



BIBLE STUDY
LEADER'S COMPANION



BIBLE STUDY
LEADER'S COMPANION

*"To fall in love with God is the greatest of all romances; to seek him, the greatest adventure."
– St. Augustine*



The Great Adventure Bible Study Leader's Companion is a resource of *The Great Adventure* Catholic Bible Study Program.

Jeff Cavins, General Editor, *The Great Adventure* Catholic Bible Study Program.

Sarah Christmyer, Editor, *The Great Adventure* Catholic Bible Study Program.

Copyright © 2015, Ascension Press. All rights reserved.

With the exception of short excerpts used in articles and critical reviews, no part of this work may be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in any form whatsoever, printed or electronic, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Excerpts from the English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for use in the United States of America. Copyright © 1994, 1997, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.–Libreria Editrice Vaticana. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture passages are from the Revised Standard Version–Catholic Edition. Copyright © 1946, 1952, 1971, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

Ascension Press

Post Office Box 1990

West Chester, PA 19380

1-800-376-0520

AscensionPress.com

BibleStudyForCatholics.com

Contents

- Introduction 4**
 - Welcome to *The Great Adventure!*4
 - About *The Great Adventure* and *The Bible Timeline* Learning System. 4
- How to Start a *Great Adventure* Bible Study5**
 - 1. Getting Started5
 - 2. Putting a Team Together.....5
 - 3. Planning and Study Logistics6
 - 4. Promoting the Study7
 - 5. Running the Study.....8
 - 6. Ensuring Participants Return Week to Week 11
 - 7. Facilitating the Study 11
 - 8. Planning for the Future.....12
- Catholic Bible Study Resources14**
- Appendix 1: Hosting a Facilitator Orientation..... 15**
- Appendix 2: Bible Study Team 24**
- Appendix 3: Bible Study Schedule 26**
- Appendix 4: Team Member Checklists27**

Welcome to *The Great Adventure!*

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the *The Great Adventure* Bible Study Program! *The Great Adventure* is about much more than simply reading and studying the Bible. It is about touching lives and drawing people into closer relationship with God and each other. By starting a Bible study, you are offering people a life-changing experience.

You can do it!

Over the past ten years, people like you have heard the call to evangelize and have started a *Great Adventure* Bible study. You can do it, too!

We are here to support you every step of the way. Our experienced Study Consultants can answer all your questions. In addition, we offer many leader resources and downloads on our website, BibleStudyForCatholics.com. Whether you have questions or just want a few encouraging words, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are here for you!

BibleStudyForCatholics.com/Leaders • 1-800-376-0520 • StudyConsultant@AscensionPress.com

A Message from Jeff Cavins and Sarah Christmyer

The Bible is at the heart of our Faith and our relationship with God. It is the living Word of God, where our Father meets with us and lovingly speaks to us. Reading the Bible should bring us closer to Christ, but understanding it is not always easy. Many people tell us they have tried time and again to prayerfully read Scripture, but they get frustrated because they “just don’t get it.”

The Great Adventure is designed so that anyone can make sense of the Bible and experience the life-changing power of God’s Word. Hundreds of thousands of people have discovered the riches of Scripture by experiencing *The Great Adventure* Bible studies. It is our prayer that you will gain a newfound understanding of God’s Word that will transform your life and bring you closer to Christ.

Jeff Cavins, Creator, *The Great Adventure*

Sarah Christmyer, Co-developer and Author, *The Great Adventure*

About *The Great Adventure* and *The Bible Timeline Learning System*

73 Books • One Story • Your Story

The key to understanding the Bible is finding the story that ties it all together. *The Great Adventure Bible Timeline Learning System* makes the complexity of the Bible simple by helping you uncover the story woven throughout Scripture, so you can make sense of it. As you see the story unfold, you will see the “big picture” of the Bible. The Mass readings will begin to make more sense, your Scripture reading and study will come to life, and you will see God’s loving plan for your life. Most importantly, *The Great Adventure* studies will help you to grow in your relationship with God as you encounter him in Sacred Scripture.

How to Start a *Great Adventure* Bible Study

1. Getting Started

Step 1: Pray

“Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.” – Proverbs 16:3

If you start with prayer and remain in prayer throughout the study, you will find that God will bless your efforts and your work will be more fruitful.

Step 2: Choose the Study that Is Right for You

We recommend you begin with *Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible*, which is perfect for both people who are new to Bible study and for those who have been studying the Bible for years. It will give you the “big picture” of the Bible and show you how it all makes sense in light of the story that ties all of Scripture together.

After completing *Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible*, many study groups continue their journey through the Bible with *The Great Adventure* Foundational Series. Or your group may want to develop a deeper love and understanding for the Mass, Mary, prayer, and other areas of our Catholic Faith (see **Bible Study Track** and **Faith Enrichment Track** on pages 12-13).

Your parish should consider offering different studies on different days and times to appeal to the needs of everyone.

Step 3: Get Parish Support

The support of your pastor and parish leadership is the most important factor for the ongoing success of your Bible study. Before speaking to your pastor, read through this guide, and familiarize yourself with the study you would like to offer. That way, you will be able to tell your pastor what the study is about, how it works, and what help you will need from him. Explain the benefits of *The Great Adventure*, and tell him how you plan to help.

Our Study Consultants can help you with any questions you have about the features and benefits of our studies. Your parish can even review our studies risk free. Call 1-800-376-0520 or visit AscensionPress.com to learn more.

2. Putting a Team Together

“Two are better than one. ... A threefold cord is not quickly broken.” – Ecclesiastes 4:9, 12

Having a team of people who are gifted in different areas is invaluable and makes everything easier.

What Does a Study Team Do?

Your study team will help you with all aspects of planning, running, and facilitating the study—things like organizing and promoting the study, setting up refreshments, and facilitating the small-group discussions.

Who Should I Ask?

It is likely that the people on your team will be a lot like you; maybe you even know them already! They will be people who are committed to their faith and enthusiastic about bringing others to Christ.

