



Living the Word: Small Groups

Narrative Lectionary (Year 1)

Dear Small Group Leader or Member,

Thank you for participating in a small group to study God's Word! Whether you have been a part of small groups for years or if this is your first time, we hope our *Living the Word: Small Group Guides (Year 1)* can be a helpful tool for your group to dig deeper into God's Story in Scripture and to grow closer to God and each other by practicing your faith.

Small group ministry takes a variety of different forms. We know that each group has its own unique personality and that your time together will be different based on the needs of your members. We have designed our Small Group Guides to be a resource and a tool that will help your group study the assigned Bible passage, practice a spiritual discipline together, and learn other things along the way. However, use this resource in whatever way fits with your group.

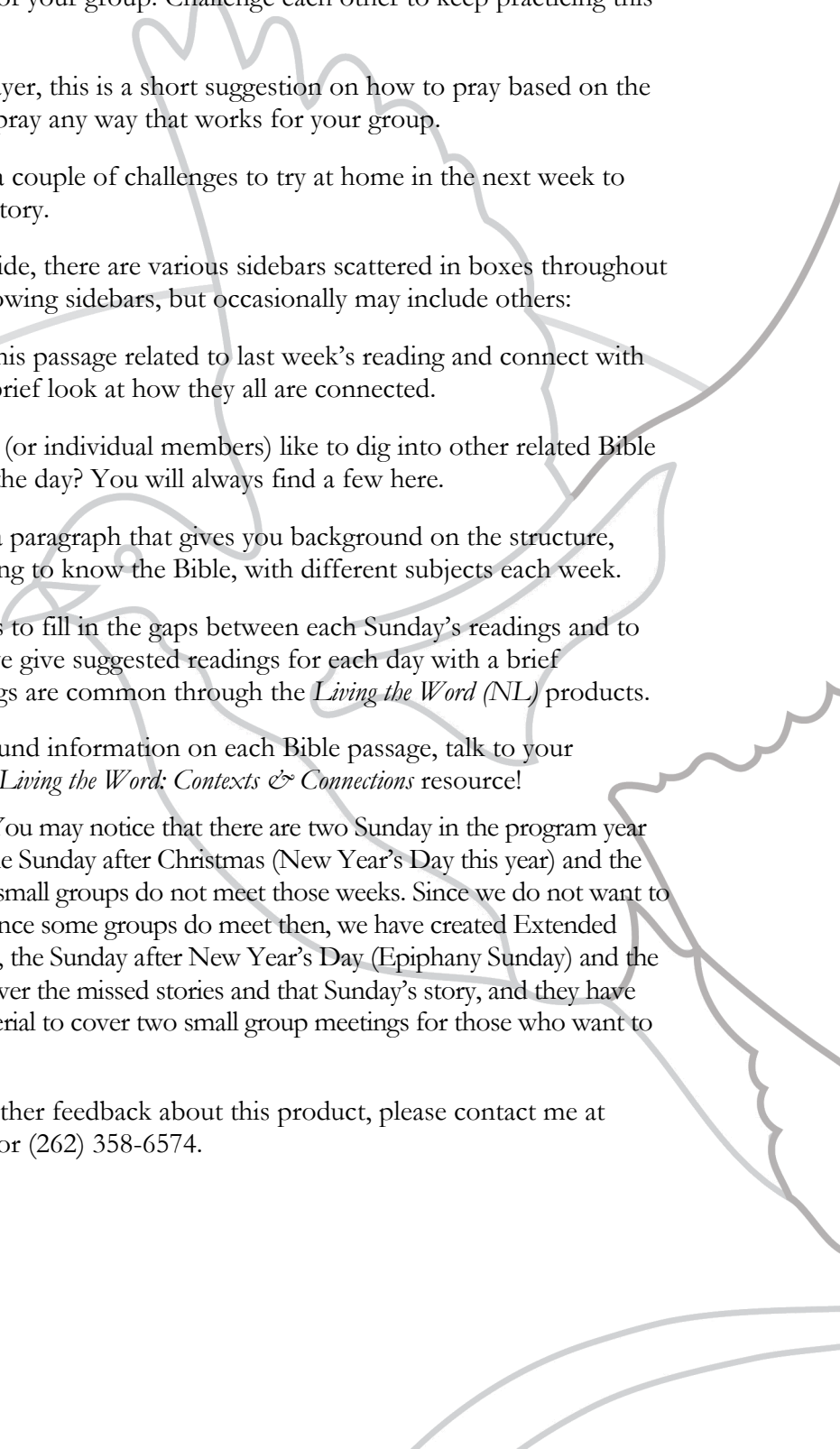
So, how does it work?

