbana Bible study using the CD Method.

Have them review the evaluation form used the day before, and tell them that they will need to be ready to evaluate their study at the end of the time.

### **9:45 – Break to 10:00**

### **10:00- CDM – Urbana '03 Bible Study #4 – led by staff**

- Pretend that this is a new group as everyone comes together. Open with prayer, then give some background info on the passage you will be studying.
- Split into “face value” groups (using the cards again). Have students work on the intro question in their groups, then come together and share what they created. Give them 10 minutes to create, and each group gets 2 minutes to share.
- Have students briefly share observations and questions – make note of all their questions and toss out a few of your own.
- Next, walk through answering the questions together as a large group.
- When you get to the question of “was the 3<sup>rd</sup> slave correct in his view of the master” split into red cards and black cards. Assign one group to be the defense and argue that the slave was wrong, and the other group to be the prosecution and argue that the slave was right. Give each group 5 minutes to prepare their arguments and choose their legal team. Then each team gets 3 minutes to present their case, then give them each another 3 minutes for a rebuttal.
- Then ask the whole group – what do you think? Hopefully they’ve arrived at the right conclusion, and you can laugh at the scripture twisting that just happened! Point out where their arguments were scriptural, and where they were twisted or supposition.
- Finish up by reading the summary, and then offering one or two application questions. Again encourage time to process, then pray in pairs for each other.

### **11:30 – Debrief study and go over the evaluation again**

### **12:00 pm Lunch**

### **1:00 pm Group Game!**

Don't tell the students what game you are going to play until you have split the groups and sent one volunteer from each group out of the room.

*The game I used is “Party Quirks” from “Whose Line is it Anyway” (Comedy Sports type). The basic premise is that one person is the “host” of a party. The other people have chosen “identities” that they act out at the “party”, and the host must guess who each of the others is pretending to be. It's best if guests “enter” the party one at a time, giving the host time to interact with each quirky person*

*before having the next one added! Quirky guests can interact with each other to give more clues...*

- You choose how they split – by suits or by face value or some other way. Get one volunteer from each group to leave.
- Tell the remaining students that they will be playing “Party Quirks” (from “Whose Line is it Anyway”) but with Biblical characters in strange situations – Noah building a flume log ride on the Ark, Mary in a Lamaze class, Joshua practicing the trumpet, Miriam rehearsing the worship band, etc.
- Tell the remaining students that they have only 10 minutes to come up with characters, or, to save time, have characters ahead of time and give an envelope with different characters to each group and let them decide who will be each person. Be sure to provide scripture references for students to look up their character.
- Go to the volunteers and explain that they are the hosts in Party Quirks, and that their guests will be Biblical characters in strange situations.
- When people are ready (or you decide they should be), call everyone together and have each group go one at a time. Be sure to help out any struggling Hosts or actors. Make sure that there are several people all at once – not one person coming in and interacting with the host until he/she gets it and then the next person comes in – “guests” should all be arriving within a minute of each other.

**After each group has gone, debrief:**

- “Hosts, what was hard about your task? What made it easy? What made it difficult?”
- “Guests, how did you feel?” etc.
- “How is this like starting a new small group?” “How might this be like how a new person feels in coming into a new group?” “How does this represent the challenges a leader faces in getting to know the people in their small group?”
- Discuss, share, etc.

**1:45 pm Four Components – philosophy/vision**

For each of the 4 components, describe/define it, and then model some ideas. Highlight which of the activities you have done so far fit into each area. If you have time or can make time, do some fun and/or unusual activities in each area. When sharing ideas in each component, have students share ideas they have seen, experienced, thought of, heard, etc.

- **2:00 pm Community:**
  - **What is it?**
  - **Why is it important?**
  - **Ideas for SG’s** (*There were a lot of students with examples of community builders from their experiences in SG’s*)
- **2:30 pm Worship:**

- **What is it?**
  - **Why is it important?**
  - **Ideas for SG's** (*We discussed how to incorporate worship for non-musical people as well as some ideas for prayer*)
- **3:00 pm Nurture:**
    - **What is it?**
    - **Why is it important?**
    - **Ideas for SG's** (*one of the ideas I shared was the "16 books of the Bible are hidden in this paragraph" exercise as a way of teaching observation*)
- **3:30 pm Mission:**
    - **What is it?**
    - **Why is it important?**
    - **Ideas for SG's** (*I discussed different strategies for outreach for on-campus vs. off-campus small groups*)

#### **4:00 pm – Break**

#### **4:15 pm Putting it all together: planning a SG meeting**

Split students into their "face value" groups. Assign each group a **short** passage (no more than 10 verses) from Luke or Mark. Tell them that they now have 1 hour to prep a small group study with the following elements:

- Their personal study – have a plan for this (using "Daily Discovery?" other method?)
- Prepare the study – have at least 5 key questions that they think are essential to understanding the main point of the passage and 2 different possible application questions
- Planning for the 4 components – including an order for the meeting
- Publicity & invitations!

Students should give most of their time to understanding the passage before planning the study – a good 30 to 40 minutes.

***Be sure to circulate and help them in their prep.***

#### **5:15 pm Groups each get 5 minutes to share their study outline**

If you have more time, have other students respond to each other's plans and give at least 2 positive comments and one suggestion for a change. (Keep it to twice as many positives as "negatives".)

