

# COORDINATOR'S MANUAL



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*A ministry of the Diocese of Little Rock  
in partnership with Liturgical Press*

## **Ordering Information**

To order Little Rock Scripture Study materials or  
to obtain general information:  
800-858-5434 or <http://www.littlerockscripture.org>

If you have questions about the program,  
need help getting started, or wish to discuss particular challenges:  
phone 501-664-6102 or e-mail [lrss@dolr.org](mailto:lrss@dolr.org)

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*To*

Fred and Tammy Woell  
Abbot Jerome Kodell, OSB  
Msgr. Richard Oswald  
Deacon Johnson Mattingly

*who guided this program  
through its initial period of growth*

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Office of the Bishop

## DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK

2500 North Tyler Street • P.O. Box 7565 • Little Rock, Arkansas 72217 • (501) 664-0340 • Fax (501) 664-6304


Dear Friends in Christ,

Dei Verbum 21, Second Vatican Council, states, “. . . all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture. For in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets his children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life.”

Catholics in Arkansas are blessed to have Little Rock Scripture Study in our midst. We are proud that LRSS touches people all over the world. The Coordinator's Manual provides the tools and expertise of the scholars of LRSS to aid facilitators in bringing the Word of God, “food of the soul,” to participants. It includes a wealth of information on how to develop and promote Little Rock Scripture Study in your parish.

The Bible challenges us to persevere in faith and inspires us to understand what God is saying to us here and now. I encourage you to pray for insight into what God is saying to you as you study. Allow Sacred Scripture to become a source of joy, peace, nourishment, and strength. You won't be disappointed.

Sincerely in Christ,

  
✠ Anthony B. Taylor  
Bishop of Little Rock

# *Introduction*

## **WHAT IS LITTLE ROCK SCRIPTURE STUDY?**

Little Rock Scripture Study provides a solid balance of Catholic biblical scholarship, reflection, and application. Adults will better understand the Bible and the tools needed for study, grow in their relationship with Christ, and build strong community life in neighborhoods and parishes. Through personal study, small-group discussion, wrap-up lectures, and prayer, participants will discover the tools needed to continue to grow as followers of Christ.

## **BENEFITS FOR PERSONAL AND PARISH LIFE**

- fuller understanding of the Bible
- richer appreciation of the faith tradition of the church
- ability to make connections between faith and daily life
- deeper, more personal relationship with God
- increased lay leadership and ministry within the parish
- stronger sense of family faith and prayer
- wider social concern and desire for service
- fuller experience of Christian community

## **FOUR ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

### **Daily Personal Study**

Participants spend about twenty minutes each day prayerfully reading and reflecting on an assigned section of the Scriptures. They use a Bible and the appropriate Study Set for a given course (Study Set includes a commentary and Study Guide). The commentary for each course provides solid scholarship that leads to deeper understanding. The Study Guide directs the reflection with daily questions and space for written responses. Daily Personal Study forms the foundation for each week's small-group discussion.

### **Weekly Small-Group Sharing**

Participants gather weekly in small groups (eight to twelve people in each group is ideal). This gathering includes time for group prayer and for sharing the fruits of the Daily Personal Study. A trained facilitator will help to create

an atmosphere of openness and trust in which God's word and its application to daily life can be discovered and discussed.

### **Weekly Wrap-Up Lecture**

A fifteen- to twenty-minute lecture follows the small-group discussion to develop and clarify the themes of the lesson. Qualified people from the local community may be invited to provide the lectures, or recorded lectures may be purchased for each course.

### **Prayer**

Prayer is the most essential of the elements. In addition to personal prayer during each person's daily study time, the group uses a simple, effective method of shared prayer to begin each session. A source of unity, support, and guidance, prayer is the key to the success of Little Rock Scripture Study at every stage.

## **PROGRAM MATERIALS**

### **For Leadership Training:**

- This Coordinator's Manual, containing preparation and instructions for each session of Leadership Training. The handouts in this manual are used for each session of Leadership Training in your local setting.
- Lesson One of *The Acts of the Apostles* from the materials available on the Leadership Training pages of the website: <http://www.littlerockscripture.org/>.
- Leadership Training recorded vignettes, containing eight short presentations to correspond to the eight Leadership Training topics, as well as a brief wrap-up lecture to be used in Session Two. (Recorded materials may be downloaded from the Leadership Training section of our website onto a laptop, or may be purchased for a nominal price for those preferring to have a DVD for projection.)

### **For Each Study:**

- An up-to-date translation of the Bible, such as the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE), the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), or the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). We recommend the *Little Rock Catholic Study Bible*, which makes use of the NABRE translation.
- The appropriate Study Set (commentary and Study Guide) for the chosen course of study. The commentary is a source of solid Catholic biblical scholarship to help in understanding the biblical text. The Study Guide directs the Daily Personal Study and reflection with questions and space for writing responses.

- The Answer Guide contains suggestions to help guide the small-group discussion. It is designed for use by the facilitator in preparation for each session.
- The Wrap-Up Lecture may be presented by local speakers or is available for purchase in DVD or CD format.

## **WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

Each weekly session lasts an hour and a half. The meeting includes opening announcements and prayer, small-group sharing, and a wrap-up lecture. A Leaders' Meeting may precede the weekly session. See "Sample Schedule for the Weekly Meeting" (p. 43).

## **COURSES**

Little Rock Scripture Study offers a wide variety of courses (all materials are listed in our catalog or at our website). Some of these courses cover one or more books of the Bible. Others take a more thematic approach and cover a given topic throughout a collection of biblical texts.

The length of each course varies, depending on the topic or book of the Bible being covered. The number of sessions for each course is listed in the catalog or online. Each course includes an Introductory Session, followed by the remaining number of lessons. (For example, *The Gospel According to Mark* is ten sessions. That means there is one Introductory Session, followed by nine lessons.)

The courses offered are grouped in the following categories: General, Intermediate, and In-Depth. It is recommended that a group or parish program begin with several studies listed in the General category before moving to the other levels according to the group's interest. These General courses provide a firm foundation for those beginning Bible study, and make further study easier and more rewarding.

As you make your way through various courses of study, you may find from time to time that it would be helpful to adapt a study to suit a different time frame or address needs of your participants who are unable to complete a typical lesson. Please visit our website to view "How to Adapt a Study" for suggestions: [http://www.littlerockscripture.org/en/adapt\\_study.html](http://www.littlerockscripture.org/en/adapt_study.html).

# *Nine Steps to a Successful Scripture Study*

## **MAKE A WISE DECISION**

(pastor, DRE, parish council, or parish administrator)

- ✓ Order or download the Informational DVD and Sampler. Both items are free of charge.
- ✓ Watch and discuss the Informational DVD with the “prime movers” of your parish and review the study materials in the Sampler to help determine whether Little Rock Scripture Study meets the needs of your parish.

## **BUILD A FIRM FOUNDATION**

(coordinator/core group)

- ✓ Select a coordinator (and core group) to implement Little Rock Scripture Study in your parish.
- ✓ Invite/recruit a team of potential small-group facilitators to be trained. Make it clear that each person trained will have the opportunity at the close of Leadership Training to determine if he or she wants to take on the responsibility of a small group.
- ✓ Conduct Leadership Training following the steps outlined on pages 24–64 of this Coordinator’s Manual.
- ✓ Select your first course. Publicize the course you have chosen as widely as possible following the promotion plan outlined on pages 71–72 of this Coordinator’s Manual.

## **ESTABLISH A VIBRANT STUDY**

(coordinator/core group)

- ✓ Describe Little Rock Scripture Study at Sunday Masses, invite parishioners to participate, and register participants on a designated “Sign-Up Sunday.”
- ✓ Recruit speakers from your local community for the Wrap-Up Lectures or order the recorded materials for use in your groups.
- ✓ Order a Study Set of the selected course for each person who may participate. Unused print materials may be returned within sixty days using the Return Manifest that accompanies your order.

Pray daily for the parish Bible study and let the light of God’s word guide you.

# *Parish Leadership*

## **PASTOR AND PARISH STAFF**

Bible study is an essential ingredient for the education and spiritual growth of parishioners. Involve the pastor and parish staff in the decision, planning, and promotion of Little Rock Scripture Study. While lay volunteers may actually coordinate and facilitate the Bible study, enthusiastic support from the pastor and staff, through promotion at Sunday Mass and other forms of visible encouragement, helps Bible study to flourish.

## **COORDINATOR (AND AUXILIARY)**

Invite one person or two people to serve as the coordinator(s) to assume overall responsibility for implementing the program. They are to become totally familiar with this Coordinator's Manual and invite and train potential facilitators to carry out the details of the program.

## **CORE LEADERSHIP GROUP**

Ideally, a core group of three to six people will work with the coordinator and the parish staff to implement and promote Bible study in the parish. In some settings, one person takes the lead, but if possible, a core group of people who collaborate can generate enthusiasm and ideas, and share responsibilities.

## **FACILITATORS**

Train a number of people who could be called upon to facilitate the small groups. The facilitators will direct the small groups in their prayer and discussion each week and will be colearners in the group. A facilitator and an auxiliary facilitator are needed for each group of eight to twelve people. Train more people than you think you will need so that leadership can be rotated as the program develops.

## **LEADERSHIP TRAINING**

Trained small-group facilitators are essential for the success of this program. Leadership Training is designed to familiarize potential facilitators with the methods and materials of Little Rock Scripture Study, and will help develop their gifts of spiritual leadership. In addition, it helps to form them into a committed and supportive community of faith. Throughout a given course of study, small-group facilitators who meet together receive added support for their ministry.

Leadership Training involves four sessions consisting of prayer, recorded vignettes, reflection, and discussion. This training will develop a well-informed, skilled, and enthusiastic leadership group, open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

# *Diverse Opportunities for Implementing Scripture Study*

The simple format of Little Rock Scripture Study makes it adaptable to a variety of parish needs. The structures and situations of parishes differ widely, but the central role of Scripture for Catholic life remains constant. Consider the possibilities described for the various settings below.

## **PARISH ADULT FAITH FORMATION**

Little Rock Scripture Study makes use of the most important ingredients for adult learning and formation, and as a result is most often used as a parish-wide program for adults. The setting involves a weekly meeting at the parish facility, with small groups meeting simultaneously in various locations on campus, coming together at the end of the session for the Wrap-Up Lecture. Small-group facilitators may plan to come early each week to meet together for their own prayer and to review any potential challenges from the week's lesson.

## **MEETING IN HOMES**

Parishes may choose to have various small groups meet in homes instead of parish facilities. While the four elements of the program remain the same, it is important to determine how to share resources to provide for the Wrap-Up Lecture. In addition, it is important to find an occasional time for small-group facilitators from these various groups to come together for mutual support and encouragement.

## **SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

The growth of small faith communities in the church demonstrates the essential need for smaller supportive communities in which faith can be shared and strengthened. Prayerful reflection and discussion of Scripture is the root of these groups throughout the world. Little Rock Scripture Study adapts naturally to this context with the pastoral facilitator guiding the community through prayer and discussion of the lessons.

## **FOLLOW-UP FOR RENEWAL EXPERIENCES**

Scripture study is an ideal way to continue and strengthen such formative experiences as retreats, missions and revivals, seasonal education groups, Christian initiation, and ministry training. Ongoing formation will help these experiences to take root in the lives of parishes and individuals. Much of the leadership and group structures formed through such experiences can be continued in Little Rock Scripture Study.

See [http://www.littlerockscripture.org/en/adapt\\_study.html](http://www.littlerockscripture.org/en/adapt_study.html) for suggestions on "How to Adapt a Study."



# Coordinator Responsibilities

The coordinator assumes overall responsibility for the Scripture study process. An auxiliary coordinator may help share the tasks. The coordinator will do the following:

- ✓ Become totally familiar with the Coordinator's Manual and the four elements of Little Rock Scripture Study.
- ✓ Plan implementation of the program with the core leadership group and/or other parish leaders. Address the practical questions of who, when, where, and how.
- ✓ Select the course for your group or parish. Schedule beginning and ending dates based on the number of sessions for that course. An idealized time line is found on pages 16–20, but may be adapted to meet the needs of your group or parish.
- ✓ Conduct Leadership Training following the steps outlined on pages 24–64. Invite and train potential small-group facilitators after prayerfully considering the “Qualities of Small-Group Facilitators” (p. 21) with other parish leaders. Or simply open the Leadership Training to anyone interested in Bible study, knowing that some will become facilitators while others may assist with various tasks such as publicity or registration.
- ✓ Develop a plan for publicizing the program and recruiting participants (see pp. 71–72). Delegate responsibilities for many different forms of promotion.
- ✓ Arrange for child care if possible (p. 82).
- ✓ Conduct a Leaders' Meeting as often as possible before the course begins and during the weeks of study. The purpose of these meetings is to develop unity, skill, and commitment within the leadership group. This is also an ideal time to consider ways to address challenges that may emerge with regard to group dynamics or use of time to complete a lesson.
- ✓ Conduct weekly sessions of the parish Scripture study according to the “Sample Schedule for the Weekly Meeting” (p. 43).
- ✓ Toward the end of each course of study, plan a closing celebration and conduct an evaluation of the program (pp. 87–89).
- ✓ Plan periodic enrichment for small-group facilitators (p. 93).



# Time Line for Preparation

This time line describes an ideal plan for implementing Little Rock Scripture Study on the parish level. Some smaller parishes in a given area collaborate to provide Leadership Training for their smaller number of facilitators. Feel free to adapt the process as needed for your parish or small group, but be sure to review all the suggested steps to assure that you get started with a solid foundation.

## **TWELVE WEEKS BEFORE BIBLE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

### ✓ Set the Dates for Parish Scripture Study and Reserve Facilities

After selecting the particular course for your Scripture study, and taking into account the number of sessions needed, set the starting and ending dates. Be sure to reserve parish facilities for each session of Scripture study, or make a decision that the sessions will take place in other locations such as parishioners' homes.

