

# Ablaze

## Class Discussion Guide

*He who walks with wise men will be wise,*

*But the companion of fools will suffer harm.*

—Proverbs 13:20

### PART I

The class discussion guide for Part I is divided into two sections for each week of class, “What Have You Learned?” and “What Do You Think?”

In the “What Have You Learned?” section class members will be able to discuss what activities/readings they have done during the week and what they have learned.

The “What Do You Think?” section will engage class members on topics they will encounter in the following week of study in order to help them consider how their presuppositions and past experiences have shaped their opinions and actions.

### PART II

The discussion guide for Part II is also divided into two sections: “Reasoning through the Word” and, as in Part I, “What Have You Learned?”

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“Pam Gillaspie is the author of *Ablaze: Igniting Spiritual Passion for Life through Reading God’s Word*. *Ablaze* is endorsed by Kay Arthur, Jan Silvius, Becky Pippert, and Liz Curtis Higgs. For more downloadable Bible study resources, visit Pam online at [www.deepandwide.org](http://www.deepandwide.org).”

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# *Introductory Class Session*

[Use this material if you plan to distribute books on the first week of class. If students come to the first class having read the first chapter of the book, proceed to the material on Chapter One.]

**Starter Questions:** If you're studying in a group, discuss these questions among yourselves. If you're reading on your own, jot your answers down in the space provided and chat the questions over with God.

## **Introduce yourselves:**

1. What has been your experience in reading God's Word? Have you tried to read through the Bible? What kind of results have you had?
2. How does that color your thinking of reading in the future?
3. Why do you think your experience turned out the way that it did?
4. What would you like your relationship with the Word of God to look like?
5. Have you ever asked God for that? Why/why not?
6. Do you think He would answer positively? What Scripture would support your answer?

## In-class exercise:

Split into groups of two or three and read from the story of one of the following heroes of the Bible. If you're studying independently, pick two characters from the list and see what you find out about these great heroes of the faith.

- Jacob: Genesis 25:27–34; Genesis 27; Genesis 37:1–4
- Moses: Exodus 2:11–15; Exodus 4:10–17
- Rahab: Joshua 2
- David: II Samuel 11–12; Psalm 51

What did you discover about the humanity of the hero(s) you looked at?

What character flaws did you discover?

To what extent do you struggle with character flaws (i.e. sin) in your life as you think about drawing near to God in His Word?

From the examples you've looked at, is God big enough to help you overcome your shortcomings? Why/why not?

# *Any Old Bush Will Burn*

## **What Have You Learned?**

1. Discuss what you learned about prayer in your reading of John 15–17.
2. Share which of the following activities you did this week, what you learned, and how it went.
  - Re-read the high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 15 – 17 and commit to memory one or several key verses on prayer.
  - Read the other letters of John . . . I John, II John, and III John.
  - Read the full Gospel of John.
  - Read the Sermon on the Mount located in Matthew 5–7 to see what else Jesus has to say about making requests of the Father. Note what you learned.

## **What Do You Think?**

1. Have you tried to read through your Bible? What kind of results have you had?
2. Did you use a particular method or plan? How did it go?
3. Why did you choose that method? Or why did you choose no method at all?
4. Do you believe you need to read the Bible in a specific way? Does your behavior suggest that you believe this?
5. If you do believe you need to read the Bible in a specific way, can you find biblical support for your answer?

*The Truth About Order:  
You Don't Have to Start in Genesis*

**What Have You Learned?**

1. Share with one another how much of the information in the “Sidebar History Lesson” on pages 32–34 was new to you.
  
2. Share which of the following activities you did this week, what you learned, and how it went.
  - Read the Five-Minute Survey of the Old Testament located on pages 141–148.
  
  - Read the Old Testament book of I Samuel (if you’re already familiar with stories in Genesis).
  
  - If you don’t have any biblical or church background, read Genesis, the very first book of the Bible. By the way, don’t be embarrassed if this is the category into which you fall. We all learn little by little.
  
  - Pick two epistles (remember, an epistle is a letter) to read this week. Remember to read an epistle in one sitting because that’s how you read a letter.
  
  - Try reading the Minor Prophet Jonah.
  
  - Read to your kids from an Old Testament storybook.
  
  - If you don’t have a children’s Bible storybook in the house, buy one before your next class.