Where Will You Find Team Members?

In addition to those in your immediate circle of friends and acquaintances, you might consider asking for recommendations from your pastor or parish leadership and asking those you see at daily Mass or Eucharistic Adoration as well as those who have just completed RCIA.

Tips for Talking to Prospective Team Members

Here are some things to keep in mind:

1. Assure people that no prior experience is needed.
2. Appeal to their unique gifts, and explain how they are a match for what you need.
3. Ask for a short-term commitment. This will help them feel comfortable saying, “Yes.”

Once you have a team together, you are well on your way to a successful Bible study! The rest of this Leader’s Companion describes tasks that could be performed by members of your team. For complete checklists and specific details, see **Appendix 4: Team Member Checklists** on page 27.

3. Planning and Study Logistics

Scheduling Your Study

When scheduling your study, take into account both the length of the study as well as the time needed for each session. The time needed for each session varies depending on the length of the videos for the particular study and the time your group takes for the small-group discussions. Here are a few examples:

Bible Study	Number of Sessions	Time Needed for Each Session*
<i>Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible</i>	Eight sessions	75-90 minutes
<i>The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation</i>	Twenty-four sessions	95-110 minutes
<i>A Biblical Walk Through the Mass</i>	Five sessions	75-90 minutes

*Session times include one hour for the small-group discussion plus the time needed to view the video for each session.

If you are running a longer study, such as *The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation*, consider dividing it into spring and fall segments. Plan ahead for holidays and any special sessions or events you intend to host, such as a Facilitator Orientation session (see **Appendix 1: Hosting a Facilitator Orientation** on page 15) or a study wrap-up celebration. For a scheduling worksheet, see **Appendix 3: Bible Study Schedule** on page 26.

Reserving Your Facilities

Reserve the facilities you will need well in advance to ensure you will have them for your study. You will need the following:

- A space big enough for the entire group to watch a video
- Adequate audiovisual equipment
- Round tables that seat eight to twelve people with enough space between the tables for separate small-group discussions

- Space to offer refreshments and child care (if desired)
- A strong Internet connection (if you will be streaming the videos from Evangelization.com)

Ensuring Everyone Can Participate

Cost may be an issue for some people, but don't let that be an obstacle for them. Your parish, diocese, or organizations like the Knights of Columbus may be able to provide financial help. Our Study Consultants also have great tips on how to subsidize your study.

Estimating Attendance

If you are using our digital study platform, Evangelization.com, you will not need to guess how many participants you will have. Participants will simply register online, and you will know exactly how many people are coming. Study materials will be delivered directly to participants.

If you are not yet using our digital study platform, you will need to order the study materials for your participants. We suggest ordering more participant workbooks than you think you will need. You can return any extra, unused workbooks for a full refund.

4. Promoting the Study

The three best ways we have found to get the word out and promote studies are:

1. Obtain your pastor's enthusiastic support, especially from the pulpit.
2. Personally invite people to join the study.
3. Host an "Encountering God: How to Make Sense of the Bible" information session using our engaging video and instructions found at BibleStudyForCatholics.com/InfoSession.

Other ideas for getting the word out include:

- Download our customizable posters and fliers for use in your parish (available at BibleStudyForCatholics.com/downloads).
- Announce the study in your parish bulletin and on your parish website.
- Use social media (i.e., Facebook and Twitter).
- Set up registration tables after Sunday Masses.
- Email the preview video and registration link to your list of parish contacts. The preview videos for each study can be found at AscensionPress.com. A registration link will be created for your study when you schedule it using Evangelization.com (see "Running the Study" on page 8).
- List your study on BibleStudyForCatholics.com/map. The map on our website helps people find a study in their area. We encourage you to register your study on this map so that the people in your area can find it easily. Our Study Consultants can help you with this, especially if you are registering multiple studies at one parish.
- Take advantage of our *Bible Timeline* Chart loaner program, which allows you to borrow as many *Bible Timeline* Charts as you need for a presentation and then return them when you are finished. The color-coded *Bible Timeline* Chart is the key to understanding the "big picture" of the Bible.

Place the Charts in the pews and then do a presentation before or after Sunday Mass or during an “Encountering God: How to Make Sense of the Bible” information session. Our Study Consultants can provide you with a prepared script for your presentation.

Once people hold the Chart in their hands, they will be able to see how *The Bible Timeline* Learning System makes it easy to understand the Bible.

If you have questions about *The Bible Timeline* Chart loaner program, contact one of our Study Consultants at 1-800-376-0520.

5. Running the Study

There are two ways to run a study:

1. Use our digital study platform at Evangelization.com.
 - a. Simply select and purchase the study you would like to offer at Evangelization.com.

Parishes that subscribe to Evangelization.com get the *Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible* study videos and Leader’s Guide for free! The DVDs and Leader’s Guide will be sent to your parish. Additional Leader’s Guides can be ordered by calling 1-800-376-0520.
 - b. Direct participants to register and pay for the study at Evangelization.com. Their study materials will be sent directly to them. Registration for participants includes access to the study videos during the course of the study and for two weeks after the conclusion of the study.
2. Go to AscensionPress.com, or call 1-800-376-0520 and speak to one of our Study Consultants to purchase and receive your materials (DVDs and workbooks) without subscribing to Evangelization.com.

When choosing this second option, parishes typically order the DVDs, Leader’s Guides, workbooks, and other study materials in advance. Participants then register and pay the parish to join the study and receive physical study materials.

What You Will Need for Each Study

Every *Great Adventure* Bible study includes engaging video presentations. In some studies, the small-group facilitators will use a Leader’s Guide while participants use workbooks. In other studies, participants and facilitators will all use a Study Set or Journal. The following chart illustrates what you will need for each *Great Adventure* study.

