

**BIBLE  
STUDIES  
FOR LIFE®**

*Advanced*

Bible Study

ADULTS  
FALL 2024

THRIVE: LIVING ON PURPOSE • NAVIGATING FAMILY CONFLICT



## LEADING SOMEONE TO THE GREATEST DECISION OF ALL

One of the great joys of leading a group in Bible study is seeing group members deepen their walk with Christ. Everyone's walk with Christ begins with an initial decision to follow Him in repentance and faith. People may be in your group who have not made that decision yet. Take advantage of your time with them to talk about becoming a Christian.

**As you tell your own story about coming to Christ, share these key truths:**

1. We are all sinners, and each of us needs to acknowledge that truth before God. That acknowledgement involves repentance, which is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Refer to Romans 3:23, 6:23, and Acts 3:19.
2. The only way a person can receive the gift of forgiveness is by faith in Jesus as God's Son. Use verses like Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:8-9; and John 14:6 when talking about faith in Christ.
3. Confessing your faith in Jesus Christ means both believing in your heart and confessing with your mouth that He is Savior and Lord. Share Romans 10:9-10,13.

**Invite the person to pray a prayer similar to this:**

**“Dear God, I know I am a sinner and have rebelled against You in many ways. I believe Jesus died for my sin and only through faith in His death and resurrection can I be forgiven. I now turn from my sin and ask Jesus to forgive me and to come into my life as my Savior and Lord. From this day forward, I will choose to follow Jesus. Thank You, Lord, for loving me and for forgiving me. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.”**

### **A Special Note about “Purpose Restored”**

(Session 3 of “Thrive: Living on Purpose.”)

As your group studies and discusses this session, use it as an opportunity to lead unsaved group members and guests to faith in Christ. Use **“Restored and Made New”** on the inside front cover of the Advanced Bible Study to connect the session with each member's own need to place their hope and trust in Christ and receive His gift of salvation. The inside cover is a guide for understanding how Jesus provides the one thing we truly need.

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## DON'T MISS THIS!

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### eBook

*Bible Studies for Life* is also available as an eBook. You can order a copy at [lifeway.com/bsflebook](https://www.lifeway.com/bsflebook).

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### EXTRA!

Every week, you'll find additional discussion questions and creative teaching ideas to help you tailor each session to the needs of your group. You'll also find links to magazine articles and the *Family Connection* page for parents.

[www.BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra](https://www.BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra)

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### Social Media

Connect with a community of *Bible Studies for Life* users. Post responses to questions, share teaching ideas, and link to great blog content. [Facebook.com/BibleStudiesforLife](https://Facebook.com/BibleStudiesforLife)

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### Podcast

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**Send questions/comments to:**  
Content Editor by email at [lynn.pryor@lifeway.com](mailto:lynn.pryor@lifeway.com)  
or mail to: *Bible Studies for Life: Advanced Bible Study Teacher Guide*  
200 Powell Place, Suite 100  
Brentwood, TN 37027-7707

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*Bible Studies for Life:  
Advanced Bible Study Teacher Guide*

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Lynn H. Pryor  
Team Leader

Dwayne McCrary  
Manager of Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

Ken Braddy  
Director of Sunday School

John Paul Basham  
Director of Adult Ministry

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# HOW TO USE

## What's Inside

### TEACHING PLAN

Each session has a two-page teaching plan. Use it in accordance with Advanced Bible Study, utilizing the teaching outline to guide your group through the passage and its key emphases as detailed in the Advanced Bible Study commentary. Engage group members by leading a discussion of key points, asking questions, and inviting their insights. Occasionally you will see a QR code in this book. Use your phone to open that QR code to see bonus digital content.

### OPTIONAL IDEA

We learn in a variety of ways. This additional teaching idea will encourage your group members to use different senses, enhancing their learning, and deepening their understanding.

### DIG DEEPER

This is an illustration or fact not readily drawn from the passage that can add depth and meaning as you teach.

## Pray

Because the Holy Spirit is the guide for your study, invite Him to show you how to “rightly divide the word of truth” as you teach your group. Read the Bible passage several times, asking the Holy Spirit to show you its meaning and application.

## Prepare Your Class Members

Encourage your group members to read Advanced Bible Study prior to group time. In addition, you may consult one of the following Personal Study Guides:

- Bible Studies for Life: Adult
- Bible Studies for Life: Senior Adult
- Bible Studies for Life: Daily Discipleship Guide

Some group members may prefer to read their book after group time as a way to follow up and reflect on what they have learned and discussed.