#### **5:45 pm Prayer and Commissioning**

#### **6:00 pm Depart**

### **Characteristics of a Small Group Leader (in no particular order)**

- Has regular personal time w/ God
- Attends Large Group each week
- Participates in conferences and other training events
- Spends time in relationship building activities with group members outside the study itself
- Attends leadership meetings (meets with small group coordinator, etc.)
- Recruits small group members for training events, conferences, etc.
- Spends 2 hours each week in preparation for the small group meeting
- Involved in weekly and/or daily prayer meetings
- Is a growing, maturing disciple of Christ
- Models healthy chapter participation
- Establishes the small group as a witnessing, nurturing community
- Has a desire to share the gospel
- Models servant leadership and shepherding
- Identifies, develops, and trains future leaders
- Prepares and leads the Bible study discussion
- Has relationships with non-Christians; models evangelism

## Guidelines for Good Small Group Bible Study

*Adapted from The Small Group Leader's Handbook (IVP)*

- 📖 Approach the Bible as we would approach any good primary source on a subject: Be open to learn.
  
- 📖 Let the Bible text speak for itself rather than depending on something we heard or read about it. Also, don't look to notes in a study Bible to give you the interpretation. Trust the Holy Spirit to teach you and instruct you through the Word (see John 14:25ff) rather than depending on study notes.
  
- 📖 Expect the text, rather than the leader, to answer questions that come up.
  
- 📖 Stay in the passage. On occasion, when background information is necessary, the study guide may refer the group to another passage.
  
- 📖 Stay on the point under discussion. Free discussion is great, but we also want to allow God to speak through a passage. When we only get half the passage, we get only half the point.
  
- 📖 Keep in mind that each person's part in the discussion helps the group to learn more. People who talk easily in discussion can provide for quieter people to contribute also. God can use what each one says to help the rest of us. We can honor each other by listening to each other.
  
- 📖 Begin and end on time. Please be prompt and help us to start on time. If we start on time, we can usually finish on time.

# Bible Study Preparation: 101

## PREPARING THE STUDY:

- I. Read the historical and cultural background of the book and passage.
  - A. Check the study guide for any background information
  - B. Look up the book in a Bible Dictionary.
- II. Read the passage
  - A. Make observations
    1. Stay in the passage; don't wander or speculate.
    2. Divide the passage into sections.
      - a. Look for logical thought breaks.
      - b. Look for transition words.
    3. Ask questions:
      - a. **Who** are the major and minor characters? Who is writing the book? To whom is he writing?
      - b. **Where** do the events occur? Are there any references to towns, cities, provinces? If so, look these up in a Bible Atlas or on a map. (Many Bibles include maps.) If you are reading a letter, where do the recipients live? Find out about the historical/cultural significance of these places.
      - c. **When** did this happen? Are there any references to the time, day, month, or year, or to when events took place in relation to other events? When was this book written?
      - d. **What** actions or events are taking place? What words or ideas are repeated or are central to the passage? What is the mood (joyous, somber)?
      - e. **Why** was this passage written? Does the passage offer any reasons, explanations, statements of purpose?
      - f. **How** is the passage written? Is it a letter, speech, poem, parable? Does the author use any figures of speech (similes, metaphors)? How is it organized (around ideas, people, geography)?
    4. Note locations, details, surprises, verbs, pronouns, connectors.
    5. Note relationships between words and between thought units: similarities, repetitions, contrasts, cause/effects, etc.

**B. Develop interpretations: *Meaning, Significance, explanations***

- 1. Define words you don't understand.**
- 2. Unravel any figurative language.** (Two good resources are *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* and *The Bible Background Commentary* - both from IVP.)
- 3. Answer the why and what does it mean questions**
  - a. Why was this done this way?
  - b. Why was this said?
- 4. Ask about the significance of the observations and relationships made in part A.**
- 5. Try to grasp the meaning and significance of any major ideas.**
- 6. Note references in the passage to biblical literature that the author and recipients would have known. Look these up!!**
- 7. Integrate:** How does the point fit with what is already known from scripture?
  - a. Be building an understanding of the teachings of scripture and their sources.
  - b. If there is a conflict between what you knew and what you are learning, rethink both to resolve the conflict. (May involve intensive study with commentaries, dictionaries, etc. and discussion with others...)
- 8. Summarize:**
  - a. What subject is the author talking about?
  - b. What is the author saying about that subject?

**C. Make Applications:**

- 1. The ultimate purpose of Bible study is not simply to educate us but to transform us.**
- 2. What does this point mean for the world and life in general and for me in particular?**
  - a. Is there a command for us to obey?
  - b. Is there a promise to claim?
  - c. Is there an example to follow?
  - d. Is there a sin to avoid or confess?
  - e. Is there a reason for thanksgiving or praise?
  - f. What does this passage teach me about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the church, myself, others, etc.?
- 3. Two principles of application:**
  - a. *Whenever our situation corresponds to that faced by the original readers, God's Word to us is exactly the same as it was to them.*
  - b. *Whenever our situation does not correspond to that faced by the original readers, we should look for the principle underlying God's Word to them. We can then apply that principle to comparable situations today.*

