



PART 1

# How to host The Bible Course



[harvestchurch.scot/biblecourselinks](https://harvestchurch.scot/biblecourselinks)



# Introduction

**Thank you so much for hosting *The Bible Course*!**

We hope the next eight weeks will be an amazing experience for your group and that you will all grow confident in the Bible together. We've designed these notes to help you host the course. We've included a few ideas for preparation, an outline of each session and a few tips to help your group get the most out of it.

## Preparation checklist for each session

Before you host the first session of *The Bible Course*, please read these Host Notes where you will find the following information:

- ☐ What you will need to run the course
- ☐ How to set up the meeting space
- ☐ How to host a session

# What you need to run the course



## ***The Bible Course videos***

If you have access to an internet connection, you can watch or download the videos on *The Bible Course* Digital Hub. If you don't have access to the internet at your venue, then make sure you download the videos to your device beforehand.



## ***The Bible Course Guidebook***

We recommend each participant has their own copy of the Guidebook. Packed with notes, visuals, journaling ideas and further content, it will help each person get the most from the course. Guidebooks can be ordered from the Bible Society shop.



## ***The Daily Bible Plan***

Between each session there's a daily Bible Plan for participants to follow. This is available on the Digital Hub and in the Guidebook. The Bible passages look forward to the next session and help people familiarise themselves with what's coming. The more people commit to the daily Bible Plan, the more they get out of the course. So please encourage this and consider setting up a WhatsApp group so you can post the passage each day and everyone can share their thoughts.



## ***The Digital Hub***

Please encourage all members of your small group to log in to *The Bible Course* Digital Hub before you start the course. This will enable them to create their profile and get the best out of their online experience of *The Bible Course*. In the Hub they can access the daily Bible Plan, re-watch course video content and explore extra resources. Please give everyone the link for the Digital Hub and provide regular reminders to visit.



## ***Pens and Bibles***

Consider providing spare pens for notetaking and copies of the Bible in a modern translation for anyone who doesn't have one.

# How to set up the meeting space



## Sound and vision

Being able to clearly see and hear the video content is crucial. Consider the size and requirements of your group. A smaller home group can watch on a Smart TV. A larger group may need the video projected through a larger screen with audio speakers. Please also check any special requirements participants may have to make it easy for them to take part.

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## Refreshments

Enhance your course by offering a drink and something to nibble as people arrive. For the first few sessions this is especially important as it will help people to relax and feel welcome. Please do consider food intolerances and allergies.

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## Room setup

Consider the room that you plan to use and make sure the lighting, temperature and seating/viewing angles are comfortable for everyone to minimise distractions.

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## Prayer

In all your preparations, do remember to pray for each person attending the course. Pray that God will speak to them through the course, that they will connect well with others and grow in confidence with the Bible.

# How to host a session



## OVERVIEW AND TIMINGS FOR EACH SESSION

- ☐ **Warm up and recap**  
(10 minutes)  
With optional Getting Started question
- ☐ **Watch video: PART 1**  
(20 minutes)
- ☐ **Discussion Time**  
(20 minutes)  
Pause the video for the Discussion Time. The Bible passage and questions appear on the video and are also in the Guidebook
- ☐ **Watch video: PART 2**  
(10 minutes)
- ☐ **Closing Reflection**  
(10 minutes)  
A key verse, reflective question and suggested prayer will appear on the screen and are also in the Guidebook
- ☐ **Wrap up**  
(10 minutes)

These timings are rough guidelines designed for a session lasting around 90 minutes. If your group has less time, you can consider the following options:

- Dive straight in to the video without warm up.
- Drop the closing reflection time, but encourage participants to do this at home.

We do not recommend splitting the sessions in half, and watching them across two weeks. Participants might lose the flow of the teaching, impacting their understanding of the big story of the Bible.

