

The Bible is a communal book. It was meant to be read and discussed in community with others. The Communal Layer of the Year of Biblical Literacy takes this into account. If you are not already in a church community going through the Year of Biblical Literacy, we suggest finding 2-3 friends who could commit to journeying with you. A majority of your time spent in the Communal Layer will be around the weekly Small Group (or Community Group in our context) material. This user guide is meant to help you have a general understanding of what we chose to base the material around and why we have chosen to structure the material the way we have.

Small Group Material

Each week's material summarizes the major thematic elements of the portion of Scripture read and offers questions and exercises meant to lead to a deeper understanding and intimacy with God and others. Sometimes these questions are focused on a particular story from the week's reading. Sometimes they are questions that invite individuals to more vulnerably share the deep, true parts of who they are in light of what was read. The goal is not always intellectual knowledge or "Bible study" but true and beautiful connection with Jesus and your community.

Each material is meant to be finished in 90 minutes and has timed guidelines for how long to spend on each section.

Format

Each material is broken up into the following 10 sections.:

YEAR OF
BIBLICAL
LITERACY

1. YOBL Week and Title

What week in the Year of Biblical Literacy the material focuses on and title of the material.

2. Recap & Preparing for CG:

Daily Reading for Week:

A recap of the past week's readings.

Resources for Week:

The portion of the week's reading the material will be centered around. This is the minimum required reading in order to fully participate in the week's community group material. It may also include watching a Read Scripture video.

3. Focus of our time together:

Offers a brief summary of what the material is hoping to accomplish in a given week.

4. Weekly ground rule / goal / value:

The ground rule, goal or value we want to commit to practicing during our 90 minutes together in community as well as an explanation of how to practice this ground rule/goal/value during your time together.

5. Connection and Unity Exercise (Mutual Invitation, 15 minutes):

This opening exercise is meant to build relational intimacy and vulnerability at the beginning of every material. It uses Mutual Invitation as a discussion technique in order to give everyone in the group the opportunity to share.

The guidelines for Mutual Invitation are that the leader selects one person to begin sharing his/her response. After he/she shares, they then invite another person in the group by name to share, to which that person responds by sharing or passing and then inviting yet another to share. Unless you have been invited to share, you should refrain from speaking, unless you need to ask for more clarity because you misunderstood what the person sharing has said. You should also give the person sharing your full attention. The exercise continues until everyone in the group has been invited to share. Mutual Invitation is meant to both re-train us in our discussion techniques as well as to make us increasingly conscious of the various social and power dynamics involved in group conversation. If you cannot remember the person's name, please don't just point but look them in the eyes and say, "Will you remind me your name and would you like to share?"

A few more thoughts about Mutual Invitation:

1) Mutual Invitation can be a useful tool when a discussion is being dominated by one or two individuals leaving others in the group without space to share. Simply apply Mutual Invitation to the next discussion question and remind the group of the ground rules.

2) Mutual Invitation invites each person to take the space and time they need to gather their thoughts before sharing without fear of someone cutting in or speaking before them. When a person is invited they have the freedom to take 5 seconds or 5 minutes to reflect before they share, there should be no pressure for them to respond quickly.

3) Mutual Invitation also gives each person the freedom to pass so they have more time to reflect or if they do not want to share. If a person passes they still get invite the next person to share. At the end of your time circle back and give whoever passed another invitation to share.

6. Opening Prayer:

A written prayer, guidelines for prayer, or portion of Scripture to pray aloud together after the Connection and Unity Exercise.

7. Intro to Discussion:

The Intro to Discussion offers a summary of the week's Scripture reading and dives deeper into context, things to look for, literary characteristics and questions that the reading may have brought up. It is meant to give a foundational understanding of a section of Scripture and set the

trajectory of what the week's discussion will be centered around. Each week's Intro to Discussion may vary in length but are usually around a page long.

8. Questions for Large Group Discussion:

These are questions meant to facilitate large group discussion (6-20 people) and may last up to 75 minutes. Both Questions for Large Group Discussion and Questions for Small Group Discussion may fall into one of five categories.:

Questions for Basic Understanding

These questions are to help us interpret and understand the text as it was intended to be interpreted and understood.

Questions for Listening to Scripture

These questions are to help us be affected by Scripture in the way it was intended to affect us.

Questions for Interacting with Scripture

These questions are to help us slow down to taste and notice Scripture, savour its richness, and meditate on its complexity of meaning.

Questions for Examining Ourselves

These questions are to help us look at ourselves, be aware and honest about who we are in light of our interaction with Scripture and consider any appropriate action.

Questions for Practicing Community

These questions are to help us reflect thoughtfully on our felt experience together in light of our shared ground rules, goals and values.

9. Questions for Small Group Discussion:

These are questions meant for small group discussion around 2-5 people. They often include invitations to share more deeply vulnerable and personal things in smaller, safer spaces.

10. Closing (5 minutes):

Guidelines for how to close your time in prayer together.

Communal Reflection

Every 10 weeks or so we have chosen to forgo a typical material centered around a portion of the week's Scripture reading and chosen instead to engage in a Communal Reflection focused on how your community has functioned, related and loved one another over the past season. We believe deeply that a community centered on Jesus means more than just learning intellectual things about him and the Bible. It also involves having honest and vulnerable conversations about the ways we are succeeding and failing to act like Jesus as a community in relationship together. These Communal Reflections are meant to recalibrate us to