



Manual

Leading Group Bible Study In the Congregation

Chapter 1

Why Bible Study in Groups?

1.1 As Christians we need to listen to God's words

Why do we as Christians listen to and study the Bible? We do that because we believe that in the Bible we hear God's voice speaking to us today. Through the Bible God explains to us what He did for us and what He wants us to do.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we should be listening to the voice of God. Just as Jesus did from His childhood years, when his parents found Him in the temple "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46). As followers of Jesus Christ we should do like Him and listen and ask questions as well.

1.2 Bible Study is key to spiritual growth

We strongly believe that key to spiritual growth is found in frequent, daily, bible reading, prayer and teaching.

We strongly believe that this bible reading, prayer and teaching is best done in meetings of small groups of members of the congregations. Why do we believe this?

- Because... Meeting in small groups stimulates studying and understanding the Bible. We often fail to study the Bible on our own. Going to a group for Bible study may motivate us to study the Bible even outside the meetings.
- Because... Bible study groups give the opportunity for more systematic and careful reading of the bible than can often be done in the church service.
- Because... Bible study meetings bring a spirit of fellowship in the congregation and will give members a sense of belonging
- Because... Praying together gives opportunity to learn how to pray
- Because... From testimonies shared during small group meetings you can find solutions and hope for your own difficulties
- Because... Small group members can equip each other to challenge temptations
- Because... Bible reading and discussions during small group bible studies may provide material for sermons

In the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia there is strong tradition of prayer, bible study and service to those in need in the guilds for men, women and youth, who meet weekly. In addition we have a strong tradition of prayers in sections on Wednesdays and Sunday afternoons.

Many parts of this Bible Study manual will be useful for guiding the Bible studies at these existing meetings.

1.3 Small Groups for Bible Study as an additional church activity

In addition to existing groups, as a church we feel that our congregations can also benefit from having dedicated small Bible Study Groups. These small groups will differ from the existing activities in the following ways:

- They will bring together men, women and youth in one group
- They will adopt a participatory approach
- They will be small in size
- They will meet at book level

Meetings like that did already take place in the early church. In Acts 17:11 we read how the people in Berea received Paul's preaching "with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true".

These small groups are not intended to replace the guilds, nor will they replace the section prayers. They will serve spiritual growth of the members by offering them another venue to read the bible together and pray together.

It is also possible for the guilds to continue having their meetings in the familiar format, but in addition to these to have separate bible study groups, where they can use the approach and methodologies described in this document.

Chapter 2

Some Principles of Bible Study

2.1 Bible study starts with asking questions

Bible study begins when the reader asks himself questions about what he has read. These may be questions like for example:

- What does this passage teach me about God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit?
- What does this passage teach me about the Christian life?
Is there:
 - a command to obey?
 - a promise to claim?
 - a warning to heed?
 - an example to follow?
 - etc.
- What is the main lesson of the passage?
- Etc.

The key to Bible study is knowing to ask the right questions.

Asking questions is a skill that you can develop. As you practice Bible study more often, you will develop the art of asking questions. The more questions you ask about the text under study, the more you will get out of it.

2.2 The ultimate goal of Bible study is application

When we study the Bible we do not want to settle for understanding alone. We want to apply the biblical principles to our daily living. Dwight L. Moody, a great evangelist and Christian educator, used to say, *“The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives.”* It was given to change our character and bring it more into conformity with Jesus Christ. All of our efforts in Bible study are valueless if in the final analysis we do not change and become more like Jesus. We must “not merely listen to the word,” but we are to “do what it says” (James 1:22).

The goal of application will also determine the type of questions you ask. So during Bible Study you don’t only ask: “What does this mean?”, but also: “What do I need to start doing or stop doing?”, “What relationships do I need to work on?” or “What ministry should I be having with others?”

Our goal in all Bible studies is to know Jesus Christ and to become like Him in our attitudes, our thoughts, our speech, our actions, and our values.

2.3 Bible Study needs to be systematic

An ad hoc study of the Word of God does not do justice to the fact that whole Bible is God's Word. Not only the passages which we happen to know or like. The "browsing" method, or the "where-it-falls-open" method of choosing which passage to read and study will not produce the results God wants in our lives.

What we need is a systematic, regular plan of study, whether we go through a book, study a theme, analyze a person's character, study a chapter, or choose some other method. We should not overlook any passage or section in the Bible. The Old Testament is just as much God's Word as is the New. Many people today do not know too much about much of the Old Testament.

In 2 Timothy 3 verses 16 and 17, Paul writes: *"all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."* Please note that:

- Paul uses the words "all Scripture" and "thoroughly". Hence the need to be systematic.
- Paul mentions being "equipped for every good work" as the goal which underlines what was mentioned in paragraph 3.2 about application as the ultimate goal of Bible study.

2.4 Writing notes is a great help in Bible Study

It is important to write down notes during Bible study and in preparation of it. Especially those who are literate should practice this skill.