## What Do You Think?

1. How do you respond when you start reading something that you don't totally understand?
2. Do you think it is important to understand everything you read right away? Why/why not?
3. What are some issues that make it hard for you to understand the Bible?
4. Would you classify yourself as a studier? a reader? both? or neither?
5. Does the way you classify yourself impact your relationship with the Word? If so, in what way?
6. Discuss what has "worked" for you in reading God's Word.
7. Discuss areas of difficulty that you have found in reading the Bible.

# *The Truth About Understanding: No One "Gets" It All Right Away*

## **What Have You Learned?**

1. Take some time and discuss with one another the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What are the main points? Why is Jesus the only way to God?
2. Share which of the following activities you did this week, what you learned, and how it went.
  - Read Isaiah 1–6 and note what you learn about man and about God.
  - Read Jeremiah 5–9 and note what you learn about the children of Israel. Is there anything that you as a Christian can learn from their behavior that you might be able to apply today? Did you understand everything else that was going on in this passage? If not, was the portion about obedience clear enough for you to be able to make some life application?
  - Read Revelation 1–3. What do you learn about Jesus? What are some of the things that disturb Jesus in His churches? Are their sound applications you can make from these chapters even without knowing for sure what some of the details refer to? Why/why not?
  - Read the book of Daniel. While much of the prophetic sections may not be immediately clear, what clear lessons can you learn from this book about God and the lives of those who follow Him fully?
  - Read through one of the Gospels without a pencil (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) and just let yourself be with Jesus.
  - Read an epistle with the 5Ws and H in mind and as you're reading, keep asking "What is the take away? How can I apply this to my life today?"

- If you're still in a twit about the "drop the pencil" comment (yes, I know some of you are) go out and buy yourself a nice notebook, then label it "My Question Journal for Later Study." You can record all the major, burning questions that you just have to have answered. As you continue reading through the Bible, you'll be able to come back and glance at the journal to see just how many of the questions have been answered through your reading of other parts of Scripture. You're sure to find that Scripture really does interpret Scripture.

## What Do You Think?

1. What does a typical day for you look like?
2. When you think about spending time in God's Word, what picture comes to your mind?
3. Respond to this statement, "We make the time for whatever is important to us."

# *The Truth About Time: Perfect Time Does Not Exist*

## **What Have You Learned?**

1. Discuss your list of "Places you could take your Bible, but probably don't."
  
2. Share which of the following activities you did this week, what you learned, and how it went.
  - Make a point to read your Bible in a public place sometime this week. (Oh yeah, and then DO it! ;)
  
  - Sometime this week, read during a time of noise or commotion.
  
  - Make a positive connection and read one of the gospels that you haven't read recently (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John)
  
  - Make a substitution and read a book of the Bible you can finish in one sitting. (What did you read? What did you replace? Magazine? Television? Novel? Newspaper?)
  
  - Pray and ask God to reveal your encumbrances. As He does, make a list and start dealing with them one at a time.
  
  - Select a verse or passage to memorize. Copy it by hand or photocopy it and keep it with you at all times during the week.
  
  - Make a point to carry your Bible with you all week.

## What Do You Think?

1. Have you ever been on a Bible-reading schedule (for example, a read through the Bible in a year plan)? How did it go?
2. How are you with a syllabus?
3. What would you say is the difference between a “get to” and a “got to”?
4. How do you react in the face of “got to's”?
5. What are some things you know you should do, but haven't?
6. The longer you wait in regard to these things, does it get better or worse? Explain.
7. How does your ability or lack of ability with a syllabus impact your reading of God's Word?

# *The Truth About Schedules: It's About a Relationship, Not a Syllabus*

## **What Have You Learned?**

1. Share which of the following activities you did this week, what you learned, and how it went.
  - Set a mini-goal with a fun reward that you can meet this week.
  - Mark your beginning date of reading your Bible in the Table of Contents.
  - Consider what would be a reasonable amount of time for you to read through your Bible. Ask God if you should set this as a tentative goal.
  - Make a point to meet with Jesus everyday this week, but without a per day quota of chapters or verses (or books for you overachievers . . . yes, I know you're out there!).
  - Take two straight hours (or 30 minutes to an hour if the two-hour suggestion just gave you a facial tic) and read a chunk of Scripture of your choice.
  - Have coffee with at least one person you know who has a vital relationship with Jesus Christ and find out what challenges they have faced in reading the Word and what has worked well for them.
  - If you wake up in the middle of the night, don't whine, sigh, and roll back over. Try getting up and spending some time with Jesus.

