



Discussion Leader's Manual

*God's Word is a lamp to our feet
and a light to our path.*

*Always remember that you are a co-worker with God
(1 Corinthians 3:9) and your heavenly partner is "able
to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or
think according to the power that works in us."
(Ephesians 3:20)*

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Mission & Method

It is an honor and privilege to play a part in influencing and helping to develop another person. This is especially true if the influence is spiritual in nature. Leadership in Explorer's Bible Study offers you just such an opportunity. We trust that this manual will enable you to better serve in this important role and ultimately be a better servant for our Lord Jesus Christ.

OUR MISSION

To bring individuals closer to God through in-depth study of the Bible, understanding God through the reading of His revelation of Himself in the Bible, coming to know His Son Jesus Christ in all His fullness through the power of the Holy Spirit.

To help encourage individuals to establish a pattern of daily Bible study and to make the Bible a living and interesting book for those involved in its study.

To make Bible study relevant to daily life through the power of the Holy Spirit and to make God's promises effective in each student's personal experiences.

To equip and motivate individuals to contribute more effectively to the life and work of their individual churches, supporting them faithfully in prayer, stewardship, and service.

To help individuals make a greater impact for Christ in their families and community, communicating to others what they have learned and received, being alert to opportunities to affect others for good, serving in the Kingdom of God.

EXPLORER'S FOUR STEP BIBLE STUDY METHOD

1. Questions

The first step is to read and study the Bible using the questions in the book to guide your study. A few questions are to be completed each day of the week with only your Bible and the Holy Spirit to guide you.

2. Discussion

The second step is to share your answers with your discussion group. This allows you to learn and grow with the other members of your small group as you meet each week. Bible truths become established as you share your discoveries from God's Word.

3. Lecture

The third step is a lecture given by the Teacher presenting an explanation of the passage along with life-changing application.

4. Study Notes

The written notes provide insight, understanding, and application of the Scriptures. This final step helps to solidify and strengthen the principles learned in the lesson.

Statement of Faith

We believe the Bible is God's Word, a divine revelation, in the original language verbally inspired in its entirety, and that it is the supreme infallible authority in all matters of faith and conduct (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16).

We believe in the Trinity - Holy God, Three in One; God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ) and God the Holy Spirit, united in one Supreme and Divine Being (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:31-33; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

We believe in God the Father, perfect in holiness, infinite in wisdom, measureless in power. He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, and He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 1:17).

We believe in Jesus Christ, the eternal and only begotten Son of God, conceived of the Holy Spirit, of virgin birth, sinless in life, making atonement for the sins of the world by His vicarious substitutionary death on the cross, efficacious for all who repent and believe (Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:14-18; John 3:16-18; 1 John 4:9).

We believe in the bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ which insures the resurrection of all believers who have received God's gift of eternal life. We also believe in a "resurrection of judgment" in regard to unbelievers who reject God's provision for salvation (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We believe in the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ to the right hand of God the Father and in His visible return to the world according to His promise (Acts 1:10-11; John 14:1-6).

We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from God to convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify and comfort those who believe in Jesus Christ (John 14:16-18; John 16:7-15).

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

We believe that man was originally created in the image of God, and that he fell into sin through the first Adam. Sin causes him to be separated from God.

We believe that salvation from everlasting punishment and entrance into a state of fellowship with God is secured only by a personal belief that Christ "bore our sins in His own body" on the cross, and by a definite receiving of Christ into one's inner being. This is to receive eternal life through a personal commitment to Christ.

We believe the church is the Body of Christ, a spiritual organism of born-again believers functioning in the world as a witness for Christ, thus fulfilling the great commission (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20).

We believe it is vital that Christians should personally study the Bible through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, that they "might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Colossians 1:9).

General Guidelines

INTERDENOMINATIONAL PRINCIPLE

Explorer's Bible Studies are interdenominational. Therefore, class leadership should never recommend one church above another or counsel or exert influence in the matter of leaving or staying with a church. If a member has no church affiliation, the teacher may recommend identifying with a Bible-believing church. But under no circumstances should a denomination be mentioned.

COPYRIGHT

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DRESS

All persons on the staff should dress in a professional manner: with dignity, neatness and modesty, keeping in mind to honor Christ in appearance. People respond to those who give expression of organization in their appearance, and so often this is a clue of the inner person in response to commitment in the work of Christ.