What Everyone Needs for Each Study			
Study	Study Leader	Small-Group Facilitators	Participants
<i>Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible</i>	Starter Pack (DVD Set, Leader's Guide, Student Workbook)	Leader's Guide Catholic Bible	Student Workbook Catholic Bible
<i>The Bible Timeline, Matthew, Acts, Exodus, Psalms, Prophets, First Corinthians, Galatians, James, Revelation, Mary</i>	Starter Pack (DVD Set, Study Set) Catholic Bible <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>	Study Set Catholic Bible <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>	Study Set Catholic Bible <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
<i>A Biblical Walk Through the Mass</i>	Starter Pack (DVD Set, Leader's Guide, Student Workbook, <i>A Biblical Walk Through the Mass</i> book) Catholic Bible <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>	Leader's Pack (Leader's Guide, <i>A Biblical Walk Through the Mass</i> book) Catholic Bible <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>	Student Pack (Student Workbook, <i>A Biblical Walk Through the Mass</i> book) Catholic Bible <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
<i>Walking Toward Eternity</i>	Starter Pack (DVD Set, Leader's Guide, Journal)	Journal	Journal

How the Studies Work

Great Adventure studies include a combination of the following steps: **Home Preparation**, **Small-Group Discussion**, and **Video Presentation**. *The Great Adventure* Foundational Series and ongoing studies include the additional step, **Review of Responses**. The *Walking Toward Eternity* studies include the additional step, **Silent Prayer**. Every *Great Adventure* Bible study includes information about how the study works as well as what to do for each session.



It is important for everyone to have what they need (as listed in the chart at the top of this page), when the study begins, because these materials will be used during each step of the study. The following charts show how the materials are used in each step of the studies:

Materials Used for Each Step of <i>Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible</i>			
Study Step	1. Video Presentation	2. Small-Group Discussion	3. Home Preparation
Materials Used	DVD Set Student Workbook and Leader's Guide (Talk Notes)	Student Workbook and Leader's Guide (Discussion Questions)	Student Workbook and Leader's Guide (Home Preparation) Catholic Bible

Materials Used for Each Step of <i>The Great Adventure Foundational Series and Ongoing Studies</i>				
Study Step	1. Home Preparation	2. Small-Group Discussion	3. Video Presentation	4. Review of Responses
Materials Used	Study Set (Questions) Catholic Bible <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>	Study Set (Questions)	DVD Set Study Set (Talk Notes)	Study Set (Responses)

Materials Used for Each Step of <i>A Biblical Walk Through the Mass</i>			
Study Step	1. Home Preparation	2. Small-Group Discussion	3. Video Presentation
Materials Used	Student Workbook Leader's Guide <i>A Biblical Walk Through the Mass</i> book Catholic Bible <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>	Student Workbook (Questions) Leader's Guide (Responses)	DVD Set Student Workbook and Leader's Guide (Talk Notes)

Materials Used for Each Step of <i>Walking Toward Eternity</i>				
Study Step	1. Home Preparation	2. Small-Group Discussion	3. Video Presentation	4. Silent Prayer
Materials Used	Journal (Days 1-4) Catholic Bible	Journal (Questions) Catholic Bible	DVD Set Journal (Talk Outline)	Journal (Silent Prayer)

Materials Used for Each Step of <i>Oremus: A Guide to Catholic Prayer</i>			
Study Step	1. Video Presentation	2. Small-Group Discussion	3. Home Preparation
Materials Used	DVD Set Student Workbook and Leader's Guide (Session Outline)	Student Workbook and Leader's Guide (Discussion Questions)	Student Workbook (Days 1-7) Leader's Guide (Days 1-7)

6. Ensuring Participants Return Week to Week

There are two things everyone wants in a study and that will keep them coming back:

1. Friendly hospitality
2. A positive small-group experience

Being hospitable – Participants come to sessions to learn, but they also come to be part of something. How welcomed they feel will have a lot to do with whether they want to stay. Here are some suggestions:

- Greet people as they arrive.
- Play music before the session begins.
- Provide tablecloths, flowers, or other decorations.
- Have facilitators sign hand-written welcome notes for their small-group participants.
- Offer child care so parents with young children can attend.

Hospitality does not have to be elaborate; it might just be a heartfelt smile and a word of encouragement to come back the next week. What is most important is that people feel like they belong.

A positive small-group experience is one of the other big reasons people come back to Bible studies year after year. They develop a close bond of friendship with those in their small groups and feel that they are part of a caring community. This caring atmosphere exists particularly in groups where the small-group facilitators do their job well. This is why it is so important that your facilitators be well-prepared.

7. Facilitating the Study

Good small-group facilitators are very important to the overall success of your study. A good facilitator should have four main goals in mind when leading a small-group discussion:

1. Create a welcoming, positive environment.
2. Keep the discussion on topic.
3. Keep the discussion on time.
4. Make sure everyone has a chance to participate.

Our 10-minute video, “Facilitating a Small-Group Discussion,” covers how to accomplish these goals in more detail. Visit BibleStudyForCatholics.com/Facilitators.

What to Look for in a Facilitator

A good facilitator is a “people person” who is friendly and faith-filled and knows how to listen attentively. This person should be confident enough to keep the discussion on track and on time and kind enough to do this in a charitable and friendly way.

Do Facilitators Need to Be Experts?

No. One of the biggest benefits of running an Ascension Press Bible study is that the video presentation brings the biblical expert to you, so your small-group facilitators do not need to be teachers, catechists, or theologians. Facilitators do not provide the content for the conversation. The studies do that. Facilitators make a great conversation possible by guiding the discussion effectively.

How Many Small-Group Facilitators Will We Need?

The number of small-group facilitators you will need depends on the size of your study. We suggest having two facilitators for each table of eight to twelve participants, so you will always have a substitute facilitator if needed. This will also allow you to pair the more experienced facilitators with the newer facilitators.

How Do You Prepare Your Small-Group Facilitators?

To help prepare facilitators for their important role, we highly recommend offering an orientation for them a week or two before your study starts. This will help the new facilitators get comfortable in their role, and the returning facilitators will get a refresher. Specific details on running an orientation are available in **Appendix 1: Hosting a Facilitator Orientation Session** on page 15 of this Leader’s Companion.