## FORMULATE THE STUDY:

- I. **Think about the purpose:** Write down what you want to see accomplished in the course of your discussion. This may be something you want your group members to understand, become aware of or do.
- II. **If using a study guide, compare the guide to your own observations, interpretations, and application.**
  - A. **Check with a commentary if you differ.** (*New Bible Commentary* from IVP is a good resource.)
- III. **Rewrite questions in your own words as necessary.**
- IV. **Add or delete questions according to need.**
  - A. **When adding questions:**
    1. Always use clearly worded questions that facilitate discussions by asking for several answers.
    2. Make sure the added questions flow with surrounding questions and move toward your purpose.
    3. Formulate each question from your Observations, Interpretations, and Applications.
- V. **Be creative with introductions.**
  - A. **Use the introduction in the study guide or write your own.**
  - B. **Writing an introduction:** it should expose a need and get group members thinking about the issues that will arise in the study.
    1. **The introduction should be:**
      - a. brief, interesting and lively.
      - b. related to the rest of the study
    2. **Introductions can be:**
      - a. A question
      - b. A brief illustration
      - c. A game

## **SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL BIBLE STUDY LEADERSHIP**

- I. In your first meeting, discuss principles for good Bible discussions:
  - A. Be open to learning from the Bible
  - B. The Bible is the Authority. Expect it, rather than the leader, to answer the questions that come up.
  - C. Keep everyone on the same level, stay in the passage under discussion.
  - D. Stay on the point under discussion.
- II. Know what you want the group members to learn and keep moving toward the purpose.
- III. Know your questions well; avoid calling attention to them.
- IV. Avoid using your own input to move into the next question.
- V. Build on what others say: ask follow up questions.
- VI. Allow a sufficient amount of time to pass before rephrasing a question.
- VII. Try to make smooth transitions between questions so that the study flows well.
- VIII. Be conscious of what is going on during the study, especially member's emotions.
- IX. Watch to see how God is moving; listen to the Holy Spirit.

## **FIVE WAYS TO KILL A DISCUSSION:**

- I. When someone offers a far out answer, don't respond at all: just ask the next question.
- II. Always end a question with "The answer is..." and then give your opinion.
- III. Make sure you let only one person answer each question.
- IV. Whatever you do, never affirm a group member's answer. That will only lead to more input from other people.
- V. Ask only questions that require yes or no answers. This helps you go much faster.

Adapted from *The Small Group Leader's Handbook* (IVP)

**Ask not,  
“What does it mean  
to *me*?”;  
but rather,  
“What did it mean  
to *them*  
(the original  
audience)?”  
and  
“What does *that*  
mean *for me*?”**

## DAILY PASSION FOR THE WORD

*How to meditate on the Bible in your quiet time or Bible study preparation*

Tackle a chapter or half chapter at a time, spending two or more days on each. Study through a book of the Bible rather than random passages. No hurry, no deadlines, just the joy of hearing from Jesus in His Word.

### Be Expectant!

The Bible is God's living Word. As you approach the Bible, pray that God would *meet you*, so you experience God Himself in His Word; *speak to you* as a friend to a friend; *teach you* His truth; *surprise you* with some new insight or discovery; and *transform you* over time into the image of Jesus.

### Get Honest with God!

As you approach God in expectant prayer, take time also to think through what the last few days have been like for you. Share honestly with God what and how you are feeling as you approach your time with Him. Share your struggles and joys. Ask Him to speak, over time, to issues in your life.

### Look Closely!

- Read the passage carefully, and write down specifics that you see such as who is there, what is happening, when is it, where is it, and how is it happening.
- Circle or write down words, phrases or ideas that *connect* by repeating, contrasting, being similar, going from the general to the particular, or stating a cause that leads to an effect.
- Put yourself into the passage. If it is a narrative, put yourself into the story. What do you see, smell, taste, feel? Chose one of the characters and become them. If it is a letter or law section, feel what it might have felt to get the letter or hear the law. If it is poetry, let the power of the poem and its images sweep over you.
- What questions does the passage raise in your mind? What words, phrases, or concepts don't you understand? Does the passage turn in any unexpected ways? What intrigues you? Write these questions down.

### Meditate!

Step back and read the passage a few times again. Read it as if Jesus were standing right there with you (He is!). Ponder again the points that stand out to you in the passage. What does the passage say or point to about Jesus? Ask Jesus what He has for you personally in the passage. What area of your life is Jesus speaking to?

## THE SECOND DAY IN THE PASSAGE

Today you'll look at the same passage, but from a different angle.

### Think Deeply!

- Divide the passage into thought units, paragraphs. See what sentences you think add up to a thought unit and mark that as a paragraph. (These may or may not be the same as the paragraphs in the version of the Bible you are using.)
- Write a brief title for each paragraph.
- Consider the questions you wrote yesterday. Look hard in the passage for insights into these questions. Also look at the context of the passage. What comes before it and after it?
- One of the best ways to move towards answers to your questions is to look for connections among the paragraphs. Is there a word, phrase or idea that repeats? Is there a contrast? Is there a cause in one paragraph and the effect in another; or a string of similar words, phrases, or ideas that run through a few paragraphs? Draw lines between the connected words or phrases to mark them. What do you think is significant about these connections? What light do they shed on possible answers to your questions?

### Summarize!

- Look at your connections, your questions, your points of significance, and the context. Step back and ask yourself: what are the main points of this passage? What is the author trying to say? Why is this passage or story here? Try to write this in an integrative sentence.