The most common environment for parish-wide Bible study is the facilities available at the parish. Reserve a space where a large group can come together at the start and end of each weekly session, and provide space for small groups to meet for prayer and discussion. Otherwise, designate various homes or other locations for small-group sessions.

### ✓ Set the Dates for Leadership Training and Reserve Facilities

Leadership Training includes four sessions, each session requiring two hours. Most parishes do this training over a four-week period; others adapt the sessions and provide training in one or two weekends. Make sure you have a space that can accommodate the number of people being trained. They will need to watch or listen to recorded presentations, and will need space to meet in small groups during each session of training.

### ✓ Invite and Train Potential Small-Group Facilitators

Leadership Training provides the experience and tools necessary to begin facilitating small groups involved in Bible study. It is a time of training and discernment. There are two methods that are effective when training potential small-group facilitators.

1. Open the Leadership Training to anyone in the parish who is interested in Bible study, with the understanding that not everyone will necessarily be assigned to facilitate a small group right away. Some who are trained may choose instead to help with publicity or registration or other tasks.

2. Select a group of potential small-group facilitators based on a prayerful consideration of the “Qualities of Small-Group Facilitators” (p. 21). The group would reflect the parish population, including women and men of various ages and backgrounds. These people would be invited to attend Leadership Training but not required to make a definite commitment to facilitate a group until the training is complete.

*Note:* A facilitator is needed for each group of eight to twelve people. It is often helpful to have a cofacilitator for each group, and to rotate leadership when beginning a new course of study. If possible, train more people than you feel you will need.

✓ Download/Order Materials for Leadership Training

Review the materials needed for each session of Leadership Training as outlined in this Coordinator’s Manual. Make copies of the handouts provided here as well. You may access the video portions online at no charge at the [Little Rock Scripture Study website](#) under Leadership Training. If you prefer to use parish equipment for projecting the recorded portions of each session, the Leadership Training video is available in DVD format at a reasonable price.

✓ Pray Daily for the Success of Scripture Study

**TEN WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

✓ Contact All Potential Small-Group Facilitators

Write a note of thanks to those who have registered to attend Leadership Training. Briefly outline the training sessions, providing dates, time, and location for the sessions. Remind each person to bring a Bible and a notebook.

✓ Assign Tasks for Leadership Training

During Leadership Training, there will be opportunities for small groups to discuss and work together. It is a good idea during training for those being trained to take turns facilitating the discussions. You may designate a facilitator for each of these groups each week to direct the discussion and prayer, or ask for a different volunteer in each group for each week.

✓ Form a Group to Plan Publicity and Recruitment for Bible Study

Begin with the materials in this Coordinator’s Manual for Publicity—Recruitment—Registration (pp. 71–81), assigning tasks to various people on the core team or parish staff. Also, take full advantage of the talents of those in the parish who have background in marketing or events planning, inviting them to assist in this process of offering an energetic invitation to adults throughout the parish.

**EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

✓ Conduct Leadership Training

Carefully plan each session of the training as outlined on pages 24–64.

✓ Determine How to Provide Wrap-Up Lectures

Invite local speakers to present all or most of the Wrap-Up Lectures for a given course (see pp. 90–92). It is appropriate to offer a stipend to the speaker, especially if the speaker is from outside your parish. You may choose instead to purchase the set of Wrap-Up Lectures for the course you have chosen (available in CD or DVD formats). If so, make sure you have access to the appropriate equipment to view or hear the lecture.

✓ Start Publicity and Registration

Use several forms of publicity as outlined on pages 71–72, giving special emphasis to personal invitation and support of the pastor and parish staff.

**SIX WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

✓ Invite Speakers for Wrap-Up Lectures

If you choose to invite local speakers, rely on the assistance of parish leaders to select qualified speakers for the weekly sessions. Send each speaker a confirmation letter, along with a Study Set for the course and a copy of “Preparing and Delivering a Wrap-Up Lecture” (pp. 90–92). The lectures on CD may also be used as a resource for speakers.

✓ Make Arrangements for Child Care

Providing child care will sometimes make it possible for parishioners to participate. Some parish youth groups take on this task as a service project, while other parishes hire adults. If necessary, determine a nominal fee so that parents can help cover the cost.

✓ Set Registration Fee

In setting a fee, consider the cost of the Wrap-Up Lectures or fees for local lecturers as well as the cost for each participant’s Study Set. Some parishes provide funding to cover all of these expenses; others ask participants to pay for the Study Sets while the parish covers the cost of the lectures; still others ask participants to pay for all materials.

#### **FOUR WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

✓ **Publicize and Register Participants**

Ask the pastor to encourage participation. Homily ideas and a sample letter from the pastor are found in this Coordinator's Manual (pp. 75–76). Arrange for the coordinator or a facilitator to give a short presentation or witness after Communion. Show the Informational DVD (available on the [LRSS website](#)) after Mass. Register as many as possible now so that materials may be ordered in advance of the study.

✓ **Order Study Materials (and Recorded Lectures)**

Order a Study Set of the chosen course for each expected participant, estimating that some additional people may register at the last minute. Unused print materials may be returned for refund or credit within two months of the invoice date, with accompanying Return Manifest. Order the recorded lectures if you are not inviting local speakers.

✓ **Assign Small-Group Facilitators and Group Members**

Once initial registrations have been received, begin appointing small-group facilitators and auxiliary facilitators from among those who have attended Leadership Training. An ideal group size is eight to twelve people, including a facilitator. As you form groups, try to create a diverse community of personalities and backgrounds. Schedule an Initial Leaders' Meeting about two weeks before the Bible study start date (pp. 59–60) to finalize plans and take care of remaining tasks.

#### **TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

✓ **Reserve Equipment and Plan the Environment**

If a large group is meeting at the same time, and dividing into smaller groups for prayer and discussion, you will need the following: a podium (and sound equipment) for initial announcements and the Wrap-Up Lecture, or a DVD or CD player or projector if using recorded lectures. A Bible stand, candles, and other decor will enhance the environment and serve as a reminder of God's presence in the word of God.

✓ **Commission the Small-Group Facilitators**

Facilitating Scripture study groups is an important ministry of God's word. It is appropriate to publicly commission the trained facilitators (pp. 83–86). Such a commissioning serves as a sign of parish support and a reminder of the importance of Bible study in the life of the parish.

✓ Conduct the Initial Leaders' Meeting

Meet with small-group facilitators and other support team to pray together, assign any additional participants to groups, discuss responsibilities, and review the schedule for the Introductory Session of the course (pp. 63–64).

✓ Continue to Pray Daily for the Success of Scripture Study

Once the Bible study has begun, enjoy the excitement and eagerness of all those involved. A few weeks *BEFORE THE COURSE IS SCHEDULED TO END*, take care of the following:

✓ Return Unused Study Sets

Unused print materials may be returned for refund or credit within sixty days of the invoice date. Include a copy of the Return Manifest that came with your order.

✓ Prepare Evaluation Forms

Evaluation is an essential part of effective planning. Create or select an evaluation form (pp. 87–89) to be completed before or during the final session. The information gathered from participants and facilitators will affirm what has been well done and suggest opportunities for improvements during the next course of Bible study.

✓ Plan a Closing Celebration

Some form of celebration is an appropriate way to conclude each course. Options include a closing Eucharist, a scriptural prayer service, a potluck dinner or dessert night, and so forth. The celebration might also include time for participants to share with the entire group what the course has meant to them. Even if small groups have been meeting in homes at various times throughout the week, this is a good time to bring all groups together.

✓ Schedule a Follow-Up Leaders' Meeting

This meeting gives the leadership an opportunity to evaluate the study and to celebrate their work. Give a summary of the evaluations from participants, share some struggles and successes within the small groups, and discuss which course will be next. Make note of potential new facilitators from among the participants in the course. Above all, express gratitude to everyone for their individual contributions.

# *Qualities of Small-Group Facilitators*

Facilitating a Scripture study group is a ministry of the Word. In all ministries of the church, God gives the Holy Spirit to encourage and support us, to give us what we need to do the work to which we are called. God builds on the desires, temperaments, and talents of individuals to do this work.

When considering potential small-group facilitators, look for men and women with the qualities that fit this type of ministry, and who are willing to receive training to hone their skills.

Potential facilitators would be

- ✓ perceived as faithful parishioners;
- ✓ respected and admired by others;
- ✓ good listeners;
- ✓ organized, responsible, and competent to complete tasks;
- ✓ aware of their limitations and willing to seek help;
- ✓ able to work well in a group and put others at ease;
- ✓ genuinely concerned and understanding of others;
- ✓ tolerant and respectful of differing opinions;
- ✓ open to a wide diversity of people;
- ✓ open to growing in their faith;
- ✓ encouraging and supportive of others in ministry;
- ✓ able to bring out the ideas and gifts of others;
- ✓ willing and able to commit the time and energy required.

Begin making a list of those you can identify right now as possible small-group facilitators.

# ***Recruiting Potential Facilitators***

After identifying potential facilitators in your parish, your task is to encourage these people to recognize and offer their gifts in service to others. A personal letter followed by a phone call or visit will probably be most effective.

This initial contact should take place at least a month before Leadership Training is scheduled to begin. The following is a sample letter that may be adapted as your own:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Our parish is beginning a Catholic Bible study program called Little Rock Scripture Study. It consists of daily personal study and weekly discussion and faith sharing in small groups, as well as a weekly wrap-up lecture.

After prayerful consideration, our parish leadership would like to invite you to train as a small-group facilitator. We have looked for people who seem eager to grow in faith, who encourage and bring out the gifts in others, and who are comfortable with a variety of people.

Would you prayerfully consider participating in the Leadership Training program that will give you the information and hands-on experience you would need to facilitate a small group of people in the study of Scripture?

These sessions will be held on the following dates: \_\_\_\_\_. Each session begins at \_\_:00 and lasts until \_\_:\_\_. They will take place in the parish hall. Please bring your own Bible and a notebook. Everything else will be supplied.

After attending this training, you will know better whether you are able to take on a leadership role in our parish Scripture study. You may wish to facilitate a small group, or serve as an auxiliary facilitator, or feel more equipped to serve in other roles of support.

We are praying and depending on God's presence with us in coordinating this wonderful opportunity for our parish. We believe that the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures is working within us as we try to bring people to a deeper understanding of God's word and its role in our daily lives.

I will contact you in the next few days to discuss this with you. In the meantime, I'll be praying for you as you consider this request.

Yours in Christ,

*Note:* You may also wish to open Leadership Training to anyone in the parish interested in Bible study, with the understanding that the sessions provide a time for discernment. Those not facilitating a small group immediately will be familiar with Little Rock Scripture Study and may become important spokespersons about Bible study throughout the parish.

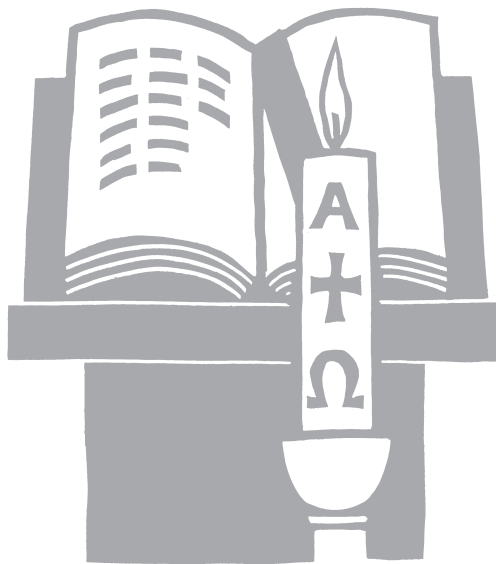




# Leadership Training

## LIST OF TOPICS

<b>Session One</b>	Topic 1	Introduction to Little Rock Scripture Study
	Topic 2	Daily Personal Study
<b>Session Two</b>	Topic 3	Conversational Prayer
	Topic 4	Small-Group Sharing and Discussion
<b>Session Three</b>	Topic 5	Jesus and His Disciples, Model for Small-Group Scripture Study
	Topic 6	Spirituality of the Small-Group Facilitator
<b>Session Four</b>	Topic 7	Techniques for Facilitating a Small Group
	Topic 8	Introducing Scripture Study to Your Small Group



## *Schedule for a Typical Session*

- 10 minutes* Welcome, overview of session, prayer (you may also use a hymn)
- 5 minutes* Introduction and Scripture
- The coordinator reads the introduction to the first topic of the session. Then, an assigned reader takes the enthroned Bible and proclaims the reading. The Bible is then placed back on its stand of enthronement. Pause for silent reflection.
- 10 minutes* Video or audio presentation on the first topic as found with the free Leadership Training materials online
- If you are working with a larger group and prefer to use DVD or CD, these presentations may be purchased from Little Rock Scripture Study for a nominal fee.
- 20 minutes* Small-group exercise
- Those participating in Leadership Training break into small groups for prayer and discussion, guided by the exercise/handout provided for the session. During Leadership Training you may designate a facilitator for each of these groups each week to direct the discussion and prayer, or ask for a different volunteer in each group for each week.
- 10 minutes* Break
- 10 minutes* Introduction and Scripture reading for the second topic of the session (as described above)
- 10 minutes* Video or audio presentation on the second topic for Session One
- 20 minutes* Small-group exercise
- 5 minutes* Assignment, announcements, prayer (you may also use a hymn)
- Participants reassemble to receive the handouts and assignment for the next session. The coordinator closes with announcements and a brief prayer or hymn.

*Note:* Some sessions depart slightly from this outline.