How Do Facilitators Address Questions that Are Not Covered in the Study?

How these questions are addressed is at the discretion of your parish. Some parishes use a “parking lot” concept where facilitators write down or “park” participants’ questions until they can be answered by the pastor, deacon, or director of religious education (DRE). Your parish may have a different plan for answering questions; ensure your facilitators know what the plan is before the study starts.

8. Planning for the Future

Once you have set a goal to start a Bible study and have formed a team, you are well on your way to establishing an ongoing faith formation program. Imagine the possibilities, and create a vision for your parish!

If you build at a pace that you and your team can manage comfortably, it will not be long before your Bible study is bigger than you thought possible. Your parish might even benefit from having several study options on different days and times throughout the year.

A sample schedule of studies that many parishes have found helpful is on page 13. It suggests offering two “study tracks” that can be run simultaneously. The **Faith Enrichment Track** includes topics with broad appeal, like the Mass, the Bible, Mary, prayer, and spirituality. These subjects are perennial and beneficial to everyone. Therefore, it is a good idea to plan to offer these studies regularly during the year so everyone in your parish will have an opportunity to participate in them.

After completing the *Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible* study, many people will want to dive deeper into Scripture. This is why it is important to have an ongoing **Bible Study Track**. *The Great Adventure* Bible studies not only explore the riches of Scripture; they also illustrate how the Mass, Mary, and our entire Catholic Faith is rooted in Scripture. For this reason, the **Faith Enrichment Track** and **Bible Study Track** complement each other well.

Year One		
Fall	<i>A Biblical Walk Through the Mass</i>	
Spring	<i>Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible</i>	
Year Two		
	Faith Enrichment Track*	Bible Study Track*
Fall	<i>Mary: A Biblical Walk with the Blessed Mother</i>	<i>The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation</i> Sessions 1–12
Spring	<i>Oremus: A Guide to Catholic Prayer</i>	<i>The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation</i> Sessions 13–24
Year Three		
Fall	<i>Walking Toward Eternity: Daring to Walk the Walk</i>	<i>Matthew: The King and His Kingdom</i> Sessions 1–12
Spring	<i>Walking Toward Eternity: Engaging the Struggles of Your Heart</i>	<i>Matthew: The King and His Kingdom</i> Sessions 13–24
Year Four		
Fall	<i>A Biblical Walk Through the Mass</i>	<i>Acts: The Spread of the Kingdom</i> Sessions 1–10
Spring	<i>Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible</i>	<i>Acts: The Spread of the Kingdom</i> Sessions 11–20
Year Five		
Fall	<i>Mary: A Biblical Walk with the Blessed Mother</i>	<i>Revelation: The Kingdom Yet to Come</i>
Spring	<i>Oremus: A Guide to Catholic Prayer</i>	<i>Psalms: The School of Prayer</i>
Year Six		
Fall	<i>Walking Toward Eternity: Daring to Walk the Walk</i>	<i>The Prophets: Messengers of God’s Mercy</i>
Spring	<i>Walking Toward Eternity: Engaging the Struggles of Your Heart</i>	<i>James: Pearls for Wise Living</i>

* The **Faith Enrichment Track** can be run simultaneously with the **Bible Study Track**.

We Are Here for You

Our Study Consultants can help you every step of the way. They can answer your questions and provide you with helpful advice, ensuring that you create an ongoing and successful Bible study program at your parish.

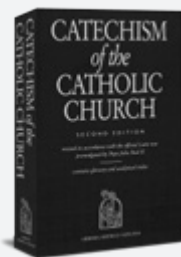
Call: 1-800-376-0520 • Email: StudyConsultant@AscensionPress.com • Visit: AscensionPress.com

Catholic Bible Study Resources

Bible Study Essentials



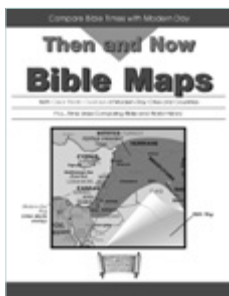
Bible Revised Standard Version-Catholic Edition



Catechism of the Catholic Church



The Bible Timeline Chart
Also available in an eight-foot banner that can be hung on the wall.



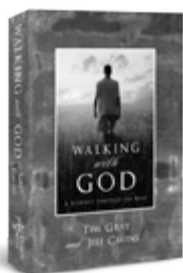
Then and Now Bible Maps
The clear plastic overlays on these full-color maps allow you to compare the places mentioned in the Bible (“Then”) with how they appear today (“Now”).



The Bible Thumper (Volumes 1 & 2)
These Bible verse finders include more than 1,000 verses that show how Catholic beliefs are rooted in Scripture.



The Great Adventure Catholic Bible Indexing Tabs
A great way to help you quickly locate each book of the Bible and see where it fits in salvation history.



Walking with God: A Journey Through the Bible
By Tim Gray and Jeff Cavins
Read the central story woven throughout Scripture and get the “big picture” of the Bible in one concise narrative.



The Bible Compass: A Catholic's Guide to Navigating the Scriptures
By Edward Sri
Learn what the Bible is and what it's not, and discover how to read Scripture within the living Tradition of the Catholic Church.



Praying Scripture for a Change: An Introduction to Lectio Divina
by Tim Gray
Learn how Scripture can enrich your prayer by following the simple and practical steps of *lectio divina*.



The Bible Timeline Guided Journal
by Sarah Christmyer
This journal prayerfully guides you through the fourteen narrative books of *The Bible Timeline*.

Available at AscensionPress.com

Appendix 1: Hosting a Facilitator Orientation

Why Host a Facilitator Orientation?

To help prepare facilitators for their important role, we highly recommend offering an orientation for new and returning facilitators; the new facilitators will get comfortable in their role, and returning facilitators will get a refresher.

Some study leaders are concerned that their small-group facilitators do not have time to attend an orientation. For this reason, we recommend you offer the orientation a week or two before your study starts on the same day and time your study will run. That way, you are only asking facilitators to begin the study a week or two before the rest of the participants. The following Facilitator Orientation will take about the same amount of time as a regular study session.

