



- August 5 – Mission, Love Others (Prepare for community)
- August 12 – Love Yourself (Prepare for leadership), Part 1
- August 19 – Love Yourself (Prepare for leadership), Part 2
- **August 26 – Love God (Prepare to prayerfully study His Word), Part 1**
- September 2 – Love God (Prepare to prayerfully study His Word), Part 2

New Small Group Guide for Leaders

Below are some things to do and talk about as you gather together the first few times that will help you become an intentional community.

Before your first meeting

One of your key roles as a leader is to take the lead on communications. Prior to your first meeting, email the group to be sure everyone is clear on when and where you are meeting.

Get to know each other

During your first few meetings, be intentional about taking time to get to know one another.

At your **first meeting** use some basic ice breaker questions:

- Where did you grow up?
- How long have you been coming to WEPC?

At **subsequent meetings**, potentially use one of these questions to go a little deeper:

- Did you grow up going to church?

- What are 2 words you would use to describe your relationship with God right now? How is that different than 3 years ago?
- Talk about 3 life events, positive or negative, that were instrumental in shaping you into the person you are today.

Figure out logistics (some of these may have already been determined)

- How often do you want to meet? Once a week... every other week...
- What day and time do you want to meet? For how long?
- Where do you want to meet? Next time and in general?

Lead a conversation with your group about expectations

- What do each of you hope to get out of this group? What are your expectations?
- What has been your past experience with small groups?
- Here's an optional discussion you could have your first night, especially if you are not jumping right into a study. Read Acts 2:42-47. What do you see about Christian community in these verses? How might that play out in how you do your small group?
- There is no right way, but these elements should generally be included in your small group: study, relationships, prayer, and service. What kind of rhythm could you establish that would help these things take place?

Decide what to study and how to study it

Here are some questions that might help you as a leader in guiding the group towards a study. Generally speaking, it works best for the leader to choose/recommend the first study. Subsequent studies could then be chosen together as a group.

- Are there any particular faith topics that you are struggling with or interested in right now?
- Are there any studies that you have done in the past that would be a great fit for a small group?
- Is anyone excited to and interested in facilitating? Do you want to rotate who facilitates? If so, week by week or study by study?

Study Recommendations

We strongly recommend you choose a study that will get you into God's Word. The WEPC Office and Library have many studies to choose from. Before you place an order, check with the WEPC Office to see if you can borrow for free, or if the study can be purchased for less.

All of the following recommendations can be reviewed in the church office. Contact Karen Howe (karen@wepc.org) or Joe Brown (joe@wepc.org).

- **God's Word For You Series** published by the Good Book Company. This is a new series of book studies which "takes you to the heart of a book of the Bible and applies its truths to your heart."
 - *Galatians For You* by Tim Keller (13 lessons)* (*Because of the 25th Anniversary Unifying Theme, the Galatians For You study is highly recommended.*)
- **Let's Study Series** published by the Banner of Truth. Sinclair Ferguson is the series editor, and is a great theologically rich study. They are designed as commentaries on the book, with a study guide in the back. For the leader that wants to go deep!
 - *Let's Study Galatians* by Derek W H Thomas (13 lessons)* (*Because of the 25th Anniversary Unifying Theme, the Let's Study Galatians study is highly recommended.*)
- **Sermon Study Guides.** By the afternoon on every Sunday you can log onto the church website (<http://www.wepc.org/resources/sermons/>) to listen to the sermon, look through the bulletin, and read the study guide and sermon notes. Starting Advent 2018 (Sunday, December 2nd) we will be going through the church calendar for the rest of the year.
- **The Gospel Transformation Series** published by Serge (series of 3 studies). 10-lessons with study guide; 29 total lessons divided into 3 books:
 - **Gospel Identity: Discovering Who You Really Are** helps you understand your identity in Christ and grow deeper in your relationship with Him.
 - **Gospel Growth: Becoming a Faith-Filled Person** helps you discover how the Spirit desires to extend that growth far beyond you.
 - **Gospel Love: Grace, Relationships and Everything That Gets in the Way** helps you learn how the gospel frees you to actively love and accept everyone God puts in your path.