## Session One

### INTRODUCTION TO LITTLE ROCK SCRIPTURE STUDY AND DAILY PERSONAL STUDY

#### Participants will

- gain a general understanding of the program's four elements and the benefits of Bible study;
- learn the purpose and method of one of the program elements, Daily Personal Study;
- get acquainted and begin building a community of shared faith, prayer, and commitment.

#### Materials:

- Bible to be enthroned and used for proclamation (marked at Matt 9:35-38 and Mark 4:1-20)
- materials to create a place to enthrone the Bible, such as a bookstand, table, cloth, candles, etc.
- recorded presentation for Topic 1—Introduction to Little Rock Scripture Study
- recorded presentation for Topic 2—Daily Personal Study
- extra Bibles, notepaper, and pens in case some participants come unprepared

One of each of the following to be distributed to each participant upon arrival:

- Handout 1: "Opening Prayer Service" (pp. 29–30)
- Handout 2: "Introduction to Little Rock Scripture Study" (pp. 31–32)
- Handout 3: "Daily Personal Study" (p. 33)
- folder for handouts (optional)
- songbooks or song sheets if desired as part of prayer
- *The Acts of the Apostles*, Lesson One, which includes pages from the commentary and Study Guide. Print these study materials from the [Leadership Training](#) section of the Little Rock Scripture Study website.

One of each of the following to be distributed to each participant at the end of the session:

- Handout 4: "Basic Assertions about the Bible" (pp. 34–35)

### WELCOME AND PRAYER SERVICE (10 minutes)

Introduce yourself and welcome all participants. Prepare the group for the prayer service, making sure that all have received the handouts.

Pause for quiet, and then begin a procession with candle bearers and appointed reader carrying the upheld Bible to the prepared setting for enthronement. Pray together from Handout 1: "Opening Prayer Service." If you choose to add a hymn, this may be inserted at the start of the prayer service or at the end.

**GET ACQUAINTED EXERCISE** (5 minutes)

Have participants pair off with someone they do not know well and share responses to this question: "What hopes do you have for yourself and our parish as we begin Little Rock Scripture Study?"

**TOPIC 1—INTRODUCTION TO LITTLE ROCK SCRIPTURE STUDY**

**1. Introduction** (2–3 minutes)

Briefly explain how the parish came to adopt Little Rock Scripture Study. Relate what you hope the program will do for yourself and the people of the parish. Then introduce the first recorded presentation, which will give the group an overview of the program.

**2. Recorded Presentation: "Introduction to Little Rock Scripture Study"** (10 minutes)

Note that some brief points from the presentations are found on the corresponding handouts.

**3. Group Exercise** (20 minutes)

Break into small groups. Using Handout 2, "Introduction to Little Rock Scripture Study," complete the small-group exercise. You may designate a facilitator for this exercise, or ask for a volunteer within each group.

**4. Break** (10 minutes)

**TOPIC 2—DAILY PERSONAL STUDY**

**1. Introduction and Scripture Reading** (5 minutes)

Explain the second topic of this session in these or similar words:

"Our second topic, Daily Personal Study, reminds us that the word we will study is the word of God. It is a word spoken in the past, but still spoken and alive today. In order to receive the word of God into our lives, we must do the necessary preparation. We work to take away the obstacles and create the conditions in our lives where the word of God can become our own today."

The assigned reader then takes the Bible from its place of enthronement and reads Mark 4:1-9, 13-20. Pause a few moments for quiet reflection.

**2. Recorded Presentation: "Daily Personal Study"** (10 minutes)

### **3. Exercise (35 minutes)**

- a. Using Handout 3, “Daily Personal Study,” invite each person to spend fifteen minutes in prayerful quiet studying the passage and answering the four questions for Daily Personal Study.
- b. After fifteen minutes, instruct participants to gather in small groups and discuss the four questions one at a time. (These questions help participants to work with the various levels of meaning found in Scripture—comprehension, understanding and interpretation, application, and call to action. In the course of studying a biblical book or theme, the actual questions for study will always vary but correspond to these levels of meaning.) After fifteen minutes of discussion, gather back together for closing announcements, and so forth.

### **ASSIGNMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, PRAYER (5–10 minutes)**

1. In order to become familiar with the materials and method used in the program, everyone in the group will be asked to prepare a portion of Lesson One of *The Acts of the Apostles* before the next session of Leadership Training.

This week’s assignment in preparation for Session Two:

- Read about the four elements in the Study Guide pages under the subtitle “Instructions.”
- Read chapters 1 and 2 of *The Acts of the Apostles*. (These chapters are found in the commentary itself, but it’s a good idea to begin using personal Bibles, as participants will also be looking up other Scripture passages that are referenced but do not appear fully in the Study Guide or commentary.)
- Read the corresponding pages of the New Collegeville Bible Commentary, *The Acts of the Apostles*.
- Complete questions 10–18 of Lesson One found in the Study Guide pages.

Distribute Handout 4, “Basic Assertions about the Bible.” Explain that this page is for their own information and reflection.

2. Remind participants to bring their completed assignment, the Study Guide and commentary pages, and their Bibles to the next training session.
3. Assign those who will proclaim the Scriptures for the next session, and give any other announcements needed.

### **4. Closing Prayer**

The closing prayer for this session may be a simple prayer from the coordinator thanking God for this fresh beginning. It might also be a good time to invite participants to offer a brief prayer of hope for what Bible study may provide in the parish.

## ***Opening Prayer Service***

**Leader:** We gather as a community of believers to try to understand the role of the word of God in our lives. We pray that the Scriptures will become a reality in our lives and a basis for our daily living.

### **Enthronement of the Word**

**All:** Lord God, through the writings of the people of God, the Word of your saving love has come to be known and shared by men and women throughout the ages. May your Spirit guide us as we seek to understand and reflect upon that message and to live in its consolation and joy, through Jesus Christ, your Son.

**Reader:** Matthew 9:35-38

### *Silent Reflection*

**Response** (based on Pss 25 and 33)

**All:** Make known to me your ways, LORD; teach me your paths.

**Leader:** Guide me by your fidelity and teach me,  
for you are God my savior.  
For you I wait all the day long,  
because of your goodness, LORD.

**All:** Make known to me your ways, LORD; teach me your paths.

**Leader:** For the LORD's word is upright;  
all his works are trustworthy.  
He loves justice and right.  
The earth is full of the mercy of the LORD.

**All:** Make known to me your ways, LORD; teach me your paths.

**Leader:** The plan of the LORD stands forever,  
the designs of his heart through all generations.

May your mercy, LORD, be upon us,  
as we put our hope in you.

**All:** Make known to me your ways, LORD; teach me your paths.

**Leader:** Lord God, we want to understand your call to us, that we may labor for your harvest. Teach us how to let your Word dwell in us as we share your wisdom with one another. Help us to put our hope in you. We pray through Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.



## ***Introduction to Little Rock Scripture Study***

### **FOUR ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS**

- 1. Daily Personal Study**
- 2. Small-Group Sharing and Discussion**
- 3. Wrap-Up Lecture**
- 4. Prayer**

### **FRUITS FOR PERSONAL AND PARISH LIFE**

- fuller understanding of the Bible's message, characters, and environment
- richer appreciation of the faith tradition of the church
- clearer insights into the connections between faith and life
- deeper, more personal relationship with God
- increased lay leadership and ministry in parish life
- stronger sense of family faith and prayer
- wider social concern and desire for service
- fuller experience of Christian community

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT LEARNING**

- variety of learning approaches
- respect for individual needs and interests
- related to life experiences
- nurtured by a community of learning
- sense of shared responsibility



**SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE** (following the recorded presentation)

Break into small groups to do the following:

1. Ask each person in the group to identify what excites him or her about Bible study, and to express any concerns.
2. Taking the four elements one at a time, discuss why each is an important ingredient of the program.
3. Discuss how the four elements work together to create an ideal experience of adult learning and formation.



## *Daily Personal Study*

### **PERSONAL EXERCISE**

Open your mind and heart to God, praying for the ability to truly hear God's word.

Read Acts 2:42-47.

Prayerfully reflect on this passage, and then write your responses to the questions below:

**1. What does the Scripture passage say?**

Slowly read the passage. Use your imagination to enter the scene of the early church. What strikes you particularly from this passage?

**2. What does the Scripture passage mean?**

Make use of the footnotes in your Bible. These notes, as well as commentary information, will help you understand what the biblical writer intended and what God wanted to communicate through the author's words. What new understanding have you gained from this passage?

**3. What does the Scripture passage mean to me?**

Reflect on the passage. What is God saying to you through this passage? Is there some way in which this passage applies to your life?

**4. What am I going to do about it?**

An encounter with God in Scripture contains a challenge to follow God's will more closely in daily life. How is God challenging you through this passage?

Daily spiritual food is as necessary as food for the body. Commit yourself to twenty minutes of Daily Personal Study of the Bible. Schedule a regular place and time for your study, as free from distractions as possible.

My best place for Scripture study is \_\_\_\_\_.

My best time for Scripture study is \_\_\_\_\_.

### **SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE**

Break into small groups and discuss each of the four questions.

## ***Basic Assertions about the Bible***

- The Bible is the word of God in human words. It has all the characteristics of human language and literature, yet its principal author is God. As Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh, is fully divine and fully human, the Sacred Scriptures are both divine and human.
- The Bible is inspired by God, giving us the assurance that it faithfully expresses the truth God wants to reveal to us. We acknowledge that the Holy Spirit affirms these truths of our salvation found within Scripture.
- The same Holy Spirit who guides the church and who inspired the Scriptures is present to us when we read the Scriptures with faith. Thus, the Holy Spirit can help us bring the message of Scripture to bear on new questions and new situations presented to us in the circumstances of our individual lives.
- Recognizing different literary forms in the Bible is central to understanding it. God's truth is expressed in a variety of forms: epic history, poetry, proverbs, parables, and other literary expressions.
- Since the Bible came from the Spirit-led community of faith, it should always be read and interpreted within the context of the church. The Bible is the book of the church, and the words of the Bible cannot express their full meaning when understood apart from the living community of faith.
- The Bible must not be interpreted superficially, but always in light of Christian tradition and human reason and experience. The dialogue between the historical context of the Bible and the realities of our times aids in interpretation.
- The church does not draw certainty about God's revealed truths from the Bible alone. God's truth continues to be understood more fully through the ongoing tradition of the church, which is expressed in the Scriptures, the doctrinal teachings of the church, the creeds, the liturgy and sacraments, the witness of the saints, and the continuing experience of the Holy Spirit working through the faithful people of God.
- Two people who dialogue over the Scriptures bring twice the potential for insight and understanding than does an individual working alone. Thus, when a small community studies the Bible, the perspective of many and the wisdom of the community enable a richer understanding of God's word.
- The purpose of Bible study is not to gain ready-made answers or to put a lid on truth. It is, rather, to gain deeper understanding of the mysteries of God. Such understanding, then, always leads to more questions to ponder in the context of one's relationship with God.

- The Bible does not give us an absolute and static understanding of God. It is the record of people's evolving understanding of God as their experience of God enlarged and deepened. God is absolute, but our understanding of God is not.
- Carefully searching for the meaning intended by the original author helps us avoid imposing superficial understandings on biblical texts. Contemporary biblical scholarship can help us better grasp the meaning of biblical passages by exploring the cultural background and the mind of the community from which biblical writings came.
- Books of the Bible can be understood more fully when studied in their entirety. Individual passages or readings from the church's Lectionary can be understood more fully by considering the context from which they have been excerpted.
- The church is not superior to the word of God, but is its servant. The church must listen and be nourished by Scripture so that it can embody, interpret, and proclaim the word of God. "All the preaching of the church, as indeed the entire christian religion, should be nourished and ruled by sacred scripture" (*Dei Verbum* 21).
- The Bible is read not only for information but also, more important, to experience the living presence of God. Thus, studying the Bible helps us to grow in faith, deepens our relationship with God, and continues to shape us as disciples.
- The church tells us that access to Sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful. The Scriptures should be the heart and foundation of the church's teaching, worship, and life.
- Deeper understanding of the Bible leads to personal transformation of attitudes, values, priorities, and actions. When we reflect seriously on the word of God, we should expect to be changed.
- "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ" (St. Jerome). Studying the Bible enables us to know Christ and to pass on our faith to our neighbors and to future generations.
- The story of the people of God continues beyond the biblical period and into our own times. Our story of life is also sacred because God who was present in biblical times remains with us today.

*Note:* The following documents are particularly helpful for those who wish to further explore the church's teachings on revelation:

*Dei Verbum* (The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation) of Vatican Council II, 1965

The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, from the Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1993

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, from Pope John Paul II, 1997

*Verbum Domini* (The Word of the Lord), from Pope Benedict XVI, 2010

## Session Two

### CONVERSATIONAL PRAYER AND SMALL-GROUP SHARING

#### Participants will

- learn and experience a simple method of shared prayer;
- experience a modified version of the weekly small-group sharing and discussion;
- continue building a community of shared faith, prayer, and commitment.

#### Materials:

- enthroned Bible (marked at Matt 18:19-20 and Isa 55:10-11)
- recorded presentation for Topic 3—Conversational Prayer
- recorded presentation for Topic 4—Small-Group Sharing (with Wrap-Up Lecture)

One of each of the following to be distributed to each participant upon arrival:

- Handout 5: “Conversational Prayer” (p. 39)
- Handout 6: “Small-Group Sharing” (p. 40)

One of each of the following to be distributed to each participant at the end of the session:

- Handout 7A: “Responsibilities of the Small-Group Facilitator” (pp. 41–42)
- Handout 7B: “Sample Schedule for the Weekly Meeting” (pp. 43–44). (Adjust this schedule for the particular times of your parish Bible study.)

### WELCOME, OVERVIEW OF SESSION, PRAYER (5 minutes)

Briefly identify the two topics to be covered in this session, and begin with a brief opening prayer of your choosing.