Be sure to include elements of hospitality and fun so facilitators will feel relaxed and happy about their commitment to help out.

Sample Invitation to Attend Facilitator Orientation (*Template*)

Note: You can adapt this sample invitation as you see fit.

Dear Facilitators:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a facilitator for [STUDY NAME] at [PARISH/LOCATION]. Your generosity and commitment are immensely appreciated! As a small-group facilitator, you represent the face of the Church and will be bringing Christ to others in a special way.

Because this mission is so important, we will offer a Facilitator Orientation to discuss the dynamics of the small-group discussion, the role of the facilitator, and the how the study works. You will receive materials and answers to any questions you might have. We ask that all new and returning facilitators attend.

We look forward to meeting with you and sharing this journey with you! If you have any questions or would like to speak to someone before the Facilitator Orientation, please do not hesitate to email or call.

Thank you again for your generosity and commitment to this important work for the Lord!

God bless!

[YOUR NAME]

Bible Study Leader

[YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS]

[YOUR PHONE NUMBER]

Facilitator Orientation

[DATE]

[TIME]

[LOCATION]

Agenda for Small-Group Facilitator Orientation (90 minutes)

Introduction (20 minutes)

1. Opening prayer
2. Facilitator welcome (see sample wording on page 17)
3. Ice breaker (see suggested ice breakers on page 18)

Walk Through the Bible Study Materials (15 minutes)

1. Make sure every facilitator has the necessary study materials (see page 9, “What Everyone Needs for Each Study.”)
2. Go over the parts of the workbook or Leader’s Guide.
3. Cover the “How the Study Works” section in the Study Set or Leader’s Guide. (Each study explains the order of steps to follow for the study.)
 - a. Go over how to use the responses to the questions, if applicable. (Note: Some *Great Adventure* studies do not have responses.)
 - **Facilitators** should view the responses prior to each session.
 - **Participants** should review the responses after they have answered and discussed the questions in their small group.
4. **Optional:** Preview one of the video presentations from the study (in its entirety if you have time, or in part).

What Does a Facilitator Do? (10 minutes)

Present the four roles of facilitators and describe each.

1. Show the “Facilitating a Small-Group Discussion” video, which can be found at BibleStudyForCatholics.com/Facilitators.
2. Provide “Facilitating a Small-Group Discussion” handout (see pages 19-21).
3. Remind facilitators of the importance of prayer. The presence of the Holy Spirit makes a discussion fruitful.
4. Assure them that you are available for them.

What to Do for Each Session (10 minutes)

Go over the “What to Do for Each Session” handout (see pages 22-23).

Optional Q&A (10 minutes)

Allow time for facilitators to ask questions.

Logistics (10 minutes)

Some things you might cover:

1. What to do if a facilitator will be absent
2. Contact information of the Bible study leader
3. Weekly attendance sheet/participant list

Closing (5 minutes)

1. Offer thanks and encouragement.
2. Explain that it takes time for a group to grow and develop trust.
3. Tell facilitators to be patient with themselves and others; God is at work.

Optional Role Playing (this will add about 30 minutes)

1. Seat your facilitators around tables, dividing them into small groups of eight to ten.
2. Give a scenario from the “How to Facilitate a Small-Group Discussion” video.
3. Deal with one situation at a time.
4. Ask questions like: “What should the facilitator do now?” or, “What role do you need here?”
5. Have facilitators contribute with their advice. (You can use a whiteboard to note their suggestions.)
6. Let facilitators practice affirming and redirecting.

Facilitator Welcome

Note: This serves as an optional scripted introduction to the Facilitator Orientation.

Thank you for agreeing to become a small-group facilitator! Your generosity in giving of your time and energy is greatly appreciated. You are contributing to an important mission.

What is this mission? As a small-group facilitator, you will help create an environment where God can touch hearts and change lives. He has plans beyond imagining for those he has called to this study. You will help make a difference!

Even though your role is important, there is no need to be anxious. God will be with you. Place your trust in God. As St. Paul says, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Romans 15:13).

Suggested Ice Breakers for the Facilitator Orientation

Eating M&Ms

Pass around a bowl of M&Ms and instruct participants to take as many as they want but not to eat them yet. Begin with yourself. Say one thing about your life for each M&M you are holding. (Some examples include your interests and hobbies, your family, your favorite color, and what drew you to Bible study.) Then, invite the participant next to you to do the same thing until everyone has had a chance to share. We recommend this ice breaker because it allows everyone to participate at their own comfort level and rewards participants immediately for contributing. You will need at least one bag of M&Ms and one bowl for each table.

Marooned On an Island

Give people a minute or two to think about the following question: “If you were marooned on a deserted island, which three people would you want with you, and why?” These people can be from the past or present, or can even be imaginary. Ask participants to introduce themselves first and then share their choices with the group. Start with yourself so participants will have an example to follow.

A Few of My Favorite Things

There are three easy parts to this ice breaker. First, give everyone a minute to think of a favorite memory (or a favorite movie, piece of clothing, or music). Next, have everyone partner with someone else. Each person shares his or her “favorite thing” with the other person and explains why it is his or her favorite thing. Finally, partners introduce each other to the group and give the rest of the group a short summary of each other’s favorite things. This helps people learn to listen to each other and is a validating experience for participants.

Facilitating a Small-Group Discussion

Why Are Small-Group Facilitators Important?

It is during the small-group discussion that what has been learned moves from the head to the heart. In order for the group to participate and have a good experience, it is important for the discussion to stay on time and on track and for everyone to feel welcome. A good facilitator guides the discussion, allowing it to be a positive and transformative experience for the whole group.

Do I Have to Be an Expert to Be a Facilitator?

No. Any faith-filled Catholic who can guide conversations with charity and confidence can be a facilitator. It is not necessary to be a theologian, counselor, or catechist. There is no need to teach, advise, or answer difficult questions.

What Exactly Is a Facilitator?