**TEACHING PLAN**

**GET INTO THE STUDY**

**OPENING QUESTION:** When is your life more fun than when you're working? How do you know when you're working too hard? How do you know when you're working too little?

- Many people respond to any and every situation as if it is the most important thing in their life.
- Many times it is what we do that makes the most of our workday. Some people make most of it in the hour of prayer.
- When we are not in a relationship with God, we will not be content in our workday.
- Digging into 1 Peter, Living as a People of God, is a challenge for many of our members. Consider this passage as a challenge to your group.

**STUDY THE BIBLE**

**ECCLESIASTES 1:3-7**

**Without God, what we do in life can be pointless.**

**Everything is futile to me.**

- Ask: "The futility of life is not just in the background and setting in the passage but in the person's perspective."
- Ask: "What is futile in life for you? What is the point of life for you? What is the point of life for you?"
- Ask: "What is the point of life for you? What is the point of life for you? What is the point of life for you?"
- Ask: "What is the point of life for you? What is the point of life for you? What is the point of life for you?"

**ECCLESIASTES 1:8-10**

**Without God, what we do in life does not matter.**

**The cycle of life is repeat itself.**

- Discuss with the group the problem that the passage presents. Following the discussion, use the illustration to help explain the problem.
- Ask: "What are some things that are futile in your life? What are some things that are futile in your life? What are some things that are futile in your life?"
- Use information from the passage that begins, "Without the Lord, what we do in life is a cycle of life." Use the illustration to help explain the problem.
- Ask: "What is the point of life for you? What is the point of life for you? What is the point of life for you?"

**ECCLESIASTES 1:11-14**

**Without God, what we do in life is a waste of time.**

**There are things that we do in life that are pointless.**

- Digging into 1 Peter, Living as a People of God, is a challenge for many of our members. Consider this passage as a challenge to your group.
- Ask: "What is the point of life for you? What is the point of life for you? What is the point of life for you?"
- Ask: "What is the point of life for you? What is the point of life for you? What is the point of life for you?"

**OPTIONAL IDEA**

How to your group meeting, spend some time planning a group activity. Consider a variety of activities that will engage your group members. Consider a variety of activities that will engage your group members. Consider a variety of activities that will engage your group members.

**DIG DEEPER**

Memorize a Verse. We try to remember every verse that we read. But when we try to remember a verse, we often find it difficult. Here are some tips to help you remember a verse. Memorize a Verse. We try to remember every verse that we read. But when we try to remember a verse, we often find it difficult. Here are some tips to help you remember a verse.

# The Three Roles Your Bible Study Group Needs

*By Dwayne McCrary*

For me, nearly forty years of marriage has included the wearing of many hats, including but not limited to plumber, exterminator, cook, mover, and petroleum exchange engineer (better known as filler of the gas tanks). None of these titles were explicitly included in the wedding vows. The key word is explicitly, since they are covered under words and phrases like cherish, better or worse, and plight thee my troth. The other hats come with wearing the ring.

Accepting the responsibility of leading an ongoing Bible study group often comes with a variety of hats. Walking alongside a grieving class member as he or she buries a loved one, especially a child or spouse, was probably not what we thought about when we said yes. Nor was setting up chairs or training someone. Even if we did not fully grasp it at the time, these things come with the territory.

Ten years ago, David Francis and Ken Braddy defined the roles we play when assigned a Bible study group in terms of teacher, shepherd, and leader. (You can download a free copy of their original work at [www.lifeway.com/trainingresources](http://www.lifeway.com/trainingresources).) These three roles can help us handle the expectations that come with saying yes to a Bible study group.



## TEACHER

This role is the most obvious. Regardless of what else we may think we are to do, teaching seems to be at the top of the list. Francis and Braddy defined this role as our ongoing goal of guiding group members to discover and apply biblical truth. They went on to say that for this to happen the group members will need to talk as much as we do.

The phrase “ongoing goal” stands out in the Francis and Braddy statement. The idea here is that we do this task week in and week out. We are not a coordinator or part-time teacher; we are to be regular in carrying out this role. As a teacher of preschoolers as well as adults, I can understand the value of being there every week. Preschoolers get accustomed to the patterns we follow. Seeing the same face each week eases some of the angst when being dropped off by a parent. The patterns bring security and give the child a framework for the learning experience. The same is true when teaching adults. They also need that same type of framework and security. We may hand over the teaching to an apprentice on occasion but ultimately, we are the ones who must consistently fulfill the role if we want the class or group to gel and become a safe place to share and learn.