You haven't really understood a biblical text until you have put the thoughts gained from it into writing. You will notice that there is a big difference between thinking about a passage and writing down what you have learned.

The writing down forces you to be specific. It forces you to make yourself understandable for others. For this reason, we often propose that - if possible - participants write down their own thoughts on a passage or a question.

This approach also makes it easier for people who are usually quiet to participate in the group discussions. If they first have time to write down something about the passage, they will find it easier to share it with the group later on. Otherwise they may feel overwhelmed by the ease and speed of talking of some other more vocal (but not necessarily wiser) members.

Chapter 3

Bible Study in Small Groups

Some Practical Methods

3.1 Some principles for Bible Study in small groups

There are many possible ways of organizing the actual Bible study in small groups. In the paragraphs below, some practical methods are presented. These methods have all been successfully used in several pilot congregations in the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia in the year 2012.

All methods presented are based on the following assumptions or principles:

- Christians meet in small groups as equals. The educated and uneducated sit down together. We all learn from the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Everyone has wisdom, so as a result everyone should be able to contribute equally.
- The Bible Study leaders are not experts who know or should know the answer to each question. Bible study leaders moderate the group discussion and make sure everyone contributes.
- It is good practice in more experience groups that members rotate leading the Bible study. At the beginning, the trained Bible study leader may lead most of the studies, but after some time he may ask another member to lead. So, when in this Chapter we talk of the leader of the Bible study it means “the member who is leading that particular Bible study”.
- Experience shows that many people need time to think about an answer to a question on a passage. The Bible study method should deliberately create this “thinking time” before the conversation actually starts. Otherwise the group conversation will only be between people who can think fast or who think out loud.
- Experience shows that participation improves in smaller groups of 3-4 people. If groups become larger than that, some members will remain quiet. Therefore if the Bible study group is around 6-8 people, it is already worthwhile to split the group into 2 subgroups. These may look at the same passage and same questions, but
 - Give participants time to prepare (and write down) individual answers to the questions asked
 - Break the group into smaller sub-groups where individual answers are discussed and then summarized for plenary discussion

3.2 Studying a given passage using sub-groups

Preparation before the meeting

- A. Before the Bible study group meets, the member that will lead during that particular meeting chooses a passage from the Bible.

Depending on how the group has organised itself, the passage may either be:

- a. his own choice without any restrictions
- b. his own choice guided by a theme set by the group beforehand
- c. the choice of the group, e.g. when the group has selected a Bible book to be studied chapter by chapter

- B. The leader prepares 1-3 questions to guide the group in its discussions

The questions can be general, for example:

- a. What would be a good title for the passage?
- b. What verse in the passage really touched you? Why? How could you apply this in your personal life?
- c. What do we learn from this passage about God?
- d. What do we learn from this passage about ourselves and our own life?
- e. What do we learn from this passage for the life of our congregation?
- f. Etc.

However, the questions can also relate the passage to a **specific theme**. For example:

- a. Which 3 lesson can we draw from this passage about ...(fill in specific theme)....?
For example "Which 3 lessons can we draw from this passage about how to do evangelism?"

During the Bible Study

- C. The members read the passage for themselves and spend some time individually to answer the questions given by the leader. If possible, they write down their answers for themselves.

(Time: 10 minutes)

- D. The group is divided into subgroups of 3-5 people. These groups sit together. In these subgroups, the members all share their answers to the questions one by one. Then they discuss and try to summarize their findings to share with the whole group.

(Time: 15-20 minutes)

- E. After the discussion in the sub-groups, the whole group sits together again. Then someone is asked to read the whole passage.

- F. After reading each sub-group presents its answers. After all groups have presented there is opportunity to ask questions for clarification and further discussion.

(Time: 20 minutes)

- G. After the presentation and clarification, the leader for the Bible study that day will ask the group to apply the passage in day to day life:

- a. What does this mean for us?

- b. What does this mean for our congregation, our vestry, our section, our book?

Please note that its is important to encourage the group to not just mention general truths, but to become really practical. In Chapter 4 some guidelines are given how to encourage this.

(Time: 10 minutes)

Example 1 – Thematic questions

Topic	What does the Bible teach us about jealousy and ambitions?
Bible passage chosen by leader	James 4:1-12
Questions	1. What would be a good title for this passage? 2. What do we learn from this passage about God? 3. Which 2 lessons do we learn from this passage for the life of our congregation?

Example 2 – Passage from a Bible book

Topic	<i>There is not specific topic, but the group had decided to read through the book of Mark. The previous weeks they have reached upto Mark 10, so this week they continue with the next chapter.</i>
Bible passage chosen by leader	Mark 11
Questions	1. Which verse in this passage really touched you? How does it apply to your life today? What does God tell you through this verse? 2. What does this passage teach us about God? 3. What does this passage teach us about repentance? How can bring this lesson into practice in our congregation?

