



Course Hosts Notes

These notes are designed to assist the Course Host in facilitating The Bible Course by providing an overview and key information for each session. We've included some further ideas, suggestions and tips to help your course run smoothly and enhance the experience for everyone who attends.

Preparation checklist for each session:

- **Refreshments and food options**
You might like to enhance your Bible Course by offering refreshments. Tea and coffee are always appreciated and you might like to explore our ideas for Bible food tasters or more adventurous options that tie in with the theme of the session. We suggest making an extra effort for session 1 as a launch event for the whole course. Encourage everyone to come along and see if the course is for them.
- **Sound and Vision**
Being able to see and hear the films are key to the success of your course. You will need to consider the size and requirements of your group and project the films appropriately. A smaller home group should be fine with a good quality TV. A larger group may require a video projector, screen and speakers. Viewing angles, comfort and appropriate volume are key issues that need to be considered.
- **Room set up**
Consider the room that you plan to use and make sure the lighting, temperature and seating/viewing angles are comfortable for everyone to minimise distractions during the course.
- **Spare manuals, pens and Bibles**
Have some pens and a few spare Course manuals available in case someone forgets to bring theirs. And for those who don't have a copy, it would be helpful to offer copies of the Bible in a modern translation. The Course uses the English Standard Version but other translations are also fine (e.g. New International Version).
- **Recommended Resources**
In the back of the manual, we've provided a Recommended Reading list for people who would like to take their exploration of the Bible further. If possible, why not have some copies of these books and resources available to borrow or to buy.
- **Prayer**
In all your preparations, do remember to pray for each person attending the course. Pray that they will enjoy the course, connect well with other people and grow in confidence with the Bible.

Discussion-starter Questions:

For each session we've included an optional question to get conversation going before the first teaching video. These are especially useful if your group are new to each other. From session 2 onwards, you could also begin by asking someone to give a ONE MINUTE recap of the last session. From session 3 onwards, this could include drawing The Bible Course storyline on a flipchart and mentioning the important events, characters and books so far. But make sure it is timed to just one minute! We have given some suggestions for the content for each recap below.

Personal Reflection time:

At the end of each session, we have provided space for Personal Reflection (suggested 10 mins). This gives an opportunity to reflect on the content of the session as a whole and the key verse of Scripture given in the manual. We suggest allowing 5 minutes to reflect on the key verse and to write down in the space allotted in the manual something that has encouraged and challenged you. Then allow 5 minutes in pairs or triplets to share some of those personal reflections and to pray together. You might also suggest that everyone commits to memorising the key verse of Scripture over the coming week.

Daily Readings:

The Daily Readings provided at the end of each chapter of the manual aim to establish a personal rhythm of reading the Bible throughout the week. The daily readings cover some of the key moments in the section of the Bible story that will be referred to in the following session. We have found that when guests participate in the daily readings they get so much more from The Bible Course as a whole. So we want to encourage you to make this a priority. Why not set up a digital group (e.g. social media/text/email) for your course and send the daily reading Scripture reference as a prompt each day and invite people to comment on what they are learning and experiencing through the daily readings.

Session 1

INTRODUCING THE BIBLE

In this session, we explore the following key themes:

- The impact and influence of the Bible
- The inspiration of Scripture
- How to interpret the Bible
- How the Bible was formed
- Different Bible Translations
- Why believe the Bible is God's book

Outline

Refreshments

Welcome & Introduction (3 mins)

Reassure those who might be a bit apprehensive that the course is accessible and enjoyable for everyone! Ensure everyone has a copy of the course manual. Give an overview of the session structure.

Discussion-starter question (5 mins) (optional)

Q: What's your favourite book or film and why?

Video Part 1 (17 mins)

Discussion Time (25 mins)

See questions on p.16 of *The Bible Course* manual

Video Part 2 (17 mins)

Personal Reflection (10 mins)

Key Verse: 'All Scripture is inspired [or breathed out] by God.' (2 Timothy 3.16)

Refreshments

As this is the first session, we recommend providing a good selection of appetising tasters to make a great first impression!