### Warm up and recap

First, thank everyone for making it to the session. Second, try asking someone different each week to give a one-minute recap of the story so far. Use a stopwatch or phone timer to keep it tight! Finally, make sure everyone is settled with a course Guidebook, Bible and pen before starting the video teaching for Part 1. In each session we've offered an optional Getting Started question to help break the ice and get conversation flowing if required.

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### Discussion Time

At the end of Part 1 there's a discussion time. We've included a Getting Started question, then a section called 'Digging in' which includes a Bible passage to read and questions to discuss. This is the standard level for those who are relatively new to the Bible. However, if your group has mature Christians you could focus on the section entitled 'Digging deeper'. However, only go deeper if everyone in the group seems ready for that.

Whichever option you choose, make sure you introduce the discussion by reminding people that this is a time to hear what everyone thinks and to focus on a key Bible passage. It's not about teaching more content. It's about discussing what we've already covered together. With this in mind, you may need to do a bit of troubleshooting:

**If someone begins to dominate** the conversation or assumes too much prior knowledge, why not say something like: 'Thanks for those ideas. Let's now hear what others think. And remember there's no need to say anything impressive. We'd love you just to share your honest thoughts.'

**If the conversation loses focus** on the Bible passage or becomes distracted by a controversial topic, why not say something like: 'That's a fascinating discussion which we can continue another time. And there's more about those sorts of tricky topics on the Hub. For now, let's look again at the Bible passage and the specific question we're discussing ...'

Remember that people are likely to be coming from different perspectives and with different levels of understanding. Please do what you can to make sure everyone feels heard and included. And always prioritise those newer to faith.

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### Closing Reflection

At the end of Part 2, there's an important moment when people consider how this session applies to them. There is a guiding question for reflection, and some suggested prayer, which participants can use individually or in small groups.

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### Wrap up

Close the session by reminding everyone to follow the daily Bible Plan that will prepare them for the next session. Also encourage people to check out specific resources signposted in the Guidebook and further content on the Digital Hub.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What do I do if we keep running out of time?**

*The Bible Course* has been designed so that each session takes about 90 minutes including time to settle down and grab a drink. Please make sure you have communicated the time of your course accurately and ask people to honour the start time as best they can. You also need to be strict about the Discussion and Closing Reflection times. If people want to continue talking then suggest they continue conversations after the session or during the week. See suggestions on page 5 for ways you can adjust the content to suit your group.

## **Can I run *The Bible Course* without the Guidebook?**

Yes, you can. However, the Guidebook offers further content, the Bible Plan, space for notes and much more to help you maximise your experience of the course. Once the course has finished, the Guidebook will continue to be a useful resource for ongoing Bible reading.

## **How can someone catch up if they miss a session?**

The videos are available to watch on our Digital Hub. If someone misses a session encourage them to watch the session and, if time allows, try to share the discussion time with them by video call or in person.

## **Do I need to know the Bible well to host the group?**

Some Bible experience and knowledge may be helpful but there is no expectation that you need to know more than anyone else. You can make it clear at the start that you are learning more about the Bible like the rest of the group. You are simply helping to host the session and to facilitate good discussion.



## PART 2

# How to prepare for each session

**Before hosting a session it's helpful to prepare yourself. You could watch the video beforehand and prepare for the discussion time by reading the relevant Bible passage and discussion questions.**

Decide which set of questions you would like to use for your group - feel free to pick and choose what works for you!

Below is a bespoke guide for each session. We've given a summary of the section of the Bible covered, along with suggestions on how to open and close the session. We've also noted some tricky topics that may come up in conversation, along with suggested resources to help you prepare.

There are helpful resources written by Dr Andrew Ollerton on key topics, along with more in-depth books by experts who feature in *The Bible Course* videos. It would be helpful to have some copies available for those on the course with a particular interest or concern.

Please also be aware that during the videos there are references to slavery, suicide and drug addiction which could be triggers for some people. It might be helpful to point these out in advance depending on your group.