## SHEPHERD

Most likely, before our first day with a class or group, we were presented with a ministry list, a set of people assigned to be in our group. This ministry list was assigned with the idea that we would care for the individuals on that list.

Teaching and shepherding seem to go hand in hand. If we think about our favorite teachers over the years, we most likely will identify people who also had some type of relationship with us. As shepherds, we know the needs of the individual sheep which should make us better teachers. We can tailor the group Bible study time in light of these known needs. Our shepherding should also influence how we lead the group time, knowing who we may call on to share an experience that illustrates the main point being examined that day.

We will naturally find it easier to shepherd those who are more regular in the group. But we cannot forget about those who rarely attend. There is a reason they are on the class list assigned to us. In a triad of parables Jesus pointed to a lost sheep, lost coin, and lost or prodigal son (Luke 15). Jesus pointed out the shepherd will search for that single lost sheep until found. We are responsible as a shepherd assigned to a specific number of sheep who also have names.

## LEADER

Carrying influence makes a person a leader even when they did not seek to be one. Teaching and shepherding automatically gives us influence, and we become a leader by proxy. We see this in how we help our class or group understand the mission of reaching, teaching, and serving.

Ongoing Bible study groups carry some responsibility in reaching people who are far from God. As the leader, we have to keep reminding our group of that responsibility. Otherwise, we will become comfortable with our Christian huddle to the exclusion of others. As we reach more people, there comes a point when we are unable to teach and shepherd effectively. That is one reason for planting a new group once 12 to 18 are attending the current one. Someone must lead the group to see the need for planting the new group and for apprenticing others who can teach/shepherd/lead. The more groups we plant, the greater the potential that we can reach our communities with the gospel which is our ultimate mission.

## GOOD NEWS, KINDA

None of us are gifted in all three of these areas, and therefore, we need others to come along side us if we are going to be successful. That is good news, but with a caveat. The three roles are interwoven. We can hand off a role, but those roles stay closely connected. All three roles are connected by assignment but also by relationship. All three require us to build relationships with all the people included on our assigned ministry list. If we neglect one of the roles, the other roles will suffer. With God’s help, we can become the teacher/shepherd/leader the people on our ministry list need and that our church needs to reach the communities in which God has placed us.

**Dwayne McCrary** is the manager of adult ongoing Bible studies at Lifeway.

# INTRODUCTION

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## *Thrive: Living on Purpose*

Antique stores. Not everyone is a fan, but my wife and I like to walk the aisles of an antique store. I may find something I can refurbish or repurpose into something else. Occasionally, I'll see something that is new and unusual to me. "What is it?" I am not interested in simply knowing its name; I want to know what it does. What is its purpose? Knowing the purpose of some tool or instrument I pick up tells me why it was invented, who might use it, and how effective it was. Too many of us go through life without purpose. Life can be mundane and even carry a sense of hopelessness, but that was never God's intent for us. God created us with purpose, and when we discover that purpose in Christ, life takes on a meaning and richness the world can't offer. Over these six Bible study sessions, we're going to see the purpose for which God created us, how we can recapture that purpose, and what it practically looks like to live life with purpose.

### **How this study supports the Discipleship Plan** (see page 65):

**Live Unashamed.** Knowing the purpose God has given us helps us live with confidence. When we are living out God's plan and desire for us, the reaction of the world around us is of little consequence.

**Session 1** Purpose Questioned  
(Ecclesiastes 1:1-14)

**Session 2** Purpose Abandoned  
(Psalm 8:1-6; 14:1-7)

**Session 3** Purpose Restored  
(Acts 3:14-26)

**Session 4** Purpose Lived  
(Galatians 5:16-26)

**Session 5** Purpose Expressed  
(Galatians 6:1-10)

**Session 6** Purpose Exemplified  
(Philippians 1:1-11)

### **Writers**

**Randy Fields** wrote the Teaching plans and Options for "Thrive: Living on Purpose." Randy is the lead pastor at New Covenant Baptist Church in Grass Valley, California, where he has served for the past eighteen years. He enjoys hiking, traveling, and spending time with his wife, Robin, and his two sons and their families.

