

BIBLE STUDY HELPS

We will be blessed as we study together. As we think of the upcoming study, here are some *helpful hints* for the one who will lead the study:

1. Encourage the group members' participation. Avoid dominating and controlling the group.
2. Deal with difficult questions honestly. Be willing to say, "I don't know. Does anyone else have input?" Check with the Pastor about the answer before the next session.
3. Keep discussion Bible-centered.
4. Take advantage of silence. A good question requires time to think and respond. A few silent moments allow the group time for insight and thought. However, if prolonged, silence may indicate participants do not understand the question. After a reasonable time, use a different approach and restate the question.
5. Don't allow a particularly verbal person to monopolize group discussion. Make eye contact with others instead. Say something like: "We've had many good thoughts and ideas. Perhaps there are others of you who would like to share." Appreciate the individual who is dominating then direct the conversation to someone else.
6. Be accepting of tears and emotions. It's okay – it's healthy to cry.
7. Accentuate the positive. Say, "That's an interesting point. Thank you for sharing." This will help the women to feel affirmed and accepted.
8. Befriend group members. Free time or breaks during the meeting can be uncomfortable for those who are new to your WMF. Introduce them to others and show a personal interest in them.
9. Pray! Pray! Pray! The best preparation will be time spent in prayer!!!

Leading An Effective Bible Study

Many of us who are involved in WMF and other ministries of the church may find ourselves being asked to take a turn in leading a Bible study. Ephesians 6:10-20 contains much encouragement for the believer in her walk with Jesus that she can also apply when asked to lead a Bible study. In these scriptures, we are encouraged to put on our armor, to stand firm, and finally to pray.

“Put on the full armor of God...” God’s servants need to **be prepared** before going into battle. For the Bible study leader, of course, this means spending time going through the lesson, and asking your own questions about the lesson so that you may **anticipate and encourage questions** others may bring up. **Do not be intimidated** if you do not always have the answer for every question; as a group, you can search the Scriptures with confidence that the *“sword of the Spirit”* is always reliable and powerful. Part of the armor consists of *the belt of truth* and the *breastplate of righteousness*, found only in the Word of God, so we always take care to **emphasize the simple truth of Scripture** over and above the opinions of too many commentaries. We are also encouraged to *“have our feet shod with the readiness to share the gospel”* so this means **being ready to share the way of salvation** if the opportunity arises.

Once our armor is in place we are told several times in this passage to *“stand firm”*. Leading a study is a great opportunity for you to **apply the Scriptures to your own life first** so that your own life is standing on a firm foundation. You may want to **share how the lesson applies to your life**, and to pose some open-ended questions to **give opportunity for others to share** as well. You are the facilitator to make sure no one person, including the leader, dominates the study! It is important to be **gentle** as well as firm and to **keep healthy time boundaries** on discussions, so the study does not drag. One hour is a good time limit; start and stop on time.

Finally, *pray, pray and pray* some more. Once we have studied the lesson and applied it to our own lives, it is time to let the Lord lead the study. **Ask the Holy Spirit to be your guide** throughout your preparation and during the study through **prayer**. Ephesians 6: 12 emphasizes that Christians’ struggles are not against flesh and blood; therefore, neither should we try to do spiritual ministry in our own human strength. **Pray not only for yourself as you lead, but for the other Bible students’ hearts to be open to the Word of God.** Our *“shield of faith”* reminds us that the Bible is not just a book written by human hands, it is a living, supernatural means God uses to impart grace to its readers. **Have faith that the Scriptures can speak** to every soul and every need of every individual in the group as you lead them through the study, and rest in the knowledge that **He does need a perfect messenger to convey His perfect message!**

While leading a Bible study is a tremendous responsibility, it need NOT fill you with fear and trembling! Let me encourage you to put your armor on and step out to serve the Lord in this way!

