

The Word Section

Welcome Worship **Word** Witness

How to lead the word section

The idea of the word section is to allow God's written word, the Bible, to encourage us and shape our daily lives. It is vital that the discussion of the Bible passage is made relevant to group members. The Word section is *not* a traditional bible study where members might search for 'answers', receive mini lectures, or swap controversial opinions. Instead it's about *every* member being honest about their life, hearing from God and receiving prayer.

A good word section might end with individuals honestly sharing how they personally have been challenged or helped by the session, which will naturally lead to prayer. We usually build on the previous week's sermon – so that technical questions have been dealt with and the group can concentrate on what a passage means in practice. *Remember, the key questions aren't 'what is society like today?' or 'what do we think about this issue?' but 'what is my response right now to this passage?' and 'what is God saying to us as a group?'*

It is often best to use the prepared questions based on Sunday's sermon. But if you want to write your own questions, see the guide below. A good technique is just to read the questions out twice and let people answer in their own time. The question shouldn't need any explanation and if you add your own thoughts to the question you may confuse people. If the discussion goes off the subject, you can bring it back by repeating the original question.

As the leader of the word section, your job is to encourage all (willing!) group members to contribute, to move the discussion along so that it doesn't get *too* sidetracked, and to help the session turn into practical action. This role may include:

- listening carefully to each group member's contribution (perhaps sometimes feeding back what you've heard)
- bringing in people who have been interrupted
- leaving spaces for people to think (don't fear silence!)
- sometimes *gently* interrupting talkative members if they have already made their point
- asking 'what does anybody else think?'
- keeping an eye on the time
- cutting down your own contribution to allow others to speak
- encouraging people to share real stories of need or blessing
- taking a lead with being honest
- always being ready to ask '*What difference is this word going to make to us this week?'*
- perhaps ending by going round the group to see what has struck each person from the Word section

As groups approach 12-14 members, two groups may be needed to make sure that quieter individuals get a chance to contribute. 30 minutes should be about enough for the discussion, so that lengthy debates are avoided and plenty of space is left for prayer and witness.

The word session should end with prayer. This is a time when the challenges and encouragements of the word section can be shared and prayed through. It is also a time to

mention specific needs. The prayer time encourages people to be vulnerable, to mention needs that other group members could meet, and to share answers to previous group prayers. It is vital to allow time for proper sharing here and decent time to pray – for example, a good 10-15 minutes (in addition to the 30 minutes for discussion). This is why discussions need to be kept within time.

When important needs are shared, it may be appropriate to pray for that person there and then. Some members of the group may wish (with permission!) to 'lay hands' on that person to pray, or they could move their seat into the middle of the group. It may help to encourage specific and persistent prayer by asking people 'so, as we pray for you this week, what should we ask God for?' The following week these requests can then be followed up.

Word Ideas

A simple set of questions:

- What strikes you from this passage?
- Any questions about this passage? (Can anyone answer these?)
- How could we follow these verses today?
(Is there a good or bad example? / is there something we should believe or do? / How is the meaning relevant to our lives today?)
- What do you think God might be saying to you through what we've discussed?

Writing Your Own Questions - Understanding, Response and Application:

If you are writing the questions, it may help to consult a commentary or study bible on the passage you will be using. This will help you to be ready for any difficult questions and cut short any dead-end technical discussions. Studies should generally move from *Understanding* to *Response* and then to *Application* [see guide below]. A long passage can always be taken section by section, or you could only concentrate on a few verses or central point.

(Choose 3-4 questions from the list below + at least one from each section)

Understanding (what is this passage about?)

- What do people notice?
- Any questions?
- What is the main point of the passage?
- How would you summarise the basic message or content of the passage?
- What does the passage mean in context?

Response (what could it mean for us now?)

- How do people feel about what the passage says?
- Is there anything to confess, do or believe?
- How does it connect with modern life?
- Can you illustrate this point [the point of the passage] with something from your own life?
- If a problem or need is mentioned in the passage (e.g. fear) – can anyone share a time when they had this problem / need?
- If a good principle or practice is mentioned in the passage (e.g. honesty) – can anyone share a time when they found this to be helpful?

