



COOKIES ON THE LOWER SHELF

Putting Bible Reading Within Reach

MINI LEADER GUIDE



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HOW TO LEAD THIS STUDY:

The Basics

Cookies on the Lower Shelf focuses on Scripture's broad strokes. Each week we'll cover many miles of text. The obvious challenge is the sheer volume of material. As a leader you don't have to succumb to thinking you need to know every answer to every question. Let me be blunt: it's not going to happen and that's okay!

You want to help your class see the main flow of the text and apply major biblical truths as they go. The focus is simple: revealed truth and application. Never be shy about directing people back to the main path.

Although the material is not as deep as that of a typical *Precept Upon Precept*[®] study, we'll use the inductive study method throughout. By introducing your class to the basics of inductive study the first week, you'll give them the tools they need to read effectively and set good parameters for class discussions that will keep them focused on the text and off stray issues.

Opening Questions

The first week of study opens with a discussion of approaches to Scripture. In subsequent weeks, opening questions will focus on review. It's important to continue reviewing main characters and plot points to help your class become comfortable with the flow of thought. Feeling oriented to the text will give them solid footing for future Bible study they undertake.

Although you may be tempted to skip on reviews after a while, remember that they encourage your students with what they've already learned and help them learn truths they have missed and recall truths they have forgotten.

Big Group or Small Group

Depending on the size of your class, you may decide to discuss everything together or break into smaller groups to give more people a chance to participate. If you break into smaller groups, be sure to bring discussions back together throughout the class period to make sure everyone is tracking the main points.



INDUCTIVE STUDY BASICS

Observation | Interpretation | Application

If your students are unfamiliar with inductive Bible study, be sure to take time to give them the basics. They will catch up and catch on as you go but giving them an overview will put them in context! You'll want to impress on your students that inductive Bible study assumes that the Bible is ultimately the only authoritative source of truth about God. Before looking for insights from derivative sources, we get into the Word of God itself. We go to the primary source and learn to discover truth for ourselves. Inductive Bible study involves three basic components: *observation*, *interpretation*, and *application*.

1. Observation

This is a very interactive process, well worth the time because the truths you discover will be accurate and profound. It begins by asking the five W and H questions.

Who *is speaking? Who to? Who is this about? Who are the main characters?*

What *subjects (teachings, people) and/or events are covered in the chapter?*

When *did or will the events recorded occur?*

Where *did or will an event happen? Where was a teaching said?*



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Why *is something said? Why will an event occur? Why this time, person, and/or place?*

How *will an event happen? How will it be done? How is it illustrated?*

Careful *observation* leads to *interpretation* – discovering what the text means.

An important part of observing the text is identifying **key words**. A **key word** helps unlock the meaning of a text. It is vital to understanding the text and is often repeated.

2. Interpretation

The more you observe, the greater you'll understand God's Word. Since Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture we'll be looking at contexts and cross-references to help us understand the meaning of God's message – what the writers communicated to their original audiences. *Observation* and *interpretation* lead to *application*.

3. Application

After we've observed the text and discovered its meaning, we need to think and live accordingly. Although a text will have a single interpretation – what the author intended to convey to his original hearers – there are numerous applications. The result of applying truth to ourselves is a transformed life – the more you and I are in the Word of God and adjusting our thinking and behavior to its precepts for life, the more we are changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ! He is the living Word of God who became flesh, the Savior of the world, our coming King of kings!



HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

- **WEEKLY STUDY material**
- **FYI boxes**
- **ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes**
- **DIGGING DEEPER boxes**

While the study is self-explanatory, reinforce its flexibility. Direct your students to the “How to use this study” page and encourage them to find a level of study that brings joy, not guilt. They can do more one week, less the next; they can mix and match and find a fit that is right. You may have students who are overburdened and overbooked. Piling on a ton of homework and making them feel guilty if they don’t do it all will not fix the problem. Rather, help them find the joy and sweetness of God’s Word and ask His Spirit to heal through the power of the Word. Take some time to review student page 2 and let them know you believe in them and their ability to use this material.

Particularly stress the flexibility to long-time *Precept-Upon-Precept*[®] students since many of them have a finish-every-question-at-all-cost mentality. Such discipline in studying God’s Word is beautiful. The every-last-question mindset, however, can throw people off in a flexible series. Because the material is designed to flex to very advanced students, the higher volume of material can overwhelm people who force themselves through every suggested additional reading, question, and sidebar. Assure your class that most students won’t finish every question every week by design. Some weeks they will but probably not every week. If every student finishes every week, the study is not flexing to meet the needs of the most advanced. The goal of flex materials is not to have people study less, but to have each person take appropriate steps to study and apply more as they are continually drawn into deeper relationship with Jesus.



A TYPICAL CLASS OUTLINE

Recap and Review

Following the Story of Redemption

Summarize

Break your class into segments based on the reading divisions in the lesson. For each segment, a simple way to approach the material is to ask someone in the class to summarize the material in the passage. Prompt them by asking *Who? What? When? Where? Why?* and *How?* questions and follow-ups as appropriate.

EXAMPLE FROM GENESIS 1-4:

Tell me about Genesis 1-4. Who are the main characters? What happened? When and where did these events happen? How did God create? Why did Eve eat the fruit? What happened after that? etc. Let this be a fluid-conversation focused on the text. If summaries start straying from the text, ask the attorneys general to give follows-up from the text or ask "Where did you see that in the text?"



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Identify Key Words/Phrases

When you've summarized the material, see if your class has identified key words and phrases. This will help them hone in on the main point of the text. Sometimes key words and phrases are obvious, other times they're not. Keep in mind that *God* is *always* a key word, as are human subjects. Don't let this section throw your class off. We want them to start noticing key words because they will help them see the main points and flows of texts.

EXAMPLE FROM GENESIS 1-4:

God + verb

God said, made, called, placed, created, blessed, completed, formed, planted, caused, took, commanded, fashioned

Good

Man

Woman

Serpent



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Discuss the Flow While Observing, Interpreting, and Applying the Text

Each workbook section leads the class through basic inductive questions and subsequent applications. When you don't have time to address every question in class, select a few that cover the main points and at least one application question. The workbook questions from Genesis 1–4 are listed in the sample section below with several highlighted that will work well as discussion starters.

EXAMPLE FROM GENESIS 1–4:

How does the Bible start?

Who is the main character in the first two chapters? What did He do?

Describe God's creation briefly. What characterized it? Was it flawed in any way? Explain.

What did God create on the sixth day? What instructions did God give?

What did God do on the seventh day?

What did God tell Adam and Eve to do? Did they have a lot of commands? Look closely and record what God told them to do and not to do.

How did the serpent deceive Eve? Look closely at the sequence.

What steps preceded Eve's sin? What did she do before she ate?

How did Adam respond when God confronted him?

What can we learn about temptation and deception from the serpent and Eve?

The first death in the Bible is recorded in this week's reading. Who died and who caused the death?

What did God promise after Adam and Eve sinned? (Genesis 3:15)

This simple model of Review and Segment-by-Segment Discussion of the text should give you a basic framework for weekly class sessions.