## SESSION ONE

# Introducing the Bible



### Warm up

*This is an optional question to use at the start before the video*

What's your favourite story, book or film and why?

### Key themes in this session

- Introducing the Bible, its impact and influence
- Seeing the Bible as a book, a story and a revelation
- Introducing the storyline
- Interpreting the Bible – 'what' and 'now what'
- The inspiration of Scripture
- The reliability of the Bible

### Possible issues

- While the Bible has been a force for good in the world, it has also been misused in harmful ways. It's helpful to acknowledge this
- Some people may be concerned that the Bible has been made up by the Church and isn't reliable. We suggest you reassure people there are good reasons to trust the Bible and point to helpful resources on the Hub and in the Guidebook

### Wrap up

- Thank people for attending the group and for their contributions to discussions
- Ask people to let you know if there's anything that can be improved for next time
- Remind the group about the Digital Hub and the daily Bible Plan throughout this week to prepare for the next session. (Make sure everyone has access to a physical or digital copy of the Bible. The course uses the NIV translation.)
- Convey details of any WhatsApp group you are starting, and meeting details for the next session
- This session has been an introduction to the Bible. In the next session we explore the first book of the Bible – Genesis

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

'Introducing the Bible'  
*In The Bible: A Story That Makes Sense of Life*  
**Andrew Ollerton,**  
**Hodder**

*Why Trust the Bible?*  
**Amy Orr-Ewing,**  
**IVP**



**For more information along with free samples of helpful resources visit the Hub**

## SESSION TWO

# Genesis: The story begins



## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Part 1: 'Can we take Genesis seriously in a scientific age'  
*In God's Book: An Honest Look at the Bible's 7 Toughest Topics*

**Andrew Ollerton, Hodder**

*Magisteria: The Entangled Histories of Science and Religion*

**Nick Spencer, Oneworld Publications**

### Warm up

What's the most inspiring or beautiful place you've ever visited?  
 Where in the world would you most like to travel to and experience?

### Key themes in this session

- Introducing the book of Genesis
- Is there a conflict between science and faith?
- Humanity created in God's image
- The Fall and the consequences of sin
- God created a good world, humans made it bad, God will restore it
- Abraham, Sarah and three great promises
- The story of Joseph: blessed to be a blessing

### Possible issues

- This session might raise questions about how to interpret Genesis and especially the creation stories in an age of modern science. For helpful resources for yourself and to share with those on the course, check out the Hub
- The personal story from Christine and Rodney is about freedom from debt, but also includes a reference to suicide. If debt is a challenge, you could introduce the work of CAP (Christians Against Poverty)
- Be aware of the pastoral challenges these issues might bring up, and be sure to signpost people to where they can get help

### Wrap up

- Thank people for attending the group and for their contributions to discussions
- Remind the group about the Digital Hub and the daily Bible Plan in preparation for the next session
- Convey details of any WhatsApp group you are starting, and meeting details for the next session
- In the next session we explore the book of Exodus



**For more information along with free samples of helpful resources visit the Hub**

## SESSION THREE

# Exodus: The story of freedom



### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Part 2: 'Exodus: Our human quest for freedom'

*In The Bible: A Story That Makes Sense of Life*  
**Andrew Ollerton, Hodder**

*Bearing God's Name: Why Sinai Still Matters*  
**Carmen Joy Imes, IVP**

### Warm up

What does being rescued mean to you? Have you ever rescued someone or been rescued?

### Key themes in this session

- God's people enslaved in Egypt
- The story of Moses
- The ten plagues and the Passover meal
- Towards the Promised Land and Mount Sinai
- The giving of the law, as well as animal sacrifices and the Tabernacle
- Caleb, Joshua, fear and faith

### Possible issues

- This session references the issue of slavery and the practice of sabbath. Some people may feel that having a 'switch-off' day isn't possible. It's important not to be legalistic; instead encourage people to start with what is possible
- Understanding the laws given through Moses in books like Leviticus can be a tricky topic. Check out recommended resources for further guidance
- Cathleen's personal story references themes of a sexual nature and drug addiction which might be a trigger for some people in your group

### Wrap up

- Thank people for attending the group and for their contributions to discussions
- Remind the group about the Digital Hub and the Bible Plan in preparation for the next session
- Convey details of any WhatsApp group you are starting, and meeting details for the next session
- In the next session we explore the time of the Judges and Israel's Kings.