Application (what difference can it make to *me*?)

- What can we do in the coming weeks to respond to this passage?
- Did the sermon include any suggestions to consider?
- Where do people honestly feel challenged or encouraged?

- How might this group or our church need to change in the light of this word?
- What things prevent us from putting this message into practice?
- What is God saying to you right now?
- What one thing is there for people to take away or do?
- [Possible ending] Split into groups to apply the passage personally and to pray

Active ideas (particularly for youth groups):

(Make sure these still end with time to APPLY the word personally)

- Brainstorm all the things that strike people from the passage. Then people can tick the things that apply to them personally
- Pick a theme from the text and ask small groups to turn it into a drama
- If the passage is a story or vision, ask people to close their eyes and imagine everything that goes on while it is being read (music may help with this)
- If the passage has speaking parts, get different voices for the different characters
- If the passage teaches something, make an action list together; for example, 'how to pray' or 'reasons to be thankful'
- Go round the group and ask – 'if you were to take this passage 100% seriously, how would your life be different?'
- Split into two groups, each group should produce a brainstorm / sketch sheet full of words and pictures. One group describes a person who obeys this passage and the second group describes a person who doesn't. Then compare sheets.
- If a few people enjoy drama, get them to represent characters in the bible story and let the rest of the group interview them (or even put them on trial!)
- Work in groups to translate or modernise different bits of the passage. Then put it all together and discuss what you've produced.
- Relate the passage to the world of TV and fame.
 - What celebrity might find this passage helpful / challenging? Why?
 - What films, TV plots or song words does it connect with?
 - What recent news story does the passage make you think of?
 - Make two lists: (1) How does the passage agree with what most people believe and do? (2) How is it different?
- What do you think friend / work mates / neighbours would say if they read this passage? Why?
- Hold a vote for people's favorite verse of the passage – then discuss why people voted as they did
- Ask people to select a word or phrase from the passage and say why it is important to them. This could be turned into prayer.
- Make a list – 'if this group were to totally follow the message of this passage we would...'. Then ask people to pick one of the suggestions for themselves.
- Ask people to come up with a 'Personal Challenge' from the passage – something they would like to do in response (even if it is just to think about it). Share these in groups of 2-3, pray for each other and ask next week how it's going...
- Ask people to complete the sentence 'I could have done with knowing / obeying this passage when...'
- In pairs pick a verse or phrase from the passage to 'give' to each other – share the verse you've picked and explain why

Ways to pray

- Ask 'who has any needs or something to give thanks for?'. Then respond to what has been shared with a time of prayer.

- 'Prayerstorm' – this is where prayers do not have to be started or ended properly (e.g. 'Dear Lord'...'Amen') but everyone is encouraged to add little thoughts and prayers. This can encourage quieter people to pray.
- Try praying for only a few people in the group – those with important needs. This may be a time to 'lay hands' on those being prayed for.
- Give out slips of paper then pray for people one at a time. Each time encourage members to write down anything encouraging that comes to mind for that person and then collect in the slips to give to them.
- Split into small groups to pray for each other. Or pray in pairs.
- Split into male and female groups to share the application and to pray for each other.
- Pass a Bible or candle round the group. Whoever has it can pray at that point – silently or out loud.
- Ask people to write down their prayers for each other – then read these out (maybe keep them for future weeks to see the answers).
- Split into two groups – each group has a candle that they light as prayer begins and blow out when it ends

Prayer in quieter groups

- To encourage prayer, suggest that all prayers use a certain pattern – e.g. 'Lord, this week help me to...'
- You could end the time of prayer with a set blessing that goes round the group, e.g., 'Lord, help (person on my right) to serve others this week'.
- People can write down something to pray for on a piece of paper (perhaps something for themselves and something for someone else). The papers go into the middle / onto a table – those who are willing to pray pick up the papers and turn them into prayers.
- Ask people to write some prayers down and then ask those who are happy to read them to do so
- Have pre-written prayers (either simple frameworks or famous prayers) for people to choose and read
- TeaSPoon (TSP) Prayer – all prayers must begin with 'thank you', 'sorry' or 'please'
- Pray silently for the person on your right...