A facilitator is someone who makes it easier to have a conversation in the small-group setting. Facilitators do not make a discussion good; they make a good discussion possible.

How Does a Facilitator Make a Good Discussion Possible?

A good facilitator does the following four things:

1. Creates a welcoming, positive environment
2. Keeps the discussion on topic
3. Keeps the discussion on time
4. Makes sure everyone has a chance to participate

How Do I Do All That?

You can think of your role as a facilitator in four ways. You are called to serve as:

Host or Hostess

A host or hostess welcomes everyone and makes sure they feel cared about and important. Some people come to Bible study a little uncertain about whether they belong there; your smile and hospitable attitude will set them at ease and assure them that they belong.

Trail Guide

Like a “trail guide,” you keep the group on track and on topic. How? Complete the home preparation for each session in advance. This will be your road map and will ensure that you know where the conversation is headed. During the small-group discussion time, gently affirm and redirect any participants who wander off topic by putting issues or questions in a “parking lot.” You might say something like, “I wish we had more time to talk about this, but we are getting off topic, so let’s get back to the question.”

Traffic Cop

In your role as “traffic cop,” you will keep the group on time by deciding how much time to spend on each question and then using verbal and nonverbal cues to move the discussion along. This includes managing

interruptions and offering an opportunity for quieter participants to speak. The group will expect you to move them along and keep them on time. How do you do this? Use your hands, body posture, and eye contact.

For example, if someone starts to take over the conversation, lean in a little toward the participant to show you are listening. Thank him or her for the insight with a smile, and then turn your body in another direction and ask the group, “Does anyone have any other thoughts on this before we move on?” Turning your body toward another person indicates a “stop in traffic” for the speaker and a “green light” for others.

Encourager

Praising participants for interesting or insightful comments will help those who are naturally quiet to open up. Your enthusiasm and the attention you give them will be powerful signals that yours is a Christ-centered group, a welcoming place where thoughts can be shared. For example, you might say, “That’s a great answer!” or, “That was a really good point! I’m glad you brought that up.”

Even if the comment is off topic, you can still say something like, “I like how you shared from your own experience,” and then redirect the conversation.

What Do I Do if No One Is Talking?

Sometimes everyone in a group is quiet at the same time. This could be because they are shy, are intimidated by not “knowing the answer,” or are just thinking about their answer. In this case, use your role as “encourager” to reassure people by saying something like, “You know, it’s OK to take time to respond or to not respond at all. But your participation really does help us all because we learn so much from each other’s lives and faith experiences.”

Do not be afraid of silence. Wait for at least the space of one Hail Mary before jumping in. Then, just restate or paraphrase the question, and present it to the group again. Give participants time to think rather than moving on too soon. The silence will not last forever.

What if Participants Ask Tough Questions?

Questions that are not covered in the study might come up. Your Bible study leader will decide in advance how these questions will be handled. Let participants know that you will be happy to field questions, but that you will not answer them yourself.

Questions not covered in the workbook can be written down (or “parked”) until they can be answered in the appropriate setting. If you like, pick a volunteer to serve as “parking lot attendant” and record these questions.

If it seems that participants are frustrated or that they do not know the answer, you might say: “It’s OK not to know everything. The Bible is not a subject to master, but a place to meet with God. You have a lifetime to explore and dig deeper. This is just the beginning!”

What if a Participant Speaks Negatively About the Church or Another Person?

Over the course of the study, negative feelings might come up. Do not worry. Using the guidelines of “affirm and redirect,” you can handle these situations in a way that will avoid debate and keep divisive topics out of the conversation. So, what specifically should you do? Affirm the speaker by empathizing with his or her strong feelings (not necessarily with his or her opinion), and then redirect the conversation. For example, affirm the speaker by saying something like:

- “I’m sorry to hear you had that experience. It sounds very painful.”
- “Yes, I can see that is a very difficult/challenging situation for you.”
- “I can see you feel strongly about this issue.”
- “It sounds like this is an issue very close to your heart, very personal for you.”

Then follow up immediately with a comment like:

- “Even though this is a very important issue, we need to respect the whole group’s time and move on now.”
- “That is an important issue that deserves more time than we can give it today. Let’s put it in the parking lot for now.”

Are There Any “Rules of the Road” that Can Help Guide the Discussion?

“The Ten Commandments of Small-Group Discussion,” found on page 23, will help head off any potential challenges. These commandments should be shared with the group on the first day of the study. Remind the group about these commandments as necessary.

As a Facilitator, Can I Participate in the Discussion?

Yes, you can and should participate in the discussion, but because you are the facilitator, you should do so after the others in your group have had a chance to speak. It can take a little restraint to do this, but it will make the experience better for everyone.

How Will I Know if I Am Succeeding?

In the beginning, you may feel some hesitation or concern about doing everything “just right.” Try not to worry. Knowing when to talk and when to listen are skills that take time to learn.

It takes time for a group to come together and for participants to develop trust in each other. Be patient, and never define success by the number of people attending your study or how you think a discussion went. Your job is to pray for discernment, use your best judgment, and ask your study leader for help if you need guidance. Then, just relax and enjoy yourself. The Holy Spirit will do the rest!

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” – Matthew 18:20.

What to Do for Each Session

For the First Session:

1. Welcome those in your group (15 minutes)
 - a. Act as the host or hostess and greet everyone.
 - b. Lead an ice breaker activity (optional). Start with yourself.
2. Go over study details (15 minutes)
 - a. Make sure each participant has the necessary study materials, including the workbook, a Catholic Bible, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (if needed).
 - b. Familiarize participants with the study.
 - Walk participants through the “How the Study Works” section in the workbook (e.g., **Home Preparation, Small-Group Discussion, Video Presentation, and Review of Responses**).
 - Go over the home preparation (reading and answering study questions) as assigned for each session.
 - Explain that you will be discussing the study questions in your small group.
 - Point out the Talk Notes that correspond to the video presentations (if applicable).
 - If responses to the questions are provided in the workbook, instruct participants to wait to review them until after they have discussed the questions in their small group.
3. Overview of small-group dynamics (10 minutes)

Explain your role as the facilitator as well as the roles you do not have.

