

# 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. The discussion is designed to flow through four phases, as explained below.

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

**Connection:** Begin by finding out how everyone is doing, checking on how their application went from last week, and praying together. International students value connection time, so take time to build cross-cultural friendships through love and trust (both for you with them, and for them with each other).

**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 America and from their home cultures.

*Deeper Perspectives* – Use these questions to move them from their personal feelings and experiences into foundational values and beliefs. As internationals, many of their views may not be based on biblical principles.

**Transition:** This statement or question eases the discussion into the Bible section, creating curiosity about what God's Word says about the issues they've begun to talk about.

**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 Teacher's Guide, and that guide may include some alternative Bible discussion questions that you can use if you feel the need.*

### UNDERSTAND it

This "understand it" 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.

### 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 copies of the Session Preparation Overview and the Sample Group Discussion Flow. Walk through these with them and answer questions. You might want to help them prepare a lesson. If possible, have them teach a part (or all) of one of your group sessions. Give suggestions afterwards to help them be 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!"

# International Essentials Leader's Guide

UNIT  
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## Lesson A: Assured

**Bible Passages:** Luke 15:11-24, 1 John 5:11-13

**Session Objective:** Provide young believers with security of their salvation and assurance of their new relationship with God.

This entire unit is designed as “follow-up” and this lesson is usually your first follow-up with a new Christian. Reflecting on God’s love and acceptance is important for Christians at any stage but it is particularly helpful to the recent convert.

You may walk through this lesson one-on-one or in a small group setting. In either case it is valuable for new Christians to articulate out loud when they first trusted Christ.

- The “Understand it” section is especially important in this lesson and the questions there should be given the time they deserve.

- Try to create an environment in these studies that encourages openness and honesty.

- If young believers doubt their salvation, they should feel the freedom to say so. If you can share a time when you struggled with doubt that may help them also feel the freedom to share.

- Remember, ultimately our assurance is based on what Christ has done for us on the cross and God’s love and forgiveness, not on our emotions or feelings. If anyone in your group struggles with this issue, the “train diagram” found in the “Four Spiritual Laws” has helped many.

## Lesson B: Forgiven

**Bible Passages:** Luke 7:36-50; 1 John 1:9-2:2

**Session Objective:** Help new Christians appreciate God’s forgiveness of sin and our need for confession to restore our fellowship with God after we sin.

Approach this lesson much like “Assured” - 2A. It is part of a series usually considered basic follow-up. As such you want to show special sensitivity to those that have questions and doubts.

When we sin, we do not stop being God’s children, but we do break fellowship with our heavenly Father. Depending on the background of your group this may or may not be easy for them to grasp.

- You may share ways you have experienced these truths in your relationship with God.

- Creating an atmosphere that allows openness and candor will help you discover spiritual issues and special ministry needs of the group.

- The questions under the “Clarification” section would be especially helpful for your group. Be sure to allow enough time to consider them carefully.

## Lesson C: Filled

**Bible Passages:** John 18:15-18; Acts 2:14-22; Ephesians 3:16-20; Ephesians 5:18-21

**Session Objective:** Introduce the concept of the Spirit-filled life and encourage the new believer to walk in the Spirit’s power.

Most young Christians understand that the Christian life is challenging. They know their need for power to live it. This lesson explores this issue from the story of Peter (which shows clearly the difference the Holy Spirit can make) and from Ephesians 3 and 5 (which tells us that this power is intended for each and every follower of Christ).

- How to be filled with the Holy Spirit is a teaching that may take some time for the Christian to fully grasp.

- If you have begun to realize the ministry of the Spirit your personal experience with that will help this lesson come alive.

- Be sure and emphasize the “Summary” section and listen carefully to see to what extent the group is grasping the concept.

- You may want to meet personally with some of the group members at a later time and share the concept “Have you Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-filled Life?” (<http://www.greatcom.org/english/spirit.htm>)

## Lesson D: Continually

**Bible Passages:** Colossians 2:6-7; Psalm 16:8,9

**Session Objective:** Show that the Christian life is a process and that our goal is continual fellowship with Christ.

Many young Christians wrongly expect growth as a Christian to move at a faster pace than is realistic, or they experience an up-and-down spiritual life. This study shows us what a day-by-day close personal walk with God looks like practically.

- In Colossians 2:6-7 we see the walk described. The questions following this passage are important for helping to make the Christian walk tangible and helping the group see what elements could be involved.

- Psalm 16:8-9 allows us to see into David’s life and observe what his personal relationship with God looked like.