### Hear from God and Act Boldly!

Look over your whole study from yesterday and today. Do you sense that God is speaking to any part of your life? Is there a promise to trust, a command to obey, or an example to follow or avoid? Is there a deeper insight into God or your experience with God? What action are you going to take in response to what God is saying to you?

### Worship Him!

Take the time to worship God and respond to His love for you. Thank Him for speaking to you in His living Word.

### The Joy of Community

After you have studied the passage on your own, share it with trusted fellow believers in a Christian community to get their correction, affirmation, and insights. Have at least one fellow believer with whom you share Bible study on a regular basis. Become a part of a small group that studies the Bible seriously.

## Using Reference Books

- Every reference book should have a section in the beginning on “How to Use This Book”. This is always a good place to start if you are unfamiliar with the book.
- When you are using a reference book for the first time, take a few minutes to flip through it and explore the book a bit. Is there an index? A table of contents? Is the book divided into sections? What are they? Are there any study tools or other reference tools in the book?
- If you are having a hard time finding a certain topic or scripture passage, check in the index of the reference book. If the topic or passage isn’t listed in the main part of the book, the table of contents, or the index, consider finding related words. For example, if you can’t find an entry under “Holy Ghost”, try “Holy Spirit”.
- When you find an article, it can be helpful to skim through it before reading it in its entirety. This gives you an overview of the information, and can help you to focus in on what is most relevant to your current study.
- It can be helpful to have an English dictionary near by in case you come across unfamiliar words!
- Don’t be intimidated if you don’t understand what the authors or editors are saying. Try reading the text out loud or asking a friend to help you. Think of it as a challenge to learn more about God!

### **Bible Dictionary:** (*New Bible Dictionary* from IVP)

The first place to turn to when you have a question or are searching for background information about a book, setting, author, character, etc.

#### Example:

If you are studying Acts, look up the word “Acts, Book of” for background information and see where that takes you. You may see words that indicate (in bold, italicized, or with an asterisk) other topics listed in the dictionary such as “Luke” (the author of Acts), or “Holy Spirit”, “Apostles”, “Disciples”, “Sanhedrin”, “Early Church”, etc. Think of these as your “hyperlinks” to more insight into the passage you are studying.

#### Example:

If you are studying Acts, you may come across names like Theophilus, Caiaphas, Sadducees, Levite, Solomon’s Colonnade, Gamaliel, the Synagogue of the Freedmen, Grecian Jews, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicolas from Antioch, and Candace. Look up these names – what is their significance? Who are these people? What can you learn about all of these?

### **Bible Atlas:** (*New Bible Atlas* from IVP)

Use this to learn what the setting of the passage is, or to learn about places mentioned in the passage. If you don’t have a Bible Atlas, a Bible dictionary may also work, but you will have less detailed information.

#### Example:

If you are studying Acts, you will come across a long list of place names throughout the book. One example is found early on: Acts 2:10 & 11: “...Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs--we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Do you know where all of these places are? What is the significance of all of these locations? Look it up!

### ***Bible Background Commentary (IVP):***

This is a great book to help you understand how the passage would have sounded to the original listeners. This book works with a verse-by-verse format to give you cultural background on the text. To look something up, you simply find the book of the Bible and the verse(s) you are studying.

#### **Example:**

Acts is loaded with a lot of cultural information that can go right over our heads if we don't clue into what is going on for the original hearers. Consider the situation between the Grecian Jews and Hebraic Jews. What's the big deal? What does it mean that someone is a Grecian Jew, and what are they doing in Jerusalem? Why do they need to take care of the widows? Why would the Grecian Jews' widows be overlooked in the daily distribution of food? To find out, look up Acts 6:1-7 in the Bible Background Commentary and find out.

### ***Commentary: (New Bible Commentary from IVP)***

This should be the last book you turn to when you are studying any passage. Don't look up anything in a commentary until you have finished studying the passage yourself and have discovered the interpretation and application on your own. If you go to a commentary too soon, "it will push you around like a cow on ice" (Jay Anderson's quote). In other words, use it to check yourself, but don't depend on it to do your Bible Study for you. Trust the Holy Spirit to teach you, not the commentary. A good commentary will give you information on all interpretations of any passages, as well as supporting the interpretation favored by the authors and/or editors of the commentary.

#### **Example:**

After finishing studying Acts 6:1-7 for several days, you could look in a commentary to check your interpretation and application of the passage. Simply look up Acts 6:1-7 as you would in a Bible, and read the information given. If you differ with the commentary in your interpretation, go back to your Bible and re-study the passage. Prayerfully consider the commentary's interpretation and your own, and seek out other commentaries. Also, discuss both interpretations with others who have studied the passage.

