



Leader's Instructions Handbook

The 80-minute video, *God's Story*, is divided into 18 discussion sections, ranging from 1 to 10 minutes in length. (You may be using *God's Story* in VCD format, with a different title, but it has the same content.) In this material we will be referring to *God's Story* as the “video.”

This discussion guide is designed for you to first show a portion of the video, and then to ask some thought-provoking questions based on what the viewers have just seen. We include some possible answers they may give, along with insights and Scriptures you will use to deepen the discussion. Also, you will see Bible verses and information which are there for leaders to help reinforce the truths covered in the video selection. These may be used during class time as you feel led to do so.

In situations other than a discussion class format, people usually see the whole 80-minute *God's Story* video in one viewing. The whole video presents information in Bible stories of the Old Testament about a promised Savior. As the video moves into the New Testament, viewers will discover that Jesus Christ is that Savior promised from the beginning by God.

Because your class will probably not watch the whole video at once, we occasionally have you volunteer information that has not yet been seen by the group. For instance, we have you identify the Savior to come as “Jesus,” long before the New Testament stories of Jesus are shown. Introducing Jesus sooner is vital because some members of your discussion group may not attend all of the meetings and knowing He is the Savior is the central message for this class.

However, this Discussion Guide format is designed to show the video in 18 smaller sections over a period of 4-8 weeks. If you want to meet together four times, try covering the sections this way: 1-5; 6-10; 11-14; 15-18. For eight class meetings we suggest going through the sections this way: 1-3; 4-5; 6-7; 8-10; 11-12; 13-14; 15-16; 17-18.

You may teach as many sections at a time as you wish, depending on what is best for your area. You can choose to stretch the class to the full 18 weeks by combining it with parenting, hygiene, health or trade or other low key secular/social classes or gatherings. You could even plan an all-day seminar where you show the whole video and lead all 18 discussion sections in one day!

Make sure you have watched the whole video as many times as possible before you begin this leadership project. Also, before each class, be sure the video is cued up at the proper place to begin the selection. Watch all video selections you plan to discuss before each meeting so that you can practice turning off the video at the correct places. You probably will be showing more than one selection during each meeting. Your class will run smoother when you avoid letting the tape run past the stop mark and do not have to rewind during class to show the next segment.

Discussion Guide Class Format

1. Video Selection: Each of the 18 discussion sections in your leader's guide begins with the title and the description of the video selection to play. For your convenience, we list a few of the words that begin and end the selection. We also list the visuals that appear at the beginning and end of the selection. To make it easier for you to plan your class sessions, we wrote in the length of time of each video selection. The actual length of your discussion will vary greatly according to the way you manage the group's conversation during the meeting.

If you are new at leading discussions, you will probably find it easier to handle the class by just discussing one selection at a time. Teaching in short segments helps the group stay more focused on the content.

If you are a more experienced leader, you may decide it is best to play several selections at the same time without stopping the video. Then you can go back and ask all of the discussion questions about those combined sections. Whatever your choice, ask the Lord to show you how your group will best receive the information. God has promised wisdom to those who ask Him.

2. Leader Information & Leader Scripture: These are for your benefit. We suggest that you read, study, and pray over these resources. As you feel directed by God, you may want to use the information or Scriptures during the discussion.

3. Read to the Group & Scriptures: Most of these insights are short. As closely as possible, present them to your group as they are worded in your Guide. Always remain flexible. If, during the discussion, class members have just given answers that cover your next prepared Insights well, you may only want to give a slight overview of those Group Insights.

4. Group Questions: These questions are to be asked of the group and discussed a little. To keep all of the class interested, try not to stay on any one question too long.

5. Transition Statement: We suggest speaking these to your group as they are written. They are designed to lead your group from one concept to the next. You will notice that each one has a parenthesis like this: (*or* next time when we meet). If you intend to play the next section of the video, use the “now” part in your Transition Statement. If you are done with the video for this class session, then use the “next time we meet” part.

6. God's Story Script: We suggest that after each meeting, every person in attendance be given a copy of the sections of the *God's Story* script that you have just covered, along with the Group Insights, Questions, and Transition Statements that you used.

Leading The Discussion

You don't have to be an experienced leader or a seasoned Christian in order to teach this class. Because you have the Holy Spirit as your guide, He will help you lead and adjust the questions and responses to your group and situation. If you are a Christian, you already know more than all non-believers because you have experienced Christ personally. Yes, there are some difficult sections, but you do not need to have all the answers. Let them know that you are a fellow learner as well. You will find that many non-Christians will be affected by hearing how becoming a Christian has helped you and other Christians in the group.

This is a discovery class for the non-Christians. It uses primarily a discussion format not lecture. Let the video do the teaching, and you can provide supplemental insights. Quite often people new at leading will be nervous, causing them to talk most of the time and experienced leaders tend to want to give all of the theology they know! So, a caution to both types of leaders is to limit your talking and stay on the central theme; how the Bible shows us the way to God through Jesus Christ.

Avoid letting Christians dominate the discussion time. The non-Christians in the class need an opportunity to voice their opinion. Your willingness to listen to them will make them more receptive to the truth of the Bible. As the leader, one way to accomplish this is to direct your eyes toward the non-Christians (or the shyer young Christians) when you ask easy questions. Do not allow one class member to dominate the discussion. If overly eager class members try to get your attention to give their answer, politely ignore them. Some times knowledgeable Christians and highly intelligent people have not yet learned the value of letting the weaker class members participate.

