

How to Choose a Bible Study

Choices abound when it comes to Bible studies and it can be overwhelming. Here are ten questions that will help narrow those choices and make the decision process less stressful and more fruitful. Share your answers with your local Christian bookstore personnel so they can point you in the right direction.

Describe Your Group:

1. Is this a Sunday school class, a weekly women's Bible study, a mom's group...?
2. What is the size of your group and where do you meet? Are you a group of 100 that meets at the church and divides into small groups, or are you a small home group?
3. What is the intent of the group? Are you more of a support/fellowship group or are you a Bible study group?
4. Do you have access to technology? Can you play videos or would you rather not?
5. What is the biblical knowledge level of your members? Do they need the basics or have they been doing Bible studies for thirty years and need fresh insight?
6. How do your members feel about homework? Try to quantify it—15 minutes, five days a week; 30 minutes daily, six days a week.
7. What kind of study structure do they like best? Do they like fill-in-the-blank with answers provided or do they like thoughtful questions to ponder? Do they want to engage their Bibles in addition to their participant's book or do they want everything in their participant's book?
8. What topics or themes is your group most interested in? Do you want to study books of the Bible, or themes from the Bible such as forgiveness or stress? Are you interested in topical Bible studies such as parables, family, women, God's will...? Or is your group more of a book club that reads a chapter of a book and then uses questions to discuss the biblical themes?
9. How many weeks will your group meet? 4, 6, 8, 12, 14?
10. Do you have a budget? Will each person pay for his/her own participant's book? Is the cost a concern? Ask your bookstore about bulk purchase discounts. How many leaders' guides will you need? If there is a video component, how many will you need of these?

Finally, after you've answered all of these questions, don't forget to ask the biggest question of the most important participant in your study? Ask God what He wants your group to do. Then listen. He will guide your steps and your decisions.

Cheri Cowell is the author of *Parables and Word Pictures*, a Following God™ series workbook-style study (AMG Publishers). Her first book, *Direction: Discernment for Your Life* (Beacon Hill) with its companion workbook, is often used in small groups wanting to study God's will. Cheri has a Masters in Theological Studies degree from Asbury Seminary and twenty years experience in youth, children's, and women's ministry in the local church where she is known as the go-to person when a group is searching for a new Bible study. www.CheriCowell.com