 - a. You keep the group on time and on topic.
 - b. You are not the teacher, counselor, or expert.
 - c. The study videos and materials will provide the expert teaching.
4. Read the “Ten Commandments of Small-Group Discussion” on page 23, emphasizing confidentiality, respect, and charity.
5. Explain that sometimes questions that are not covered in the study will go into a “parking lot” to be answered later.
 - a. You may occasionally ask participants to move on to the next question.
 - b. This is not personal, but serves to keep the group on topic and on time.
 - c. The study leader will determine how unanswered questions will be addressed.
6. Ask participants to complete the home preparation for the next session.
 - a. Explain that investing the time to read and answer the questions will ensure the best experience.
 - b. Encourage participants to come to the next session even if “life got in the way” of doing the home preparation.

7. Go over any information or messages from the study leader.
8. Dismiss participants back to the large group at the appropriate time.

For the Rest of the Sessions:

1. Before the study session
 - a. Do the home preparation for each session in advance.
 - b. Note what you think is important to highlight during the small-group discussion.
 - c. Review the responses to the questions (if applicable).
2. During the study session
 - a. Start and end the small-group discussion on time, but welcome latecomers.
 - b. Host and guide the small-group discussion using the four roles of a facilitator (see pages 11 and 19) and the “Ten Commandments of Small-Group Discussion” found below.
 - c. Put difficult or off-topic questions in the “parking lot” when necessary.

Ongoing

1. Call participants (if directed by the study leader to do so).
2. Attend facilitator meetings.
3. Inform your Bible study leader of any issues or challenges you face.

Ten Commandments of Small-Group Discussion

1. Enjoy yourself!
2. Speak with respect and charity.
3. Do not ridicule or dismiss what others say. Keep comments positive.
4. Come prepared.
5. If you were not able to prepare, let others speak first.
6. Stick to the topic and questions at hand.
7. Start and end on time.
8. Allow silence. Give people a chance to think.
9. Listen to others without interrupting.
10. Keep personal matters within the group.

Appendix 2: Bible Study Team

These are the suggested roles for your Bible study team. You may find that dividing your team into other roles will better suit your needs or that one person can take on several of these roles.

Bible Study Team

Bible Study Leader – responsible for the overarching vision and management of the Bible study

Facilitator Coordinator – selects, orients, and supports the small-group facilitators

Small-Group Facilitator(s) – guides the small-group discussions

Hospitality Coordinator – creates a welcoming environment and offers refreshments

Logistics Coordinator – secures the facilities and equipment needed for the study

Prayer Coordinator – leads the study in prayer and prays for its success

Promotional Coordinator – creates enthusiasm and interest in the study and gets the word out

Registration Coordinator – creates and manages participant information and details

Child Care Coordinator (optional) – provides safe care for children of participants

Bible Study Leader (*has vision and administrative skills*)

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Facilitator Coordinator (*insightful and encouraging administrator*)

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Small-Group Facilitator(s) (*friendly, good listener, faith-filled*)

Name(s):

Phone(s):

Email(s):

Hospitality Coordinator (*welcoming and gracious, able to delegate*)

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Logistics Coordinator (*good with details, audiovisual equipment*)

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Prayer Coordinator (*prayerful and dedicated to the Lord*)

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Promotional Coordinator (*creative and energetic promoter*)

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Registration Coordinator (*well-organized and detail-oriented*)

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Child Care Coordinator (optional) (*trained in Safe Environment, loves children*)

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Appendix 3: Bible Study Schedule

By answering the questions below, you can create a schedule for your study. Planning in advance will help you decide when to take time off for holidays and when to add days for special events (for example, a study wrap-up celebration).

Which study or studies are you offering at your parish at this time?

For each study:

How many sessions does this study have? _____

What day of the week will the study meet? _____

Study start date: _____

Study end date: _____

How much time is needed for each session? _____ minutes

Study start time: _____ AM/PM

Study end time: _____ AM/PM

Appendix 4: Team Member Checklists

The following checklists provide convenient step-by-step lists of the tasks of each Bible study team member.

Bible Study Leader Checklist

Oversee the study as a whole, and work with your Bible study team to ensure that the necessary tasks are completed.

- _____ Pray for your Bible study during the planning process and throughout the study.
- _____ Choose the study you would like to offer.
- _____ Get the support of your pastor and parish leadership for your study.
- _____ Gather a Bible study team.
- _____ Schedule your study.
- _____ Work with your Bible study team members to ensure they have what they need to complete their tasks.
- _____ Complete any tasks not assigned to a particular team member. (For example, if your study does not have a Facilitator Coordinator, then the Bible Study Leader would fulfill those responsibilities.)

Facilitator Coordinator Checklist

Prepare and support facilitators throughout the study. Plan to be in regular contact with facilitators to support, encourage, and pray for them.

- _____ Pray, and ask God to send the right people to help facilitate the study.
- _____ Make a list of prospective facilitators using the suggested criteria in this Leader's Companion.
- _____ Schedule a Facilitator Orientation, and invite your facilitators.
- _____ Decide how to handle off-topic questions. (For example: You could direct facilitators to place off-topic questions in a "parking lot" to be answered later by your pastor, deacon, or DRE.) Be sure to communicate this to all your small-group facilitators.
- _____ Decide what information facilitators need (i.e., study leader contact info, policies, attendance list, name tags, facility map).
- _____ Host the Facilitator Orientation using the information in this Leader's Companion.
- _____ Create small groups of eight to twelve participants, and assign two facilitators to each group.

Optional:

- _____ Provide facilitators with folders that include important information, such as the study schedule, Bible study leader contact information, and attendance sheets.
- _____ Have facilitators meet prior to each study session to prepare for the small-group discussions.
- _____ Ask facilitators to be on the lookout for people in their small groups who might be good facilitators for future studies.

Hospitality Coordinator Checklist

Set a welcoming tone for your Bible study, which will build fellowship among the participants.