Each guide is four pages long (with a few exceptions). These guides are designed to be used both with a small group leader or without any designated leader. All four pages are designed to be reproduced for each small group member. The following list explains the elements of each guide:

- ✝ **Header Information:** At the top of the first page is some brief information for the current guide. There is a small image that illustrates some portion of the Bible reading, as well as the guide number, Scripture citation, and date. This date might not be the date you actually meet, but is the date for the Sunday that this particular Bible reading is scheduled to be used as part of the Narrative Lectionary. Below this information is a title for the guide, and the theme for the unit this guide falls into. For a full list of our thematic units and Bible readings, please check out our free "Living the Word (2022-2023, Year 1) Scope & Sequence" on our website, also included along with the discussion guide files.
- ✝ **The Point:** The Point is the main idea of the guide (in bold) with some additional explanation. The Points are tied together in multi-week thematic units, which in turn are tied to an annual theme. For those with family members using other *Living the Word* curriculum products this year, The Point and the themes are the same for all ages.
- ✝ **About the Story:** The background information on the Bible passage is something that everyone can read, either aloud together or individually.
- ✝ **Opening Prayer:** We offer a preprinted prayer that goes along with the Bible passage of the day, but feel free to pray any way you would like!
- ✝ **Into the Story:** This section gives a brief discussion question or activity to help you transition from walking into the room to being ready to dig into the Bible story.

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- † **Learning the Story:** This is the heart of the guide. If there is one thing not to skip—this is it. Here is where the Bible passage is read. Generally, your group reads several verses and then discusses it using the questions provided (and any other that come to mind). Occasionally, the format changes a bit, but it always gets you into the Bible to learn more about God, each other, and yourself.
 - † **Living the Story:** Each guide seeks not only to help you study the Bible in your small group, but also to practice your faith using a designated spiritual practice (Prayer, Worship, Fellowship, or Service) within the safety and support of your group. Challenge each other to keep practicing this throughout the week on your own.
 - † **Closing Prayer:** Like the Opening Prayer, this is a short suggestion on how to pray based on the Bible passage. Of course, you should pray any way that works for your group.
 - † **At Home:** This last section gives you a couple of challenges to try at home in the next week to continue growing spiritually with this story.

In addition to the main elements of the guide, there are various sidebars scattered in boxes throughout the materials. Each guide includes the following sidebars, but occasionally may include others:

- † **Last Week/Next Week:** How does this passage related to last week's reading and connect with next week's? This sidebar gives you a brief look at how they all are connected.
- † **Bible Connections:** Does your group (or individual members) like to dig into other related Bible passages in addition to the passage of the day? You will always find a few here.
- † **Bible Nuts & Bolts:** Each guide has a paragraph that gives you background on the structure, themes, tools, or topics related to getting to know the Bible, with different subjects each week.
- † **Daily Readings:** To assist participants to fill in the gaps between each Sunday's readings and to encourage daily reading of the Bible, we give suggested readings for each day with a brief devotional practice. These daily readings are common through the *Living the Word (NL)* products.

If you are a leader and want more background information on each Bible passage, talk to your congregational leaders about ordering our *Living the Word: Contexts & Connections* resource!

Note on Extended Discussion Guides- You may notice that there are two Sunday in the program year that we do not provide a regular guide for, the Sunday after Christmas (New Year's Day this year) and the Sunday of Easter. We do this because many small groups do not meet those weeks. Since we do not want to miss the Bible readings for those days, and since some groups do meet then, we have created Extended Lessons for the following Sunday. Therefore, the Sunday after New Year's Day (Epiphany Sunday) and the second Sunday of Easter have guides that cover the missed stories and that Sunday's story, and they have been extended to have enough teaching material to cover two small group meetings for those who want to use them both weeks.

If you have any questions, comments, or other feedback about this product, please contact me at G.Rawn@SpiritAndTruthPublishing.com or (262) 358-6574.

Blessings,

Gregory Rawn
Publisher