### TOPIC 3—CONVERSATIONAL PRAYER

#### I. Introduction and Scripture Reading (5 minutes)

Explain the first topic of this session in these or similar words:

“From the Bible we learn that prayer was a part of every gathering of Christians in the early church. Sometimes they searched for direction, sometimes they prayed for courage to face persecution, always they gave praise and thanks. As we prepare to lead others in the study of Scripture, we seek ways to deepen our own prayer and learn to lead others in spoken prayer.”

The assigned reader takes the Bible from its place of enthronement and reads Matthew 18:19-20. Pause for reflection.

2. **Recorded Presentation: “Conversational Prayer”** (15 minutes)
3. **Small-Group Exercise** (15 minutes)
  - a. Invite each participant to spend about five minutes of quiet time reflecting on the questions in Handout 5: “Conversational Prayer.”
  - b. After five minutes, instruct participants to gather in their small groups and discuss the questions for ten minutes or so.
4. **Break** (10 minutes)

#### **TOPIC 4—SMALL-GROUP SHARING AND WRAP-UP LECTURE**

1. **Introduction and Scripture Reading** (5 minutes)

Explain the second topic of this session in these or similar words:

“The heart of each weekly meeting is the Small-Group Sharing and discussion. Facilitators will guide their groups through Conversational Prayer and a discussion of the assigned portion of Lesson One of *The Acts of the Apostles* prepared in Daily Personal Study. Facilitators will help group members share understanding, insights, and experiences of faith. Wonderful things happen when we allow God’s word to bear fruit in a community of faith.”

The assigned reader takes the Bible from its place of enthronement and proclaims Isaiah 55:10-11. Pause for a few moments of silent reflection.

2. **Recorded Presentation: “Small-Group Sharing”** (10 minutes)
3. **Small-Group Experience** (30 minutes)

Break into small groups. Either designate someone in each small group or ask for a volunteer from within the group to facilitate each group in this exercise. The facilitator will guide the group in prayer and discussion following the instructions from Handout 6: “Small-Group Sharing.”
4. **Recorded Presentation: “Wrap-Up Lecture”** (5 minutes)
5. **Discussion** (5–10 minutes, optional)

If there is time, ask each person who facilitated the exercise to discuss one thing that went well, and one thing that could be improved from their group experience.

**ASSIGNMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, PRAYER** (5–10 minutes)

**1. Distribute the following:**

Handout 7A: “Responsibilities of the Small-Group Facilitator”

Handout 7B: “Sample Schedule for the Weekly Meeting”

Ask the participants to study these handouts carefully before the next session in order to have a better idea of what may be asked of them.

Assign those who will proclaim the Scriptures for the next session, and give any other announcements needed.

**2. Closing Prayer**

The closing prayer for this session may be a simple prayer offered by the coordinator, returning to the theme of thanksgiving for what is happening in the training sessions.



## Conversational Prayer

*"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt 18:20)*

*"First of all, then, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone." (1 Tim 2:1)*

*"Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil 4:6-7)*

### THE FOUR STEPS OF CONVERSATIONAL PRAYER

- |                                |                         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Jesus is here.              | Prayer of Awareness     |
| 2. Thank you, Lord.            | Prayers of Thanksgiving |
| 3. Help me, Lord.              | Prayers of Petition     |
| 4. Help my brother and sister. | Prayers of Intercession |

### PERSONAL REFLECTION AND SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE

Reflect for a few minutes on each of the following questions, and then break into small groups and select three of these questions to discuss.

1. Why is Conversational Prayer an important complement to formal prayer?
2. What difficulties do you foresee in praying conversationally?
3. How can shared prayer add to the group experience of Scripture study?
4. Why is shared prayer essential for the formation of Christian community?
5. How could this four-step method of prayer enrich your personal life of prayer?



## *Small-Group Sharing*

### **SMALL-GROUP EXPERIENCE**

You will now experience a short version of the weekly small-group meeting, beginning with Conversational Prayer, followed by a discussion of a portion of Lesson One from *The Acts of the Apostles* that you prepared before we gathered for this session.

1. Break into small groups, with each group having one of its members serve as a facilitator for this exercise. Facilitators will welcome the group members and help them feel comfortable.
2. The facilitator guides the group through the four steps of Conversational Prayer (5–10 *minutes*).
3. The facilitator guides the group through a discussion of Lesson One, questions 10–18 of *The Acts of the Apostles* (20 *minutes*).

Discussion guidelines:

- Encourage all to participate in the discussion.
  - Stay on topic as much as possible.
  - Try to bring out faith sharing as well as information.
  - Don't worry about covering every question if you run a bit behind.
  - Watch the time and conclude with a brief prayer.
4. Participants reassemble in the central meeting area for the Wrap-Up Lecture on the lesson that has just been discussed (5 *minutes*).

Reflect on your group experience. Jot down one thing that went well and one thing that could be improved.

## ***Responsibilities of the Small-Group Facilitator***

The role of the facilitator is to “make easy” the work of the small group. The facilitator guides the group through the weekly prayer and discussion, creating an environment where open communication and faith-filled sharing can occur.

### **BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS**

1. Attend all sessions of Leadership Training and other enrichment opportunities.
2. Send a postcard or online reminder to each member of your small group to welcome them. Include date, time, and place of the Introductory Session, and remind them to bring their Bibles. Then call to introduce yourself and to offer encouragement.
3. Make sure there is a name tag for each person in your group.
4. Commit yourself to pray daily for your group and to faithfully complete your Daily Personal Study.

### **DURING THE STUDY ITSELF**

1. Attend the leaders’ meeting before the weekly session for guidance and encouragement. (If your parish does not do this on a regular basis because of groups meeting at different times, make plans to get together with other leaders at least two or three times during a course of study.)
2. Greet participants as they arrive.
3. Lead your group in Conversational Prayer.
4. Guide your group through the weekly lesson, encouraging participants and keeping the discussion focused on the Study Guide questions and responses.
5. Get to know the members of your group, call them by name, and respect their unique personalities, gifts, and struggles.
6. Keep current addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail to communicate with group members when needed.
7. Keep an attendance record. If group members are absent, express concern through a call or online note the following day. Encourage them and help them deal with any challenges related to the group or the study.
8. Conduct occasional informal evaluations with your group to identify potential problems and to elicit suggestions for improvements.

9. Reflect regularly on your own role as a facilitator. Try to improve your skills using the handouts from Leadership Training and other enrichment resources.
10. Arrange for your auxiliary facilitator to serve when you are unable to fulfill your responsibilities.

An *auxiliary facilitator* is ideal in each small group. He or she shares in the overall responsibilities and may take on some of the specific tasks mentioned above.



## *Sample Schedule for the Weekly Meeting*

### **LEADERS' MEETING** (45 minutes)

In a parish where one large gathering meets at a given time, dividing into small groups for discussion, the facilitators and coordinators have the opportunity to meet together prior to the participants arriving. This is a time to share prayer, discuss highlights from the week's study and preparation, and raise questions about any concerns. When facilitators meet together on a regular basis, they feel better prepared for the group experience and can share advice when problems arise.

- 6:30 Welcome, Prayer (5 minutes)
- 6:35 Facilitators' discussion of lesson (20 minutes)
- 6:55 Concerns, suggestions, advice (10 minutes)
- 7:05 Announcements (5 minutes)
- 7:10 Prayer (5 minutes)

In some parishes, small groups meet at different times and/or locations during the week. In these situations it will not be possible for the facilitators to meet weekly. However, it is very helpful if the facilitators from various groups arrange to meet once or twice during the course of a given study.

In a parish where there is only one small group with one facilitator, it would be helpful to meet on occasion with other parish staff members, or Scripture study facilitators in neighboring parishes, to share experiences and pray for those involved in the program.

### **GENERAL MEETING** (1½ hours)

It is important to start and end promptly at the times designated for your parish Scripture study, allowing about an hour and a half for each session. The sample schedule below allows the time needed to move through the essential elements of the process, and has proven over time to be the best for the widest number of people.

- 7:30 Opening prayer with the large group (5 minutes)
- 7:35 Small-group Conversational Prayer (5–10 minutes)
- 7:45 Small-group discussion and sharing (45–50 minutes)

8:30 Reconvene in lecture area to view Wrap-Up Lecture (20 minutes)

8:50 Announcements and closing prayer (5–10 minutes)

Conversational Prayer should take a maximum of ten minutes at the start of Small-Group Sharing. If facilitators notice that people are becoming anxious about covering everything in the allotted time, please refer to our website for tips on adapting a study: [http://www.littlerockscripture.org/en/adapt\\_study.html](http://www.littlerockscripture.org/en/adapt_study.html).



## Session Three

### **JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES AS A MODEL FOR SMALL-GROUP SCRIPTURE STUDY AND SPIRITUALITY OF THE SMALL-GROUP FACILITATOR**

#### **Participants will**

- realize that Jesus taught his disciples by sharing faith in small groups;
- understand that the ministry of God's word is guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit;
- continue to build a community of shared faith, prayer, and commitment.

#### **Materials:**

- enthroned Bible (marked at Matt 14:13-17 and John 14:12-17)
- recorded presentation for Topic 5—Jesus and His Disciples as a Model for Small-Group Scripture Study
- recorded presentation for Topic 6—Spirituality of the Small-Group Facilitator

One of each of the following to be distributed to each participant upon arrival:

- Handout 8: "Jesus and His Disciples as a Model for Small-Group Scripture Study" (p. 47)
- Handout 9: "Spirituality of the Small-Group Facilitator" (p. 48)

One of the following to be distributed to each participant at the end of the session:

- Handout 10: "A Guide to Spiritual Discernment for Scripture Study Leadership" (p. 49)

#### **WELCOME, OVERVIEW OF SESSION, PRAYER** (5 minutes)

Briefly identify the two topics to be covered in this session, and begin with a brief opening prayer of your choosing.

### **TOPIC 5—JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES AS A MODEL FOR SMALL-GROUP SCRIPTURE STUDY**

#### **I. Introduction and Scripture Reading** (5 minutes)

Explain the first topic of this session in these or similar words:

"The Gospels show us how Jesus formed his disciples, preparing them and empowering them for the ministry we see in the Acts of the Apostles. Jesus has called us all to discipleship and forms us in these ways: through the Scriptures, the sacraments, prayer, and action for others. Let us respond to the challenge Jesus presents to us through God's word."

The assigned reader takes the Bible from its place of enthronement and reads Matthew 14:13-17. Pause for reflection.

**2. Recorded Presentation: “Jesus and His Disciples as a Model for Small-Group Scripture Study” (10 minutes)**

**3. Small-Group Exercise (20 minutes)**

Break into small groups. A chosen or volunteer facilitator from the group guides the group following the instructions from Handout 8: “Jesus and His Disciples as a Model for Small-Group Scripture Study.”

**4. Break (10 minutes)**

**TOPIC 6—SPIRITUALITY OF THE SMALL-GROUP FACILITATOR**

**1. Introduction and Scripture Reading (5 minutes)**

Explain the topic in these or similar words:

“The disciples of Jesus were amazed that they were given the gifts necessary to spread the Good News to others. They realized that the Holy Spirit, who had been given to them, was the same Spirit who had inspired the Scriptures and empowered the life of Jesus. That same Spirit is given to us as we open our lives to God’s work within us.”

The assigned reader takes the Bible from its place of enthronement and reads John 14:12-17. Pause for reflection.

**2. Recorded Presentation: “Spirituality of the Small-Group Facilitator” (12 minutes)**

**3. Small-Group Exercise (20 minutes)**

Break into small groups. A chosen or volunteer facilitator from the group guides the group following the instructions from Handout 9: “Spirituality of the Small-Group Facilitator.”

**ASSIGNMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, PRAYER (5 minutes)**

**1. Distribute Handout 10: “A Guide to Spiritual Discernment for Scripture Study Leadership.”**

Ask participants to use the handout as a source of prayer and reflection before the next session to help them know how to respond to God’s call.

Assign Scripture readers for the next session.

Other announcements.

**2. Closing Prayer**

## *Jesus and his Disciples as a Model for Small-Group Scripture Study*

### **HOW JESUS FORMED HIS DISCIPLES FOR MINISTRY**

1. He taught them to pray and prayed with them often.
2. He taught them using the Hebrew Scriptures and the experiences and examples from their lives.
3. He supported them in failure and helped them to learn from their mistakes.
4. He empowered them by encouraging them and inspiring them to use their gifts.

### **LESSONS FOR SCRIPTURE STUDY BASED ON THE ACCOUNT OF JESUS' APPEAR- ANCE ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS (LUKE 24:13-35)**

1. Jesus met the disciples along the ordinary journey of their lives.
2. Jesus asked them questions to draw out their experiences.
3. Jesus showed how all the Scriptures can be understood in the context of a relationship with him.
4. Jesus became fully known to them in the context of Word and sacrament.
5. Jesus caused their hearts to burn with desire as he opened the Scriptures to them.

### **SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE**

1. Break into small groups. A chosen or volunteer facilitator from the group guides the participants through the steps of conversational prayer.
2. Discuss the following questions:
  - a. What impresses you about Jesus' method of teaching his disciples?
  - b. What characteristics of Jesus' relationship with his disciples would you want to imitate as a small-group facilitator?
  - c. When have the Scriptures caused your heart to burn within you, affecting you in a deep way?



## ***Spirituality of the Small-Group Facilitator***

### **THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

1. The Holy Spirit strengthens us.  
*"[T]he Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness." (Rom 8:26)*
2. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray.  
*"[W]e do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit." (Rom 8:26-27)*
3. The Holy Spirit teaches us.  
*"For the holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say." (Luke 12:12)*  
*"The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you." (John 14:26)*
4. The Holy Spirit guides us.  
*"But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth." (John 16:13)*
5. The Holy Spirit is the source of spiritual gifts.  
*"To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. . . . But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes." (1 Cor 12:7, 11)*
6. The Holy Spirit unifies us.  
*"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." (1 Cor 12:13)*  
*"I . . . urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, . . . striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit." (Eph 4:1, 3-4)*
7. The Holy Spirit bears fruit within us.  
*"[T]he fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Gal 5:22-23a)*

### **SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE**

Break into small groups to discuss the following questions.