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR

Those who teach and lead others are held to a higher standard. They must avoid even the hint of impropriety in regards to their personal lives. Things that might be perceived as an offense by others should be avoided (Romans 14:1-15:6). Those in leadership should be aware of—and avoid—cliques in leadership that exclude others.

AUDIO & VIDEO RECORDING

We ask that class members not be allowed to tape the lecture. (If a class has a children's program the teacher's lecture is taped for the benefit of the teacher and staff of this program.)

INFANTS

Children (including babies) are not permitted to be present during lecture time or in discussion group. Leaders must be firm regarding this. (Classes with a children's program have made provision for child care during class session.)

DISTRIBUTION OF LITERATURE

Literature (tracts, pamphlets, announcements) are not to be passed out or given at class sessions at any time. Allowing class members to hand out any information sets a precedent for distribution of literature that may be contrary to Explorer's principles and purpose or be offensive to the host church. Some members may become confused over detailed charts and papers that a leader or teacher may understand well. Copyright issues may also be involved. All materials to be used are provided by Explorer's Bible Study.

BALANCE IN USE OF TIME

Use discretion and wisdom in balancing your personal time. When an excuse is given to pastors for inactivity in a member's own church "because he/she goes to Bible class and it takes so much time," this can be a serious offense against the class and to the member personally, as well as an affront to the pastor. The same can be true for your family if they feel that their needs are being neglected because of your involvement in Explorer's. Make sure that your time is balanced between home/family, church, and Bible study so that none of these important areas are neglected.

RELATIONSHIP TO HOST CHURCH

We are guests in the host church, and we should act accordingly. Always leave the church in better shape than you found it. If you get something out—put it back; if you make a mess—clean it up; if you turn something on—turn it off before you leave. Find out how the church wants the chairs arranged after your class and set them up that way. Food and drinks can really make a mess, so follow the policies of the church on where these items are permitted or prohibited.

STAFF MEMBERS AND STRUCTURE

Class leadership consists of the following:

- Teacher
- Assistant Teacher
- Administrator
- Children / Youth Coordinator (if program is offered)
- Discussion Leaders

Roles and responsibilities are described in detail later in this manual. The leadership of an Explorer's Bible Study Class works together as a team to create an efficient, effective tool for ministry to the class members. The Teacher must take the lead role in bringing together various individuals to form a cohesive team. Classes must work to fill each of these roles so that the burden of any particular role does not become too great.

LEADERS IN TRAINING

It is a great idea to have one or more Leaders in Training. They can take the role of substitute Discussion Leader or backup for other leadership positions. They can assist the Class Administrator or be asked to do the lecture once or twice a year. The Teacher can assign a Leader in Training to visit different discussion groups each week to observe how other Discussion Leaders lead their groups.

Discussion Leader's Role & Responsibilities

1. Attend the leadership meeting each week. If a leader is absent a substitute leader should lead his/her discussion group that week. Absence is discouraged for any reason other than sickness or an emergency.
2. Prayer undergirds everything in EBS! Pray daily for at least two members of your discussion group. When you pray for the members of the group, you will have no problem remembering names.
3. Complete your lesson each week before the leadership meeting.
4. Be on time for leaders' meeting and for class.
5. The goal is to dismiss the discussion group promptly at the set time of the class schedule, having completed every question. The group is relying on you to keep them on task and on time.
6. Communicate with each member of your group every week. Call, e-mail, text, or otherwise communicate regularly. Include any Children's Leaders assigned to your group. Communicate the way individuals prefer to be contacted. You may need to sign up for e-mail, get a Facebook account, or learn to tweet. We have choices today we never had before. Take advantage of them. A quick text, "I missed you at class," is potentially as powerful as a 15 minute call. Use a text or e-mail on class day, "I hope to see you today" or "Don't forget we are having lunch after class." Veteran discussion leaders recommend keeping notes on your contacts: include name, address, spouse's name, children, conversations, prayer requests, and answers.
7. Appoint a group administrator to keep attendance records.
8. If you choose to have a luncheon or fellowship, it is your responsibility to coordinate and attend.
9. Do not be satisfied that members of your group just come to class; ASK GOD TO LET YOU SEE THEIR GROWTH!
10. Get Excited! Remember, enthusiasm is contagious!

How to Lead a Discussion Group

The Leader's Objectives for Each Member

1. To help each individual know Jesus Christ.
2. To encourage each individual to establish daily study habits.
3. To make the Bible alive and interesting to each individual, relating it to daily life.
4. Through Bible study, to experience the power of the Holy Spirit to effect changes in individual lives.