Devotional Life, *A New Journaling Idea*

Barbara (Elmqvist) Gustafson, Mesa, AZ

*“The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up,
and He let NONE OF HIS WORDS FALL TO THE GROUND!”*

I Samuel 3:19

As I read this verse a couple of years ago, I was struck with this thought: “God is so **careful** with the words of Samuel – and I am so **careless** with the Word of God!” I am thrilled as I read the Word of God and the Holy Spirit brings some passage or verse alive to me. No other words can touch the heart as God’s Word can. But my heart is saddened to realize that many times God blesses me through His Word and I am so quick to forget the blessing. I have kept a journal, but how many times do I go back and read what I have written? Seldom!

As I read 1 Samuel 3:19, I was struck with a new journaling idea. It took me a while, but I finally put this new idea into practice in 2003, and it has been a great blessing to me.

- (1) Purchase a simple 3-ring binder and divide it into 31 sections (1 for each day of the month).
- (2) As you have your devotions each day, write out the scripture that speaks to your heart in the section for that day of the month. Some days it is a single verse – others, a longer passage. You may choose to add thoughts of your own – simply write the Word of God.

The blessing comes as I add to the journal, reviewing the previous month's verses for that day. For example, I wrote in my journal on July 1st: “*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*” “*A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones*” (Proverbs 15:1,30). Then I reviewed January’s entry – Genesis 4:7 “*If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.*” Then I wrote, “What an important reminder as I begin each month. Sin is always lurking – trying to have me, but with God’s help, I must master it!”

February 1st was Numbers 10:35, 36; 12:3! March 1st – I Samuel 8:7! April 1st – *And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve Him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever*” (I Chronicles 28:9)! Then I wrote, “I will never forget the last words that my own father spoke to me. Although Solomon didn’t heed his father’s advice, I’m sure he never forgot these final words of David.” May

1st – “*But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold*” (Job 23:10)! June – Psalm 73:26!

God has richly blessed my life through this practice of review. It is my heart’s desire not to let any of God’s Words fall to the ground, but rather to treasure them in my heart.

BIBLE STUDY- SEARCHING SCRIPTURE

By Jan Strand

The FBI-you have most likely heard those initials before. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is the domestic intelligence and security service of the United States. When exploring a different way to meet the needs of some of the women of our congregation, our WMF group used these initials but applied a different meaning to them. Although sometimes met with a giggle when announced, the "Female Bible Investigators" was founded.

Our WMF booklet describes it this way: "This Bible study group will meet the second and fourth Saturdays of the month at 8 a.m. Place, times and dates may be changed to accommodate needs. Lessons will be done as a group effort at the meeting. This is a casual group-just come as you are."

That's right. Come as you are. And we do. Our goal has been to present a flexible and low-pressure atmosphere. Some from other congregations who are unable to attend their own women's meetings have been invited and come. God has blessed this group. Lively and deep discussion comes from the Word and the WMF Bible study booklet. Although we are not always on the lesson of the month-we meet more than the monthly groups-we find that we take more time to complete a lesson. Coffee is allowed and encouraged.

This has worked for us. So many of our women are unable to attend the strong, well-established core groups that meet on a weekday once a month. We felt we needed to find a way to include women who are in that situation. Having a relatively early Saturday time also allows for unhurried prayer time. We established early on that confidentiality was important, so we can share one another's burdens without worry. Tears and laughter happen often, sometimes simultaneously.

Perhaps the definition of the real FBI might be closer than we initially realized. Perhaps we are developing a domestic and security service for the families of our women. We praise Him for providing for us.

An apt portion of Scripture comes from Hebrews 10:24-25, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another-and all the more as you see the day approaching."

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS

The *Voice of the Martyrs* is an organization started by Richard Wurmbrandt who was imprisoned in the Soviet Union for serving Christ.

The organization provides opportunity to find out how Christians are dealing with persecution in many parts of the world. *Voice of the Martyrs* provides materials to help us become both informed and to have opportunity to minister to those living in areas of persecution. Their resources include books, video presentations with discussion guides, and periodicals that keep Christians informed of what is happening to the persecuted church around the world.

We in the United States have been largely isolated from what many brothers and sisters in Christ have experienced and are experiencing elsewhere today. The materials provided by *Voice of the Martyrs* can help us realize what we have, be more thankful for it, and to be more involved in helping others that are not so blessed. Knowing how Christians are treated elsewhere can help us prepare for what may be part of our future.