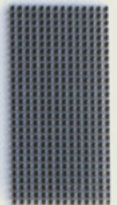




IS THERE MORE?



A BIBLE STUDY FOR THE NON-RELIGIOUS

USER GUIDE



Young people are increasingly apathetic, cynical, or even hostile towards the Church.

THIS IS A GLOBAL REALITY

We are living in an increasingly secularized culture. This generation is overwhelmed with loneliness, anxiety, and depression... and sadly, they are NOT looking to the Church for answers. These are our brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, friends and co-workers. Many are suspicious of religious institutions, but they ARE open to having spiritual conversations.

From these conversations, many respond positively to Jesus. How can we offer a next step for those who initially struggle to connect with a local church?

To help bridge the gap between secularized culture and the Church, Steiger has created the **IsThereMore?** tools, including the **Bible Study for the Non-Religious**.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

More than a set of materials, the **IsThereMore? Bible Study for the Non-Religious** will train you to engage non-believers with the Bible and help them discover it for themselves. It is a great way for people to experience God through His Word in a neutral and informal setting, whether they have already decided to follow Jesus or are simply interested in knowing more.

At the end of this user guide, you will find a series of Bible study materials and training resources that will help you get started.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

Running an **IsThereMore? Bible Study** is about providing an opportunity for people who don't know Jesus to do two things: meet Him through contact with His Word and become part of a community.

This is not another meeting for Christians. The point is to create a community where people who don't consider themselves religious feel welcome and belong, where they can ask questions, disagree, and discuss relevant topics.

Community is a powerful response to our fragmented and detached culture. Authentic relationships, acceptance, and a united sense of purpose can help people discover their identity in Jesus.



PREPARATION

Build Your Team

Find a team of 2-3 dedicated people who are passionate about the unique vision of this Bible Study. Meet together for prayer and preparation every week.

Work as a group to reach new people in your city, build relationships, and promote your Bible study in a way that is attractive to non-religious people.

This is not a once and done course. Focus on building long-term [discipleship relationships](#) and a community that will last.

If you have many Christian friends who want to partner in this, consider splitting into multiple groups. You don't want to fill your meetings with Christians, as this can be intimidating for your non-Christian friends and often discourages open discussion.



Find a Location

Host your Bible study in a non-religious environment. It might be a café, a club, a cultural center, a community house, a park, or somewhere else where people naturally gather. Sometimes it can help to start the Bible study in the same location or near where you have held an evangelistic event or where your regular local evangelism happens.

Finding a neutral venue like this is essential, as it can be challenging for people to walk into a church. Go to where the people you want to reach are.

Draw People In

For this Bible study to be effective, it has to be integrated with ongoing relational presence in secular places and active creative evangelism. Get out and meet new people! Find places you can regularly go, building and investing in new relationships. Use Steiger's [tools and resources](#) to support you in engaging in the evangelistic work that should precede the start-up of this study.

When you invite people to the Bible study, be clear and upfront about the purpose of the gatherings and what you will do. Promote your meetings on social media and encourage participants to invite their friends.



Study the Bible

We recommend going through a book of the Bible during the course of your meetings. It is best to start with one of the Gospels for new groups. We offer materials on a few different books of the Bible. For this example, let's look at preparing a Bible study on the Gospel of John.

Before you facilitate a group discussion on a Bible text, you need to prepare and understand it well. Read through all of John. While reading, pray that God would reveal Himself to you as you reflect on the following questions:

1. What is the context? (place, time, culture, issues, author, readers)
2. What is the writer's purpose? Why did they write the book?
3. What are some of the themes? Is there a main theme?

After making your own notes on the book, look at what some Bible commentaries say about John. Most study Bibles have commentaries; you can also find them online or in bookshops.

After this background preparation, you are ready to study each specific passage that will be focused on in the meetings. Study the verses and look for the **facts, meaning, and application**.



1. Facts: What does the passage actually say? What are the facts?

Read the passage carefully and write down the specifics you see, such as who is there, what is happening, and when, where, and how it is happening.

Circle or write down words, phrases, or ideas that connect by repeating, contrasting, being similar, going from the general to the particular, or stating a cause that leads to an effect.