### ***Other Great IVP Reference Books (which you can get at a discount!):***

*Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*

*Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*

*Dictionary of the Latter New Testament and its Developments*

*Dictionary of New Testament Background*

*New Dictionary of Theology*

*Women's Bible Commentary*

*Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*

## Urbana 03:Leading Morning Bible Studies

*Bible studies at Urbana 03 will be **one-hour, interactive, inductive** studies using a **manuscript** of the text:*

- **One-hour** – Students at Urbana 03 will have had vastly different experiences with types and lengths of group Bible study. For those who are used to a 15 minute “devotional”, one hour might feel rigorous. For those who like 2+ hour manuscript studies (used at some InterVarsity camps and conferences), they may be wishing for more time to study or discuss at length. As the leader, you are responsible for **pacing**, which means you help the group use the hour best. This might mean that you will have to say, “This has been a good discussion, but we need to move on to another question so we get all the way through the passage.” It might also mean that you help a group slow down from arriving at the main point and ask them to think more deeply.
- **Interactive** – Group discussion is the key to this type of Bible study. It is not a time for the leader (or a member) to give a teaching on their understanding of the passage. Your role is to assist the community in digging into Scripture together. You will **facilitate** a lively discussion by helping the group members ask questions of the text and look for answers from the text. Please remember that English may not be the first language of some of your group members and religious language may not be familiar to everybody. Try to speak clearly and make sure everyone understands the vocabulary of the discussion, so that all can participate fully.
- **Inductive** - These studies will be “inductive”, which means we want to let the text speak for itself, rather than trying to fit it into pre-determined grids. To the greatest extent we are able, we want to lay aside what we have been taught before about the passage and look at it with fresh eyes. By looking closely, and asking good questions, we hope to discover the **author’s intended meaning to the original audience and then apply God’s truth to our lives today**. This means that we won’t be referring to other parts of the New Testament when trying to answer our questions, since Luke has included all that is necessary to make his points.
- **Manuscript** – The passages we are studying are in the Convention Handbook. Studying from a printed page, rather than a bound Bible, enables us to write freely. We can mark repetitions, sketch images, jot down questions, and record insights from group discussion. Writing as we study helps us develop the **active posture** which is so crucial for transformational Bible study.

### Suggested Pacing

5-10 minutes: Introduction and individual study

10 minutes: Group shares observations and questions

25-30 minutes: Group discussion answering questions

2 minutes: Leader summarizes

10 minutes: Respond

3 minutes: Pray

## Using Teaching Notes

The following notes are not a traditional Bible study guide. They are intended to sharpen your understanding of the passage as you prepare and to give ideas for how to lead the group study. They are not intended to replace your own study and preparation but to be a resource for you. The most important part of the study is that the group generates its own questions. It's not necessary that all the ideas in these notes come out in your discussion.

The material in the three boxes at the beginning of the Teaching Notes is important for the leader to understand and can be shared with the group as questions arise.

Good Bible study always considers the **context** of the passage. The power of the story is clearer when we see it unfold within a larger whole. **Historical and cultural background** is important for understanding how this passage would have struck the original audience.

The sidebar highlights **critical observations**. These can be discovered inductively from the passage itself. A leader should come out of their own preparation with a strong grasp of these categories: who, where, broader setting, and primary tension. They are the initial building blocks on which our interpretation is built.

### Introduction

The goal of the introduction is to orient the group to the context of the study so they can begin to engage in the passage with their hearts and minds. This might be done through asking a reflective sharing question or by giving them an exercise to use during individual study.

### Individual Study

This is a time of **silence** when each member of the group reads and writes on their own. Here are some suggestions of what to do during individual study.

- Read through the passage, noting the key players and tensions.
- Read through again, looking for ideas that are emphasized through repetition, contrast, or strength of image.
- Pay attention to the questions that float through your mind as you study. Write them down in the margins of the manuscript.

### Group Shares Observations and Questions

Have the group share with each other what they noticed and the questions they have from the passage. The leader should write down the questions as they are shared, but don't let the group answer them yet. The first morning it might be helpful to go around the circle, having each person share a question or comment, so everyone participates and gets used to talking in the group.

### **Group Discussion Answering Questions**

Walk through the passage from beginning to end, asking the main questions that the group generated and interspersing your own as needed. The role of the leader is to ask questions, help people listen well to each other, and summarize what the group is discovering. The **leader should not answer the questions themselves**, but continually ask the group to generate answers from clues in the passage. A useful facilitator question is, “What do others of you think about that...?”

*The teaching notes have a table with questions and possible answers. Do not try to ask every question on this list. Use the questions that the group generates and then supplement them so that there are questions to discuss from every section of the passage. The questions and answers that are highlighted are significant in understanding the passage’s central thrust.*

### **Leader Summarizes**

At the end of the group discussion, it is helpful for the leader to summarize the central thrust of the group’s conversation. This not only brings clarity, but it can also help to drive home the point of the passage. Your summary should be a short, punchy paragraph, not a long reiteration of the passage. Sample summaries are included in the teaching notes. The best summaries use the language of the text and of the group discussion.

### **Respond**

The Bible’s transformational power is experienced when people take concrete steps to live under the authority of the Bible. Make sure to leave enough time for the group to discuss how to respond to the passage. The teaching notes include possible application questions. Pick no more than two of them to use. The questions you select should fit your group’s discussion. Encourage people to write down the application questions at the bottom of their manuscript.

### **Pray**

Hearts and lives only change by the power of the Holy Spirit, which works primarily through the Scripture, community, and prayer. When God speaks to us in Bible study our response should be to say “yes” to Him. Through prayer we invite the Holy Spirit to extend God’s reign further into our lives.

#### ***Here are some hints to help you as you lead your group:***

- *Don’t preach, don’t lecture and don’t share everything you saw. Get the group to share what they see.*
- *Encourage those who are sharing a lot to choose what they share more carefully; encourage those who are not speaking as much to share some simple, brief observations. Let the group know that it’s okay to be quiet and okay to be more talkative – as long as everyone is contributing something and everyone is listening well to one another.*

## Luke 3:1-20 Teaching Notes

### Context: Who's Who in Luke 3:1-2

**Emperor Tiberius** – 2<sup>nd</sup> Roman Emperor, ruled AD 14-37

**Pontius Pilate** – Roman governor of Judea, ruled AD 25-37, appointed by Augustus Caesar after the Jews complained about Archelaus (son of Herod the Great)

**Herod** – son of Herod the Great, Jewish ruler of Galilee, ruled 4 B.C. – A.D. 39

**Philip** – son of Herod the Great, Jewish ruler of Ituraea and Trachonitis (a region E of Galilee), ruled 4 B.C.- AD 33

**Lysanias** - Jewish ruler of Abilene (a region NW of Galilee), ruled AD 27-36

**Annas** – high priest (civil and religious head) of Israel AD 6-15, deposed by the Romans, but retained influence until his death since subsequent high priests were members of his family

**Caiaphas** – son-in-law of Annas, high priest of Israel AD 18-36

**John son of Zechariah** – prophet of God whose miraculous conception and birth is recorded in Luke 1: 5-25, 57-80

### Critical Observations

**Who** – John the Baptist, crowds, tax collectors, soldiers, and Herod the ruler

**Where** – the wilderness area around the Jordan River in Judea

**Broader Setting** – A.D. 28-29, the nation of Israel is under the military occupation of the Roman Empire; God has not spoken through a prophet in over 400 years.

**Primary Tension** – The people of Israel are responding with great humility to the prophet sent by God, expecting that deliverance from their oppression is coming soon. Yet, John the Baptist predicts God's judgment on them rather than their enemies and calls them to change the way they handle money and possessions.

### Historical and cultural background

Many of the prophetic books of the Old Testament begin with “**the word of God came to ...**” Prophets played a significant role in ancient Israel's spiritual and political life. Their last prophet, Malachi (c. 432-425 BC) predicted the coming of a Messiah (a liberator) who would restore God's people to right worship.

**Baptism** was a once-for-all ritual washing administered to Gentiles who wanted to become Jews. It was a purification ceremony that acknowledged their need of God's cleansing of their sins and a commitment to leave their Gentile past.

God established his covenant with **Abraham**. The nation of Israel is one of the nations descended from Abraham, and the nation God chose to use to bless the nations. See Genesis 12:1-3, 15:1-6, 17:1-14.

**Tax collectors** were Jews who worked for the occupying Romans to collect taxes from their own countrymen. Most took advantage of their position to get rich.

**5 minutes: Introduction**

*If necessary, make sure to do introductions again this morning to be hospitable to those who missed the first evening prayer group.*

“How do you or your family prepare for the arrival of someone important into your home? Has someone important (like the president, the Pope, etc.) ever come to visit your city? How did city officials prepare for their visit?” Have two or three people share.

**Or ...**

“Remember a time when a friend, teacher, coach, or parent gave you some feedback that was hard to hear. How did you respond initially? Did you appreciate it later?” Have two or three people share.

**5 minutes: Individual study**

Have someone read the passage out loud. Then, tell the group something like: “Take a few minutes to study this passage on your own. What do you notice about the dynamics between John the Baptist and the crowds? As you read and study the passage, write down any questions that float across your mind. Is there anything that interests or intrigues you? Anything you don’t understand?”

**10 minutes: Group shares observations and questions**

- Have the group share with each other things that they noticed as they studied.
- “What are your questions? We won’t answer them but we’ll wait until we’ve gotten them all out on the table so we can work on them in an orderly way.”
- Jot down the questions as they are shared so you remember to ask the most relevant ones.

**25 minutes: Group discussion answering questions:**

*Remember, these are just some of the questions that might arise. The best questions to work on are the ones asked by the group. Supplement the group’s questions with some of these if there are important ideas in the passage that the group hasn’t raised themselves.*

*The highlighted questions are ones we think are key to understanding the passage.*

<p>v. 1-6</p> <p>- Why does Luke spend so much time setting the historical context?</p> <p>- What is “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”?</p> <p>- How does this passage quoted from Isaiah 40:3-5 fill out what John is doing?</p>	<p>- Luke emphasizes the historical importance of John’s ministry by dating it in six different ways. The word of God comes to his people through a man with no political or official religious authority.</p> <p>- Jews acknowledging that they have been so far from God, it is as if they have been Gentiles.</p> <p>- In the ancient world, when a king wants to visit a new part of his realm, he sends a courtier to get the locals to build a road for his chariots. Calling people to repentance is the way John prepares the “road” for Jesus.</p>
<p>v. 7-9</p> <p>- Why are the people coming to be baptized?</p>	<p>- They recognize that John is a prophet from God and think he might be the</p>

