

Adapting Studies for Your Needs

The *ideal* way to use Little Rock Scripture Study materials is to incorporate the four elements (daily personal study, conversational prayer, small group sharing, and a wrap-up lecture) in the number of sessions designated for each study. Another ideal is that the weekly sessions cover the material in an hour and a half.

However, there are times when the ideal can be the enemy of the good. So, here are some ways to do what might not be ideal, but can be *very good*.

Looking for shorter studies?

LRSS offers a number of studies that are **seven sessions or less**:

- Introduction to the Bible
- The Infancy Narratives of Jesus
- The Passion and Resurrection Narratives of Jesus
- Hebrews
- Second Corinthians
- Wisdom
- Psalms I
- Psalms II
- Israel's Story (Parts One and Two)
- Parables of the Kingdom (Parts One and Two)
- Touching the Mysteries: Scripture and the Rosary
- Praying the Scriptures
- The Way of Justice and Peace

Shorten longer offerings

Be creative and look for **natural breaks in the longer offerings**. Divide these studies to make shorter offerings, opening the group each time to new participants. Here are some examples:

The Gospel According to John and the Johannine Letters (15 sessions) can become two, or even three, shorter studies. Here are some natural breaks in the material:

- John 1 - 12, known as the "book of signs"
Plan for Introduction + Lessons 1-7 (8 sessions)
- John 13 - 21, known as the "book of glory"
Plan to use Lessons 8-11 (4 sessions)
- 1, 2 & 3 John, the letters
Plan to use Lessons 12-14 (3 sessions)

The Gospel According to Luke (12 sessions) also has some nice breaks which could create two studies with a break in between.

- Luke 1:1 - 9:50, early life and ministry of Jesus
Plan for Introduction + Lessons 1-5 (6 sessions)
- Luke 9:51 - 24:53, travel narrative, passion & resurrection
Plan to use Lessons 6-11 (6 sessions)

Letters from Prison (10 sessions) plus bonus section on 1 & 2 Thessalonians can be divided easily into shorter pieces with breaks in between.

- The Letter to the Philippians
Plan for Introduction + Lessons 1-3 (4 sessions)
- The Letter to the Colossians
Plan to use Lessons 4-6 (3 sessions)
- The Letter to the Ephesians
Plan to use Lessons 7-9 (3 sessions)
- The First & Second Letter to the Thessalonians
Use bonus section (3 Sessions)

Galatians and Romans (13 sessions) could be simply divided between the two Pauline letters.

- The Letter to the Galatians
Plan for Introduction + Lessons 1-3 (4 sessions)
- The Letter to the Romans
Plan to use Lessons 4-12 (9 sessions)

Voices in the Desert: Amos, Hosea and Micah (10 sessions) can easily become three short studies, each focused on one of the prophets.

- Book of Amos
Plan for Introduction + Lessons 1-3 (4 sessions)
- Book of Hosea
Plan to use Lessons 4-7 (4 sessions)
- Book of Micah
Plan to use Lessons 8-9 (2 sessions)

Women in the Old Testament (10 sessions) can be divided according to the way the women are grouped in the study set.

- Women of Israel's Beginnings and Women of Israel's Passover
Plan for Introduction + Lessons 1-3 (4 sessions)

- Women of Israel's Early Tribes and Monarchy
Plan to use Lessons 4-6 (3 sessions)
 - Women who teach us about God and ourselves
Plan to use Lessons 7-9 (3 sessions)
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Are you having difficulty getting through a lesson each week?

Are you finding that your group can't seem to get through an entire lesson each week? There are a variety of reasons that people who come to Bible study, intending to enter into it fully, cannot complete the reading or have not responded to the daily questions.

Talk plainly and openly about why group members are unable to complete the assigned reading – don't ignore the "elephant in the room." Encourage participants to make it a priority on a daily basis so that it is more manageable than waiting to do the work all in one or two sittings. Talk about the benefits some have found when they make this a habit.

If lack of preparation continues to be a challenge in your group, consider some of the following ideas:

- In advance, identify the questions that are most important for the following lesson. This may be done by an individual facilitator, or by a group of facilitators in a parish. So, for example, at the end of the small group gathering for Lesson One, the facilitator would have already worked ahead for Lesson Two and would identify for the group the 4-5 questions that are most significant for the next session.
 - Each week, group members could volunteer to be responsible for one of the six days of questions in the study guide for the following lesson. Ask each member to read the entire Scripture assignment, and then one or two would be responsible to respond to questions for Day 1, one or two others for Day 2, and so on. It's not ideal, but at least everyone comes prepared by being familiar with the Scripture and having answered three questions. Groups who have tried this find that it eventually leads to more members preparing more and more of the lesson in advance.
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Need to fit a Bible study into a shorter weekly time period?

Any study could be adapted to fit into an hour per week instead of the ideal 1 1/2 hours. This might be especially helpful if groups are trying to fit their meetings into a Sunday school format which often allows for one hour or less between Masses at a parish. Here's how it could work.

- Divide each lesson into two sessions. So, Lesson One of a given study would be covered as follows:
 - Lesson One, Session One would cover Days 1, 2, 3, and 4 in the Study Guide.
 - Lesson One, Session Two would cover Days 5 and 6 in the Study Guide, and allow time for the wrap-up lecture.

- Divide each lesson into three sessions. So Lesson One of a given study would be covered as follows:
 - Lesson One, Session One would cover Days 1, 2, and 3 in the Study Guide.
 - Lesson One, Session Two would cover Days 4, 5, and 6 in the Study Guide.
 - Lesson One, Session Three would present the wrap-up lecture for that lesson.

Here are the benefits:

- each week allows for plenty of time to discuss a limited number of questions.
- less preparation is required for the participants each week.
- one book of the Bible, or one theme, would be the focus of an entire "semester".

The above options will only work if the plan is made in advance. If participants sign up for an 8-week study and mid-way through it is stretched out for more than the assigned weeks, it will have a definite negative effect.

Program Information

The Four Essential Elements
Making Time for Scripture Study in Your Busy Life

Daily Personal Study

Spend about 20 minutes a day prayerfully reading and reflecting on a section of Scripture. Questions in the Study Guide direct the reflection, while the commentary provides solid Catholic scholarship that leads to deeper understanding.

Weekly Small-Group Sharing

Gather weekly in groups of eight to twelve to pray and to share your responses to the study questions. Trained small-group facilitators encourage the sharing of personal thoughts and experiences in an atmosphere of openness and trust.

Wrap-Up Lecture

Listen to a brief lecture that follows the small-group discussion. The lectures develop and clarify the themes of the lesson and may be delivered by local speakers or by using audio- or video-taped resources.

Prayer

Prayer is the most essential of the elements. In addition to daily personal prayer, learn to use Conversational Prayer, a simple, effective method of prayer used in the small group. A source of unity, support, and guidance, prayer is the key to the success of your Bible study



Weekly Small-Group Session (90 minutes) includes:

- Conversational Prayer (10-15 minutes)
- Group Sharing and Discussion (50 minutes)
- Wrap-Up Lecture (about 20 minutes)