2. Meaning: What does it mean? What did the author intend it to mean?

What questions does the passage raise in your mind? What words, phrases, or concepts don't you understand? Does the passage turn in any unexpected ways? What intrigues you? Write these questions down.

3. Application: What is God saying to me, and how will I put this into practice in my life?

Step back and read the passage a few times again. Ponder the points that stand out to you. What does the text say or point to about Jesus? Ask Jesus what He has for you personally in the passage.

As you ponder your study, do you sense that God is speaking to any part of your life? Is there a promise to trust, a command to obey, or an example to follow or avoid? Is there a deeper insight into God or your experience with God? What action will you take in response to what God is saying to you?



4. Summarize

Write down the key thoughts and questions that came up under each step (facts, meaning, and application). Identify the main points of this passage. Develop 4 or 5 questions that can help the group come to their own understanding of the passage and the main points you identified.

Our attached John study already presents an introduction and questions for each passage, but you must do your own personal study of the passage to be ready for the meeting. You can use your own questions instead of, or in addition to, the ones in this resource. Ultimately, it is the themes and questions that the group brings up that will be your most valuable material to lead the discussion. Once you have gone through this preparation process, you are ready to start your Bible study!



HOW TO RUN THE BIBLE STUDY

The key goal is to help the group discover the truths in the Bible through asking good questions, looking for answers, and seeking Jesus together. Your role is to assist the group in digging into the passage, rather than just to share your insights and answer their questions. In essence, we want people to experience the power of God's revelation through His Word.



Building the Community

In every aspect of running your study, evaluate how it helps or hinders the formation of a community.

- Welcome newcomers. No one should be able to slide into the group unnoticed. Before diving into your study, take time to welcome new people as a group and get to know a little bit about them.
- Skeptics belong. People don't have to be Christians or believe in the authority of the Bible to participate and belong to the group.
- Value everyone's contribution. People will often say things you disagree with or feel are off-topic. Others won't say anything until you directly ask them to. Facilitate the conversation so that everyone gets to speak.
- Spend time together. Community can only happen if you allow the group to spend time together. Find ways to connect beyond the actual Bible study time.
- Offer application steps. Offer your group opportunities to live out what they are reading. Where could your group serve in your community? As people discover the truth and who they truly are, they will also find a new passion to be involved in changing the world around them.



Materials

We don't recommend handing out study guides or lists of questions to the group. The Bible is sufficient. You need to be able to be flexible with where the conversation leads, not tied down to a set of questions.

Our [Bible study resources](#) include an introduction to help you think of a way to start the meeting. Do not read it out loud to the group or memorize it as a speech. Use it as a preparation aid, not a format to follow.

You will find more engagement in your Bible study when it is just your group and the text. Paper handouts, forms, discussion paths, and the like often hinder conversation and prevent the group from discussing the actual questions and challenges that each member has about the text.



The Study

If you gather the right group of people for your study, many will never have walked into a church or read the Bible before.

You have to start with the basics of how to read the Bible. Help your group learn to observe and discover its message and the living God behind it. It is vital that they learn how to do this on their own so that they can begin a lifelong journey of reading and studying the Bible.

To do this, focus on the group reading the Bible and generating ideas together. Get the group to share what they see in the passage and what questions it raises. Then dig together for answers.

This method is particularly relevant to the current culture. In a time of skepticism toward institutions and authorities, people today are not inclined just to sit and listen to a leader explain what they should believe. They are more interested in an open dialogue, expressing their own thoughts and experiences, and discovering the truth together.

Contribute to each discussion - and remember you are not there to teach, but rather to facilitate the discussion. Focus on listening and asking questions. The objective should be for those you invite to do most of the talking. Listening is a powerful way to show love.



A Bible Study for the Non-Religious could look like this:

- Spend some time building a sense of community before you start. Try to create a fun, relaxing atmosphere. Get to know each other, enjoy conversation, laugh, and build authentic relationships. Depending on the context, you could offer snacks or share a meal.
- Offer a 15-minute introduction, including an ice breaker, and read/have someone read the passage out loud
- Take 15 minutes to explore the passage as a group, sharing observations and listing questions it raises
- Spend 30 minutes trying to find answers to those questions in the text
- Close with 10 minutes of summarizing the passage, discussing what applying it to our life today would look like, and prayer.