Example 3 – Thematic & more than one passage

Topic	What does the Bible teach us about Bible Study?
Bible passage chosen by leader	Divide the Bible Study group into several sub-groups. Half of the subgroups will look at 2 Tim 3:10 – 4:8 and the other half will look at: James 1:19-27
Questions	1. Which 2 lessons does this passage teach you about Bible Study?

3.3 Finding passages for a theme using sub-groups

- A. Before the Bible study group meets, the member that will lead during that particular meeting chooses a theme on which to reflect.

Depending on how the group has organised itself, the theme may either be:

- a. his own choice without any restrictions
 - b. the choice of the group, e.g. when the group has selected a theme (maybe with some subthemes) beforehand
- B. When the group meets, the leader presents explains the theme he or she has chosen and asks the following questions:
- a. Which passage from the Bible do you think would be relevant for this theme?
 - b. Which lesson does this passage teach you about the theme?
- C. The members are then given time to find a passage and read it for themselves. Then they reflect and – if possible – write down the lesson from this passage for the chosen theme.
- D. The group is divided into subgroups of 3-5 people. These groups sit together. In these subgroups, the members all share their passages and lessons. Then they discuss.
- E. At the end of the discussion they summarize their lessons and then select one verse out of all the individual passages which best summarizes their discussion.
- F. After the discussion in the sub-groups, the whole group sits together again. Then each subgroup presents its findings. Each subgroup starts by reading the summarizing verse and then presents the findings. Then there is time for questions for clarification as well as comments.
- G. After the presentation and clarification, the leader for the Bible study that day will ask the group to apply the lessons learnt about theme in day to day life:
- a. What does this mean for our congregation?
 - b. What does this mean for ourselves and our families?

Please note that its is important to encourage the group to not just mention general truths, but to become really practical. In Chapter 4 some guidelines are given how to encourage this.

3.4 Using a Bible Study guide and sub-groups

A Bible study guide can be helpful tool for the members leading the Bible study. The steps followed can then be the same as in paragraph 3.2 only that the leader does not need to choose the passage and define the questions. For these the Bible study guide will be followed. In this case the order becomes like this:

- A. The theme and the relevant passage(s) are defined by the Bible Study guide chosen by the group. The leader presents the theme and the passages for Bible Study guide.
- B. The members read the passage for themselves and spend some time individually to answer the questions. If possible, they write down their answers for themselves.
- C. The group is divided into subgroups of 3-5 people. These groups sit together. In these subgroups, the members all share their answers to the questions one by one. Then they discuss and try to summarize their findings to share with the whole group.
- D. After the discussion in the sub-groups, the whole group sits together again. Then someone is asked to read the passage(s) suggested in the Bible study guide.
- E. After reading passage(s) each sub-group presents its answers. After all groups have presented there is opportunity to ask questions for clarification and further discussion.
- F. After the presentation and clarification, the leader for the Bible study that day will ask the group to apply the passage in day to day life:
 - a. What does this mean for our congregation?
 - b. What does this mean for ourselves and our families?

Please note that its is important to encourage the group to not just mention general truths, but to become really practical. In Chapter 4 some guidelines are given how to encourage this.

Chapter 4

Guidelines for Application

4.1 Application is a Biblical command

In the Bible there are numerous examples where the importance of application is highlighted. Let us start by looking at the Jesus' own teaching in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:24-27. He compares different types of disciples. Both hear Jesus' words, but they differ in what they do afterwards. The first puts Jesus' words into practice. The other does not. The first one is called a wise man, the other one a fool. The first one's house will stand, the other one's house will fall.

This is repeated very clearly in James 1:22-23: *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. (...) the man (...) who continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does."*

So application is not optional. It is a command.

4.2 Application is hard work

Stillmore, application is not easy. It actually is the hardest part of Bible study. Why is that? Three things that make applying Scripture to our lives so difficult.

1. Application is hard work because it requires serious thinking .Sometimes it is difficult to see how a particular passage applies to our own life, our own congregation. We may then easily give up. In this chapter we try to give some different ways how you may find an application. Try them.

2. Application is hard work because Satan fights it viciously .The devil's strongest attacks often come when you are trying to apply what you have studied. Satan knows that as long as you are content with merely having head knowledge of the Word, you are not much of a threat to his plans. He will let you study the Bible all you desire as long as you don't ask yourself, "Now what am I going to do with all that I've learned?"

3. Application is hard work because we naturally resist change. Often we don't "feel" like changing, which is what true application requires. Application often requires us to sacrifice the behaviour we are used to and that has become convenient for us. Yet, the key to spiritual growth is to follow Jesus Christ who sacrificed His life for us. In the gospels He repeatedly talks about taking up our cross, humbling ourselves, becoming like children. We naturally resist these things and that makes applying these words particularly hard.

4.3 Some help to find an application

1. *Pray about it!*

If you don't know how to apply the passage, then ask God to show you. He was the one speaking to you in the passage in the first place. He is the one who wants you to apply it. If you ask, He will show.