Encourage Fellowship

1. Each person should feel accepted, loved, and appreciated.
2. This feeling will emanate from the leader to the whole group.
3. Keep things non-threatening—we all remember being called when we didn't know the answer.

Keep the Discussion Moving

1. Start promptly.
2. Beware of time lags in:
 - a. reading questions.
 - b. hesitation (go to next question).
 - c. allowing too much time for volunteering (go to next question).
3. Don't read headings or notes on question sheets.
4. There is no need to reread Scripture text; groups are expected to be familiar with the readings. Always conduct the discussion group on the positive assumption that the class has studied the lesson. Your consideration should be for those who have prepared.
5. The Discussion Leader is responsible for the group returning to the class on time for the lecture.
6. The Discussion Leader should **not** call on an individual for an answer or go in order around the room expecting each member to answer a question. The leader should **not** press an individual for an answer or for sharing.

Clarifying Confused Answers

1. Know how to clarify a confused answer without embarrassing the one giving the answer.
2. Avoid summing up after every answer. (This is done only if necessary for clarification.)

Handling Extra Questions Asked by Members

Extra questions posed by group members or the Discussion Leader can be confusing to a group. Concentrate on the questions in the lesson. Do not answer extra questions in class because:

1. It takes up lesson time.
2. To answer just encourages more questions.
3. Questions will come up that the leader can't answer—do not quench questions, but answer them after class or during sharing time at luncheons.

Arrangement of Chairs and Table

1. Arrange chairs around a table if one is available so people will be comfortable and have a place for their study materials.
2. Be sure everyone can be seen by the leader and other class members (no one hidden or sitting behind another person).
3. The leader always sits facing the door.
4. Leave the room better than you found it, and set up the room as the church desires.

NEW OR VISITING MEMBERS

If group has started the lesson, do not interrupt for introduction until end of session. Introduce the new member or visitor by giving his/her name and saying it was nice to have them in the discussion group and you will look forward to their return next week.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Problem: One person does all the talking.

Solution: Talk privately with the talkative person, appreciate them for being prepared and for their contribution, but enlist their help including others by not answering so often.

Problem: Getting off the subject and how to get back on the subject.

Solution: 1. Verbally recognize the situation: "This is interesting, but...we have left our topic."
2. Suggest discussing the matter later.
3. Read the next question.

Problem: Wrong answers

Solution: Never contradict—direct the question to others. "What do others think? Has anyone else thought about this?"

QUESTIONS NOT ANSWERED BY THE GROUP

The leader should not give the answer. Leave the question until the end and then, if there is time, work on it together as a group.

The only answers we directly correct are errors in understanding salvation. Salvation is by grace, through personal faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross. All roads do not lead to God, and being a good person doesn't get you to heaven.

DISCUSSION GROUP FELLOWSHIP

Discussion groups may choose to have monthly or periodic fellowships. The Discussion Leader should include any Children's Leaders that have been assigned to his/her group. A member of the group will act as host/hostess for the fellowship and provide beverage, paper plates, cups, etc. as well as dessert. The fellowship may be held at the host/hostess home or can be held at the church where the class meets. (Prior arrangements should be made with the church office.) This can be an extension of your discussion group as a time of fellowship and sharing. Childcare for this time is a responsibility of each group.

CONTACTING GROUP MEMBERS

Contacting group members weekly is the key to a successful group. Today people can choose how they want to be contacted—home telephone, cellphone, e-mail, text messaging, even Facebook or Twitter. Ask individuals how they prefer to be contacted and get the best number or address to use.

Personal phone calls should always be a part of your communication strategy. You can pick up clues from a person's voice, get immediate feedback, be more private, and pray with the person.

Communication Guidelines

PHONE CALLS

1. Pray before phoning, asking for wisdom and guidance in your conversation.
2. First few times to develop friendship:
 - a. Make person feel welcome
 - b. If person is willing to talk:
 - ask how he/she likes the class.
 - ask how the lesson is going.
 - ask friendly questions. (Keep notes so you can remember details about his/her family – a notebook is good for this.) Speak about your own experiences in class when first in Bible Study, but don't monopolize conversation.
 - be brief (five minutes should be your limit).
 - subsequent weeks, ask what he/she likes about the lecture or discussion.
 - if absent—let them know they were missed.
3. Don't burden your group with your personal problems; they will hesitate to share theirs with you. Discussion Leaders' problems are cared for at the leaders' meetings.
4. Give members direction on how to contact you.
5. If a group member asks you not to call, honor their request. Make a special effort to speak to that individual on class day or e-mail.
6. Always keep absolutely confidential any personal problems shared.

