

LAUNCHING A BIG READ

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

- 1 Timothy 4:13

InterVarsity is entering an exciting collaboration with the Grace & Mercy Foundation to field test a new method of Scripture Engagement we're calling "Big Reads" (public reading of Scripture). You can think of a Big Read as a book club with no advance reading required!

Reading Scripture in a public setting was practiced by God's people throughout the Bible to remember who their God is, who they are, and what they have been called by faith to do. We want to help recover this historic practice.

We hope your participation will help us with two goals:

- 1) Further refine a new resource that can be adapted to every corner of every campus as we pursue our 2030 Calling
- 2) Increase biblical literacy and comprehension through communal reading of whole books and large sections of Scripture

Forms of Big Reads have already been tested by InterVarsity staff and students throughout the country. Your participation can help us move this exciting new project forward!

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FAQs

Is this going to replace InterVarsity Bible Study?

Not at all! We're looking to add another tool to our existing ministry tool kit, and we think Big Reads have a lot of potential to help us 1) reach new populations and new corners of campus and 2) increase biblical literacy.

Do Big Reads involve any kind of discussion? Sounds like it's just listening to Scripture.

That can be up to each group! There's lots of room to experiment and see what works. Some groups have added extra space throughout for reflection and discussion; others focus just on the listening portion with minimal discussion at the end.

One thing that *is* different from InterVarsity Bible study is that participants are not studying 1-2 typed pages of a passage in detail, but listening to much larger chunks and seeing what stands out.

Is this suitable for non-Christians?

Yes! We've had great success in our pilot programs with mixed groups. It's helpful to acknowledge upfront the ways in which the Bible can seem weird, but non-Christians appreciate getting to hear the story for themselves.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- thegraceandmercy.org
- publicreadingofscripture.com
- thebibleproject.com
- streetlightsbible.com
- bible.is

GETTING STARTED

- ❑ Decide if you'll have a group member(s) read the passage, or use an audio Bible. We recommend Street Lights, but there are several good ones available.
- ❑ If using an audio Bible, ensure your speaker or device (like a phone/tablet/computer) can play the audio drama Bible loudly enough to be clearly heard by everyone (especially in a Large Group setting).
- ❑ If using print copies of the biblical text to be read, make sure they are in the same translation as the audio drama. Some testers have found it's helpful to give participants the option of using print copies, based on their preferred learning style.
- ❑ Debrief the experience with your participants. You can find suggested debrief questions at the end of this packet.

TIPS

Here are some things we learned during pilot testing of Big Reads. Keep in mind that since we're still in the Discovery phase, there's not really one 'right' way to do it!

- We *love* the Bible Project, and their videos can provide helpful introductions. But, some testers found that including a video at the beginning of a Big Read resulted in too much content. Use your discretion in deciding how to frame each Big Read.
- Some testers found it helpful to provide manuscripts during a Big Read, but only if they're optional for participants. This seems to be the best way to accommodate different learning styles.
- What about Application? This depends on the context (passage, audience). Pay attention to the dynamics and be willing to flex your original plan as the Spirit moves and participants respond to what they're hearing.
- On that note, take occasional breaks. This provides an opportunity to check in with participants. The ideal length of uninterrupted listening time seems to be about 10-12 minutes (some narratives can go slightly longer).
- Because Big Reads involve so much listening, it's very important to choose a meeting space free from distractions.
- Use your creativity to make the experience as fun and engaging as possible!
- As always, provide food if you can!

ACTS 1-8

A Large Group Big Read

75 minutes

Preparation:

- Provide markers and blank paper for creative response times
- Download Streetlights audio Bible app (recommended)
- Room setup: round tables are ideal; ensure audio projection will be loud enough

Intro: What do you find challenging (or exciting) about reading the Bible? 3 min

Share the following intro: 2 min

The Acts of the Apostles frames and introduces the rest of the New Testament. Written by the evangelist Luke, the book tells the continuing story of the risen Jesus through the Holy Spirit and communities of believers committed to worshipping and following Jesus. In this way, Acts is part two of Luke's gospel.

Note: it may be helpful to prompt participants, "If you zone out, don't worry! Just redirect your attention to the text."

Listen to Acts 1-3 (Streetlights), or have the text read out loud. 15 min

Ask group: What did you hear? (Discuss first in groups of 3-4) 3 min

Listen to Acts 4-6, or have the text read out loud. 15 min

Ask group: What did you hear? 3 min

Listen to Acts 7-8, or have the text read out loud. 14 min

Space for creative response (drawing, journaling, etc) 8 min

Debrief (choose from these questions based on time and group interest): 12 min

- What did you learn about following Jesus?
- What did you learn about community?
- What's something you noticed in the text for the first time?
- Was there anything in the text that bothered you?
- What questions do you have?

Feedback from pilot testing:

- *“Really like the Streetlights version because you become really shooketh throughout the book. The music really helps.”*
- *“This reassures that I can read the Bible without feeling overwhelmed. Being zoned in reminds me of watching a tv show.”*
- *“This format helped me picture it in my mind.”*
- *“It was nice to have paper and something to write with to help organize my thoughts. Listening brought up a lot of things.”*
- *“I liked it but it was a lot, so while drawing stuff, I would zone out.”*

PSALMS

A Leadership Team Big Read

60 minutes

"Portraits of Jesus Christ" - Streetlights playlist

Preparation:

- Print out psalm manuscripts for participants who want to use them
- Provide markers and blank paper for creative engagement

Intro question: What do you find most compelling (or confusing) about Jesus? 3 min

Share the following intro: 2 min

Psalms is the prayer book of Israel. It was read, sang, and chanted as the community gathered in the Temple. Doubts of faith, a cry for healing and deliverance, a confession of sin and plea for forgiveness, a celebration of God in history and life—these are among the many themes that comprise the Psalms. Every human emotion is represented, and the Psalms teach us how to pray (especially when we don't have our own words). Throughout the book, there is communication with a living God, and a deep awareness of God's relationship with humanity and creation.