1. What happened to the first disciples that enabled them to carry out the mission of Jesus in the early church?
2. Recall a time when you were surprised at your ability to do something you thought yourself unable to do. Describe.
3. Consider what you have learned about the work of the Spirit. What do you need most from the Holy Spirit to enable you to be a minister of God's word to others?

## ***A Guide To Spiritual Discernment for Scripture Study Leadership***

The ministry of God's word requires ongoing discernment and spiritual growth. This guide is offered for your personal reflection and prayer.

Read each of the following statements and prayerfully consider where you see yourself on the journey of discipleship. In each of these, are you . . .

*just beginning*      or      *growing*      or      *excelling*      ?

1. I recognize that faith is a gift from God, a gift that God continually offers to me.
2. I am committed to a regular time each day for personal prayer and quiet reflection.
3. I regularly turn to Scripture for prayerful study and spiritual guidance.
4. I have a deep desire to serve others by sharing my time and talents.
5. I strive to be a witness to others by living the values of Jesus in my home, workplace, parish, and civic community.
6. I have a desire and commitment to continue learning about myself and my faith through reading and educational opportunities.
7. I am able to forgive myself and others for mistakes and learn from them.
8. I try to keep priorities ordered in my life: God, self, family, work, and parish community.
9. I recognize and respect my own limitations and those of others.
10. I do not take myself too seriously. I view myself and life with a sense of humor.
11. I am committed to the development of my parish through communal worship, education, and service.

## Session Four

### **TECHNIQUES FOR FACILITATING A SMALL GROUP AND INTRODUCING SCRIPTURE STUDY TO YOUR SMALL GROUP**

#### **Participants will**

- learn some of the attitudes and skills necessary to successfully facilitate a small-group discussion;
- learn the fundamental requirements for establishing a small group;
- continue building a community of shared faith, prayer, and commitment.

#### **Materials:**

- enthroned Bible (marked at 1 Cor 1:26–2:5; Rom 12:9-18; and Phil 1:3-11)
- recorded presentation for Topic 7—Techniques for Facilitating a Small Group
- recorded presentation for Topic 8—Introducing Scripture Study to Your Small Group

One of each of the following to be distributed to each participant upon arrival:

- Handout 11: “Techniques for Facilitating a Small Group” (p. 53)
- Handout 12: “Introducing Scripture Study to Your Small Group” (p. 54)

One of each of the following to be distributed to each participant at the end of the session:

- Handout 13: “Communication Skills for the Small-Group Facilitator” (p. 56)
- Handout 14: “Closing Prayer Service” (pp. 57–58)

### **WELCOME, OVERVIEW OF SESSION, PRAYER**

Briefly identify the two topics to be covered in this session, and begin with a brief opening prayer of your choosing.

### **TOPIC 7—TECHNIQUES FOR FACILITATING A SMALL GROUP**

#### **I. Introduction and Scripture Reading (5 minutes)**

Explain the topic in these or similar words:

“A successful facilitator will always rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance and strength. This trust will be accompanied by commitment to self-evaluation and growth in the skills of communication and group dynamics. Fortunately, our life experiences have given most of us a measure of these skills. We need

only bring them into focus and apply them with a Christian concern for every member of the group.”

The assigned reader takes the Bible from its place of enthronement and reads 1 Corinthians 1:26–2:5. Pause for reflection.

**2. Recorded Presentation: “Techniques for Facilitating a Small Group”**  
(10 minutes)

**3. Small-Group Exercise** (20 minutes)

Break into small groups. The chosen or volunteer facilitator from the group guides the group using the instructions from Handout 11: “Techniques for Facilitating a Small Group.”

**4. Break** (10 minutes)

**TOPIC 8—INTRODUCING SCRIPTURE STUDY TO YOUR SMALL GROUP**

**1. Introduction and Scripture Reading** (5 minutes)

Explain the topic in these or similar words:

“We are almost ready to begin leading others in the process of Scripture study. Our roles and tasks will be many. Some of you will be facilitating groups; some may serve as auxiliary facilitators; others will help in various ways to publicize the program and provide support and set-up as we begin. Each of us has our unique contribution to make to the work of God’s Spirit in this process.”

The assigned reader takes the Bible from its place of enthronement and reads Romans 12:9–18. Pause for reflection.

**2. Recorded Presentation: “Introducing Scripture Study to Your Small Group”** (10 minutes)

**3. Small-Group Exercise** (20 minutes)

Break into small groups. The chosen or volunteer facilitator from each group guides the participants through the instructions from Handout 12: “Introducing Scripture Study to Your Small Group.”

**4. Final Discussion** (10–15 minutes)

Ask for final questions and make clarifications regarding the process of preparing for Scripture study. A separate meeting is scheduled to cover final preparations and other assignments.

**ASSIGNMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, PRAYER** (10–15 minutes)

**1. Distribute the following to each participant:**

Handout 13: “Communication Skills for the Small-Group Facilitator”

Handout 14: “Closing Prayer Service”

**2. Parish Plans**

Announce the date of the Initial Leaders’ Meeting. This will be the time to ensure that registrations are coming in, groups are being assigned, and facilitators are beginning to be in touch with parish participants. (More information is available on [pages 59–60](#).)

Remind all those who have been trained of the starting date for the parish Scripture study.

Ask the group to personally invite and encourage others to participate in Little Rock Scripture Study.

**3. Closing Prayer Service**

Ask those who have been attending Leadership Training to pray for one another and for all who may consider joining a Scripture study group.

Using Handout 14, ask the group to pray together. You may choose an opening and/or closing song to enhance this final prayer. Be sure the assigned reader is prepared to proclaim Philippians 1:3–11.



## *Techniques for Facilitating a Small Group*

### **BASIC TASKS FOR FACILITATORS**

- Listen attentively to each person in the group.
- Encourage participation from each person.
- Help keep the discussion focused.
- Deal with problems forthrightly and courteously.
- Support each member of the group with personal concern.
- Model good group interaction skills.
- Watch for and be ready to respond, when necessary, to the following:
  - the dominator who may talk too much
  - the rambler who easily gets off the subject
  - the shy or hesitant person who doesn't contribute verbally
  - the authoritarian whose opinion is always right
  - the person with problems that need to be solved

### **SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE**

1. Break into small groups. The chosen or volunteer facilitator from the group guides participants through the steps of Conversational Prayer.
2. Discuss the following questions:
  - a. Recall some positive and some negative experiences you have had in small groups in the past. In particular, what made the experiences positive? negative?
  - b. What do you think is the most important skill needed to be an effective small-group facilitator?
  - c. Name a skill you possess that will be helpful in a small-group experience. Name a skill you feel you need to develop or improve in order to be effective.
  - d. What are your fears or concerns about facilitating a small group?
  - e. What reminders will you need to rely on the Holy Spirit and on your growing skills?

## ***Introducing Scripture Study to Your Small Group***

### **DOS AND DON'TS FOR BEGINNING YOUR GROUP**

- DO remember that you are a colearner in the group.
- DO prepare the lesson thoroughly each week.
- DO begin and end on time out of respect for the group.
- DO arrange seating in a way that all members can see and hear each other.
- DO establish a climate of hospitality.
- DO encourage, praise, and support participants.
- DO keep everyone involved in the discussion.
- DO keep the goal of growing in faith and understanding in mind.
- DO recognize that each person is valuable and unique.
- DO be joyful and affirming.
- DO make use of the Answer Guide in your final preparation for each lesson.
  
- DON'T feel you have to know all the answers. You are learning too.
- DON'T refer to the Answer Guide in the group setting.
- DON'T be careless about time or a slave to time.
- DON'T force responses from each person or go in order around the group.
- DON'T be a slave to the Study Guide, but use the questions to generate a good discussion and sharing of faith.
- DON'T feel the need to comment on each response.
- DON'T fear silence on occasion.
- DON'T significantly change the process or format.
- DON'T feel guilty when your group is less than perfect.

**GROUP MEMBERS COMMIT THEMSELVES TO:**

1. Prayer
2. Preparation
3. Presence
4. Participation

**SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE**

Break into small groups to discuss the following questions:

1. What is most exciting for you as you enter the process of Scripture study leadership?
2. Name three things that you can do to support one another as you enter this process.
3. What further questions do you have as you prepare for leadership? (Bring these questions to the larger group if they remain unanswered.)





## *Communication Skills for the Small-Group Facilitator*

### **ESTABLISH AN OPEN AND ACCEPTING CLIMATE.**

The tone you set for the group will determine how freely and honestly the participants will converse. Try to convey a spirit of respect for the unique qualities of each group member, and for the process of working together in a group.

### **LISTEN ATTENTIVELY.**

Model good listening skills by focusing on the person who is speaking and affirming what you are hearing. Listen not only to words but also listen for emotions and observe nonverbal communication.

### **SUPPORT AND AFFIRM PARTICIPANTS.**

Your group may include people from many walks of life with varying amounts of knowledge and a diversity of experiences. Everyone needs to know that their contribution is valued and respected. Welcome people by name and show concern for those who are absent from the group.

### **REDIRECT THE CONVERSATION WHEN NEEDED.**

When the group has strayed from the topic, ask a follow-up question to refocus the conversation. When participants focus their questions and responses on you rather than the whole group, redirect them by making eye contact with others and engaging other participants in the dialogue.

### **PARAPHRASE AND SUMMARIZE ON OCCASION.**

You can demonstrate careful listening and concern by rephrasing a speaker's response in your own words. Summarizing some of the main ideas being expressed can redirect the group when it gets bogged down, and can also serve as an effective conclusion to the discussion.

### **BE ENTHUSIASTIC AND ENCOURAGING.**

Show as much excitement about the insights and discoveries of others as you do about your own. Your joyful enthusiasm is contagious and will motivate the group.

### **TRUST THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

The focus in Bible study is on God's word. You are an instrument of God's Spirit as you help create the environment for growth in faith. Know that God is giving you all that you need to be a minister of the Word for others.

## ***Closing Prayer Service***

Song (optional)

**Leader:** Loving God, we come before you now to affirm our ongoing commitment to your Word. Be with us as we continue the work we have begun. Help us to remember that you are always with us. May our hearts burn forever with love for your Word. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord and brother.

**Reader:** Philippians 1:3-11

### *Silent Reflection*

**Leader:** Do you believe that Almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth, has a plan for us and for all of creation?

**All:** I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe God's plan has become known to us in Jesus Christ and that we can hear God's plan for the church through the Holy Scriptures?

**All:** I do.

**Leader:** As you seek to know God's design, do you promise to remain open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

**All:** I do.

**Leader:** Let us pray quietly for one another as we commit ourselves to the word of God.

*(Each person may come forward and place his or her hands on the open Bible as a sign of personal commitment.)*

**Leader:** God's Holy Spirit guides us to truth and reminds us of all Christ taught us. May we experience the Spirit's direction as we study God's word.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** God's Holy Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness. May we experience the strength and consolation of God's Spirit as we labor for the Lord.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** God's Holy Spirit gives many gifts for the benefit of the one Body of Christ. May we use God's gifts generously as we serve as ministers of God's word.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** May Almighty God bless us (†), in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.



# *Initial Leaders' Meeting*

This meeting is scheduled to be held about two weeks before the Introductory Session of each new course of study. It is an opportunity to gather the small-group facilitators and support team for a review of responsibilities, organization of small groups, and final preparations for the study.

## **Leaders will**

- be assigned to small groups or other support services;
- review the schedule for the Introductory Session;
- review handouts and responsibilities;
- pray with one another for the needs of the program and those who will be participating.

## **Materials:**

- stamped postcard or e-mail address for each registered participant
- enthroned Bible (marked at Col 3:12-17)

One of each of the following to be distributed as each person arrives for the meeting:

- Study Set and Answer Guide for the course being studied
- Handout 15: "Introductory Session" (pp. 63–64)
- Attendance Record (pp. 65–66)

Extra copies available of the following handouts used during Leadership Training:

- Handout 7A: "Responsibilities of the Small-Group Facilitator"
- Handout 7B: "Sample Schedule for the Weekly Meeting"
- Handout 13: "Communication Skills for the Small-Group Facilitator"

## **INTRODUCTION AND SCRIPTURE READING (5 minutes)**

Welcome all who have come and briefly describe the agenda for this meeting in these or similar words:

"Each one of us has accepted the invitation to serve our parish community through leadership in Little Rock Scripture Study. We will spend this time together preparing ourselves to begin our Bible study soon. We are reminded of the words of St. Paul, 'Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.'"

The assigned reader takes the Bible from its place of enthronement and reads Colossians 3:12-17. Pause for silent reflection.

**DISCUSSION** (30–40 minutes)

1. Report on how the registration efforts are proceeding. The number of those registered will determine the number of groups and facilitators needed. Plan on assigning eight to twelve people to each small group.
2. Determine if you have designated enough facilitators (and auxiliary facilitators), and those who might serve in more practical ways. (See “Responsibilities of the Support Team,” pp. 67–68).
3. Review the schedule for the opening night using Handout 15: “Introductory Session.” Discuss the Small-Group Sharing for the Introductory Session.
4. Emphasize the proper use of the Answer Guide. Its purpose is to help facilitators in their preparation for the group experience, anticipating how discussions might unfold, and so forth. It is not to be used in the small group itself as if only these answers are appropriate.
5. Review the following handouts simply to brush up:
  - 7A: “Responsibilities of the Small-Group Facilitator”
  - 7B: “Sample Schedule for the Weekly Meeting”
  - 13: “Communication Skills for the Small-Group Facilitator”

**ASSIGNMENTS** (20–30 minutes)

1. Give each facilitator a list of group members and the Attendance Record form (pp. 65–66).
2. Assign duties for the opening session (greeters, name tags, late registration, group assignments, simple refreshments, enthronement area, seating for groups, etc.).
3. If the small groups will have auxiliary facilitators, invite them to meet together to clarify who will be responsible for what within the group.
4. Spend some time sending postcards to each participant who has registered, or writing the e-mail that will be sent from facilitators to their group members.