- Use these passages to help the group come to practical conclusions about the elements that would make up a healthy and meaningful walk with God and to motivate them in their relationship with Christ.

- The “Act” section will be important for allowing the group to state personally what specific steps they wish to apply to strengthen their walk. Be sure to allow enough time in the lesson so they can each express their thoughts.

## Lesson E: Truth

**Bible Passage:** John 8:42-47

**Session Objective:** Help the student grapple with the fact that the Bible teaches that we can believe in “absolute truth”.

In John 8 Jesus makes a case for the fact that truth is “absolute”. Our modern society and the university world present a very different view- that “there are no absolutes” and that all truth is relative. Postmodernism also embraces this view. For anyone to establish a strong foundation in their faith they must resolve this discrepancy between what Jesus taught and what the world says

- There are several principles that the group can derive from John 8:42-47:
  - There is such a thing as truth.
  - It comes from God.
  - Jesus spoke truth.
  - Those who reject God also reject Jesus’ teachings.
  - Those who are of God receive the words of Christ as truth.

- When you reach the reference on Postmodernism it might be helpful to review the term. How Postmodernism interprets truth is stated most clearly by Stanley Grenz in *A Primer on Postmodernism*: “[Postmodernism] affirms that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth are dependent on the community in which we participate . . . There is no absolute truth; rather truth is relative to the community in which we participate.”

Of course, Jesus in John 8:42-47 shows the inaccuracy of this view.

# Assured

Be sure of your personal relationship with God

CONNECT with Each Other

HEAR God's Word

UNDERSTAND it

APPLY it to Life

**Begin with Prayer**

**Discussion Questions Our Lives:**

- Consider this statement: "Relationships thrive on acceptance and assurance."
- Have you seen this to be true since coming to the United States?

• How would this statement apply back in your home culture?

• Can you tell us about it?

**Deeper Perspectives:**

- This principle also applies in a relationship with God.

**Transition**

Let's see what the Bible has to say about it.

**Bible Passage: Luke 15:11-24**

*Background: This is the story of a rebellious son. The father represents God. The rebellious son represents how we sometimes act toward God. The father was looking down the road, hoping his son would return. He had compassion: running to meet his son and celebrating his return. This story assures us that God loves and accepts us. He wants to have close fellowship with us.*

**Bible Discussion Questions:**

- Have you seen yourself acting towards God in ways similar to the rebellious son? When?
- What are some evidences of the father's love and acceptance of the rebellious son?
- How were the son's thoughts and actions reflective of the father's love and acceptance?
- What can we learn about relationships from this story?
- Do you often see Jesus' kind of love demonstrated in the behavior of people in the U.S.? How about in the behavior of people in your culture?

**Bible Passage: 1 John 5:11-13**

*Background: These verses provide simple clarity that receiving Christ assures us that we have eternal life (with God).*

**Bible Discussion Questions:**

- What does this passage teach us about the source of eternal life?
- What do you think John wanted people to know and feel when they read these words? How does this truth help us in our relationship with God?
- What do these passages show us...
  - about God?
  - about ourselves?
- How do you think these passages relate to the statement we discussed earlier: "Relationships thrive on acceptance and assurance?"

**Summary**

Write the main lesson learned from these passages in the space below:

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**Clarification**

- Why don't we always experience assurance in our personal relationship with God?
- What is one action you can take this week to begin to feel more assured?
- Was there anything about the lesson today that you found confusing?
- What surprised you most from our lesson today?

**Act**

- As you experience more assurance of God's love and acceptance, what difference could this make in the weeks ahead?
- What practical steps can you take to cultivate more of Jesus' type of love in your actions and attitudes toward others?

Write down your specific actions to take below. Then in groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take.

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**Tell**

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that person to tell.

Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?

# Forgiven

Be sure you experience God's forgiveness so you can have a close relationship with Him.

## CONNECT with Each Other

## HEAR God's Word

## UNDERSTAND it

## APPLY it to Life

### Begin with Prayer

### Discussion Questions Our Lives:

• Consider this statement: **"Forgiveness gives a relationship a fresh start."**

• Have you experienced the reality of this statement? How?

### Deeper Perspectives:

• Why is forgiveness such a great need in our closest relationships?

• These same principles apply in our relationship with God.

### Transition

Let's see what the Bible has to say about it.

### Bible Passage: Luke 7:36-50

*Background: This story involves Jesus, a sinful woman and a self-righteous religious leader. After Jesus saw the woman's sorrow over her sins, He forgave her of her sins. This should encourage anyone who feels that God could never forgive them of all the bad things they have done.*

### Bible Discussion Questions:

• What are some differences in how the religious leader viewed the sinful woman and how Jesus viewed her?