## What Do You Think?

1. When faced with a difficult task, what does your typical first-response sound like?
2. How do you respond to weaknesses within yourself?
3. What does your prayer life look like? (Just a note, if you're in a group setting, chances are most of the group is feeling a little uncomfortable with this question right now, it's not just you.)
4. Have you ever put yourself in a relationship of accountability in reading God's Word? If so, what kind of results did you have?
5. What is your view of prayer? Do you believe in your gut that God is serious about what He says about prayer? Do you know what God says about prayer?
6. How do you understand the relationship between faith and feelings? Are you more apt to act based on your faith or your feelings? Explain.

# *The Truth About Ability: God Loves the Underdog*

## **What Have You Learned?**

- Share which of the following activities you did this week, what you learned, and how it went.
- Identify the lies that you've been holding in regard to reading your Bible.
- Spend some time praying and asking God to guide you in your prayer life.
- Read the letter to the Ephesians and circle every occurrence of the phrase "in Christ."
- Read one of the Gospels and observe the need of Jesus to spend time with His heavenly Father. See how often He withdrew from the crowds for solitude with God. Then consider this question: If Jesus, being fully God and fully man, sinless and the whole nine-yards, needed solitude with the Father regularly, how can I ever think that I can function without that myself? What would be the root of thinking that suggests that I have no time for solitude with God?
- When you experience a time of opposition this week (too tired, too busy, too bored, feelings of unworthiness, and the list goes on . . . ) resolve to press into God through reading His Word, even if it is only for a short time.
- Read the book of James, and seek God's leading in finding a prayer warrior.
- Read in the Proverbs to find out what God has to say about wisdom and seek His leading in finding a wise accountability partner.
- Just in case you missed the opportunity last week, here it is again . . . Make a point to meet with Jesus somewhere in the Gospels every day.

# *Carriers or Barriers?*

## **Reasoning Through the Word**

1. Have you ever encountered a person who rejected Christ and the Gospel because of an experience with a hypocrite in the church?
2. Would you describe yourself as more of a carrier or barrier to the cause of Christ? Explain.
3. Do you have anyone in your life who you would consider a “carrier” or a walking hot zone? Describe that individual.
4. Discuss what you learned and/or questions that were raised in your mind when you read the Parable of the Sower from Luke 8.

## **What Have You Learned?**

Discuss what you learned this week as you read through I John and interacted with the following questions that the letter itself raises.

1. Do I have fellowship with the Father?
2. Am I abiding in Him?
3. Am I practicing sin habitually?
4. Do I have God's love? Do I love the brethren?
5. Am I overcoming?

# *On a Mission from God*

## **Reasoning Through the Word**

1. Do you have a mission in life? From the way you spend your time, money, and energy, what would an onlooker perceive that mission to be?
2. Considering the Acts account, discuss the mission on which Jesus sent his disciples and the tools needed to get the job done.
3. How would you answer a person who claimed that Jesus was just a good man or a great teacher? How does this fit in with His self-proclaimed purpose as described in Scripture?
4. Based on what you have studied, what is one way that you can bring glory to God? If this is too vague, specifically check out how Jesus brought glory to God in John 17.
5. Discuss the concepts of love and unity in the body described in John 17. Are these essential? Why or why not?
6. What will it take for you to accomplish your mission from God?
7. What are your plans for staying “on mission” when you have completed this study?

## What Have You Learned?

This week's activities are designed to help you to continue to draw near after you close the pages of *Ablaze*. Share which of the following activities you did this week, what you learned, and how it went.

1. Find a friend or mentor who will keep you accountable in your Bible reading. Make the contact this week and share at class who this person is.
2. Sign up for the Deep & Wide e-group ([www.deepandwide.org](http://www.deepandwide.org)) that will give you weekly tips and encouragement in your Bible reading. Sign up prior to class so you can let the class know that you did it.
3. Start a read through the Bible small group. You could plan to meet monthly to benchmark progress.
4. If reading isn't your thing, purchase (don't just think about it) the Bible on CD or MP3 and begin to work it into your routine.
5. Take an hour or two at your favorite coffee shop, restaurant, or park to do some "chunk" reading in the Word. Give God a couple of hours of your time and you will be amazed at what He can do with it!