

9 Tips for Choosing the Right Bible Study Material

I have dealt with Bible study from almost every conceivable angle. I have used Bible study materials for decades and participated in countless Bible study groups. I have led Bible study groups and organized women's Bible study for several churches. And I have written Bible studies.

Yet, there is one question I still grapple with again and again. "Which material should we use for this group at this time?" The sheer abundance of great choices makes the decision overwhelming. Add to that the scope of your options – everything from looking at classic TV shows with a biblical lens to in-depth, exegetical Bible book studies – and the task becomes daunting!

However, these tips can get help you narrow down your choices.

1. **Establish your purpose** – Recall why you and your women study the Bible. Our primary goals should be to know and experience God more deeply and to allow Him to make us more like Jesus. A good Bible study will have the same goals for its readers.
2. **Contemplate the needs of the students** – For instance, do they need the doctrinal basics or are they ready to go deeper? Also consider their life stage. Young moms have different life needs and interests than empty nesters. They also have less time! Make sure the topic and the time required will fit your group.
3. **Consider the experience of your leaders** – Less experienced leaders will benefit from a study that has a solid, helpful leaders' guide. Those with more experience won't necessarily need one. If your leaders are inexperienced, look for a study with lots of leader helps!
4. **Enlist a few trusted friends** – Enlist 3 or 4 women who have lots of Bible study experience to help you. First, ask for study and author recommendations. Then later, after you have gathered a few possibilities, ask them to help you read through and review the selections.
5. **Do a little research** – Visit your local Christian bookstore and browse the Bible study section. If you're looking for a very specific topic, check the non-fiction or Christian living section. Many trade books now include group discussion questions.
6. **Explore a few new authors** – During your research, take a look at a few authors you've never used before. We all have our favorites, but different voices can bring freshness and encourage us to look at timeless truths in new ways. Visit the authors' websites, check their "statement of beliefs," and check out reader reviews.
7. **Gather some options** – After your research, narrow it down to a handful of options and purchase a single copy of each. Review those choices with the help of your enlisted friends.
8. **Check the doctrine** – Just because a book is published by a Christian publisher doesn't mean the author's doctrine will line up with your church's understanding of God's truth. Some things are insignificant like how often we should partake of the Lord's Supper. Others – like how we are saved – are non-negotiable. Make sure the material is on solid ground!
9. **Confirm the material encourages spiritual growth** – Go back to your purpose to make your final decision. Some material can be engaging and even grow our biblical knowledge, yet not encourage application and growth.

Cover it all with prayer and you're ready to select the next Bible study for your women.

Kathy Howard is the author of 4 Bible studies including *Unshakeable Faith* and *Embraced by Holiness*. Find out more at www.kathyhoward.org