_____ Provide hospitality for your study group. Consider offering some of the following things:

_____ Music

_____ Tablecloths

_____ Fresh flowers

_____ Refreshments

_____ Hand-written welcome notes

_____ Child care

Other: _____

_____ Determine what additional hospitality is needed. This may include a study “wrap-up” celebration, facilitator meetings, or Bible study team meetings.

_____ Plan to offer at least coffee and other beverages on the first day of the study. Create a sign-up sheet for snacks and drinks for future sessions if you like.

_____ Assign greeters to each entrance. Heartfelt smiles and words of welcome are the keys.

_____ Clean up the facilities so you will be welcomed back.

Optional:

_____ Choose an ice breaker activity for the Facilitator Orientation and for the first day of the study.

_____ Consider recruiting greeters, bakers, and musicians.

_____ Become familiar with the equipment you will need to use, including the coffee machine, ice machine, and dishwasher.

_____ Work with your Child Care Coordinator (if applicable).

_____ Work with your Logistics Coordinator to create a facility map, directions, and directional signs.

Logistics Coordinator Checklist

This list will ensure you are ready for each session, including technical details and setup and breakdown.

_____ Reserve space for your larger group meetings and small-group discussions well in advance of your study start date.

- The meeting space for the entire group should have adequate audiovisual equipment for everyone to see and hear the video presentations. Consider using a projector and strategically located speakers if needed.
- The meeting space for the small-group discussions ideally should have round tables for every small group of eight to twelve participants. Consider both privacy and acoustics when reserving this space.
- Plan for more people than you expect.
- Reserve space for child care (if applicable).
- If you plan on streaming the video presentations through Evangelization.com, you will need a strong Internet connection.

- _____ Do you need technical support? If so, recruit someone who is tech-savvy to attend each session to help with setup and to troubleshoot any “hiccups.”
- _____ Contact the parish staff to coordinate setup and breakdown. This will ensure you always leave facilities as you found them and will be welcomed back.
- _____ Consider how you will access the building and the individual rooms. Do you need keys? Is there an alarm system?
- _____ Get permission to use the necessary audiovisual equipment, and obtain Wi-Fi passwords.
- _____ Do a “dry run” before the study start date, including locating the lights and testing the audiovisual equipment.
- _____ Have a backup plan in case of technical difficulties.
- _____ On the day of the study:
 - Make facility-related announcements: Give directions if necessary, point out restrooms, mention any facility policies about parking, food and drink, and smoking.
 - Start the video, and troubleshoot any technical challenges during the session.
 - Ensure that the facilities are left as you found them (i.e., return the keys).

Prayer Coordinator Checklist

Your study will have the best possible support when prayers for its success are offered regularly.

- _____ Pray for your Bible study during the planning process and throughout the study.
- _____ Lead the welcoming and closing prayers each week. You can choose a prayer you like from a prayer book or from the Bible, or use the prayers of the Liturgy. You could also compose your own prayer or pray extemporaneously if you are comfortable doing that.

Optional:

- _____ Provide a book for participants to record intentions that the group will pray for each week.
- _____ Create prayer cards or bookmarks.

Promotional Coordinator Checklist

Get the word out and create “buzz” to promote and grow your Bible study.

- _____ Ask your pastor to announce your study from the pulpit and to encourage people to register. Sample pulpit announcements are available for download at BibleStudyForCatholics.com/downloads.
- _____ Host the free information session, “Encountering God: How to Make Sense of the Bible” (see BibleStudyForCatholics.com/InfoSession).
- _____ Post our customizable posters and fliers (these are available at BibleStudyForCatholics.com/downloads).
- _____ Announce the study in your parish bulletin and on your parish website.
- _____ Ask each person on the Bible study team to personally invite others to the study.

- _____ Use social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) to get the word out.
- _____ Set up registration tables after Sunday Masses.
- _____ Email the preview video and registration link to your list of parish contacts. The preview video for each study can be found at AscensionPress.com. A registration link will be created for your study when you schedule it using Evangelization.com (see “Running the Study” on page 8).
- _____ Make sure your study is listed on our Bible study locator map. Go to BibleStudyForCatholics.com/map.
- _____ Take advantage of our *Bible Timeline* Chart loaner program. You may borrow as many *Bible Timeline* Charts as you need for a presentation and return them when you are finished. You can place these Charts in the pews to go along with a presentation before or after Sunday Mass or during an “Encountering God: How to Make Sense of the Bible” information session. Speak to a Study Consultant at 1-800-376-0520 for more information.

Registration Coordinator Checklist

Keeping track of participant details will help your Bible study go off without a hitch.

- _____ Set up registration—using Evangelization.com makes it easy! You do not need to manually register participants or order their materials. Participants will register for your study at Evangelization.com, and their materials will be sent directly to them.

OR

- _____ Provide hard-copy registration forms to participants, collect payment for their registration, and order their study materials at least two weeks in advance of your study’s start date. On the first day of the study, set up a registration table to:
 - Help with on-site registration (if needed).
 - Hand out name tags and materials (if needed).
 - Update lists and notify your Bible study leader if there are last-minute or late registrations.

Optional:

- _____ Create an attendance sheet for each small group.
- _____ Create name tags for every participant and Bible study team member.
- _____ Download certificates of completion for your particular study from BibleStudyForCatholics.com, and fill in each with a participant’s name. Give the certificates to participants on the last day of your study or during the optional study wrap-up celebration.

Child Care Coordinator Checklist (optional)

- _____ Recruit another experienced person to help you with the details.
- _____ Gather a team of child care providers. Be sure they have completed the required “Safe Environment” training needed to volunteer with children at your parish.
- _____ Create a registration form for parents with children, including space to record food and other allergies.
- _____ Work with the Logistics Coordinator and Hospitality Coordinator in your planning.
- _____ Plan activities to do with the children.
- _____ Create drop-off and pick-up policies for authorized parents and guardians.
- _____ Leave the facility as you found it each week.