Let experienced class members answer when the others do not respond. Occasionally direct a slightly harder question to them using the eye contact method. This assures them that you really are interested in their contributions to the class.

Be careful about singling out people by name to answer a question. Some class members will become very embarrassed if they do not have the correct answer. When people do give a wrong answer to a specific question, or if they give a response that is totally off of the subject, here are a few polite ways for you as a leader to respond:

1. Very interesting answer. I will have to think about that awhile.
2. Thank you for your thought. That opens up a whole new direction of discussion that would take more time than we have right now.
3. Please let me rephrase that question to make it a little more clear.
4. That is an answer that seems correct, but it may not quite fit here.

Also, avoid arguing points with class members. Remember, it is not your job to convince anyone of the truth. That is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit. Your role is to share a few insights, including personal experiences, and to guide the discussion so that all the material is covered.

Personal Preparation

The Group Insights and Questions are meant to be shared orally with the group. Your presentation will be most effective if you read through the material ahead of time and practice. Perhaps this is your first time to use the video or even to lead or teach. Don't let fear of this new experience keep you from feeling capable of leading a discussion group.

Look at the group and speak to them as individuals. A tip for new leaders is this. As you teach, if you feel nervous, try looking at people's foreheads instead of their eyes.

Refer to your outline as needed. If necessary, you may read some of the Insights and the Questions to the group. God will honor and use your efforts. Even groups of non-Christians or seekers can take this study guide and the God's Story video and use them to discover the truth of the Bible.

Remember: *The Holy Spirit is the teacher, you are just the facilitator.*

If you are a new Christian, gather your friends together and take them through the video using the discussion guide as an aid.

Leader Scripture: Grab hold of the Bible promise:

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

Your most important role is to pray for the group. No matter what happens in the discussion time, continue to reach out in friendship and pray for the participants. They must see that you are showing love to them not only because you want them to become a Christian, but also because God has put a love in your heart for them. They will see the difference.

Leader Scripture:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another” (John 13:34-35).

Prayer and Evangelism

Each session of the God's Story video should draw people closer to Christ. You don't want to push people into making a decision, but be open to encouraging them to individually speak to God. If during the first or second session you feel your group is ready, you can read the special "I Want to Know the Truth" prayer to them (Handout #1 found below). This prayer also fits naturally into some of the other lessons. Use it when you feel led by God to do so. This prayer is to help them express a willingness to God to learn the truth.

To introduce the prayer, say something like this: "Some of you may be wondering about who God is and if what Christians say about Him is true. If you really want to know the truth, why not pray and ask God to show you? If He is real and if He answers prayer, He will give you an understanding that allows you to take the step of belief. If you would like this understanding, you can pray something like this" (read prayer on handout #1).

"I am going to pass out this example of some words you might want to pray. You do not have to pray these exact words, just the idea contained in them. God is more interested in your seeking attitude than in your being able to pray perfect words.

"If you want help in seeking to know the truth about God, you can pray later on your own, when you are ready. Just express your willingness to God to listen for the truth. It is not our responsibility to convince you to trust in the Bible message from God. Only God can do that."

Leaders Note: There may be many opportunities to present this prayer. Have copies available at every session for newcomers. If you find a heated argument developing in the class, you can ease the situation by suggesting the use of this prayer. As people in the group get to know each other better, it is important to offer to pray for them. This works best in small groups of 3 or 4. At the conclusion of the main discussion, you might divide them into these smaller groups, with one Christian leader in each. The leaders of each small group should give each person an opportunity to ask for any additional explanations.

Also, each small group leader should ask if anyone in the group would be willing to share a need for which the leader could pray. Leaders shouldn't force the issue, but at least ask, and then follow through by praying out loud for the request. Include something in the prayer like, "I ask that each person here will know what is true and good. I pray that they will see themselves as God sees them, and will consider experiencing the joy of coming to faith in God through Jesus."

Using Questions

Some of the questions are observation questions. Others are opinion or reaction questions. Rather than viewing answers as “right or wrong,” view them as helps to guide members to the Christian viewpoint.

If you have a large group or lots of group participation, it will take more class sessions to go through the video and Discussion Guide. Consider each week having a class member to go back and review the previous stories. This opportunity to share Bible stories is good witnessing training for baby Christians and also helps those who missed a session.

As we have said, the Group Questions we provide are just basic guidelines. As the Lord leads, you may also include these types of questions:

1. What else did you observe?
2. What else surprised or moved you?
3. Do you have any other questions about this section?

Follow Up

The *God's Story* video has the ability to take those who are slightly interested in Christianity to a clear understanding of the gospel message. During or at the conclusion of the discussion sessions, we pray that many will be ready to trust Christ and move forward in faith.

If a group of individuals viewed the film together, they may already be the nucleus to a new small group or church. Let them know that they have just begun the walk with Christ and that they will want to continue meeting together to learn more about faith, as well as seeking other learning opportunities. You can help them become a new church or direct the group to the closest Bible believing fellowship.

Do your best to provide new Christians and interested inquirers with further nurturing and learning opportunities, but remember that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher and He can help them grow and find faith even without your constant presence.

The gospel moves most quickly through an existing relationship with other people. As you approach the final sessions, begin to encourage them to consider holding a similar discussion group using *God's Story* in their homes with their own friends.



Handout

Prayer

"I Want to Know Truth"

Dear God,

I am not sure who you are, but I would like to know what is true. Will you show me if the Bible is your message, and what you want me to believe and do?

Thank you for hearing my prayer.