

# LEADER BIBLE STUDY

“Let the Word of God dwell within you” -Colossians 3:16

## THEME

There is often a sense that Jesus is someone who lived a long time ago in a land far away. Yet when the text from Colossians was written, Jesus had already been crucified and raised from the dead for many years. Many of those who were alive when it happened had already died as well. But the author understood how God’s word works in the present and doesn’t just tell us about the past, it also DWELLS in us in the here and now!

## PURPOSE

The goal of this Bible study is to help people who serve as leaders in Christian education in congregations. Those leaders will be encouraged to think about the word of God in many ways and to reflect on how their teaching can move from information about the Bible to a way of hearing God speak to us now. People will discover that God’s word is both bigger than we often think and closer than we often notice. And it is not just a “religious” thing to spend time in the Bible, it is a way of being a part of what God is up to in the world.

## MAIN IDEAS

The Bible is the “word of God” but it bears that word for us to meet a God who is alive. We’ll try to emphasize that the Word of God is more than ink on a page. God’s word is on the move and doing many things. The three things we’ll explore in this study include:

1. It is creative – it brings life,
2. It is incarnational – it participates in life,
3. It is meaningful – it helps make sense of life.

## THREE MAIN COMPONENTS

This Bible study is designed with three main components. These three parts can be used as the core of a leaders’ retreat over the course of a day or extended outing. Or leaders can use these as three parts in a series of three studies on the word of God. They are designed so that anyone can lead them – the instructions cover all that needs to be known and no experts are required. God’s word is a creative word. So use these studies to explore how living in that word calls you to be creative as well!

Each component contains:

A discussion starter

A Bible reading

A place for reflection

Questions for you to ponder. Talk these over together!

A time to pray (out loud) together

# Participating in Creation

## Bible Study #1

### Discussion Starter:

There is an increased interest in creation and our role in caring for it. How is care of creation being expressed in your lives as disciples?

### Bible Reading: *Genesis 1:1-31*

Here we see that God's word is a creative one. And God both sees that it is good and calls on humankind to be stewards of the world God has made.

### Reflection:

What is God doing in this text?

What is God saying *to you personally* as you read and/or listen to this passage?

What is God sharing *with you collectively* (your small group, congregation, etc.) in this text? What lessons are you to hear together?

How does the *creative* word of God influence us, as it should, in our lives as disciples of Jesus?

God speaks and good things happen! In some Christian traditions people have considered the world "disposable" since getting people to heaven is the goal.. But much of the ministry of Jesus points to the reality that God is very concerned with what happens *here*. One apocryphal story tells of Luther planting a tree. He is asked, "If you knew Jesus was coming tomorrow, what would you do?" Luther reportedly answered, "I would still plant a tree." What if the whole point of Jesus coming into the world is to make sure we know how much the world matters to God?

### To Ponder Together:

How does your congregation help people meet a God in scripture who cares about the world?

What regular things does your congregation do to participate as good stewards of creation as it uses resources? What could it consider doing?

### Prayer:

Close together by praying out loud with prayer for the world God has made and loves. Include prayers for people and situations needing prayer now.

# The Word Became Flesh

## Bible Study #2

### Discussion Starter:

Where have you seen God at work recently? What makes you think it was God?

### Bible Reading: *John 1:1-8*

John is very excited about the word that made the world now coming to be involved as a part of it in Jesus. He begins God's creative work in Jesus by connecting it to God's creative work in creation.

### Reflection:

What is God doing in this text?

What is God saying *to you personally* as you read and/or listen to this passage?

What is God sharing *with you collectively* (your small group, congregation, etc.) in this text? What lessons are you to hear together?

What ways can you help others "see" God in the flesh and encounter a living Christ?

One of the amazing claims of Christianity is that the God who made the world dared to come down in the middle of it. It was a huge risk and one that almost no one saw coming. In fact, John reminds us that even the people who should have been best prepared for this had trouble believing it and ultimately rejected Jesus. At the same time, John sees the amazing truth that in Jesus God is acting to invite anyone and everyone to connect with God. And this is a God whose love and commitment are deep enough to persist through even death and continue being a part of our lives. Believing this brings the life changing gift that turns ordinary people into children of God!

### To Ponder Together:

How does the ministry of your congregation help people to not just hear about Jesus who came long ago, but also to meet Jesus in the present?

If believers are children of God and given new life in Christ, how does your congregation teach and train everyone for their role as a disciple called to carry on the work of Jesus, in the church and in the world?

### Prayer:

Close by praying out loud with prayers of thanksgiving for where you have seen God in the flesh lately. Include prayers for people and situations needing prayer now.

# Interpreting Scripture

## Bible Study #3

### Discussion Starter:

Who are the people in your life who started interpreting scripture for you when you were a “young” Christian (as a child or adult – whenever Christianity was new to you)?

### Bible Reading: *Acts 8:26-40*

A man from Ethiopia is intrigued by what he is finding in scripture. But he needs help to fully understand the implications of what he is reading.

### Reflection:

What is God doing in this text?

What is God saying *to you (individually and as a group)* as you read and/or listen to this passage?

If having help interpreting scripture is important for new Christians, who are you personally helping better understand and listen for what God is saying?

For Christians, it can be all too easy to assume that if we know what a message means that others must know as well. We can even assume enough about what we think we know to miss new insights for ourselves. A key to really hearing and meeting a living God comes from being willing to live in community with others, ask questions, and share answers. Just as the Ethiopian eunuch was blessed by conversation with Philip, all of us will be blessed to ask good questions and share our answers with others along the way.

### To Ponder Together:

When you personally have a question about faith from scripture, where do you go to find help or support?

How do leaders in the congregation or ministry in which you are participating encourage people to ask questions and work to discern answers in community?

What ways could this be expanded?

### Prayer:

Close out loud with prayers for wisdom, discernment and curiosity to seek out insights from scripture. Include prayers for people and situations needing prayer now.