

A Difficult Road Ahead

Few spiritual challenges have been more exhilarating, and yet more humbling, than reading, developing a curriculum for, and leading a group through the *One Year Chronological Bible*.

For those of you who desire to lead a group, your task is a difficult one. This year will demand more of you than you've ever demanded of yourself, for you not only have to read what everyone else is reading, but you will have to prepare for your group meetings. You will have to see the big picture of the Bible and help others to see it as well.

As though that weren't enough, each week will be a surprise, as you won't know what to expect from participants — helpful and not-so-helpful personal insights and observations, seeming contradictions, bad theology, and difficult questions. You must be ready to answer knowledgeably or to defer graciously to other scholars. Sometimes, you'll have to admit that you just don't know the answer, and that's okay.

A heavy burden will be laid on your shoulders — as you will be the one to maintain order and structure during the meetings, to keep the momentum and motivation to press on through the year, to check on and encourage individuals along the way, and to express confidence that things are going well week to week.

It is a worthy calling to lead out in this endeavor, but know this, you will not be able to do it in your own strength. You must rely upon the Lord week to week, even day to day, to guide you through. Just remember that our enemy will strive to frustrate you, discourage you, and cheat your time and energy in order to derail your journey through the Bible and discount the influence you exert on your group members.

Little by Little

To facilitate through the BiAY curriculum, you will need the following reference pages to know what to study and what to copy for each week. It is recommended that you alone have a copy of the entire notebook before you start. **It is not recommended that the members of your group have everything from the very beginning.** Make hand-outs as you go, only for what is needed each week, so that members will be required to come to the meetings and study, discuss, and build their notebooks gradually. If a person is given everything up front, he or she is less likely to commit to coming each week.

I would also recommend meeting with your group 4-6 weeks leading up to your kick-off. Make sure to get everyone a *Chronological Bible NLT (2000)* and a notebook with tabs and dividers. You will also want to give them the pages listed in the Prep Weeks of the Weekly Game Plan.



Build Up Excitement

Also, make sure to cast the vision of this incredible challenge, informing your group of the importance of it, the difficulty of it, and the rewards of it. Sober your group members on the fact that this challenge will demand time, discipline, focus, and self-motivation.

Establish a system of encouragement that can be used throughout the year, where one encourages another all year long or where members rotate each month. Without genuine encouragement, this challenge will simply become a dry, legalistic routine for all participants. Make sure that by kick-off, each member is thoroughly equipped, enthused, and encouraged to start their personal journey through BiAY.

Huddle Up

Finally, concerning the time we spent as a group, our group of 18 couples met once a week for two hours. Our church was gracious enough to provide child care. We had food and fellowship for 20-30 minutes, then convened for questions that people had about the reading from the week — anything from simple clarifications to deep theological confusions; this took us anywhere from 20-40 minutes, depending on the questions.

A word of caution here: I had the group email me ahead of time major questions that came up during the week, so as I could best use my time during the group meeting. I did not want to let our time be chiseled away by knick-knack inquiries,

just those things in which everyone was interested. I also tried to allow for anyone to share their observations or insights from the week, something that God revealed to them during their reading; usually, people were excited to share with others.

I saved the last hour for three things — about 30 minutes of discussing or teaching the Weekly Review (hitting the highlights and capturing the big picture), 20 minutes of guy-girl group time answering personal questions listed at the end of the Reviews, and 10 minutes of prayer time. Of course, your time will vary from week to week, but you will eventually get into a rhythm.

I wish not to dampen the excitement that you have for this endeavor by mentioning the preparation and pressure that will be placed on you. *With God's help, you will succeed.* I thoroughly enjoyed my journey through the *One Year Chronological Bible* and *Study Guide* and the rewards of that challenge will remain with me the rest of my life. What can be better than spending a year engrossed in God's Word with friends and fellow believers?

I trust that this calling, to lead a group through BiAY, will push you deeper into the Scriptures and enrich both your understanding and appreciation for God and His redemptive plan. Oh my, what a difference a year can make! Roll up your sleeves, dig in, and enjoy.