2. *Read the passage as if the main character were you.*

If the passage is about a particular person, read the passage as if you were that person. You may even read it again replacing the name of the person to which the passage is addressed or about which the passage talks with your own name. And then ask yourself the question. If I were really this person, what would I feel? What would I say? What would I do? Would I do the same? Would I say the same? Or something else?

3. *Summarize the passage in your own words*

It can be helpful to try to summarize the passage in your own words, as if you had to explain your neighbour who did not attend the Bible study meeting. After summarizing you ask yourself: why did God want me to hear this particular passage today?

4. *Use a checklist to find an application*

In this passage, is there any ...

- Sin to confess?
- Promise to claim? Is it a universal promise? Have I met the condition(s)?
- Attitude to change? Am I willing to work on a negative attitude and begin building toward a positive one?
- Command to obey? Am I willing to do it no matter how I feel?
- Example to follow? Is it a positive example for me to copy, or a negative one to avoid?
- Prayer to pray? Is there anything I need to pray back to God?
- Error to avoid? Is there any problem that I should be alert to or beware of?
- Truth to believe? What new things can I learn about God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, or other biblical teachings?
- Something to praise God for? Is there something here I can be thankful for?

4.4 Make the application as practical as possible

You need to remember four factors in writing out a good application:

1. Your application should be **personal** — don't talk about "we" or "they", but use words like *I, me, my, and mine* throughout.
So don't say: "We should be more humble in the congregation." But say: "I should be humble towards other people in the congregation."
2. Your application should be **practical** — it should be something **you can do**. Even more, it should be something that **others can see**.
So, not only say "I should be humble to other people in the congregation", but also say how, e.g. "so I will give up my position as vestry chair to allow someone else to grow into leadership."

When during Bible study groups report back their lessons, you should feel free to ask if their applications meet these two criteria.

Chapter 5

Leading a Bible Study group

5.1 The leader manages expectations

The first task of the leader is to make sure that the members of the Bible Study group understand what they can expect of each other. He makes sure the group agrees on and regularly evaluates its values.

Some commonly accepted values for small groups are:

- We will both as leaders and as members prepare for the meeting, e.g., by reading the Bible passage if the passage is known in advance
- We will take part in group discussions but we will try not to speak too long so that others can also take part
- When someone is speaking we will all listen
- We will start and finish on time (as the leader you are primarily responsible for this – don't wait for latecomers)
- We will be committed to this group in attendance and participation
- We will ask God to help us love and support each other through hard times and good
- We will not gossip about church issues but we will be engaged with and supportive of the wider congregation
- What we hear in this group, we will keep confidential: it will remain within the group.

You can add others but it is better not to make the list too long or detailed – it should be easy to see if someone has not met an expectation, e.g. if they speak an unkind word.

It is the duty of the leader to correct members who do not act in accordance with the values of the group. Of course this should be done gently, sometimes in the group sometimes in a separate one-to-one meeting.

To be effective a leader will have to lead by example, e.g. be on time, be prepared, be willing to help, speak words to build up and not tear down.

5.2 The leader moderates conversations

During a Bible Study meeting members come together as equals to learn together from the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The task of the Bible Study leader is to facilitate group discussions so that everyone can contribute equally regardless of background and status. The Bible Study leader is not a teacher who should know all the answers or who will mark other people's answers.

The purpose of the group Bible study is that all members actively participate in discussions about the theme and the passage. The Bible study methods presented in this manual are already an attempt to ensure participation by all.

However, the leader may still need to intervene regularly to make sure real conversations are taking place. The main ingredients for real conversations are:

- Encouraging real listening
- Removing barriers for participating and talking

5.3 The leader encourages real listening

“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry”. This verse from the letter by James serves to underline the truth that real conversation starts with real listening.

What is needed for real listening?

- **Listen actively**

Conversation starts by listening actively to each other. Active listening means a few things:

- When you listen, be patient and focused. Do not – while listening – already start thinking about your objections to what is being said or about what you want to say next.
- When you listen, try to observe the feelings of the person talking: is he or she happy, angry, disappointed, or just giving an opinion.
- Show that you are listening by maintaining eye contact, nodding and encouraging words.

- **Do not interrupt**

Allow the other to finish what they are saying. Research shows that on average we listen for only 17 seconds before interrupting. When tempted to do this, force yourself to go back to active listening.

- **Summarize and ask for confirmation**

Reacting to each other starts by showing the other person that you have heard him or her. This can be done as follows:

- briefly summarizing what you have heard the other person say
- asking for confirmation: “Is this what you tried to say?”

If the person says “yes”, then you can come in with your own reaction. If the person says “no”, then you should ask the other to explain again “What is the most important aspect of what you were saying?”

- **Assume that everybody has wisdom, so ask clarification**

There may be cases in which you are tempted to think that what a person is saying does not make sense or even is offensive. Your first reaction may well be to object.

However, you may also pause and try to understand why the other person made the statement. The best way to do this is by asking questions like: “What makes you think it is like this?” or “Where do you find this in the Bible?”