You could arrange a tapas-style selection of Bible foods from the various suggestions given for each session below and provide a label that briefly explains the food's significance in the Bible (e.g. fruit; breads; lamb; fish; honey; wine). This will create some anticipation for all that is to come!

Wrap Up

- In summary: the Bible is a library of books, divided into two Testaments – Old and New. Together they form one story that centres on Jesus Christ. *The Bible Course* will show how all the books, characters and events form one BIG story and give tools and skills to apply it to our lives.
- Daily Readings on p.23 of *The Bible Course* manual. To get the most out of the course, it is vital that we have a go at the daily readings. They will really help as the readings cover some key passages for next session. Does everyone have access to the Bible in a modern translation? Does anyone need to use an audio Bible instead? How can we encourage each other to do the readings and share what we are learning through the week?
- Next week we begin with the Bible story – starting with the first book, Genesis, and considering the themes of creation and covenant. See you then!

Session 2

CREATION & COVENANT

In this session, we explore the following key themes:

- The creation account in Genesis
- The fall
- The flood
- The Tower of Babel
- The call of Abraham
- The theme of covenant

Outline

Refreshments

Welcome & Introduction (2 mins)

Make sure any new guests are welcomed. Ask how everyone got on with the daily readings. Give a brief recap from session 1 using the summary sentence and some headings in the manual.

Discussion-starter question (5 mins) (optional)

Q: What's the most inspiring or beautiful place you've ever visited? Where in the world would you most like to travel to and experience?

Video Part 1 (17 mins)

Discussion Time (25 mins)

See questions on p.33 of *The Bible Course* manual

Video Part 2 (17 mins)

Personal Reflection (10 mins)

Key Verse: 'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.' 2 Corinthians 5.17

Refreshments

As this session starts with Genesis and the story of Adam and Eve, you might like to offer a variety of fruits, e.g. figs linking to the fig leaves (Genesis 3.7) and pomegranates which featured in Solomon's Temple as symbols of the goodness of creation (1 Kings 7.17-22).

Wrap Up

- In summary: Genesis is the first book of the Bible. As an ancient text, it still provides the best explanation of all the beauty and tragedy in our world.
- Reminder about Daily Readings on p. 41 of *The Bible Course* manual.
- Next week we explore themes of Exodus and the Promised Land.

Session 3

EXODUS & PROMISED LAND

In this session, we explore the following key themes:

- Exodus, liberation and freedom
- Captivity in Egypt
- Story of Moses
- The Passover meal
- The Law, the tabernacle and sacrifices
- Jesus – the ultimate exodus

Outline

Refreshments

Welcome & Introduction (3 mins)

Check how people are getting on with the daily readings? Give a brief recap from session 2 – Creation, the fall, the flood and then the covenant with Abraham and his family that will bring hope back to the world.

Discussion-starter question (5 mins) (optional)

Q: Have you ever been lost, trapped or needed rescue? Or have you ever rescued someone?

Video Part 1 (17 mins)

Discussion Time (25 mins)

See questions on p.52 of *The Bible Course* manual

Video Part 2 (17 mins)

Personal Reflection (10 mins)

Key verse: 'Everyone who sins is a slave to sin ... [But] if the Son sets you free you will be free indeed.' John 8.34, 36 NIV

Refreshments

To tie in with the Exodus event, give a taste of some foods from the Passover meal: matzoh or flat bread (most supermarkets stock it); celery, sprigs of herbs dipped in saltwater, a taste of lamb, a hard-boiled egg and a sip of red wine (if appropriate). In addition, the Promised Land 'flowed with milk and honey' and contained huge grapes! See Numbers 13.23, 27.

Wrap Up

- In summary: Through a mass exodus, God delivered Israel from slavery, into the Promised Land. Today, we can experience true liberation through Jesus Christ.
- Reminder about Daily Readings on p.59 of *The Bible Course* manual.
- Next week we explore the books of Judges and Kings.