A historical look at Inerrancy

- Ancient Church
- Roman Catholic Scholasticism
- Protestant Reformers
- Protestant Liberalism
- Neoorthodox Theology
- Vatican II Catholicism
- "Liberal" Evangelicals
- Protestant Fundamentalism
- Most Fathers, Reformers, and Evangelical

Two Presuppositions

1. The Bible as a whole, and in all of its parts, is the very Word of God written. It is therefore completely trustworthy, fully reliable, and without error.
2. The Bible principally teaches two things: What we are to believe concerning God (His character, ways & purposes) and what duty God requires of us (the Bible's instruction for the practice of the faith).

What does the Bible say about how God reveals Himself to His creation?

from Lewis & Demarest, Integrative Theology

In other words: A biblical theology on revelation

Pentateuch

1. *Protoevangelium* – the religion of Israel and the church would be rooted in special revelation.
2. Divine Speech - God supernaturally speaking to the Fathers
3. Dreams, Visions, and Theophanies
 - a. dreams, when rightly interpreted, conveyed truths about God and his purposes
 - b. Visions went to one awake
 - c. Theophany is a visible manifestation of God
 - i. Gave command and encouragement
 - ii. Visible symbols of God's presence with his people
4. Mighty Acts
 - a. Plagues
 - b. Israel's release and passage

Historical Books

1. God gave commands, provided information, and communicated promises
2. Revelation here was also sometimes given in theophany
3. Space-time events with accompanying interpretation

Wisdom and Poetry

1. Job 23:8-9 – people cannot find God by themselves, so God must initiate contact
2. Psalms- God's redemptive revelation to Israel through mighty acts of deliverance and judgment, and laws, statutes and commands

The Prophets

1. God spoke in the Old Testament not only audibly, but inaudibly
2. Not only did God speak to the prophets, he spoke through them
3. The prophetic ministry involved both foretelling and forthtelling

4. Proclamation of the prophets was the same as the Word of God
5. "Word of God" in the OT evolved into a technical terms for the prophetic proclamation of God's truth
6. In both dreams and visions specific truths are imparted
7. Prophets testify that God made Himself known through mighty deeds in Israel's history
8. Although rich in content, special revelation in the Old Testament was preparatory and incomplete

Synoptic Gospels

1. Direct revelation of God through dreams, visions and theophanies
2. God revealed himself to specific persons at particular times and places through Jesus' miracles
3. Direct communication of truth from God
4. The Synoptics represent Jesus and his teaching as an important modality of special revelation

Primitive Christianity/ Acts

1. Vision, accompanied by messages
2. Miracles of God wrought through the apostles
3. The Spirit-given message of the apostles was itself revelatory

The Pauline Corpus

1. Paul's ministry was rooted in supernatural revelation
2. Divine revelation to Paul was subjective in character
3. But Paul's teaching also focused on revelation that was objective in character
4. Revelation encompasses not only the messenger but the message
5. Paul's preaching is identified as "the word of God"
6. Paul believed that the historical Jesus was the pinnacle of all God's revelations to mankind
7. Not only the incarnation, but the return of Christ was viewed as Paul as a modality of special revelation
8. To speak of revelation in the fullest biblical sense is to speak of Jesus Christ

Johannine Literature

1. Miraculous signs and miracles
2. Jesus' revelatory works were performed for several purposes:
 - a. To demonstrate that the Father sent him into the world
 - b. To validate his extraordinary claims
 - c. To affirm the unique relationship that exists between him and the Father
 - d. To engender the faith in himself that issues in eternal life

3. Jesus Christ is upheld as the supreme embodiment of special revelation
 - a. Christ has made God known by their unique relationship
 - b. Jesus most fully exegetes the reality of God for us