5.4 The leader removes barriers for participation

For some people talking seems (too) easy. For others it is difficult. They may think by themselves:

“I don’t know where to start”
 “It’s too complicated”
 “They won’t be interested”
 “They might laugh at me”
 “I may sound weak”
 “I don’t want to disturb the peace”

The Bible study leader should try as much as possible to remove barriers like this, by:

- **Build trust**

Trust grows slowly as members get to know each other better. However, the leader plays a crucial role by emphasising...

- ...the value of confidentiality
- ...that there are no right or wrong answers. There are no stupid comments or questions.
- ...that everyone has something to contribute and that everybody’s contribution is needed.

When people trust each other, it will be possible to experience what Paul was saying to the Ephesians: *“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”* (3:17-19)

- **Involve others**

After listening to one persons comments, the leader may invite the group in general to react, e.g. by saying “We have heard what our brother said, what do we think about it?”.

Alternatively, the same question can be directed to one person. “So Mr. Kabaghe, what do you think about this?”. If this person is generally not open, it is advisable for the leader to ask permission to ask such questions before the meeting.

- **Stop people who talk too much**

There are always people who talk many times and talk long time. They may dominate the conversation too much. Then the leader is allowed to interrupt them: “Thank you, we heard you say that...” and then you summarize and add the following question: “I would like to know what others in the group think about this.”

- **Make sure people stay on topic**

While talking people may add new elements that will divert the conversation from the focus question. The leader then may intervene and bring the discussion back on topic. E.g. by asking the one talking: “How do you feel this helps us to understand or answer our focus question better?”

Chapter 6

Order of Conducting Group Bible Study

The Bible Study methods described in the previous chapters should be used as the (core) part of a Bible Study Group meeting. In this chapter we describe a proposed order of a complete Bible Study group meeting.

6.1 Duration

We recommend that a group Bible Study should take about 60-90 minutes in total.

6.2 Order of conducting a group Bible study

1. **Singing**
At the agreed starting time, the members present start by singing 1 to 3 hymns. These could be either sumu or well-known choruses. It is recommended that the leader of the meeting chooses at least one hymn that is somehow related to the passage or theme of that meeting.
2. **Prayer**
The leader of the meeting or the bible study group leader starts with a prayer to ask God's Holy Spirit to be present and guide the discussions.
3. **Introduction of the lesson by the Bible Study leader**
The Bible study leader briefly explains the theme or bible passage chosen for that meeting including the reasons for choosing it or – when relevant – the relation to previous bible study meetings.
4. **Reading & Group discussion**
The group conducts the Bible study using any one of the Bible study methods described in the previous chapter.
5. **Summary**
After the group discussion the one leading the Bible study that day will provide a short summary. Please note that a summary is not a verdict about what transpired.
6. **Agreeing passage or theme for next meeting**
After closing, the Bible study group will agree the theme or passage for next week. This can be done on a week to week basis, or the group can decide to draw up a programme for a longer period, e.g. a quarter. If the programme is available, the Bible study leader will remind the members of the theme or passage for next week.
7. **Closing Prayers**
The bible study is concluded by prayer. There are different approaches to this. These are described in more detail in Chapter 8.

The steps above are the basic steps. Individual bible study group may choose to add different steps, such as more singing, testimonies or prayers.

It is also possible to devote an entire bible study meeting to intercessory prayers. For example if specific events in the life of the Bible study group members, or congregation, or Synod or country require God's special intervention.

6.3 Who leads the Bible study group meeting?

Every Bible study group has a trained leader. The presbytery will regularly organise training sessions for new bible study leaders either at congregation or presbytery level.

It is the responsibility of the Bible study leader to organise and lead the bible study meetings.

However, it is recommended that the bible study leader shares this responsibility with the members of the group. When the group has just started, he or she may be the one leading the meetings. But after some time, when the group has become used to the methods of Bible study, it is advisable that he also involves other group members to take turns to lead a meeting. Of course this may require some guidance and assistance by the bible study group leader.

In a way, the relationship between the Bible Study leader and the one leading a particular meeting is like the section chairperson and the one leading the section prayers on a particular Sunday afternoon.

It is important that the leadership of the bible study itself is shared among all members. This increases participation and ownership. This will greatly increase the sustainability of the group.

Moreover, it is expected that the number of people joining bible study groups will grow. This will require more groups to be formed at some point in time. Then it is important new bible study leaders are already available for these new groups. This will be the case when leadership of the meetings is rotated.

Chapter 7

Making a Programme of topics for Group Bible Study

7.1 Making a programme

In stead of choosing on a week by week basis which passage or which topic to study, the group may develop a programme for a longer period, e.g. a quarter. The advantage of this is that we will go through the Bible more systematically.

If the group has chosen to rotate who will be leading the Bible study, the programme can also include a list of leaders.

If the group has chosen to rotate venues, the programme can also include a list of venues.

Then the programme may look like this:

Date	Topic and/or passage	Leader	Venue

This chapter gives some ideas how you can go about choosing a programme.

7.2 Studying a Bible book

The easiest way of developing the programme will be to choose a book from the Bible and study one chapter each meeting.