• In verses 40 – 47 Jesus applies the cancellation of debts to the attitudes of the religious leader and the woman. What do you learn here?

• What do you suppose was the impact on the woman when she heard that her sins had been forgiven?

• What do you suppose Jesus was trying to teach from this story?

• How do you think you can apply this to your life and relationship with God?

### Bible Passage: 1 John 1:9-2:2

*Background: This passage clarifies that we should confess our sins to God. As we acknowledge the fact that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, we can experience the joy of being forgiven by God*

### Bible Discussion Questions:

• Do you agree that people commit sins? What leads you to this conclusion?

• How did Jesus Christ provide a solution to the problem of sin? (See also 1 John 1:7) What must we do to take advantage of that solution?

• What you think these passages teach us...

-- about God?

-- about ourselves?

• How do you think these passages relate to the statement we discussed earlier: **"Forgiveness gives a relationship a fresh start"**?

### Summary

• Write the main lesson learned from these passages in the space below:

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### Clarification

• Why don't we always experience the forgiveness that God offers us?

• What is one action you can take this week to begin to experience that forgiveness?

• Was there anything about the lesson today that you found confusing?

• What surprised you most from our lesson today?

### Act

• Remember the main lesson: *"Experiencing God's forgiveness allows you to have a close relationship with Him."*

• In the coming week, what difference will it make to be more confident of God's forgiveness?

• What practical steps can you take to cultivate a greater understanding of God's forgiveness of you and others?

• Write down your specific actions to take below. Then in groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take.

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### Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that person to tell.

*Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?*

# Filled

Be sure you are filled with the Holy Spirit so you can have power for living

## CONNECT with Each Other

## HEAR God's Word

## UNDERSTAND it

## APPLY it to Life

### Begin with Prayer

#### Discussion Questions Our Lives:

How are you doing?  
How did Application go from last week's lesson?  
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.  
Consider this: "Often we need help to do a difficult assignment."

#### Our Lives:

- Has there been an experience in the past several weeks where you felt overly challenged and needed help?

- Can you tell us about it?

### Transition

- This same principle is also seen in our walk with Christ.

This study will explore the solution we find in the Bible for the power we need to live the Christian life effectively.

### Bible Passage: John 18:15-18 and Acts 2:14-22

*Background: These two passages show the remarkable change in Peter's courage within a few weeks. Before being filled with the Holy Spirit, he denied Christ. After being filled, he preached with great courage to a large crowd.*

#### Bible Discussion Questions:

- What types of changes do you see in Peter from John 18 to Acts 2?

- What seems to have been the major contributors to those changes?

*Note: Clearly the Holy Spirit provides significant help for difficult assignments in life.*

- How do you think this passage relates to the statement we discussed earlier: "Often we need help to do a difficult assignment?"

### Bible Passage: Ephesians 3:16-20 and Ephesians 5:18-21

*Background: The first passage describes how much help God wants to give us through the power of the Holy Spirit. Then, Paul commands us to be filled with the Holy Spirit and shows the dramatic life-change that can result.*

#### Bible Discussion Questions:

- What are some benefits believers will experience if they take advantage of the presence of the Spirit in their lives?

- If we possess such power and such a sense of how much God loves us, in what ways might that affect our daily lives?

- What are some specific behaviors that result from being filled with the Spirit?

- In what ways do those behaviors contrast with typical human behaviors?

### Summary

- How would you summarize what we learned today about the power the Holy Spirit gives for living? Write important points down:

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### Clarification

- Is there anything about the filling of the Spirit that is unclear to you?

- What new idea do you want to continue to explore from this study?

### Act

- In the coming week, what practical steps can you take to apply what you are learning about the filling of the Holy Spirit?

- Write down your specific actions to take below. Then, in groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take. After that, let's pray for one another.

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### Tell

Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that person to tell.

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*Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?*

# Continually

Relate to God all the time

## CONNECT with Each Other

## HEAR God's Word

## UNDERSTAND it

## APPLY it to Life

### Begin with Prayer

### Discussion Questions Our Lives:

• Consider this statement: "A relationship with a person greatly benefits from frequent interaction."

- Have you seen this statement to be true in your experience?

• Is there someone who you have grown very close to in your life? What made this relationship strong?

• Have you been in a relationship in which you didn't spend much time together? What happened: did the relationship stay strong or did you drift apart?

### Deeper Perspectives:

This principle also applies in a relationship with God.

### Transition

Let's see what the Bible has to say about it.