**PRAYER** (10 minutes)

Close the meeting by asking all in leadership to spend time together in Conversational Prayer.

# Introductory Session, Parish Scripture Study

Every new course of study begins with an Introductory Session. This important session sets the tone for the entire study. The Introductory Session is designed to accomplish the following:

- Establish an atmosphere of warmth and welcome.
- Teach Conversational Prayer.
- Allow small-group members to get acquainted.
- Encourage participants to prepare each weekly lesson.
- Reassure those who may be new to Scripture study.
- Introduce the particular course of study for the upcoming weeks and distribute Study Sets to participants.

(*Note:* Refer to Handout 15 from Leadership Training as the basic framework for this session, especially when this is the first time your parish has used Little Rock Scripture Study.)

## **KEEP IN MIND THE FOLLOWING AREAS WHEN PLANNING THIS SESSION.**

### **1. Preparation and Delegation**

Because the Introductory Session is a different format from the other weekly sessions, it requires thoughtful preparation. Plan ahead and use your creativity to ensure an organized and helpful session for participants. Learn the strengths of your team and delegate responsibilities whenever appropriate (set-up, greeters, simple refreshments, announcements or explanations).

### **2. Environment**

Arrange the chairs in comfortable groupings. If you choose to use tables, be sure that the shape of the tables will allow members of each small group to see and hear one another. Create an area where the Bible will be enthroned each week; plan to use plants, candles, a Bible that is easy to read and in good condition. You may even add symbols that are appropriate to the biblical book or theme being studied, or to the liturgical season. When people see a room that has been carefully prepared and arranged for them, they know they are in for a special experience.

### **3. Inclusion**

Do all you can to make everyone feel welcome and a part of the program. Even if most in the group already know one another, or have been involved in Bible study, there may always be some who are new to the group or to the

process. Make a special effort to help newcomers feel at home and comfortable. Watch for and discourage a “members of the club” or “clique” mentality.

### **DO WE NEED AN INTRODUCTORY SESSION WHEN THIS IS NOT OUR FIRST EXPERIENCE USING LITTLE ROCK SCRIPTURE STUDY?**

Yes. When your parish has been involved in Scripture study for some time, there is a temptation to skip through the Introductory Session, but remember that the content of every study is different, and hopefully there are new people coming on board as well. The following ideas may be a helpful way to keep this session fresh, even with a preexisting group:

- Have one or more participants of a previous study tell how the study, prayer, and group sharing affected them. What were their feelings when the study started? when it ended? Honest sharing of personal experiences touches people and often puts them at ease.
- Show one or more sessions of the recorded presentations from Leadership Training. The following topics might be good for all participants to view: Daily Personal Study, Conversational Prayer, Small-Group Sharing, and Jesus and His Disciples as a Model for Small-Group Scripture Study.
- If your parish groups struggle with Conversational Prayer, consider a “refresher” on this form of prayer. Ask all the participants to be seated in their groups, but all gathered in one large area. The coordinator or one of the facilitators could then lead all the groups at one time through the four steps of Conversational Prayer. Correctly modeling this type of prayer can help allay discomfort that some may feel.
- When small groups have been together over time, they often know each other pretty well. Use some different kinds of questions as “icebreakers,” such as:
  - If you could share a meal with one person in Christian history, whom would you choose, and why?
  - Who was your hero/heroine when growing up? Whom do you admire now?
  - What is the kindest thing a stranger ever did for you?
- Invite participants to talk honestly about the challenges and benefits of coming prepared for each week’s session. What difference does it make personally and to the group when the content of the lesson has been digested a bit through prayer and reflection?
- Emphasize within the small groups that they will be sharing faith experiences as well as thoughtful insights from study. Scripture study is not simply about arriving at the correct answers. Discuss what this means to each member.
- Consider asking each group to write a group agreement or “ground rules” to ensure that the group functions well for all involved. Include simple, mutually agreed upon expectations such as daily study, confidentiality, respect for differing opinions, staying focused on the topic, prayer for one another, and so forth.

## *Introductory Session*

### **LEADERS' MEETING**

1. Briefly review this Introductory Session schedule and allow facilitators to ask questions.
2. Review assignments (name tags, distribution of Study Sets, registration fees, late registrations, group assignments, refreshments, etc.).
3. Pray together.
4. Greet participants as they arrive, making sure that each person receives a Study Set for the selected course.

### **GENERAL MEETING FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS**

- 1. Welcome, Opening Prayer** (*5 minutes*)  
Greet all who have gathered, make sure everyone picked up a Study Set (commentary and Study Guide), and offer a brief prayer to begin.
- 2. Orientation** (*5 minutes*)  
The coordinator introduces the study and describes the schedule for this session and for the weekly sessions. In all subsequent sessions for this course, participants come prepared for each lesson. Encourage participants to create a daily habit of about twenty minutes of prayerful study using the Study Set materials.
- 3. Explanation of Conversational Prayer** (*10–15 minutes*)  
The coordinator or another leader discusses the purpose and four steps of Conversational Prayer, which will be used at the start of each small-group discussion in the coming weeks. The recorded presentation “Conversational Prayer” from Leadership Training may be shown.
- 4. Organization of Small Groups** (*10 minutes*)  
Introduce the small-group facilitators and auxiliary facilitators. Designate the areas for each small group and the names assigned to each group.



**5. Small-Group Sharing** (30 minutes)

- Get acquainted. Ask members to introduce themselves and perhaps share one hope or apprehension concerning the course.
- Review the Instructions and Four Essential Elements of Little Rock Scripture Study found in the beginning of the Study Guide.
- Point out the abbreviations for biblical books found toward the back of each Study Guide. Demonstrate how to find cross-references referred to in the Study Guide questions.
- Clarify the commitments of this process: Prayer—Preparation—Presence—Participation.
- Lead the small group in Conversational Prayer. Point out that the four steps of this kind of prayer are found in the front inside cover of the Study Guide. The group needs to focus on only one step at a time before moving to the next step.

**6. Wrap-Up Lecture** (20 minutes)

This first lecture for each course introduces the book or biblical theme being studied. A local speaker may give such an overview, or you may plan to use the introductory lecture from the DVD or CD for the course.

**7. Closing Prayer** (5 minutes)

A simple prayer from the coordinator is all that is needed to end the session. Encourage all to come prepared next week having completed Lesson One of the course.

# Attendance Record

**FACILITATOR**

## AUXILIARY FACILITATOR

Name	Date	Address	Phone	E-mail
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				

Name	Date												Address	Phone	E-mail
9.															
10.															
11.															
12.															
13.															
14.															
15.															
16.															

# *Responsibilities of the Support Team*

Depending on the size of your parish Scripture study program, and the needs and gifts of your group, you may want to consider the following:

## **I. SECRETARY/TREASURER**

- Collect fees and pay bills.
- Keep attendance records.
- Prepare name tags; distribute and collect name tags before and after each session.

## **2. PHYSICAL SET-UP**

- Open doors early and lock doors after each session.
- Adjust the temperature and check restroom supplies.
- Make sure there are enough chairs available in the lecture area, and supply a speaker's podium and microphone for live presentations. If using recorded lectures, make sure the screen and sound system are in working order.
- Assure that all areas for small groups are equipped with chairs that are neatly arranged. (Some parishes split into small groups in one large area and simply move chairs back together for the Wrap-Up Lecture. Other parishes arrange for small groups to meet in separate areas, coming together in a large area for the lecture.)
- Return spaces to order and put away supplies at the end of each session.

## **3. REFRESHMENTS**

- Organize simple refreshments for each meeting. An appointed committee may take care of this throughout a course of study, or the responsibility may be shared among the various small groups throughout the study.
- Plan for a closing celebration to coincide with the final session for a course of study.

## **4. TIMEKEEPER**

- Keep meetings running on schedule by reminding facilitators of the time. Ring a bell or send a text reminder to each facilitator about five minutes before the end of Small-Group Sharing.
- Ending the Small-Group Sharing on time allows everyone to gather on time for the Wrap-Up Lecture.

## **5. CHILD CARE**

- If possible, provide child care for those whose participation depends on having this service offered.
- Some parishes invite youth group members or parish organizations to offer child care service free of charge; others provide a paid child care coordinator.

## **6. MUSIC MINISTRY**

- If possible, each session could be opened or closed with appropriate music as part of the simple prayer of the group.
- Select suitable music and determine whether to use songbooks, music printed or projected with permission.
- Recruit a musician or two from the group, or from the wider parish.



## *Preparation for Subsequent Studies*

Subsequent courses may be offered once the trained leadership is in place. However, after a few courses, consider training additional new facilitators using Leadership Training. This will broaden the leadership base, call forth gifts from participants, and allow facilitators to occasionally return to a group as a member rather than in leadership.

A reasonable limit should be placed on the coordinator's time of service. This allows the coordinator to gracefully withdraw from service so that others may share in the leadership role.

Facilitators are the program's most important asset, so look for opportunities for further enrichment, evaluation, and assistance. Parishes might offer educational opportunities such as days or evenings of reflection, and further training in facilitation skills. Take full advantage of programs offered in the surrounding area relating to biblical prayer or study, small-group dynamics, or even learning how to publicize.

When preparing for subsequent courses of study, you may find the following time line helpful. More details for various points may be found in the general time line on pages 16–20.

### **EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

- ✓ Set the dates for the parish Scripture study.
- ✓ Plan publicity and recruitment (pp. 71–81).
- ✓ Reserve facilities that are needed.
- ✓ Make a decision about Wrap-Up Lectures.
- ✓ Review plans with the pastor or pastoral team.

### **SIX WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

- ✓ Invite speakers for Wrap-Up Lectures (if not using recorded lectures).
- ✓ Make arrangements for child care.
- ✓ Set registration fee.
- ✓ Recruit a support team.

**FOUR WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

- ✓ Publicize and begin registration.
- ✓ Order study materials and recorded lectures (if not using local speakers).
- ✓ Assign small-group facilitators.

**TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

- ✓ Assign small groups.
- ✓ Commission the small-group facilitators.
- ✓ Reserve any needed equipment.
- ✓ Conduct the Initial Leaders' Meeting (pp. 59–60).
- ✓ Continue to pray daily for the success of the Scripture study.

**FOUR WEEKS AFTER THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

- ✓ Return any unused print materials with the Return Manifest that was sent in the initial order.
- ✓ Plan a closing celebration for the course.
- ✓ Prepare evaluation forms to be used at the end of the course.

**ONE WEEK AFTER THE FINAL SESSION (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

- ✓ Hold the final leaders' meeting to review evaluations and look forward to future courses.

# ***Publicity—Recruitment—Registration***

Begin developing plans for promotion as soon as the decision is made to use Little Rock Scripture Study. It is most effective if several people work with the coordinator to make plans. Brainstorm creative ways to reach the entire parish community. Involve the pastor and parish leaders in the plan so that Scripture study is integrated into the overall education and faith formation goals of the parish.

Well-planned publicity, in a number of forms, reaching out to existing groups as well as people in the pews, will help to ensure a positive response. In your advertising and when speaking of the program, use multiple ways to stress these three points:

1. Little Rock Scripture Study is for you as you are now.
2. Little Rock Scripture Study will make a difference in the way you live.
3. Little Rock Scripture Study requires a limited time commitment.

## **MULTIPLE WAYS TO ADVERTISE:**

### **Mailing to Parishioners**

Ask the pastor to send a letter to each household in the parish describing the benefits of Scripture study and giving specific information about what the parish will offer (see [p. 75](#) for a sample letter). This letter could also include the registration form.

### **Flyers and Posters**

Create a flyer that can be accessed on the parish website, printed and left at the church doors, or even inserted in the parish bulletin. Be creative, present the information neatly, and use visual images as well as words. Reinforce this message with posters in key places around the parish to be sure to get attention.

### **Bulletin and Website Announcements**

Make announcements inviting and informative. Include registration information and starting dates. For samples, see [pages 79–80](#). Use the clip art of the Little Rock Scripture Study logo to enhance your announcements. Refer readers to the [LRSS website](#) for more information.



**Telephone Committee**

Telephoning parishioners is a very effective way to invite participation. Divide the parish households into groups and try to contact as many as possible. Callers should have a good basic understanding of the program. If the parish has e-mail addresses, a notice could also be sent to households in this way.

**Homily on the Value of Scripture Study**

Ask the pastor or deacon to preach a homily emphasizing the value of reading and studying Scripture and the transforming power of God's word (see pp. 76–77 for sample homily). Their support and encouragement will be an effective message in itself.

**Witness Talk**

Arrange for lay participants in Bible study to speak at Sunday Masses about what the Bible means to them, and how Bible study has affected them. A personal invitation made after Communion might help parishioners see the value and benefits of Bible study (see p. 78).

**Registration Table or Area**

Set up a table before and after the parish weekend liturgies to offer information and register participants on a given weekend. Make it attractive and inviting and have members of the core leadership group take turns staffing the area. The Informational DVD could be running in a viewing area during this registration time if appropriate.