The group may want alternate its choice of books between the Old Testament and New Testament.

For larger books (e.g. Isaiah or Psalms), the group may choose to study a part of the book, in stead of the whole book.

7.3 Studying relevant passages for the festive seasons

In the periods around Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, the group may decide to study relevant passages for the festive season, e.g. Matthew 1, Luke 1 and Luke 2 around Christmas; Mat 26-28 around Easter; Acts 1 and 2 around Pentecost.

7.4 Studying a theme

The group can also choose to study a specific theme, e.g. prayer, the Holy Spirit, or the parables of Jesus. Depending on the size of the theme, it may be covered in one meeting or may require several meetings, with each meeting dealing with a sub-theme.

Some examples

Theme	Prayers in the Bible	Holy Spirit	The life of Moses
Sub-themes	The Lord's Prayer (Mat 6) The Prayer of Nehemiah 1 The Prayer of Daniel 9 Jesus praying for his Disciples (Joh 17) The Prayer of Paul for the Ephesians (Eph 3:14-21)	The coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2) The work of the Holy Spirit (Joh 16) The fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5) The gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12-14)	Birth and youth (Ex 2) His Calling (Ex 3) The Exodus (Ex 12) Leadership lessons (Ex 18) The Golden Calf (Ex 32) Moses sees God (Ex 33) Moses' farewell (Deut 31)

The group can choose the relevant passages for the sub-themes itself, or it can leave that assignment to the leaders that will lead the group during the particular meeting.

Lastly, the group may choose to follow a theme from a Bible study guide.

Chapter 8

Prayer in Small groups

8.1 Forms of prayer

Bible Study group meetings are concluded with prayer. This prayer can take many forms:

- A general prayer of thanksgiving by the Bible Study leader or any of the members present
- Intercessory prayer based on prayer points given by the members during the meeting
- Spontaneous individual prayer, where each individual prays aloud by him- or herself. After some time, individuals fall silent and the Bible Study leader prays a closing prayer.

8.2 Intercessory prayer

If some group members lack confidence in praying out loud, you can help them:

- Give some teaching on prayer and explain that prayer is not about using big theological words
- Tell the group not to be afraid of silence but that the value of spoken prayer is that others can add their 'Amen'.
- Make your own prayers simpler so that it sounds easier to do (your experience may discourage them from trying).
- Write down prayer requests and ask someone other than you to pray through them – or divide them up and ask group members if they will take a section each. Praying from written material is easier than trying to remember all the prayer requests or think up appropriate words.

It is at the time of intercessory prayers that members may share testimonies. When giving testimonies, members should remember to share enough but avoid speaking too long.

When praying:

- Be specific. For example, try not to say 'we just pray for Mr X' but 'we pray that Mr X would know your peace/become a Christian/know your provision/etc.'
- Normally prayer is to the Father, in the name of Jesus by the Holy Spirit – the dynamics of this are that Jesus grants us access to God by his work on the cross and the Spirit indwells us as our connection with God.
- God knows all the details, so in praying out loud, just give enough for others to understand and say 'Amen'.

8.3 Use a “checklist” for prayer

Use the ‘ACTS’ model – adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication (requests) to expand prayers beyond just requests.

The following specific examples are not exhaustive but will help you have a more balanced approach:

- Adoration: have a time just praising God in prayer for who he is and what he has done in Christ for us, ask the group to pray one word (or very short) prayers describing God’s attributes (love, care, holiness, etc...)
- Confession: say sorry for individual sins as well as sins of the group, for example if the group has neglected to do what it promised, e.g. to visit someone. (And if you cannot think of a sin, pray the Holy Spirit will bring them to mind at an appropriate time.)
- Thanksgiving: keep a notepad of prayer requests and then remember to give thanks when they are answered! Share testimonies and give thanks.
- Supplication: pray for each other and those you know who are in need, the Minister, Kirk Session and your congregation, missionaries, the persecuted church, our country, for people we know to become Christians.

Chapter 9

Pastoral Care in Bible study groups¹

9.1 Why is pastoral care important for Bible study groups?

In addition to Bible study and prayer, pastoral care is an important part of the life of Bible Study groups, because:

- In the Bible Study meetings, people meet each other regularly and share their thoughts and experiences around an open Bible. In many cases, this will result in growing trust between members of the group.
- When a member then shares his or her struggles and problems, we are called to care for one another—Galatians 6:2 tells us to ‘carry each other’s burdens’.
- Of course, the parish minister and the elders carry the first responsibility for pastoral care, but if a group member tells us their struggles during a Bible Study meeting we are also called to provide care where possible
- The advantage of pastoral care in a Bible Study group is that if someone has a particular pastoral need, there may be different members of the group readily available who can help because they have experienced something similar (2 Corinthians 1: 3-4) or who can provide practical assistance.

