

How to Get the Most Out of *Illustrated Bible Life*

Each week, as you prepare your lesson plan, you may be wondering how to fit *Illustrated Bible Life* into your group session. IBL is first and foremost a resource to enrich your study of the Scripture passage. One of the first things you probably do when you begin studying is to read the Scripture passage. We encourage you to read it through more than once, the second time (and any subsequent readings) taking the time to jot down questions that come to mind from your reading.

We provide a wealth of material in the *Faith Connections Leader's Guide* to help you as you prepare for your group session. *Illustrated Bible Life* is designed to help you dig even deeper into the background of the Scripture study.

After reading the *Faith Connections* exposition, you may find you still have questions about the Scripture passage for the week. That's where IBL should come in. The commentary section is intended to help answer any questions that arise from your reading of the Scripture passage. In fact, it should answer questions you didn't even know you had!

- The verse-by-verse commentary can help you see things in the passage that you may have skipped right past while reading. It explains what the original audience would have understood given their social and historical context, meanings that may be quite different for us today. Sometimes, the original Hebrew or Greek language has nuances of meaning that we don't have in English. So, the commentary points out the differences of meaning and helps us to better grasp what the passage is saying.
- The IBL article for each week goes one step further than the commentary. Sometimes, a particular word or verse needs more explanation than can be covered in either the exposition or commentary. Sometimes having some historical background can help us to see the actions in the Scripture in a more understandable light. Other times, a theological concept may need explaining. The articles cover a number of topics related to your study: theology, history, Bible background, ancient culture, geography, archaeology, and more.
- At the end of each article, you'll find several questions related to your reading. These are designed to help you, the leader, think through what you just read. The better you understand the material, the easier it will be for you to communicate to your group what the lesson is about.

You may also want to use some or all of the questions in your group setting. Consider sharing the contents of the article with your group. Here are a few ways you can do this:

1) Summarize the contents of the article during the group session, under the Bible study portion of the session (Connect to the Word). Then ask some or all of the questions, or ask questions of your own.

2) Did you know that we now provide an audio recording for every article in IBL (see below)? If you have a longer class session, and your group likes a lot of extra material, consider playing the podcast for your group, and then using the questions to help them think through the what they have learned.

3) If your group likes to prepare during the week, consider purchasing a copy of IBL for each member, and direct them to the website to download the audio portion if they prefer. Ask them to read or listen to the article during the week before your session, and come prepared with their answers to the questions provided for each article.