Other New Testament Writings

1. Hebrews 1:1-2 = God's revelation through Christ is full and complete
2. 1 Peter 1:5 = Peter identifies Christ's second coming as a specifically revelatory datum

Some Guidelines of Biblical Hermeneutics

- The meaning of a biblical statement is the ordinary, or normal, meaning of the statement.
- The meaning of a biblical statement fits the historical and cultural setting of the writer and the first readers.
- The meaning of a sentence is the one most coherent with the writer's own context.
- The meaning of any Scripture is not contradictory with any other part of Scripture.
- The intended meaning is the one literal, historical, grammatical, contextual meaning, not a "deeper" or "secret" meaning.
- Extensive passages on a subject take theological precedent over brief allusions.
- Doctrinal passages are more important than historical narratives that do not have a normative application.
- What is central in biblical teaching should be central in our theologies.

The Basic Principle of Biblical Interpretation

Seek the plain, natural, intended meaning of the text. What did God through the original author intend for His original audience to understand, and therefore what is implied for Christians today?

Deductive and Inductive Reasoning

1. **Deductive method:** A conclusion is drawn that follows necessarily from the premise.
 - *For example, a prosecuting attorney seeks to prove a premise by deduction in arranging the facts & testimonies.*
2. **Inductive method:** A conclusion is drawn that is inferred by the particular observations.
 - *For example, Sherlock Holmes seeks to discover & evaluate the facts by induction to arrive at a conclusion which is usually not immediately evident.*

Inductive Bible Study Method (*background to step 1 on next page*)

I. Observe: “What does it say?”

- A. Read the passage a couple of times, carefully.
- B. Observe the facts and write some of them down.
- Who is there?
 - What is happening?
 - Key words & ideas
 - Descriptions of people
 - Descriptions of places
 - Repeating words & phrases
 - Note grammar
 - Things omitted
 - Cause & effect relationships
 - Contrasts
 - Type of literature

II. Interpret: “What does it mean?”

(*with your observations in hand*)

- A. Find out what the facts mean. Draw conclusions based on the evidence. Remember that you are only interpreting your observations.
- Define key words
 - Put into context
 - Summarize main teachings
 - Examine cultural habits
 - Review sentence structure
 - Ask “why?”
 - Define analogies
 - Explore language
 - Ask “significance?”

III. Apply: “What does it mean for me?”

(*with your observations & interpretations in hand*)

- A. Determine how we are to respond to what God has said.
- ⇒ Does the passage address a specific issue that I am dealing with?
- ⇒ How am I like the characters in this passage?
- ⇒ What seems to be the main thing God is saying to me through this passage?
- ⇒ How am I to respond to Him?
- A command to obey
 - A principle to apply
 - An example to follow/avoid
 - A sin to avoid/confess
 - A challenge to face
 - An action to take
 - A promise to claim
 - A truth about me
 - A truth about God

STEP 1 of an Inductive Bible Study: Personal Study

MAIN POINT:

<p>OBSERVATION</p> <p>"What does it say?"</p> <p>Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?</p>	<p>INTERPRETATION</p> <p>"What does it mean?"</p> <p>What meanings or conclusions come from the facts</p>	<p>APPLICATION</p> <p>"What does it mean for me?"</p> <p>Moves it from being intellectual to practical</p>

Step 2 of an Inductive Bible Study: Planning For The Study

- I. Write down the main point of the passage.
 - A. Think through an introduction that will orient the group to the passage and context.
 - B. Write an Intro Question that will get the group thinking about the main point.
- II. Turn your own O-I-A into questions that build on each other.
 - A. Are the questions...
 - 1. Clear?
 - 2. Brief?
 - 3. Open-ended?
 - B. Do the questions...
 - 1. Cause the group to search the passage?
 - 2. Flow together?
 - 3. Lead the group to a main point or specific application?

MAIN POINT:
INTRO QUESTION:
OBSERVATION QUESTION:
INTERPRETATION QUESTION:
APPLICATION QUESTION: