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Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home, in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, students, business colleagues or teens. That’s why we’ve designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the ‘big picture’ of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to apply appropriately what we have discovered to our lives. Let’s take a look at what is included:

- 🗨️ **Talkabout:** most groups need to ‘break the ice’ at the beginning of a session, and here’s the question that will do that. It’s designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ⬇️ **Investigate:** the Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. **The Leader’s Guide** contains **guidance on questions**, and sometimes 🗨️ additional ‘follow-up’ questions.
- 🗺️ **Explore more (optional):** these questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to understand how the Bible fits together as a whole.
- ➡️ **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you’ll keep coming across **apply** sections. The first part has questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. The second part, 🗨️ **getting personal**, is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have discovered.
- ⬆️ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God’s Word—in line with His concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader’s Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God’s Word.

Why study *How to be sure?*

Do you wish you could be more confident? Some people never seem to suffer a moment's doubt about anything, whereas you fret and agonise with constant uncertainty. OK, so you're a Christian, but doesn't that just mean there are more and bigger things to be unsure about? We can be unsure about the truth of the gospel message; about whether God will judge or punish us; about whether our forgiveness is secure; about how to continue in the Christian life; and about our guidance for the future.

And so many different 'Christian' voices speak to us on matters of eternal life and death. How can we be sure of the real truth about Jesus? How do we know for certain that we are saved? How can we tell if others are truly from God or not?

At a time when the first-century church had been invaded by false teachers, the apostle John knew that Christians who are not sure of God's truth can wander away, never to return. He wrote to help his 'dear children', not only to know the real truth, but to be confident of it.

If then, why not today? We all urgently need to hear and obey God's loving message in this letter of John's. This Good Book Guide will help us to continue in Christ, so that we may be discerning about the truth, confident in its meaning for our lives and unashamed when He returns.





1 John 1 v 1-10

THE HEART OF THE MATTER



talkabout

1. What pressures do Christians, preachers and church leaders face to change the Christian message today?



investigate

The apostle John wrote to a group in churches in what is modern-day Turkey. False teachers were saying that physical things were evil and spiritual things were good. This led to two dangerous errors:

- They could not believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Instead they said that the human person, Jesus, was anointed by 'the Christ' at His baptism, but then left Him at the cross. Jesus was just an ordinary man who was inspired for part of His life.
- They believed they could live as they wanted because what they did with their bodies does not matter. A distinctive Christian lifestyle was irrelevant.

John insists on the real life and death of Jesus Christ – God in the flesh. And he says that sin matters, and how Christians live is equally important.



Read 1 John 1 v 1-4

2. What is the message that John proclaims? Why do you think he expresses it in this way?



3. What does John say about the Word of life?

4. Why does John proclaim the Word of life?

 **apply**

5. The act of God becoming human is called 'the incarnation'. Why is the testimony of the apostles about the incarnation so important?

- How can we defend the Bible's teaching on the incarnation?

 **getting personal**

Do you think a literal incarnation is important? Do you think the historical facts of Jesus, the God-man, are worth fighting for? Are you *willing* to defend it when the identity of Jesus comes up in conversation?

Do you know the joy of fellowship with God? Do you want other people to share that joy?



investigate

▶ Read 1 John 1 v 5-10

6. 'God is light' (v 5) could mean many things. What does John mean (look at how darkness and light are used in the rest of the passage)?

7. What false claims does John tackle in verses 6-10?

8. How does John respond to these false claims?

9. How is it possible for God to be both faithful *and* just when He forgives sin?



getting personal

When are you most tempted to think that sin doesn't matter?
What kind of sins do you think of as 'little sins'?

What confidence do you have that your future is secure with God?
Is it based on a false confidence in your ability to clean up your life? Or is it a true confidence in the faithfulness of God, expressed in the death of Christ on the cross?





explore more

Compare the opening of John's first letter (1 John 1 v 1-10) with the opening of John's Gospel (John 1 v 1-14). What are the common words and themes? What truths are emphasised in John's teaching?



apply

John opposes people who do not take sin seriously. They think sin does not matter (v 6-7) or can easily be overcome (v 8-10).

10. How might a weak view of sin affect our spiritual lives?

11. Why is it important to keep the cross at the forefront of our lives?



pray

that God would help you

- to trust the message of the apostles about Jesus, the God-man;
- to delight in the God who is light, so that you want to walk in His light;
- to keep the cross at the forefront of your life.

Spend some time confessing your sin (either out loud or in silence). Close by using the words of verses 8-9.