Note: it may be helpful to prompt participants, "If you zone out, don't worry! Just redirect your attention to the text."

Listen to the first five tracks of Streetlights playlist (*Jesus is sovereign*) 12 min

Ask group: What did you hear? (Discuss first in groups of 3-4) 3 min

Listen to the next three tracks (*Jesus suffers*) 13 min

Ask group: What did you hear? 3 min

Listen to the final five tracks (*Jesus is victorious*) 12 min

Debrief (choose from these questions based on time and group interest): 12 min

What did you learn about Jesus?

What did you learn about yourself? Your relationships?

Was there anything in the text that bothered you?

What questions do you have?

Feedback from pilot testing:

- *"I feel loved and special."*
- *"This is telling my story; feels like it was written for me. It's making me uncomfortable."*
- *"It TUGGED at me, brought back all the times I cried out to God and he responded."*
- *"This was more visual; I could really tell the difference between this and inductive study. It's like watching Hamilton versus reading the script."*
- *"I liked reading along and hearing it; two senses at once was good for me."*
- *"I was more emotionally locked in when I didn't have the text in front of me."*

EXODUS 1-6

A Small Group Big Read

50 minutes

"Vol. 2 The Blueprint" - Streetlights playlist

Preparation:

- Provide markers and blank paper for creative response times
- Download Streetlights audio Bible app (recommended)

Intro: What do you find challenging (or exciting) about reading the Bible? 3 min

Share the following intro: 2 min

The book of Exodus continues the story of how God formed the nation of Israel to play a special role in his plans to rescue the world from its captivity to sin. It follows the stories of Israel's founders—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph—told in the book of Genesis. In chapter 1, the Israelites have relocated from their homeland to Egypt, which was not only the most powerful nation at the time, but also the only place that had food during a massive famine. In Exodus we see more of God's character: he rescues and saves. He's the one who brings his people out of slavery.

Note: it may be helpful to prompt participants, "If you zone out, don't worry! Just redirect your attention to the text."

Have participants take turns reading chapters 1-3, five verses at a time. 12 min

Ask group: What did you hear? 3 min

Listen to Streetlights 4-6, or have the text read out loud. 13 min

Ask group: What did you hear? 3 min

Debrief (choose from these questions based on time and group interest): 14 min

- What did you learn about God?
- What did you learn about community?
- What's something you noticed in the text for the first time?
- Was there anything in the text that bothered you?
- What questions do you have?

Feedback from LaFe small group pilot testing:

- *“‘LAZY!’ Being forced to make bricks from straw without the needed supplies is like DACA. We’re given few and confusing/limited resources to seek citizenship, with rules changing all the time. We can’t do it, then we’re told we are lazy for not doing it.”*

Note from staff: Half of the students in the pilot group were DACA recipients. They came alive in this discussion; it really impacted them, and the quiet students shared a lot. They connected with each other and with this story, since they could see themselves in it clearly.

- *It was helpful for LaFe students to read in Spanish.*
- *“Listening along was like watching an action movie.”*
- *“I want to read more!”*

WHOLE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

In Under an Hour

| 20 minutes or less | | ~30 minutes | |
|--------------------|----|---------------|------|
| Ruth | 18 | Lamentations | 32 |
| Song of Songs | 23 | Amos | 33 |
| Joel | 14 | Micah | 28 |
| Obadiah | 5 | | |
| Jonah | 13 | | |
| Nahum | 9 | | |
| Habakkuk | 11 | ~ 45 min | |
| Zephaniah | 13 | Esther | 43 |
| Haggai | 8 | Ecclesiastes | 42 |
| Malachi | 13 | Hosea | 42 |
| Galatians | 22 | Zechariah | 45 |
| Ephesians | 21 | 2 Corinthians | 40 |
| Philippians | 15 | | |
| Colossians | 15 | ~60 minutes | |
| 1 Thessalonians | 13 | Ezra | 54 |
| 2 Thessalonians | 7 | 1 Corinthians | 1:02 |
| 1 Timothy | 17 | Hebrews | 53 |
| 2 Timothy | 13 | | |
| Titus | 7 | | |
| Philemon | 3 | | |
| James | 15 | | |
| 1 Peter | 17 | | |
| 2 Peter | 11 | | |
| 1 John | 17 | | |
| 2 John | 2 | | |
| 3 John | 2 | | |
| Jude | 4 | | |

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

No matter how you creatively use Big Reads, we suggest ending with a short time of debrief using some or all of the following questions:

- What's something in the text you noticed for the first time?
- Was there anything in the text that bothered you?
- What questions do you have?
- What did you learn about loving God?
- What did you learn about loving others?

TESTER DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

What did you find was helpful for your friends in doing Big Reads?

What adjustments to what you tried do you think would be needed for future experiences?

Imagine incorporating Big Reads into chapter planting/building and disciple making. How do you think this could work? What would you want to try next?

What resources would be needed to do the above?