**Registration Form**

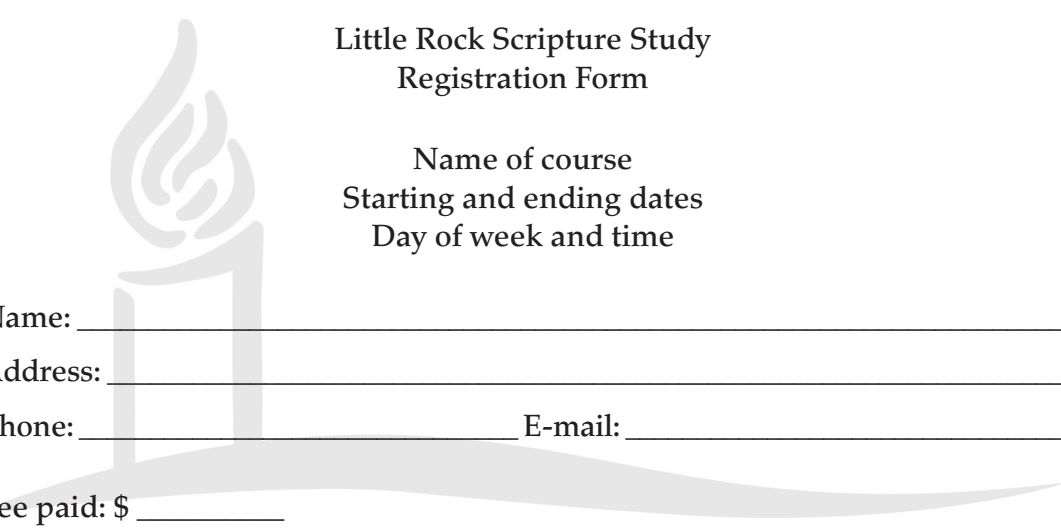
Create a simple but clear form that can be used for mailings, phone follow-up, weekend registrations at the church, and so forth (see below).

**Informational DVD**

The Informational DVD presents a short overview of Little Rock Scripture Study and offers testimony from users in various parts of the country. It may be shown after Sunday liturgy, at meetings of parish groups, in home gatherings, etcetera. Also, refer people to the [Program Information](#) section of the Little Rock Scripture Study website, where they may view it online.

**Personal Invitation**

The most effective form of publicity always has a personal touch. People are much more likely to participate in something that may be unfamiliar if they are invited individually. Personal notes, conversations when gathering on Sundays or at parish functions and meetings, and even presentations to existing parish groups will help people feel welcome and encouraged.



Little Rock Scripture Study  
Registration Form

Name of course  
Starting and ending dates  
Day of week and time

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Fee paid: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Time Line for Publicity—Recruitment—Registration***

The planning team should make its own time line and include as many forms of publicity as possible. Here is a sample of such a time line.

### **TEN WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

- ✓ Form a group to plan publicity and recruitment. (Consider parishioners who may have experience in marketing or advertising, even if they do not choose to participate in Bible study.)
- ✓ Assign specific tasks for each step of promotions.

### **EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

- ✓ Discuss plans with the pastor or parish staff.
- ✓ Begin a series of creative bulletin and online announcements.
- ✓ Prepare a flyer to promote Bible study.

### **SIX WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

- ✓ Include article and/or flyer in the parish newsletter.
- ✓ Set up a telephone committee to call parishioners.
- ✓ Ask pastor to plan a homily on Scripture study.
- ✓ Promote Scripture study at meetings of parish organizations.

### **FOUR WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

- ✓ Send a letter from the pastor inviting parish participation.
- ✓ Hold a Sign-Up Sunday with flyers, homily, and/or witness talk.
- ✓ Show the Informational DVD after Sunday Masses.
- ✓ Set up a registration area before and after weekend Masses.

### **TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE STUDY BEGINS (DATE: \_\_\_\_\_)**

- ✓ Commission trained facilitators at Sunday Mass (see pp. 83–86). (The primary purpose is to invite God’s direction and blessing for those who will facilitate groups. However, this also sends the message that Bible study is an essential part of the Catholic experience.)
- ✓ Make one final invitation for any late registrations.

## *Sample Letter from Pastor*

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to invite you to participate in Little Rock Scripture Study, a program of prayerful study of the Bible that will begin in our parish on \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_.

There are many reasons to study the Bible:

- The Scriptures are at the heart of our Catholic faith, and every effort to know the Bible is an effort to understand our faith.
- As the word of God, the Bible has the potential to deepen our relationship with God and transform our lives.
- Studying and reflecting on the word of God is the best means of forming people into true communities of faith.

We want to put the Bible at the heart of our faith formation efforts. Little Rock Scripture Study consists of daily personal reflection, weekly small-group sharing, a weekly wrap-up lecture, and prayer. The method is designed to create a balance between learning about the Bible and applying the Bible to our daily lives.

We want to make sure that right here in our parish we offer a valuable experience of studying the Bible with fellow Catholics, using the best scholarship our tradition has to offer in a way that is simple and effective.

This program of study will appeal to those who have never studied the Bible before, as well as those who have been reading the Bible for quite a while. You do not need to worry if you lack understanding or experience. We will all be learning together and supporting one another in this rewarding adventure.

If personal Bible reading and shared reflection on the Bible are not already a part of your life, I encourage you to become part of this outstanding program that will enrich your life and the life of our parish.

Yours in Christ,

## *Homily Ideas*

### **CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING CONTRASTING REALITIES:**

- The Bible is the book of the church, the people of God. However, many Catholics do not feel comfortable using the Bible or read it on a regular basis.
- The Liturgy of the Word is essential to Catholic worship. However, many Catholics do not understand the background or context of the Scripture readings proclaimed at Mass.
- The Bible is at the heart of the Catholic tradition of faith. However, few Catholics are able to articulate the meaning of basic passages from the Bible when in dialogue with others.
- Scripture is a fundamental source of God's revelation and truth. However, few Catholics turn to the Bible for guidance and inspiration.
- Our church teaches that the Bible should be the foundation of religious education and formation. However, few Catholics have taken a course on the Bible or studied it seriously.

### **SOME IDEAS YOU MAY WISH TO DEVELOP:**

- Describe how the Lectionary readings have deepened people's understanding of God, challenged their actions, and formed them into community throughout salvation history. The Scriptures continue to have those effects in our lives, enabling us to experience the presence of God and the power of God's word more deeply.
- Emphasize that the foundation of our Catholic faith is the Scriptures. The Bible is the book of the church. The more we know the Bible, the more we are able to appreciate our faith.
- We believe that in the proclamation of Scripture we have the opportunity to encounter Christ in a personal and profound way.
- The church teaches that Bible reading is an essential part of our Catholic lives. If we study the Bible, we are better able to understand the readings at Mass, explain our faith to others, teach it to our children, and use it to form our lives.
- The constant challenge of Christian life is to live in such a way that our faith commitment is reflected in our daily living. The example of our ancestors in faith, along with the teachings of Christ and his followers in the early church, can help us to discover ways to witness that are effective and genuine.

- The Bible can give us understanding, hope, confidence, comfort, and challenge. The same Holy Spirit that has guided the church through the ages works in our lives as we read the inspired Scriptures.
- When we pay attention to the Scriptures, we discover that God's presence is available to us in ordinary and extraordinary ways.



## *Witness Talk Ideas*

When encouraging others to study the Scriptures, the most effective witness is to describe what the word of God has meant in your own life. When we give witness, we offer an invitation to see what God has in store for each of us.

- Using the Scriptures for personal prayer and reflection can deeply transform a person's attitudes and approach to life. The word of God can challenge us, console us, convict us, and motivate us. It can remind us of our own dignity as a son or daughter of God. It helps us to know God better and to know ourselves better in relationship to our Creator and Redeemer.
- Help people to realize that this program of Bible study is for people who face the ordinary struggles and routines we find in marriage, family, and work. Too many people delay studying Scripture until their lives are calmer and time is more available. Those kinds of delays may prevent people from ever studying the Bible. Appeal to the need we all have to reflect on the word of God in the present moment of our lives.
- Communicate the following:
  - Little Rock Scripture Study is for you as you are now.
  - Little Rock Scripture Study will affect your everyday life in good ways.
  - Little Rock Scripture Study requires a limited time commitment of a set number of weeks.
- This program of Bible study will give us sustenance, challenge, and hope in the midst of daily living. God's word will make a difference in our lives when we make the effort to explore it.
- There are many biblical images that describe the transforming power of God's word in our lives. You may wish to use one or more of these images as the foundation of your personal witness:
  - life-giving rain (Isa 55:10-11)
  - a light for our path (Ps 119:105)
  - constant source of vitality (Isa 40:8)
  - fire and hammer (Jer 23:29)
  - fertile seed (Mark 4:14, 20)
  - two-edged sword (Heb 4:12)
  - motivation for action (Jas 1:21-22)
  - source of community (Acts 20:32)
- Encourage participation in Scripture study by being clear about what it will involve. Explain that it consists of creating a habit of brief daily home study, and a weekly meeting for prayer, discussion, and a wrap-up lecture. Also, indicate the dates and times, and how to register.

## Sample Bulletin or Website Announcements

It's often said that repetition is vital when communicating, and advertising is one form of communication. Place announcements in the parish bulletin and/or on the parish website several weeks in advance, and repeated several times. Make your announcements inviting, motivating, and clearly informative. (See samples below.)

- Sample 1    The word of God is a seed. We need to nurture the ground of our lives to allow the seed to grow and bear fruit within us. Plan to attend our parish study of the *Gospel of Mark* beginning on \_\_\_\_date\_\_\_\_. We will meet for ten sessions on Monday evenings from 6:30–8:00 p.m. in the parish hall. Registration will take place at all Masses on the weekend of \_\_\_\_date\_\_\_\_.
- Sample 2    Would you like to explore the meaning that the Bible holds for you today? Would you like to become more comfortable discussing Scripture with other Christians? Please join with members of our parish as we study *Introduction to the Bible*, Sundays, 10:00–11:30 a.m., beginning on \_\_\_\_date\_\_\_\_. We'll meet for seven sessions in the community building. Register by \_\_\_\_date\_\_\_\_ online at the parish website, at the parish office, or by calling John Smith at \_\_\_\_phone number\_\_\_\_.
- Sample 3    We want you! Little Rock Scripture Study groups are forming to study *Pilgrim People*, a five-week course that invites us to enter into the journey of our lives with God at our side. Wednesdays at either 10:00–11:30 a.m. or 7:00–8:30 p.m. \_\_\_\_date\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_date\_\_\_\_. The program includes individual study with resources provided, as well as weekly prayer and small-group discussions followed by a wrap-up lecture.



Make use of the Little Rock Scripture Study logo to draw attention to your message.



*Ignorance of the Scriptures  
is ignorance of Christ.*

St. Jerome



*The premier Catholic Bible Study  
—three million strong!*

***Let the word of God influence your busy life!***

- Gain a fuller understanding of God's word.
- Receive a richer appreciation of our faith tradition.
- Grow in your relationship with Christ.
- Experience a fuller sense of Christian community.

Little Rock Scripture Study provides a rich spiritual learning experience through prayer, personal study and reflection, weekly small-group faith sharing, and wrap-up lectures.

Join us in an informal setting as we make real connections  
between our faith and our everyday lives.

---

TITLE OF STUDY

---

NUMBER OF SESSIONS

---

DATES

---

DAY OF WEEK

---

TIME

---

LOCATION

## *Child Care for Young Families*

Often, parents with small children are unable to participate in parish programs because of the need to care for their children. When parishes provide child care and publicize it as a service to parents, participation in Scripture study can increase significantly. Providing this service is a way of saying, “We want to do all we can to help you participate.”

Parishes might offer these services by considering a variety of volunteer resources within the parish community, or by paying for services as part of the parish budget, or collecting funds from those whose children will use the child care being offered. Parish youth groups and local Catholic high school students are sometimes willing to work with children as part of a service program.

Ensure that all who work with children have completed training in the parish or diocesan safe environment program.

When child care is offered, it can be beneficial to offer Bible-based activities for children. Children’s Bible programs are available from a variety of publishers. Also, consider using biblical coloring books and crafts, Bible stories for children of various ages, movies and music with biblical themes, and so on. This type of program offers child care with an emphasis on ministry of the Word with children.



# Commissioning Service for Small-Group Facilitators and Coordinators

Blessing and commissioning the coordinators and facilitators of the parish Scripture study is a sign of mutual commitment: their commitment to the life of the parish, and the parish's commitment to their service. It is a reminder, too, that such service is a legitimate ministry within the community and a way of answering God's call.

When commissioning leaders *within the celebration of Mass*, begin the service after the homily, calling by name those who are designated as coordinators and facilitators. Once they have come forward, the presider begins with "Explanation of the Service" and prays only the sections below that are indicated with an asterisk (\*).

To commission leaders at a *communal prayer service outside of Mass*, follow the service below in its entirety.

## OPENING SONG/ENTHRONEMENT OF THE WORD

The Bible is carried reverently during an opening song of your choosing, with candle bearers leading the way with lighted candles. The presider (priest or deacon) follows. The Bible is placed on a table or stand and the candles are placed beside it. All bow to the Bible and then take their places.

**Presider:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

**Presider:** May Christ, who guides us with his Word, be with each of you.

**All:** And may Christ be welcomed by all gathered here.

## \*EXPLANATION OF SERVICE

**Presider:** My sisters and brothers, we gather today to commission and bless those who will lead the Scripture study program of \_\_\_\_\_ parish.

The church has always venerated the Sacred Scriptures as she venerates the Body of the Lord. The church promotes wide access to the Scriptures and encourages us to read, study, and meditate on the word of God.

In accepting this ministry of God's word, these men and women have responded to the call we each received at baptism. Committed to prayer, work, and study, they will walk with others on a faith journey seeking comfort, confidence, and challenge in the living word of God.

#### **READING**

Choose from among the following suggestions:

Isaiah 55:1-3a, 10-11a

Romans 10:11-15

Colossians 3:12-17

1 Peter 1:22-25

#### **HOMILY OR REFLECTION**

The presider may give a brief homily or reflection.