Session 4

JUDGES & KINGS

In this session, we explore the following key themes:

- The cycle of the Judges
- Violence in the Old Testament
- Story of Ruth
- Kings of Israel (esp. David)
- Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple
- Wisdom literature

Outline

Refreshments

Welcome & Introduction (3 mins)

Give a one-minute recap of the story so far. Draw the storyline on a flip chart and plot the main events and characters so far: Creation, fall, flood; Covenant with Abraham; Joseph down to Egypt; Israel enslaved for 400 years; Moses and the exodus got them out; Joshua led them in to the Promised Land.

Discussion-starter question (optional) (5 mins)

Q: Have you ever met anyone famous? Who would you most like to spend an hour with and why?

Video Part 1 (17 mins)

Discussion Time (25 mins)

See questions on p.68 of *The Bible Course* manual

Video Part 2 (17 mins)

Personal Reflection (10 mins)

Key Verse: 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths'. Proverbs 3.5-6

Refreshments

Fresh bread, honey and dips make a good link to this session. Ruth gleaned barley from Boaz's field and ate bread dipped in wine-vinegar with him (Ruth 2.14). Bethlehem, where the story of Ruth is set, means 'house of bread'. Equally, David ate the sacred shew-bread from the Tabernacle (1 Samuel 21.6). In addition, Samson (one of the Judges) killed a lion and later found honey in its carcass. See if the guests can crack his riddle while they enjoy some honey (Judges 14.5-14).

Wrap Up

- In summary: God raised up judges and kings to lead Israel. They were anointed with the Holy Spirit and foreshadowed the coming Messiah.
- Reminder about Daily Readings on p. 79 of *The Bible Course* manual.
- Next week we explore the theme of Exile and the prophets.

Session 5

EXILE & THE PROPHETS

In this session, we explore the following key themes:

- The divided Kingdom
- Story of Elijah
- Putting the text in context
- Story of Jonah
- Old Testament prophets (e.g. Isaiah)
- Exile and restoration
- The close of the Old Testament

Outline

Refreshments

Welcome & Introduction (3 mins)

Give a one-minute recap of the story so far. Draw the storyline on a flip chart and plot the main events and characters: Creation events; covenant with Abraham; Joseph down to Egypt; Israel enslaved for 400 years; Exodus (Moses) and into the Promised Land (Joshua); cycles of Judges (note Ruth fits in here); era of Kings (Saul, David, Solomon); the Temple and wisdom writings.

Discussion-starter question (5 mins) (optional)

Q: What's the toughest season of life that you have experienced? What gave you hope through it?

Video Part 1 (17 mins)

Discussion Time (25 mins)

See questions on p.89 of *The Bible Course* manual

Video Part 2 (17 mins)

Personal Reflection (10 mins)

Key Verse: 'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given ... and his name shall be: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' Isaiah 9.6

Refreshments

As this session focuses on God's people being taken into exile in a foreign land, give a selection of unusual foods that originate from other countries – perhaps involve guests to help with variety. The strange tastes and uncertainty will help to highlight what being an exile feels like.

Wrap Up

- In summary: God raised up judges and kings to lead Israel. They were anointed with the Holy Spirit and foreshadowed the coming Messiah.
- Reminder about Daily Readings on p. 99 of *The Bible Course* manual.
- Next week we explore the theme of Jesus and the Gospels.

Session 6

JESUS & THE GOSPELS

In this session, we explore the following key themes:

- The four Gospels
- Reliability of the Gospels
- Interpreting the Gospels
- Jesus' life and ministry
- The Kingdom of God
- Jesus' death and resurrection

Outline

Refreshments

Welcome & Introduction (3 mins)
Give a one-minute recap of the story so far. Draw the storyline on a flip chart and plot the main events and characters: Creation; covenant with Abraham; Joseph down to Egypt; Israel rescued through Exodus (Moses) into the Promised Land (Joshua); cycles of Judges; era of Kings (e.g. David); Solomon's Temple; division of kingdom; Northern Kingdom (featuring prophets: Hosea, Amos, Jonah) then conquered by Assyrians; Southern Kingdom (featuring King Hezekiah and Prophet Isaiah); exiled in Babylon for 70 years (Ezekiel and Daniel fit in here); then Judah returns, rebuilds and waits...

