

Get Ready: Preparation Guide

Getting ready to lead an International Essentials session is simple. Each one-page outline can be used as both the leader's guide and as the students' worksheet. It includes directions and guided discussion questions. Print one sheet for each person in your group. Work through the discussion from left hand column to right.

Before you begin: *Pray*

Only God can empower you to have a successful session.

Pray that God will help each person in your group to:

1. Attend the session.
2. Understand what is discussed.
3. Apply the main lesson in a specific way.
4. Share what they learn with someone else.

Four Phases of the Group Discussion Flow

CONNECT with Each Other

Begin with Prayer: Start by finding out how everyone is doing, checking on how their application went from last week, and praying together. Students value connection time, so take time to build friendships through love and trust (both for you with them, and for them with each other). End this time with a prayer to begin the lesson.

Discussion:

Our Lives – Use these questions to draw out personal experiences, to create an authentic atmosphere, and to help group members see the relevance of this lesson to their lives. Encourage them to share experiences from their time in this country and from their home cultures.

Deeper Perspectives – Use these questions to move them from their personal feelings and experiences into foundational values and beliefs.

Lesson Summary: Brief summary to tie the lesson together as a whole. Use the statement to direct you as you lead the students in what they should take away from this time.

Transition: This statement is to help transition into reading God's Word.

Notes:

Use Examples - Be ready to use examples from your life as the group discussion proceeds.

Use Discernment - Use the connection time to assess everyone's spiritual condition. If there are a number of non-Christians present, your session may contain more basic explanations and you may need to be sensitive about prayer times, etc.

HEAR God's Word

Background: There will usually be a paragraph which you can read aloud that will give some good context to the Bible passage.

Passage: Have one or more of the group members read the Bible passage(s) aloud.

Discussion: The Bible discussion questions are designed to be open-ended and thought-provoking. They are also usually ordered to guide the group through the passage and from the theoretical to the practical. However, feel free to come up with your own questions, based on the spiritual interest and maturity of your group. Since your group consists of internationals, you may need to ask questions which clarify or ensure proper understanding.

Each Unit (group of five lessons) includes a Leader's Guide, and that guide may include some alternative Bible discussion questions that you can use if you feel the need.

UNDERSTAND it

This section has two parts: Summary and Clarification

Summary: This part helps the group members to summarize the most important truths and principles in the lesson. Encourage the group to write down summary statements in the space provided. Give examples if they need help to think of good summary statements.

Clarification: This part offers a chance to ask questions if anything remains confusing and to vocalize what has made the deepest impression. Be patient. Encourage them to share, giving examples if they have a hard time getting started talking about these issues.

New Terms: In this section encourage everyone to list any terms or vocabulary they discovered along with a brief definition.

APPLY it to Life

This section also has two parts: Act and Tell. Both give them the chance to think and plan about how to apply what they've learned in the lesson

Act: Give everyone time to think and write, then discuss and pray about what God may be telling them to do in the following week. We want to encourage the group to act upon what they have discussed and learned. Space is given to write these applications down. Occasionally, homework may be included to help them process the lesson's content or to prepare for the following week's lesson.

Tell: One great way to imprint the lesson in their hearts and minds in the following week is to challenge them to share what they have learned with someone who is not in the group (believer or preferably, a non-believer). Lead them and give them time to consider who that person might be and to pray together for him/her. Space is given for them to write that person's name down so that they will remember him/her later in the week.

After several weeks, see if some members of your group might like to lead their own groups. Look for people who are particularly faithful to attend and are excited about the discussion, application and sharing. (People they have been telling week-to-week may be willing to join their new groups.) Talk to them about how important it is for group leaders to be growing in their walk with the Lord. Inconsistency in their walk can undermine a person's credibility with group members. It is a privilege to teach people about God, but it is also an important responsibility.

If they are willing to accept that responsibility, give them a copy of this Preparation Guide and walk with them through it and answer any questions they might have. You might want to help them prepare a lesson. If possible, have them teach a part (or all) of one during one of your group sessions. Give suggestions afterwards to help them get ready to start a new group. Now you are getting seriously involved in spiritual multiplication. Before long, there may be several groups meeting because of how God used you in starting your original group. You will begin to identify with the Apostle John when he said in 1 John 1:4, "We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!"