9.2 What are limitation for pastoral care in small groups?

There is a huge amount of care that can take place in groups but some areas need care above and beyond this:

- Bereavement – the group can provide great support along with extra care from the minister, elders and entire congregation.
- Particular difficulties such as depression, addictions, major crises – specialist help should be sought . The Bible Study leader should contact the minister and/or the convening elder.
- Sometimes people are reluctant to open up in a group about a specific issue other than those mentioned above and a one-to-one meeting is better – this could be arranged with the minister or the convening elder.

9.3 What are the principles of pastoral care which everyone should remember? (all the time!)

If the following principles are not followed much damage can be caused, if they are, much good can result:

- Pastoral care in the small group is the group caring for each other—the small group leader does not become a replacement for the Minister or Elder (unless he/she is the Elder for people in the group).

¹ This chapter is based on “Pastoral Care in Small Groups – Quick start guide 8” published by the Board of Christian Training of PCI in 2012.

- If it is shared in the group it stays in the group! Confidentiality is crucial for maintaining trust. The exceptions are if the information is already public; the person says clearly it can be shared; or if the person who shares is endangering themselves or someone else (then the leadership must refer it to an appropriate person).
- Care must be Christ centred – the person should be encouraged to put their trust in Christ while still receiving the support of the group. The group (or anyone) should not take the place of dependence on Christ as saviour.
- Be open and honest in sharing and others will be encouraged to be too – but don't pressurise them to share.
- Be empathetic – try and understand what is like to be in their shoes (and don't say 'I know how you feel'!)
- Be very wise in giving direction – ask yourself: is this helpful, Christlike, biblical and the right time to say this?
- Avoid a judgemental attitude. Everyone who is a Christian in the group has been saved by grace and should be particularly conscious of this if someone shares a struggle with sin...
- But don't help others make excuses for their sin – help them know the forgiveness of Christ.

9.4 How can pastoral care happen in a small group?

We may be more used to thinking of pastoral care in a one-to-one conversation. How can it happen in a group?:

- Through Bible study – being transformed together by God's Word means that it encourages and challenges us. Group members can share their insights and experience which can be pastorally helpful to everyone in the group. For example, a Bible study on what it means to be a godly parent, being a Christian at work, coping with stress, illness or even bereavement.
- Through praying for each other – this is a great way to make care Christ centred and dependent on him.
- Through offering practical help – offering to make a meal, help with a move, give a lift, help with a simple task someone else finds too difficult all speak volumes of God's love in action (for those in or outside the group).
- Through arranging to visit a group member who is ill at home or in hospital or is bereaved.
- Through keeping in touch with group members who have not been attending recently. Express concern: not 'why weren't you there?' but 'we missed you, is everything OK?' (leaders could choose to delegate this).
- Through arranging to meet up to chat if the small group meeting is not enough to share a particular burden – this could be with a leader or someone in the group but wisest if male with male and female with female.

9.5 How can I be good at listening?

Listening well shows you care. Just being listened to can be of great help – it also informs us how to pray or help.

- Listening requires concentration! Try to switch off from other thoughts like the great advice you might give.

- If someone is sharing and you haven't understood ask for a question for clarification – it shows that you care about what is said (and avoids you praying for their mother-in-law when it was actually their aunt who was ill!).

Refer to paragraph 5.3 for more tips on real listening.

9.6 How can I be good at sharing my struggles?

In small groups we also need to be good sharers. Unlike a one-to-one conversation, time is a bit more limited.

- Share enough but avoid speaking too long. For example say briefly what happened/is happening, how it made you feel and perhaps what you would like the group to pray for.
- Be open but take care not to share inappropriately, e.g. giving confidential knowledge you have about others without their permission or a particular sin you struggle with that is better talked about one-to-one.

Chapter 10

Organisation of Bible Study Groups in the Congregation

10.1 Bible study groups at book level

The objective of the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia is for each congregation to have at least one Bible Study group active at every book/elder district.

If no Bible study group exists in a book, a member of the congregation may volunteer to start one. He/she should apply to become a Bible study leader through the taskforce for Bible Study (refer to 10.3 for more details on the role of this taskforce)..

Alternatively, the Bible Study committee may request someone to become a Bible study leader for a book if it finds no Bible study group is active in that particular book.

The first task of a bible study leader is to promote membership of the Bible Study group among the members in his/her book. He/she will be responsible to make sure that many members from his/her book come to attend group Bible Study.

These bible study groups meet at regular times under the leadership of a Bible study leader.

During the group Bible study meetings, members will take turns in leading the process of bible study, using the methods described in this manual or using a group bible study guide.

If a Bible study group in a book grows larger than a convenient number of members (typically bigger than 15), the group may decide to split. If possible, the group will then elect a leader for the new group and recommend this person to the taskforce for Bible Study to be officially appointed as a bible study leader.

10.2 Relationship with Guilds and (Section) Prayers

The Bible Study Groups are organised to promote participatory Bible Study. They bring together men, women and youth in one group at book level.

As indicated before, Bible Study groups don't replace bible studies at Guild meetings. In fact, the methods used in this book can equally be adopted in the Guild meetings as an addition to the existing methods of Bible study and the guides used there.

