

# LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

## The Big Picture

God's word is alive and it should be embodied in our lives.

## What Do I Need to Know about This Study?

St. Paul wrote his First Letter to the Corinthians while he was staying in Ephesus, in response to problems in the church in Corinth. He had originally evangelized the people in Corinth in 51 and 52 AD while staying with Priscilla and Aquila (see Acts 18). A few years later, a contingent from the Corinthian Church brought him news of divisions and difficulties. Paul is speaking to his own spiritual children in 1 Corinthians (4:14). This is the second of four letters that Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, though only two have been preserved.

Knowing a little about Corinth's history is key to understanding the letter. Corinth had been a major Greek city until the Romans destroyed it in 146 BC. They rebuilt it in 44 BC as a Roman colony for freed slaves and military veterans. It became the capital of the province of Achaia (modern-day Greece) and a major trade city because of its control of two ports on opposite sides of the Greek peninsula. It was infamous for its licentiousness and social ladder-climbing. Many pagan temples dedicated to gods and goddesses such as Aphrodite, Asclepius, Poseidon, and even the Roman emperor filled the city. Every two

years, Corinth hosted a mini-Olympics called the Isthmian Games. At the time that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, Corinth was a booming metropolis, filled with mariners, merchants, tradesmen, and tourists.

Paul makes four main points in the letter. He rebukes the Corinthians for their divisiveness and sin (1–6). Next, he addresses specific questions they had about marriage and food offered to idols (7–10). Then Paul takes up issues regarding the Mass, charismatic gifts, the centrality of love, and the importance of prophecy (11–14). Last, he focuses on the victory of the resurrection of the dead and gives his final greetings (15–16).

For more on 1 Corinthians, see the FOCUS Equip article “An Introduction to 1 Corinthians and the World of Ancient Corinth,” by Kevin Cotter.

### **How FOCUS Equip Studies Work**

Each FOCUS Equip study highlights one particular passage of Scripture. As the leader, you guide a discussion about the passage, which allows participants to discover truths within the passage for themselves. This process is called self-discovered learning. Its format can help participants learn about Scripture and the way to discover Scripture on their own.

## Introduction

At the same time, you are not left alone to understand the Scriptures by yourself. Each chapter will contain a section titled “What Do I Need to Know about This Passage?” It will provide you with details about the passage, along with summaries about the passage’s big picture, how it applies to Jesus, and how it can apply to your group.

### UNDERSTANDING

## WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PASSAGE?

The discussion guide supplies you with an opening question, some background information to share about the passage, and a set of example questions and answers on each passage to use with your group.

### DISCUSSION

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR YOUR BIBLE STUDY

Prepare by studying “What Do I Need to Know about This Passage?” before the Bible study, and then use the discussion guide to direct the conversation with your group.

### How to Prepare Your Study

With all of this information at your disposal, you are all set and

ready to go. You just need to pass out the notes, ask each question as it is written, and read the answers to the questions, right? Well, not exactly. It would not make for a very engaging Bible study. This material is a Bible study in a can: It is meant to preserve good-quality Biblical content and allow for a broad distribution, but someone still needs to take the material out of the can, spice up the content, and serve it to your study. That person is you.

This is where the audience for your study is crucial; these are the people for whom you are “cooking.” Whether you have a group that has never heard the Gospel before or a group that attempts to live out the Gospel each day, you can adapt the Bible study to the group. The flexibility of this format is what can make it so effective.

Most likely, however, you will have a group with both kinds of people. Follow the example of my dance lesson: try to create a Bible study where beginners can learn the basics while the experts can be rejuvenated. Scripture is a great way to do this. St. Gregory the Great once said, “Holy Scripture is a stream in which the elephant may swim and the lamb may wade.” Both groups should be able to discover something meaningful in the Scripture passage.

**For more on How to Lead a Bible study, check out our resource on [FOCUSEquip.org](http://FOCUSEquip.org). As a review, FOCUS Bible study leaders have 3 roles and 3 goals in each study.**

### **Your 3 Key Roles**

With all of the above information in mind, remember that you have 3 key roles in this study. These 3 roles are your contribution to the study, and doing these 3 things well will make the study successful.

## Introduction

1. **Prayer:** Ultimately, it will be God Who changes the lives of the participants. By personal prayer and praying for your participants, you open the door for God to accomplish great things. Please take time to pray for your group, talking with God about each participant.
2. **Hospitality:** Effectively welcoming participants, getting to know them, meeting them outside of Bible study, and becoming real friends will be a great asset to the study. Create an environment that is open and personal, allowing participants to feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and experiences.
3. **Facilitator:** A good discussion really enhances the fruitfulness of a Bible study. Take the time to review the study and ask good, relevant questions to your group. Guide the discussion, allowing everyone to participate. Bring the discussion back if it gets too far astray.

### Your 3 Key Goals

There will, no doubt, be many questions and discussions that come up throughout the study. You may even find yourself a bit lost here or there. However, the goals listed below are what you are ultimately trying to accomplish. Keeping these in mind throughout the study will help you stay on course.

1. **Deep Transformation:** Through interaction with God's word and one another, it is our hope that the lives of your Bible study members will be profoundly changed. The purpose of a Bible study is not to simply learn information or to be a

part of a Bible study club, but allow the Lord to transform our lives. Specifically, we hope that students, through Scripture, are drawn more intimately to our Lord in the sacraments and liturgy of the Church where they can most fully receive the gift of God's grace in their lives.

2. Intimate Fellowship: If people are going to be deeply transformed, they will need others along the way, not only to help this transformation, but also to make sure they continue this transformation in the future. Your goal as a leader is to take a group of people with various backgrounds and personalities and help them form authentic relationships with one another.
3. Spiritual Multiplication: Another important dynamic of small groups is their ability to be reproduced. As you lead, pray that the Lord will raise up members of your small group to go on to disciple others and to lead Bible studies of their own.

### **Final Note**

One of the best ways to learn how to lead a Bible Study is to learn from others. Consider observing someone else's Bible study to learn how they have been successful. Also, ask a missionary or your discipler to come to your study and give you feedback on how you are doing.

### **The Challenge**

To properly lead this study, you will need to prepare in advance and apply God's word in your own life.