<p>- Why is John the Baptist so harsh?</p> <p>- In what way are the people like a brood of vipers?</p> <p>-The people of Israel relied on their Religious and cultural background to give them favor with God. How do you rely on your religious/cultural/family background to give you special position with God?</p> <p>- What is “the wrath to come”?</p>	<p>Messiah.</p> <p>- The situation is very serious. The Messiah is coming and most of Israel will reject him. God wants true repentance so their hearts will be soft enough to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. They are in danger of resting complacently in their (supposed) racial privilege.</p> <p>- Snakes who lived in the wilderness would scurry away from fire. The people are running out to be baptized because they are afraid of God’s judgment.</p> <p>- Give time for a few members of the group to share their reflections. If your group has a mix of races or ethnicities, this could be a very interesting discussion worthy of further conversation outside of the study.</p> <p>- The hardness of Israel’s heart towards God will be exposed through their response to Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Ethnic Israel will soon be replaced by the Church as God’s people on earth (vs. 9 “every tree that does not bear fruit is cut down”).</p>
<p>v. 10-14</p> <p>- What are the soldiers doing there?</p> <p>- All three sub-groups ask “What should we do?” What does this show about their understanding of repentance and sin?</p> <p>- What sins are being addressed in John’s answers to the different groups?</p> <p>- Why is there so much emphasis on money?</p>	<p>- The soldiers are probably Roman, sent by the governor as security guards for crowd control. The Israelites were infamous for their uprisings. It is remarkable that the soldiers, too, respond to John’s message.</p> <p>- Repentance is not merely an internal shift of heart. Sin affects our relationships with others as well as God. Repentance should be demonstrated in our lives in concrete ways.</p> <p>- Crowds: greed, materialism, lack of compassion. Tax collectors: greed, manipulation, selfishness. Soldiers: greed, violence, abuse of power.</p> <p>- Our relationship to money and possessions is a clear manifestation of what is actually true in our relationship with God and others.</p>
<p>v. 15-20</p> <p>- Why do they think that John might be the Messiah?</p>	<p>-They have been waiting for the Messiah for a long time. John is drawing a big</p>

<p>- How does John answer their questions about himself?</p> <p>- What does it mean to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire?</p> <p>- What is John trying to say through the wheat and chaff metaphor?</p> <p>- Why does Luke include the information here about John's arrest?</p>	<p>crowd and talking about God with tremendous authority.</p> <p>- John points to the person coming after him and describes how powerful he is. By comparison, John isn't even worthy to be his lowest servant (the one who changes shoes). The baptism of water that he has been performing is "small potatoes" compared to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire that Jesus will bring.</p> <p>- Only God can give the Holy Spirit. When the Messiah comes, he will bring the Holy Spirit to his people. The coming of Jesus will bring the judgment of God as well (symbolized by fire).</p> <p>- When the Messiah comes, he will bring judgment on those whose lives haven't borne fruit.</p> <p>- It shows the reader that it is dangerous to speak the truth. There may be real suffering that comes when we talk straightforwardly about sin.</p>
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<p>Wrap-up</p> <p>- In what way does repentance prepare the way for the Lord?</p>	<p>- It exposes the ways we don't trust and obey God, the areas of our lives that need purification. Repentance "paves the road" so that the work of God can come further into our lives.</p>
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**2 minutes: Leader summarizes**

John the Baptist explodes on to the scene, asking the nation of Israel to turn back to God with public repentance and humility. It is not enough to bear the name of "Jew" (or in our case "Christian"). God is looking for fruit in our lives that demonstrates our allegiance to Him. Our relationship to money and possessions – how we gain them, how we feel about them, and what we do with them – is a key indication of what is actually happening in our hearts. We are called to repentance, not as an end in itself, but as a preparation to receive the greater things God has for us.

**10 minutes: Respond**

- What have you brought with you to the convention that you have more than one of (and that could be of benefit to the poor)? Sweaters, sweatshirts, t-shirts? We have the opportunity to give an article of clothing (no underwear, please) to the Salvation Army to be distributed to the homeless. If God leads you to do so, bring what you'd like to give to the Assembly Hall either this morning or evening. You may prefer to wait and give something to a local clothing distribution ministry

when you get home. This is not intended to be a substitute for the offering later this week, but rather a small sign of our repentance.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and convict you of sin. Confess it and repent this morning so that you are ready to receive all that God has for you at Urbana 03.
- How do you try to convince yourself that you don't need to repent, especially in the area of money?
- If you asked John, "What do I need to do?" what do you think he would say?

**3 minutes: Pray**

Pray together that God would use our concrete acts of repentance this morning to prepare the way in our hearts and lives to encounter Jesus more fully.

## Luke 19:11-27 Teaching Notes

### Context:

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. He has clearly told the disciples that he will be killed there (Luke 13:33-34, Luke 18:31-34). While passing through Jericho, Jesus encounters Zaccheus (a tax collector) and declares his ministry of salvation. A crowd – which includes Zaccheus, the disciples, and people who grumble against Jesus – are the audience for this parable.

### Historical and cultural background:

**Parables** are stories using familiar subject matter, designed to make a main point or answer a single question. They are intended to illicit a response and are different than allegories, i.e. stories where every element is a representation of something in the real world (e.g. Pilgrim's Progress and Hinds' Feet on High Places).

In 4 B.C., Herod the Great, ruler of Israel died. His kingdom was divided between his 4 sons, who had to **travel to Rome and be crowned** by the emperor. One of the sons, Archelaus was disliked by the citizens of Judea. They sent 50 representatives to Rome to protest the coronation. In response to their request, Archelaus did not become a king, and Pontius Pilate, a Roman, was appointed governor instead.

