

The Word Diet:

One Chapter per Day for a Year to Read & Understand the Bible

LEADER'S GUIDE (Intro)

Setting up your Group Gatherings:

- Ideally, group size will be no more than 12 people to encourage people to participate.
- Co-ed groups are fine—different, rather than better/worse.
- A 60-minute meeting can be sufficient. But 75 or 90 minutes would be more relaxed, especially with a larger group or more emphasis on prayer and building relationships.
- Decide how and how much you want to encourage memorization.
- Decide about levels of accountability and discuss this with potential members: intermittent vs. regular attendance; “just show up” vs. more insistent discipleship. Your church probably offers a number of intermittent and “just show up” opportunities. If so, consider making this an opportunity that requires more rigor.
- Consider using a “covenant” if you choose a more rigorous approach. (This is available on our website, ThoroughlyEquipped.org.)
- Avoid Mondays to avoid schedule/holiday disruptions.

Ground Rules / Running your Group Gatherings week-to-week:

- Add opening/closing prayer (ideally, often led by others).
- If someone memorizes more than one verse, decide whether you want to hear both or just one.
- The group should be facilitated not taught; your comments should be no more than the most-active participant.
- Aim for even levels of “class participation” (CP).
- Watch your “time management” (TM): As a default, spend 1/6th of your time on each day’s reading. Feel free to strategically (Spirit-led) deviate from that norm. But don’t settle for floating (in “the flesh”) into a pattern where you don’t spend adequate time on each day.
- Help participants to understand the difference between interpreting and applying the Scriptures—e.g., the sin in Genesis 3 was not sexual, but the temptations described in Genesis 3 can be applied to sexual immorality.
- Help participants with the Old vs. New Covenant and how to read the Old Testament. (Andy Stanley’s *Irresistible* is a nice resource for leaders. See: my blog review at <https://schansblog.blogspot.com/2019/02/andy-stanleys-irresistible.html> for more detail.)
- Questions should be rare compared to comments. And encourage comments to be less technical and more personal.
- Communicate that there are no stupid comments or questions.

Shepherding your group members outside the Group Gatherings:

- Be purposeful and strategic in enhancing accountability—e.g., a mid-week text.
- Provide intentional and personal shepherding, especially for more-marginal group members.
- Add missional service and encourage relational community outside of your group gatherings.
- Discuss appropriate “next steps” for participants as they exit the group. (Corollary: make sure that you have good next steps available for them!)

Comments on selected days (if you want more—guidance, warnings, details, etc.—shoot me an email at DSchansb@ius.edu!)

Week 1, Day 5: This is obscure and something I overlooked until reading Leon Kass' great commentary, *The Beginning of Wisdom*. In a much longer discussion about God's work with Abraham rather than Noah, Kass notes that God is trying to fix "the man's world" of post-Fall, pre-flood world—with Cain's murder and then a range of typically-male shenanigans in the passage we're skipping, from polygamy to the "heroes of renown" in the mysterious Nephilim passage. Kass sees Noah's failure here as a clue that Noah doesn't "get it" and the reader knows that God will be moving on to Plan C—which will involve Abraham.

Week 3, Day 2: The third of Moses' three rescue/justice attempts works really well—and then Jethro's response to hearing about "a good man" is amusing.

Week 5, Day 4: Striking the rock is disobedience—and replicates what Moses did (and was commanded to do) in Exodus 17. In *The Saving Life of Christ*, Ian Thomas draws a parallel between striking and crucifixion vs. speaking and the Holy Spirit. He sees this as re-crucifying Christ and failing to depend on the Spirit. Beyond that, Moses fails as a leader on many levels—and is thus prone to greater punishment (James 3:1).

Week 6: Interested readers might enjoy my book on Joshua, *Inheriting the Promised Land*. Of particular interest, God arranges for various battles to be different combinations of His provision and their participation—from the miraculous at Jericho to conventional warfare at Ai and then a powerful combo in chapter 10.

Week 7: Judges is as pessimistic as Joshua is optimistic. We won't read it this time, but Judges 17-21 is as dark as it gets, including the nasty parallel to Genesis 19 in Judges 19. On Samson, reviews of his early ministry (in Judges 13-15) range from looking for evil in everything he did (Walvoord and Zuck) to graciously interpreting everything he did (Matthew Henry).

Week 13, Day 4: Like Solomon, Josiah's reign has an unseemly end: after his reforms and dependence on God, it's sad to see him depend on foreign governments and military power/strategy rather than God. And it's interesting to speculate on how Judah might have continued spiritually if Josiah had lived longer.

Week 14, Day 3: Paul makes clear that "success" in God's kingdom is measured by faithfulness and obedience, not by how other people respond. This theme is echoed in the concept of "the watchman" in Ezekiel (week 18).

Week 21, Days 1-2: The timing of events and characters can be confusing for people. Note that Ezra does not appear in the book named for him until the second half of the narrative.

Week 23: This can be a depressing week of reading for some people. So, it's a good time to emphasize prayer for your people and to check with them during the week.

Week 35: In discussing your local church context, make sure that the conversation is constructive, rather than descending into critique (without action), gossip, etc.

Week 36, Days 4-5: Chapter 5 can be challenging for people. Among other points, it's probably worth noting that it's important for the Early Church to "get off to a good start". Both chapters may lead to important but challenging discussions on church discipline and church administration. Again, make sure that the conversations are constructive.

Week 43: There is more potential for challenging discussion throughout this week. Of particular sensitivity, applications of the weaker/stronger can be difficult—given the potential for legalism and dogmatism in the weaker and the potential for insensitivities by the stronger. Again, be careful that all of these conversations are constructive.

Week 45, Day 2: Philemon can be a difficult book for some, so be ready. If you want my Bible study notes on it, shoot me an email.

Week 49: Days 4-6: I warn about this in the comments, but it is challenging to distinguish between John's thoughts here—about committing sins vs. walking in sin, etc.

Week 51: Despite my comments, it will be tempting for you and yours to get distracted in this week's discussion. Try to keep them focused on bigger themes such as God's character, faithfulness in persecution, etc.