**For more information along with free samples of helpful resources visit the Hub**

## SESSION FOUR

# Kings: The story of power



## Warm up

Think about people who are famous, influential or powerful – who would you most like to have a coffee with and why?

## Key themes in this session

- God's people are caught in negative cycles
- Introducing Judges like Gideon, Deborah and Samson
- Introducing Samuel, who anoints the first kings of Israel – Saul and David
- The significance of the Temple
- The book of Proverbs and the theme of wisdom

## Possible issues

- People in your group may relate to being caught in negative cycles of bitterness, comparison, lust or greed. You may need to be sensitive and respond with compassion and understanding. Romans 8.1 is a reminder there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus
- Violence and warfare in the Old Testament can be uncomfortable issues for many people, causing them to question God's character. For helpful resources for yourself and to share with those on the course, check out the Digital Hub
- Gary's story mentions a particular opinion on keeping the sabbath – be aware, some in your group may have questions about this or disagree with Gary's approach. Be ready to listen and expand on some different views Christians might have on this issue

## Wrap up

- Thank your group for attending and contributing
- Remind them about the daily Bible Plan and further resources on the Digital Hub
- In the next session we will be exploring the themes of exile and loss

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Part 3: 'Does God condone warfare and violence?'

*In God's Book: An Honest Look at the Bible's 7 Toughest Topics*  
**Andrew Ollerton,**  
**Hodder**

*Blessed are the Peacemakers: A Biblical Theology of Human Violence*  
**Helen Paynter,**  
**Zondervan**



For more information along with free samples of helpful resources visit the Hub

## SESSION FIVE

# Exile: The story of loss

**Warm up**

What's the toughest season of life that you have experienced?  
What gave you hope through it?

**Key themes in this session**

- Exile and the end of the Old Testament
- The division of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms
- Northern Kingdom prophets like Amos, Hosea, Jonah, Elijah
- Southern Kingdom prophets like Isaiah, Micah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah
- Southern Kingdom conquered by the Babylonians and Jerusalem destroyed
- The example of Daniel as an exile in Babylon
- Returning to Jerusalem and rebuilding the Temple
- Malachi points forward to Jesus

**Possible issues**

- The exile raised questions and doubts about God. There may be people in your group who are suffering and wondering whether God has forgotten them. It may be appropriate to meet with them and pray outside of the session
- Dai's personal story is about working for positive change, but there are references to abuse and trafficking which may be a trigger for some in your group

**Wrap up**

- Thank your group for attending and contributing. Congratulate them on their progress – they've made it to the end of the Old Testament!
- This was a big session with lots of details. If people are feeling a bit overwhelmed, encourage them to watch the video again on the Digital Hub
- Remind them about the daily Bible Plan and more resources on the Digital Hub
- In the next session we will be in the New Testament and the Gospels

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES**

Part 3: 'Exile: our human longing for peace'

*In The Bible: A Story That Makes Sense of Life*  
**Andrew Ollerton,**  
**Hodder**

*Exiles on Mission: How Christians can Thrive in a Post-Christian World*  
**Paul Williams,**  
**Brazos Press**



**For more information along with free samples of helpful resources visit the Hub**

## SESSION SIX

# Jesus: The story of rescue



### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Part 5: 'Do miracles really happen?'