Discussion-starter question (5 mins) (optional)
Q: What's your favourite event or section of teaching in the Gospels and why?

Video Part 1 (17 mins)

Discussion Time (25 mins)
See questions on p.107 of *The Bible Course* manual

Video Part 2 (17 mins)

Personal Reflection (10 mins)
Key Verse: 'These [things] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.' John 20.31

Refreshments

Bread and fish feature in the Gospels – large catches of fish, the call to be fishers of men and the feeding of the 5,000. And bread and wine feature in the Last Supper that echoes the Passover meal.

Wrap Up

- In summary: the Gospels capture the extraordinary life of Jesus Christ – Messiah, Saviour and Lord. Now this same Jesus calls to us: 'Come, follow me!'
- Reminder about Daily Readings on p.115 of *The Bible Course* manual.
- Next week we explore Acts and the Church.

Session 7

ACTS & THE CHURCH

In this session, we explore the following key themes:

- The spread of early Christianity
- Pentecost and the Holy Spirit
- The inclusion of the gentiles
- The Apostle Paul
- How to read the letters/epistles
- The book of Romans

Outline

Refreshments

Welcome & Introduction (3 mins)
Give a one-minute recap of the story so far. Draw the storyline on a flip chart and plot the main events and characters: Creation; covenant with Abraham; Joseph down to Egypt; Israel rescued (Moses) into the Promised Land (Joshua); cycles of Judges; era of Kings (e.g. David); Solomon's Temple; division of kingdom; Northern Kingdom (featuring prophets: Hosea, Amos, Jonah) then conquered by Assyrians; Southern Kingdom later exiled in Babylon (Ezekiel and Daniel); then Judah returns, rebuilds and waits... Finally, the Messiah arrives. The four Gospels give accurate accounts of his life, kingdom teaching and ministry, then his crucifixion and resurrection.

Discussion-starter question (5 mins) (optional)
Q: What's your favourite memory of sitting around a fire with others? What made it special (e.g. telling stories, singing songs, cooking food)?

Video Part 1 (17 mins)

Discussion Time (25 mins)
See questions on p.123 of *The Bible Course* manual

Video Part 2 (17 mins)

Personal Reflection (10 mins)
Key Verse: 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses ... to the end of the earth.' Acts 1.8

Refreshments

To highlight the inclusion of the Gentiles (non-Jews), serve up some snacks that include foods forbidden in the Old Testament (see Acts 11.1-10), for example, pork sausages or seafood like prawns.

Wrap Up

- In summary: Acts tells the story of the explosive growth of early Christianity. This story continues today as we share the good news of Jesus with our world.
- Reminder about Daily Readings on p. 133 of *The Bible Course* manual.
- Next week we explore the book of Revelation and review all we have learnt and our next steps.

Session 8

REVELATION & REVIEW



In this session, we explore the following key themes:

- The book of Revelation
- Interpreting apocalyptic writing
- Judgement and New Creation hope
- How to interpret and apply the Bible
- Next steps with the Bible

Outline

Refreshments

Welcome & Introduction (3 mins)

For the last time give a one-minute overview of the Bible story so far – including session 7 content on Pentecost, the church and the NT epistles/letters (e.g. Romans)

Discussion-starter question (5 mins) (optional)

Q: What would be your idea of heaven on earth? Invite some humorous responses e.g. first-class travel and no more queues.

Video Part 1 (17 mins)

Discussion Time (25 mins)

See questions on p.142 of *The Bible Course* manual

Video Part 2 (17 mins)

Personal Reflection (10 mins)

Key Verse: 'Blessed is the one ... whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.' Psalm 1.1–3 NIV

Refreshments

Revelation reveals themes of judgement – so serve up something hot and spicy; and new creation with the tree of life reappearing – so serve up fresh fruits like figs and pomegranates to echo the first creation.

Wrap Up

- In summary: the Bible finishes with visions of a new creation. Paradise lost will be regained. Inspired by this hope, let's make the Bible our priority until we get there!
- Encourage everyone to commit to a Next Step option that will go deeper with the Bible.
- Celebrate the end of the course!