**10 pounds** is 3 months salary for a laborer (approximately \$10,000).

### Critical Observations of the Parable

**Who** – a nobleman, 10 slaves (3 of which are highlighted), enemies of the nobleman, a few bystanders

**Where** – an unnamed kingdom

**Broader Setting** – An ambiguous and contentious political situation

**Primary Tension** – Nobleman's slaves are faced with dilemma of whether or not to align themselves publicly with him by doing business in his name. The true nature of the nobleman is up for debate

**5 minutes: Introduction and Individual study**

Have someone in the group read the passage out loud. Then give these instructions: “Design the cover of a tabloid about the events described in this parable. What headlines would you include? What would you use for illustrations? As always, write down your questions.”

*Or...*

“Make a chart comparing the three different slaves. Consider areas of resources, opportunity, motivation, outcome, etc. Take note of the questions that float across your mind as you work on this.”

**10 minutes: Group shares observations and questions**

- Have the members share what they came up with from the exercise during individual study time.
- “Let’s get out all our questions. We won’t answer them but we’ll wait until we’ve gotten them all out on the table so we can work on them in an orderly way.”

**30 minutes: Group discussion answering questions**

<p>v.11 - What is Jesus’ audience expecting to happen in Jerusalem?</p>	<p>- Jesus will storm into Jerusalem, throw out the Romans, and establish the Kingdom of God on earth with himself as King.</p>
<p>v. 12-14 - Why does the nobleman need to go away to get royal power?  - Why does the nobleman pass out money to his slaves?  - Why do the citizens hate the nobleman?</p>	<p>- His power comes from someone with greater authority, just as all who rule in Israel need the approval of the Roman emperor. - There are several possible reasons: he wants to continue to make money while he is gone; he is testing the slaves to see who he can trust. - Jesus doesn’t tell us, we just know that he has enemies.</p>
<p>v.15-19 - In our world, what kind of activity yields 1000% return on your money? - How did the first two slaves make all that money? - Why is he rewarding the wealthy?  - Why does the nobleman give them control of cities?  -Why does the first slave make more money than the second one?</p>	<p>- Risky (gambling), illegal (drugs), or highly speculative investments (dotcoms). -They must have been aggressive and crazy in making business deals. - The nobleman isn’t interested in the money. He is using money as a test to see who is risky, trustworthy, and obedient. - He is pleased with them and rewards them with significant authority (like becoming the governor of a large state). Now that he is in power, he needs to find leaders he can trust to help him run his kingdom. - Perhaps he risked more or worked harder. The reward appears to be</p>

<p>- Why does the parable only tell the outcome of 3 of the 10 slaves given money?</p>	<p>proportional to the effort. - Highlighting the outcome of 3 of the 10 reveals the spectrum of response without dragging out the story.</p>
<p>v. 20- 27 - What makes the third slave different?</p> <p>- What is the third slave's view of the nobleman? - Where does he get his ideas of what the nobleman is like?</p> <p>- What evidence in the story supports or refutes the third slave's view of the nobleman?</p> <p>- How does the nobleman respond to the third slave's excuse?</p> <p>-Why does the king slaughter his enemies?</p>	<p>- He took no risks; he was passive and self-protective; he doesn't want to be associated with the nobleman publicly because of uncertainty of whether or not the nobleman will return as king. - He accuses the nobleman of being a thief and a tyrant. - The slave seems to agree with the nobleman's enemies, or at least have doubts about the nobleman's character because of the attitude of the enemies.</p> <p>- The slave's view of the nobleman doesn't line up with the nobleman's actions. Upon his return, he doesn't collect the money that was made. He lets the faithful slaves keep it and then shares his authority with them. He is generous, not tightfisted. - He points out that his argument doesn't make any sense. The slave's accusation is merely a cover up for his own fear of being publicly associated with the king (whether through doing business in the marketplace or through making a deposit at the bank). The king calls him wicked and punishes him. - It shows the fullness of his victory. The presence of enemies was a stumbling block for at least one of his slaves.</p>
<p>- How is this parable intended to help those who thought the Kingdom would appear immediately?</p> <p>- What does it take to be a good and trustworthy servant in the Kingdom of God?</p>	<p>- Jesus is going away (to heaven) but will return to earth and reign supreme, judging all his enemies and rewarding those who are faithful to him. - Confidence in the victorious return of the King and a willingness to "do business" with what the King has given you in risky ventures that will expand His Kingdom.</p>

**2 minutes: Leader summarizes**

Jesus' followers find themselves in a peculiar place. We have a king who hasn't yet fully set up his reign on earth and his enemies abound. He has entrusted us with our lives and asked us to invest them wildly, promising tremendous rewards to those who are faithful, obedient and risky. Who will we listen to? Our

generous king who has declared he will return and reward? Or the voices of doubt and accusation that insinuate that God isn't good or ultimately triumphant? In considering the future of our lives and the Kingdom, it always comes down to **fear vs. faith**.

**10 minutes: Respond**

- What risk is the Lord asking you to take?
- Where does fear cause paralysis in your life? What would it look like for you to repent of fear?
- How are you tempted to wrap up and hide what God has given you? What kind of accountability can you set up for yourself so that you are faithful to God's call?

**3 minutes: Pray**

Pray together that God will enable you to be obedient to His call with faith and confidence in His rewards. Ask Him to break the power of fear during this last day of the convention.