*In God's Book: An Honest Look at the Bible's 7 Toughest Topics*  
**Andrew Ollerton,**  
**Hodder**

*Can We Trust the Gospels?*  
**Peter Williams,**  
**Crossway**

### Warm up

If they made a movie about your life story, what details would they need to include and who would you most like to play you?

### Key themes in this session

- Introducing the Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
- The life, death and resurrection of Jesus
- Jesus' ministry and teaching
- Jesus' final week and the cross
- The resurrection of Jesus, good news for everyone

### Possible issues

- Some people may question whether the stories about Jesus in the Gospels are historically reliable. For helpful resources for yourself and to share with others, check out the Hub
- This session includes a challenge to decide clearly to follow Jesus. Offer to talk further with people outside of the session if they would like to know more about becoming a Christian
- Alanzo's story includes drug abuse and violence. Some may find these references challenging. Think about where you could signpost for further support

### Wrap up

- Thank your group for attending and contributing to discussions
- If appropriate, you might finish with a moment of prayer response for those people who are thinking about following Jesus
- Remind them about the daily Bible Plan and further resources on the Digital Hub
- In the next session we will be in the book of Acts



**For more information along with free samples of helpful resources visit the Hub**

## SESSION SEVEN

# Acts: The story of mission



## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Chapter 1: 'The Route of the Gospel'  
*In Romans: A Letter That Makes Sense of Life*  
**Andrew Ollerton, Hodder**

*God is Not a White Man and Other Revelations*  
**Chine McDonald, Hodder**

### Warm up

If you could be a superhero, what super-power would you most like to have?

### Key themes in this session

- The growth of early Christianity in the first 30 years after Jesus' resurrection
- The Day of Pentecost and the arrival of the Holy Spirit
- The early Church and spread of the gospel
- The story of Saul/Paul
- Paul's missionary journeys
- New Testament letters
- The book of Romans

### Possible issues

- People may have questions, concerns or experiences related to the Holy Spirit. Be aware and sensitive to this in your group. There may also be questions about Church unity and why we have so many different denominations
- The session highlights the importance of Paul's letter to the Romans. You could check out Bible Society's *The Romans Course* and begin to think about running it as a follow-on to *The Bible Course*
- John's personal story is about his conversion from Islam to Christianity, which some people may find challenging

### Wrap up

- Thank your group for attending and contributing to discussions
- If appropriate, you might finish with a moment of prayer for people to be filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered to bring hope to the world
- Remind everyone about the daily Bible Plan and further resources on the Hub
- Next week looks at the book of Revelation and is the final session of *The Bible Course*



For more information along with free samples of helpful resources visit the Hub

## SESSION EIGHT

# Revelation: The story completed



## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Part 7: 'What about heaven, hell and the afterlife?'

*In God's Book: An Honest Look at the Bible's 7 Toughest Topics*

**Andrew Ollerton, Hodder**

*Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*  
**Ian Paul, IVP**

### Warm up

What would be your idea of heaven on earth? Invite some humorous responses, e.g. first-class travel and no more queues.

### Key themes in this session

- Introducing the book of Revelation
- How to interpret strange visions and symbols
- Encouragement for Christians suffering persecution
- The return of Jesus Christ
- Concluding *The Bible Course*
- Keep going with the Bible

### Possible issues

- Some people have strong views about the book of Revelation. The key message in this session is that Jesus is king, and he is with us to the end
- What's next after *The Bible Course*? Some people may want to do *The Bible Course* again as there's a lot to take in. Others may be ready to try *The Romans Course*. There are also books written by Dr Andrew Ollerton that accompany both *The Bible Course* and *The Romans Course* in more detail
- Carl's story is about living with a terminal illness. This might be a sensitive topic and some people may need pastoral support

### Wrap up

- Thank your group for attending and celebrate completing *The Bible Course*
- Invite people to consider running the course for other people
- You could ask if people would be interested in attending *The Romans Course*
- Pray and thank God for the journey everyone has had together through the Bible



For more information along with free samples of helpful resources visit the Hub