The same applies to (Section) prayers. Bible Study groups are not meant to replace these. However, as with the guild meetings, the (Section) prayers could follow the methods described in this manual.

10.3 Supervision of Bible Study groups during the pilot

During the pilot year, the Bible study groups operate under the supervision of a Bible Study Taskforce.

This taskforce will have 5-10 members. These members will be elected from the active Bible study leaders.

The taskforce members elect a chair and a secretary.

Bible study leaders will report regularly to the Bible Study taskforce about the activities of their Bible study group. The taskforce will also actively inquire about the status of each Bible study group.

The Bible Study taskforce will report to Session about the number of active Bible Study groups in the congregation as well as any issues regarding Bible Study groups that need attention at that level.

At presbytery level, the Presbytery will appoint a Bible Study Contact person for the duration of the pilot.

The congregation Bible Study taskforce will send reports about the Bible Study groups to the Presbytery Bible Study contact person. The presbytery contact person will also actively inquire with the congregation bible study taskforces about the status of the bible study in the congregations

The presbytery contact person will then compile a consolidated report about all congregations in the presbytery and then forward this to the taskforce Spiritual Health of the Synod.

10.4 Maintaining Healthy Bible Study Groups

Some signs of unhealthy small groups are: being exclusive, a leader or group at odds with congregational leadership, a lack of growth or desire for evangelism/mission, an emphasis on social activities, Bible study but no prayer or pastoral care, a leader who teaches unhelpful theology, a lack of openness in group sharing, etc. (the opposites of these are signs of vibrant Christ centred groups). This is not an exhaustive list but raises the question of how unhealthy signs can be prevented or cured. Oversight of small group leaders is essential. Some suggestions are:

- Having one leader and a vice per group (perhaps one has the main responsibility for Bible study and the other for pastoral care or alternatively they could share Bible study by taking it on alternative weeks).
- Having an elder in every small group (not necessarily in leadership although it should be noted that elders should be able to teach – 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9) – and having every elder in a small group.
- Providing initial and regular on-going training for leaders in pastoral care, leadership and teaching the Bible.
- Providing support to leaders through regular meetings with the person or group of people responsible for small groups where leaders can share their concerns, be prayed for and given direction where necessary.

- Making sure that every group leader is equipping potential new leaders and allowing group members to test and exercise their gifts in leading Bible study, showing hospitality (encourage meeting in homes other than the group leader's), pastoral care, intercessory prayer, worship, evangelism, etc.
- If necessary exercising church discipline by removing a leader if they refuse to correct erroneous and harmful teaching and/or are not willing to rectify serious pastoral harm that they have caused.
- Having a rule of avoiding talking about church issues in groups.

10.5 Appointment and Qualities of Bible Study leaders

Bible Study leaders are appointed by the congregation Bible Study Committee.

Bible Study leaders should have the following qualities:

- Full member of CCAP Synod of Livingstonia
- Spiritually mature
- Literate
- Able to build relationships with different types of people
- Able to lead group discussions
- Able to manage time
- Open-minded to various ideas and groups in the congregation

Bible Study Leaders don't necessarily have to be church elder or deacons.

The Bible Study committee should make sure that Bible Study leaders are selected from all groups in the church, i.e. youth, women and men

10.6 Roles & Responsibilities of Bible Study Leaders

The Bible study leaders have the following roles & responsibilities

- Advertise so as to bring together a group of people for Bible study in their district or section
- Encourage attendance to bible study meetings
- Contact those who are becoming irregular
- Organize venues & other logistics
- Facilitate choosing topics for bible study
- Prepare thoroughly for bible study meetings
- Facilitate discussions in Bible study
- Make bible study interesting for group members to attend
- Lead the group so that every member grows in understanding
- Attend trainings on how to conduct bible study
- Train other bible study group members to lead bible studies
- Give regular reports to the Bible Study taskforce

10.7 Training of Bible Study leaders

The congregation Bible Study taskforce will organise a training for new Bible study leaders on an annual basis in cooperation with the presbytery.

The training will be based on the content of this manual and consist of the parts:

- **The importance & principles of group Bible Study**
Participants should be able to explain why Bible Study is important and what principles underly it
- **Bible Study Methods**
Participants will practice several methods of bible study in small groups. After explanation of the method, they will be taking turns leading a small group practicing the method.
- **Group facilitation skills**
Participants will practice Bible Study methods. During this practice, they will also practice group facilitation skills.
- **Setting up Bible Study groups**
Participants will develop their own action plan for setting up Bible study groups in their vestry. This session will give all the necessary ingredients and then move on to actually developing the plan

This training will be facilitated by the Presbytery Bible Study contact person in close cooperation with the congregation Bible Study taskforce and the parish minister.

It will be the responsibility of the congregation to host the training and facilitators.

From time to time, the congregation may also organise continuing education seminars for existing Bible Study leaders to refresh their skills and to increase their knowledge about the Bible.