[*See Below for a Full Example Meeting Outline](#)



Remember, many in your group will have never read the Bible before. Some will come with preconceived ideas about the text. You will need to help steer the group in the right direction. Be sensitive to moments in the discussion when you can reinforce the following ideas.

- **Facts Before Theories:** Sometimes, we try to make the Bible say what we want it to by pushing our own ideas onto it. Instead, we want the Bible to tell us what it says. Encourage the group to first observe what the text says rather than jumping to their own theories about its meaning.
- **Author Determines Meaning:** The author of each book of the Bible, in his own context, determines what they intended. It means seeking to understand what the author wanted his original audience to understand rather than what it sounds like to us in our modern context.
- **Understanding Requires Application:** It's important to not only understand the passage but also to question our assumptions and beliefs. How do we apply these truths to our lives? What will this study change in my life?



People may not trust the Bible the same way you do, but it is still possible to guide the group with these principles.

It is not uncommon for difficult questions to arise, including the challenging of biblical texts or the reliability of the Bible. We have provided a list of resources at the end of this guide to help you navigate these questions.

While we encourage you to prepare well for these studies, don't let the fear of being unprepared keep you from starting. Your gathering will probably not run perfectly the first time you meet. That is okay. You will learn and grow each time you meet and become a better facilitator with practice. **Remember that you are not putting on a teaching performance but building a community.**

Pray, take the risk to meet people, and invite them to read the Bible with you. Trust that God will do the rest.



EXAMPLE MEETING OUTLINE

Introduction (15 min)

- Start the conversation with a creative icebreaker to catch everyone's attention. Share a story or an interesting fact for people to think about or discuss.
- Read the passage out loud. Show newcomers how to find the Bible and the passage you're reading on their phones so they can follow along.

Group Exploring (15 min)

- Have the group share their observations and questions from the passage. Take notes on what is said so you can return to them.
- Don't answer the questions yet! This is a brainstorming time, so it should be lively and dynamic, with everyone sharing thoughts and questions.
- Help the group generate ideas by asking questions like, "What caught your attention? How would you describe what is happening? What did you understand about this passage? What else did you notice?" Make sure you ask open-ended questions that make people think rather than detailed questions like, "Who did Jesus encounter on the road to Samaria?"



Seek Answers (30 min)

- Walk through the passage using the key questions that the group identified.
- Use the questions in the Bible study material or your own questions when necessary to cover the key sections of the text.
- Encourage the group to seek answers in the passage. Be ready to share your answers, but focus on helping the group discover them on their own first.

Summary and Application (10 min)

- After walking through the passage and answering the questions as a group, a few main themes should emerge. Summarize those with a few sentences.
- Ask one or two questions that encourage personal application.
- Example: “Does the passage we read today change how you see Jesus in any way? If so, what does that mean for you?”
- End with the key application points challenging the group to put what they have heard into practice. The [**IsThereMore? Bible Study**](#) material includes an application point and conclusion to help end the meeting with a clear and powerful message.
- End with prayer. Ask if anyone needs prayer. This can be a powerful time, especially for people who have not prayed much before. If you have the right audience (non-believers), they will not be comfortable to praying just yet, so you should pray for them.



RESOURCES

Looking for additional resources? The following books, videos, and tools will help you prepare for leading your Bible study.

- [IsThereMore? Bible Study For The Non-Religious](#), 2022
- [Global Youth Culture](#), Luke Greenwood, Steiger International, 2019
- [Jesus in the Secular World](#), Ben Pierce, Steiger International, 2018
- [Spiritual Conversations for the Non-Religious](#) Tool, Steiger International, 2021
- [The Reason for God](#), Timothy Keller, Hodder & Stoughton, 2008
- [The Bible Study Handbook](#), Lindsay Olesburg, InterVarsity Press, 2012
- [The Bible Project](#), Tim Mackie and John Collins
- [Deflate](#), Lukas Ruegger

You can find more resources for your church at

steiger.org/resources



WE MOBILIZE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS TO
REACH YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WOULD
NOT WALK INTO A CHURCH



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