EMAILS

It is easy to set up a distribution list on e-mail so that you can send general messages to your whole group or personal e-mails to an individual member. If you use e-mail for a group of people it is best to put the addresses in the bcc or blind carbon copy (remember carbon paper?) line so that the recipients cannot see the addresses and will not be able to use them for other purposes without the permission of the individual. It is also possible to set up a "group" so that you select the group and send the message.

Group e-mail is especially helpful to quickly disseminate news. If class is cancelled or plans are changed, a quick e-mail to the group is a great tool.

Many people today will prefer e-mail as they can control when they choose to read it.

FACEBOOK

If your group is willing, you can try forming a group on Facebook just for your EBS class or discussion group. (If you don't know how—ask any teenager.) As the administrator of the group you can control who is invited and also monitor the postings on the site. When someone in the group posts a message, everyone in the group will see it. It's also a great way to set up a fellowship time and send out invitations.

TEXT MESSAGES

This format is effective and quick for a brief message like a day of class reminder and encouragement to come or a quick note about cancelation of class or changes in plans. It is more likely to be read as soon as sent.

General Guidelines Concerning Discussion Groups

1. Instruct new members on how to do their lessons. Encourage them to do the lesson daily as they will experience greater value from their study. Create the expectation that the Bible is exciting and personally relevant.
2. A leader's responsibility is to guide the discussion—not to teach. A leader must be tolerant of different points of view.
3. Encourage all members to share their answers. Written answers are required to participate in group discussion.
4. Keep discussion on the lesson and off tangents. Your group will appreciate your efforts to stay on track.
5. Answer Sheets: We want each class member and those in leadership to dig for treasures in the Word of God. For this reason the answers are made available for the Teacher's use only. Don't allow those in leadership to ask you for the "correct" answer. You need to train them that their answers are important.
6. Discourage use of commentaries, references to an individual's church, other ministers, books, or broadcast ministries, etc.
7. Direct the class discussion so that it is not dominated by one or two members.
8. Encourage members to wear name tags each week.
9. The group administrator will quietly check off the attendance roll. Do not take time to call the roll in your group.
10. The discussion leader should try to sit facing the door so a late arrival or new person can be easily welcomed to the group. If the leader can sit in a different spot in the room from week to week, new members or visitors don't feel that they have moved someone out of their "reserved" seat; when the teacher moves, the members have to shift a little as well.
11. Prayer undergirds all we do in Explorer's. In the discussion group the Discussion Leader begins the meeting with prayer. This should not take more than five minutes. The Discussion Leader controls this step and is the one who prays for the group. Ask for prayer requests and praises. Ask the group to limit the prayer requests to personal needs which are very close to the people in the room. Prayer requests should be personal and specific when possible. For example, "Pray for my son to find a job" is fine. "Pray my boss' wife's cousin" or "pray for the missionaries" is not. Before asking for the group to take on a burden, it should be a burden to the person making the request.

Be sensitive, occasionally things will come up in a prayer request which may appropriately redirect the group for a time. If for example, someone says, "I just found out I have cancer." or "I lost my mother this week." Have the appropriate response. You will know what to do as the Holy Spirit directs. It may be a time of focused prayer is the best response or you may need to refer the person to a trained professional counselor. If in doubt, consult other leaders in the class.

Forms

Here Is Your Answer: The Holy Spirit gives fruit from the study of the Word. This is what every leader desires for every member in the class. When one is ready to come to Christ, you will know. Let God be God in their lives, and let the Holy Spirit do His work. Birth into the spiritual life comes this way; you can't force it. Each leader should have two or three copies placed on a table in their room for class members to pick up voluntarily. Use ***Here Is Your Answer*** carefully and prayerfully.

Certificate of Achievement: The certificate will be signed by the Teacher and Discussion Leader and presented to those who have attended eighty percent of the class sessions.

Welcome Letter: Distribute this on the first day of class and give to new members as they join throughout the year.

You're Invited Brochure: A brochure designed for members to give to others inviting them to join Explorer's Bible Study. The Teacher or Administrator may call or e-mail the Service Center (page 1) the class information to be printed on the brochures.

Other Forms:

Discussion Group Attendance Roll Sheet

Weekly Attendance Form (to report attendance from each discussion group)

Enrollment Form

ADDRESS FOR WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE

Please mail all reports and other correspondence to:

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