### Bible Passage: Colossians 2:6-7

*Background: In many Bible translations, verse 6 reads "so walk in Him." This passage reminds us that the Christian life is a continual walk of faith. We received Christ BY FAITH, and that is how we continue on the journey.*

### Bible Discussion Questions:

• According to this passage, what type of relationship should we have with God?

• In this passage and many others, the Christian life is described as a "walk". Why do you think this is a good description of the process we experience?

• What do you think it means to say we are to "live in him, rooted and built up in him"?

• What are some ways to be "strengthened in the faith"?

• Why is it natural to be "overflowing with thankfulness" as we walk in faith?

### Bible Passage: Psalm 16:8,9

*Background: These verses give insight into David's walk of faith and his total dependence on God. "I have set the Lord continually before me."*

### Bible Discussion Questions:

• What positive outcomes in David's life result from walking in daily dependence on God?

• Why do you think God wants this type of relationship with us?

• Have you discovered any ways to keep a continual connection to God throughout your day?

• What can we learn from this (and the previous) passage concerning a walk with God?

• How do you think these passages relate to the statement we discussed earlier: "A relationship with a person greatly benefits from frequent interaction"?

### Summary

Write the main lesson learned from these passages in the space below:

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### Clarification

• Why don't we always experience a continual, close, personal walk with God?

• What most often causes a break in that fellowship?

• What is the solution when we sin and find ourselves out of fellowship with God? (1 John 1:9)

• What is one action you can take this week to remain in a closer walk?

• Was there anything about the lesson today that was hard to understand?

### Act

• As you experience a more consistent walk of faith, what difference will it make in the weeks ahead?

• What practical steps can you take to become more like David when he said: "I have set the Lord continually before me."

• Write down your specific actions to take below. Then in groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take. After that, pray for one another.

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### Tell

• Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that person to tell.

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*Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?*

# Truth

Walking confidently because God gives us truth

## CONNECT with Each Other

## HEAR God's Word

## UNDERSTAND it

## APPLY it to Life

### Begin with Prayer

*How are you doing?  
How did Application go last week from our lesson on walking continually with God?  
Let's pray together for wisdom from God for today's session.*

### Discussion Questions

#### Our Lives:

- When you hear people say that 'there are no right answers', or that you should 'tolerate all points of view', how does that make you feel?

#### Deeper Perspectives:

- In the parable of the "6 Blind Men and the Elephant" each blind man feels a different part of an elephant and reaches a different conclusion. One grabs a tusk and says, "This is a spear! Another holds the trunk and says, "This is a snake!" etc. Each man believes that they have the whole of the elephant, however in reality they only have a part of it, and no one can have the whole elephant, just like no one can know the whole truth.
- Does this illustration about truth seem legitimate to you? Do we really know that no one can know the whole truth?
- How might it make our lives better if we all knew that objective truth really existed?

### Transition

The Bible in general and Jesus in particular claim to give us absolute truth.

### Bible Passage: John 8:42-47

*Background: Jesus often dialogued with Jewish religious leaders. Here, we see a group of Jews who seem to be favorably impressed with Jesus, but are still clinging to their Jewish racial/religious heritage as their core identity. Jesus points out to them that their hearts AND minds are still in the wrong place.*

### Bible Discussion Questions:

- What principles does Jesus give us about truth?
- Do you believe what He says here: that a personal God (the Father) exists who is the source of objective truth? Why or why not?
- Do you believe what He also says here: that a personal devil exists who is the ultimate source of falsehood? Why or why not?

If, as Jesus says and contrary to post-modernism, objective truth and falsehood really do exist, then . . .

- What difference can this make for you as you hear many of the false assumptions you are confronted with in your studies?

-What differences could that make in how a student at an American college conducts their life?

- What differences might that make in how a person from your home culture lives?

### Summary

How would you summarize what we learned today about truth? Write important points down:

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### Clarification

- Was there anything confusing that you still have questions about?

- What made the deepest impression on you?

### Act

- In the coming week, how are you going to learn more truth from the Word of God?
- How are you going to make yourself more aware of the falsehoods that the devil might be spreading?
- Write down your specific actions to take below. Then in groups of two or three, share what action you plan to take. After that, let's pray for one another.

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Assignment: This coming week, please read the article "The Reliability of the Bible" at <http://www.leaderu.org/orgs/probe/docs/bib-docu.html>

### Tell

- Who might be interested in hearing what we are learning? Write down the name of that person to tell.

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*Let's pray for each other that we would apply God's Word to our life and tell our friends. Who will pray for us?*