Those to be commissioned are called forward by name and stand facing the presider, where they remain until after the Sign of Commitment/Presentation.

#### **\*INTERCESSIONS**

**Presider:** Let us pray together to God, the giver of all gifts, as we respond:

LET THE LIGHT OF YOUR WORD SHINE UPON US.

**Reader:** Give us humble and trusting hearts, that we may rely on the Holy Spirit in all our efforts, O Lord, we pray:

LET THE LIGHT OF YOUR WORD SHINE UPON US.

**Reader:** Encourage us in our commitment to read and study your word in the Scriptures. Free us from obstacles, excuses, and our own fears, O Lord, we pray:

LET THE LIGHT OF YOUR WORD SHINE UPON US.

**Reader:** Deepen our commitment to prayer, the source and wellspring of guidance and strength, O Lord, we pray:

LET THE LIGHT OF YOUR WORD SHINE UPON US.

**Reader:** Help us to create a climate of openness and love where we can grow as a parish community, sharing our experiences of faith and daily living, O Lord, we pray:

LET THE LIGHT OF YOUR WORD SHINE UPON US.

**Reader:** Challenge us to respond to your Word, especially on behalf of those who are lonely, poor, hungry, or who suffer injustices of any kind, O Lord, we pray:

LET THE LIGHT OF YOUR WORD SHINE UPON US.

With hands outstretched over those being commissioned, the presider concludes the General Intercessions with the Prayer of Blessing.

**\*PRAYER OF BLESSING**

**Presider:** Loving God, your Word nourishes and guides us all.  
Bless and strengthen our brothers and sisters  
who will help others to study our living Word.  
Send your Holy Spirit to guide them and to help them carry out  
their duties with Christian concern for all who take part  
in this Scripture study.  
Give them the grace to truly listen.  
Help them to know when to affirm, encourage, and challenge,  
and when to be silent.  
Calm their fears, Lord, and give them the courage to trust  
their abilities and to rely on your Spirit.  
We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ.

**All:** Amen.

**\*SIGN OF COMMITMENT/PRESENTATION**

After the prayer of blessing, one of the following methods may be used:

- Those being commissioned come forward one by one and lay their hands on an open Bible, each making a silent personal commitment to the word of God.
- The presider prays silently over each person to be commissioned. After the prayer, the person being commissioned responds: "May the word of God be on my mind, on my lips, and in my heart."
- A gift Bible, a certificate of your own making, a quote from Scripture, pin, or other appropriate symbolic gift may be presented to each person being commissioned.

The presider may address the congregation in these or similar words before instructing the leaders to return to their places.

**Presider:** We praise and thank God for these coworkers and pledge our support to their ministry.

#### **CONCLUSION**

**Presider:** May grace and peace be yours through knowledge of God and of Jesus, his Son.

**All:** Amen.

**Presider:** May the word of God, in all its richness, dwell in your hearts and may you always welcome God's word with its power to save.

**All:** Amen.

**Presider:** And may Almighty God bless you all, in the name of the Father, and of the Son (†), and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

(In the absence of a priest, another leader may say:)

The Lord bless you and keep you!

The Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you!

The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!

**All:** Amen.

#### **CLOSING SONG**

# Evaluation

- Evaluation of the parish Scripture study is valuable for both leaders and participants and is essential for the health of the program. Without regular feedback within groups, problems may emerge and escalate, mistakes get repeated, good ideas remain undeveloped, and good work may not be recognized.
- Two types of evaluation will be of benefit: informal evaluation in small groups during the study and formal evaluation at the end of each study.
- Informal evaluations help to reinforce the lesson that our behaviors in the group have an impact on others and on the process. Consider the following as types of informal evaluation:
  - Every few weeks, a few moments at the end of a small-group session could be used to check the group's progress. Allow group members to make comments and suggestions regarding the group process and the quality of the discussion.
  - The facilitator may occasionally ask for brief written feedback. For example, the following could be used: "Name one strength and one weakness in our group process," or "I liked . . . , I suggest . . ."
  - It is also possible to ask group members to do a self-evaluation for their own personal reflection. Consider one's commitment to prayer, preparation, presence, and participation.
- At the end of each course of study, make plans to use a more formal tool for evaluation (see sample on following pages).
  - Provide an opportunity to include those who stayed and those who may have left the program. Be sure to allow anyone who even began Bible study to offer feedback.
  - You may discover some interesting misperceptions or suggestions for future use.
  - Plan a meeting or some other way for facilitators and coordinators to review the completed evaluations and discuss the overall impressions as well as particular concerns.
  - Provide feedback to Bible study participants to summarize the positive things that were heard, and to address any suggestions or concerns.



## *Scripture Study Evaluation*

1. I have a deeper understanding of the Bible as a result of this study.	Disagree 1	2	3	4	Agree 5
2. I am encouraged to continue studying Scripture as a result of this course.	1	2	3	4	5
3. This study had a positive effect on my life of faith.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Our group shared freely in a supportive way with insights that were helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The facilities and meeting room were suitable to our needs.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Bible study has helped me grow in appreciation of the church and Christian community.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The quality of Conversational Prayer in our group was . . .	Poor 1	2	Good 3	4	Excellent 5
8. The quality of my commitment to Daily Personal Study was . . .	1	2	3	4	5
9. The quality of our Small-Group Sharing and discussion was . . .	1	2	3	4	5
10. The quality of the Wrap-Up Lectures for this course was . . .	1	2	3	4	5
11. The number of participants in our small group was . . .	Too few 1	2	About right 3	4	Too many 5
12. The amount of reading and preparation required was . . .	Too little 1	2	About right 3	4	Too much 5

What most affected your decision to participate in Bible study?

What aspects of this study did you find most valuable?

In what ways has your understanding or appreciation for God's word changed as a result of this study?

Will you be willing to participate in the next study? Why, or why not?

Identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of your small group.

Would you be willing to serve as a facilitator in the future? Or is there a person or two in your group who might be effective in this role?

Do you have any suggestions for how to publicize or invite greater participation in Bible study in the future?

## *Preparing and Delivering a Wrap-Up Lecture*

The Wrap-Up Lecture, presented at the end of each weekly session, is a valuable component of Little Rock Scripture Study. It may be presented in a recorded format (DVD or CD purchased from Little Rock Scripture Study) or may be presented by local speakers. Many parishes use a combination of these two methods.

The Wrap-Up Lecture is not the primary focus of the weekly session, and should not be presented before the discussion. The purpose is to develop and clarify themes that emerged from the Scriptures that were studied and discussed in that given lesson. It serves as a final focus for the group and is meant to challenge participants to greater expression of their faith.

Applying the Scriptures to daily life is often best done by local speakers familiar with the needs of the community and the opportunities found there. We offer the following guidelines to help speakers prepare their lectures.

The Wrap-Up Lecture is not

- a homily;
- a point-by-point review of each question from the Study Guide;
- a commentary on each verse or section of the assigned Scripture passages.

The Wrap-Up Lecture is

- informational as well as formational;
- a product of prayerful preparation and study;
- meant to help participants apply the Scriptures to their lives (how do the Scriptures speak to the church, the world, and individuals in our time?);
- intended to offer further understanding of the passages being studied (what can be learned from additional scholarship that the group members may not have access to?).

## **ADVANCE PREPARATION**

### **1. Read and pray with the assigned Scripture passages.**

- Each lesson includes assigned chapters or passages of Scripture. Read the passages for the given lesson in their entirety and allow them to be the focus of your prayer.
- Make note of anything that “jumps out” at you. Are there any thoughts or feelings that occur to you as you read these verses?
- Make note of anything that is confusing or may be difficult for you or others to understand. These notes will help you focus some of your research as you prepare the lecture.

### **2. Review the questions in the Study Guide.**

- You are not expected to address each of the questions or provide answers to the group, but it will be helpful to review the questions as a way of anticipating the kind of faith sharing and discussion that will have occurred before your lecture is presented.
- Again, make note of any questions that might benefit from further discussion, self-examination, or scholarly insight.

### **3. Examine commentaries for scholarly insight into the assigned Scripture readings.**

- You will want to read the commentary that is being used by the participants as part of their Study Set.
- In addition, make use of other commentaries available from a variety of Catholic publishers (e.g., Sacra Pagina series, Berit Olam series, The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, etc.).
- The work of skilled Scripture scholars will help you to organize your thoughts and may give you new insights to share with the group.

## **ORGANIZING THE LECTURE**

The Wrap-Up Lecture may take a variety of approaches to the material under study.

### **1. Follow the story line.**

- If you choose to follow the story line as it appears in the particular passages assigned for a given lesson, remember that the participants are already familiar with the material. They will have read the Scriptures and the commentary, answered the questions in the Study Guide, and will have had a small-group discussion.

- Be careful not to repeat too much of the Scripture text or commentary but instead call upon insights from the scholarship you examined, and from your own personal reflection.
- Aim for a good balance between interpretation and application.

## **2. Take a thematic approach.**

- As you study and pray with the assigned Scripture texts, one or two themes may emerge that you wish to develop. With this approach, you are able to “reorganize” the material around the theme you feel could be emphasized.
- For example, there may be a variety of teachings or events that emphasize the cost of discipleship throughout several chapters of the Gospel of Mark. You would be able to draw these together and offer insights about discipleship rather than treating each passage as it occurs in the order of the text.
- This approach may allow you to draw on personal experience or other genres (e.g., music, poetry) more easily.

## **3. Select one or two stories within the assigned texts.**

- Select one or two stories or teachings that struck you in the passages being studied. Sometimes within a longer assignment one or two events resonate with your personal experience or that of your parish in a way that warrants additional attention.
- This approach may also allow you to tackle some of those difficult passages you noticed and offer new insights gained from reading a variety of commentaries.

Whatever method you choose, bear in mind the following four questions that help to guide any study of Scripture:

- What does the passage *say*? (observation)
- What does the passage *mean*? (interpretation)
- What does the passage *mean to me*? (reflection)
- What am I going to *do about it*? (application)

# How to Enrich Your Parish Scripture Study

If your parish Scripture study is not as successful as you would like, don't get discouraged. A careful analysis of your program may lead you to discover ways to become more effective. We know the problem is not the subject matter; the Bible is capable of holding its own as a subject of study and reflection. The problems lie in other areas that you may be able to address. Consider the following possibilities.

## **DECLINING ATTENDANCE WITHIN THE PROGRAM**

A small decline in the number of participants through the weeks of a course of study is natural. If the decline is significant, there are several aspects of your program that could need attention:

- Effective facilitators are the most important ingredient for a thriving program. Leadership Training is essential for every facilitator. Encouragement and attention to their needs will greatly benefit them and all those who attend Bible study.
- After Leadership Training, facilitators will benefit from periodic opportunities for further development and enrichment. Programs to improve communication and facilitation skills are most beneficial. (See a brief list of supplemental resources at our [website](#) or in our catalog, focusing especially on *Facilitating for Growth* by Barbara Fleischer.)
- Changes in leadership can be healthy. Both coordinators and facilitators need to step back periodically and help develop new leaders for the program. New ideas, approaches, and personalities will help revive programs that may be struggling.
- Group members who are frequently absent may need a gentle reminder and invitation to return. Personal contact with them is very effective.
- Frequent informal evaluation within the small groups and among facilitators will allow problems to be identified early before frustration sets in.
- Make a consistent effort to adhere to the agreed upon time frame each week. Starting and ending on time demonstrates respect for the participants and sensitivity to their other obligations.
- Lack of personal preparation by participants is sometimes the result of being pressed for time, and can lead to discouragement and decline in attendance. Occasionally provide time within the group for members to discuss how they carve out time in busy schedules, and to identify the personal benefits they experience.

## **LACK OF INTEREST WITHIN THE PARISH**

When your parish Scripture study attracts only a small percentage of people within the parish, it's time to analyze your promotional efforts. The following suggestions may help:

- Increase the visibility of the program within your parish. Review the many methods of reaching people outlined on pages 71–72 and make sure that you are using as many avenues of communication as possible.
- Challenge each person involved in the program to personally invite another person (“each one bring one”). This has the potential of doubling your attendance.
- Make an effort to assure that potential new members feel welcome to join an existing group. If a group is together for several courses, it may be unconsciously sending a signal that new members are not welcome or will not fit in.
- A course such as *Introduction to the Bible* will give people the background needed to feel more comfortable joining a Scripture study program. Experienced Bible study participants will also benefit from this course since it helps to identify appropriate ways to read and interpret the Scriptures, as well as articulates the Catholic Christian use of Scripture. By doing this together, all begin feeling they have an equal footing.
- Publicity after a study is almost as important as promotion before the study. A bulletin board in the parish facility or online at the parish website is an ideal place to display photographs and use comments gleaned from the evaluations of participants. Also consider writing an article in the parish newsletter describing the impact that Scripture study is having in the lives of participants.

## **LACK OF DIVERSITY AMONG PARTICIPANTS**

Ideally, your parish Bible study should reflect the wide variety of people within your parish. If the program only attracts a certain segment of your parish population, you may need to evaluate the level of inclusiveness, and come up with an action plan to reach more of those not represented:

- If your parish program is attracting predominantly older people, consider what you are not offering that might attract younger adults: child care, facilitators in their age group, different time frames, and so forth.
- If your program attracts primarily women, make sure that men are a part of your planning team and among the facilitators. Assure that men are visible in the promotional efforts and that couples are encouraged to attend together as a way to strengthen their relationships.

- If your program is not ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse, make sure your promotional efforts reflect that diversity, especially by making personal contact within these households.
- Many of the Little Rock Scripture Study materials are available in English and in Spanish. While your parish may have groups meeting at different times, consider planning a potluck or prayer gathering to bring all participants together, witnessing to the diversity that is there. Plan a bilingual prayer service to accompany the variety of foods supplied by different groups.