**Jeff Dabbs** wrote the Digging Deeper features for "Thrive: Living on Purpose." Jeff is the Senior Pastor of Spring Creek Baptist Church in Rome, Georgia. He received a Ph.D. from Trinity Theological Seminary.





# PURPOSE QUESTIONED

## THE POINT

*Apart from God, life is meaningless.*

### **Ecclesiastes 1:1-14 (CSB)**

<sup>1</sup> The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> “Absolute futility,” says the Teacher. “Absolute futility. Everything is futile.” <sup>3</sup> What does a person gain for all his efforts that he labors at under the sun? <sup>4</sup> A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. <sup>5</sup> The sun rises and the sun sets; panting, it hurries back to the place where it rises. <sup>6</sup> Gusting to the south, turning to the north, turning, turning, goes the wind, and the wind returns in its cycles. <sup>7</sup> All the streams flow to the sea, yet the sea is never full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. <sup>8</sup> All things are wearisome, more than anyone can say. The eye is not satisfied by seeing or the ear filled with hearing. <sup>9</sup> What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun. <sup>10</sup> Can one say about anything, “Look, this is new”? It has already existed in the ages before us. <sup>11</sup> There is no remembrance of those who came before; and of those who will come after there will also be no remembrance by those who follow them. <sup>12</sup> I, the Teacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> I applied my mind to examine and explore through wisdom all that is done under heaven. God has given people this miserable task to keep them occupied. <sup>14</sup> I have seen all the things that are done under the sun and have found everything to be futile, a pursuit of the wind.

### **Ecclesiastes 1:1-14 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup> The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. <sup>3</sup> What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? <sup>4</sup> One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. <sup>5</sup> The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. <sup>6</sup> The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. <sup>7</sup> All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. <sup>8</sup> All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. <sup>9</sup> The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. <sup>10</sup> Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. <sup>11</sup> There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after. <sup>12</sup> I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. <sup>14</sup> I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

# TEACHING PLAN

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## GET INTO THE STUDY

**OPENING QUESTION:** When in your life have you done something that you thought was extremely urgent and important at the moment only to discover later that it really didn't matter at all?

- Many people respond to any and every situation as if it is the most important thing in life.
- Many times in life what we think matters the most—in the end—really doesn't matter much at all in the scope of things.
- When we live a life without a relationship with God, life itself and all it contains is meaningless.
- Display **Item 1: Thrive: Living on Purpose** poster to overview the study and reference session titles throughout the study.

**OPTIONAL IDEA:** See page 12 for a creative way to introduce the session.

## STUDY THE BIBLE

### ECCLESIASTES 1:1-7

*Without God, what we do in life can feel pointless.*

---

**Everything is futile to mankind.**

- Use “The Setting” to help your group understand the background and setting in this passage from Solomon, the Preacher/Teacher.
- Ask: What cycles in life do you see that seem to be pointless in the scope of things?
- Guide the group to understand the phrase “under the sun” in the Bible by using information from the paragraph that begins “The phrase ‘under the sun.’”
- Point out that the Preacher was using examples of recurring cycles of nature to make his point that, like those natural cycles, we can get caught up in an endless cycle that doesn't provide any satisfaction in our lives and can ultimately lead to feeling pointless.

- Discuss the correlation between things that have purpose compared to those that are pointless.
  - Following the discussion, drive home the point that without God, what we do in life is pointless.
- 

### ECCLESIASTES 1:8-10

*Without God, what we do in life does not satisfy.*

---

**The cycles of life repeat endlessly.**

- Discuss with the group the problem that the Preacher points out. Following the discussion, use information from the paragraph that begins “These verses continue” to help explain the problem.
  - Ask: What are some things that bring satisfaction to you? Why is the eye not satisfied with seeing or the ear with hearing?
  - Use information from the paragraph that begins “Moreover, the eye” and lead the group in a discussion answering the question.
  - Ask: What life experiences are unique to this generation compared to previous generations?
  - Explain using information from the paragraph that begins “Why is this true?” to help the group understand that there is nothing new under the sun.
- 

### ECCLESIASTES 1:11-14

*Without God, what we do in life is a miserable task.*

---

**There are limitations to our own wisdom.**

- Display **Item 2: Finding Meaning and Purpose** poster. Use this poster as a tool to create a conversation about how others respond to the issue of purpose and meaning in life.
- Ask: Who can tell me what happened on this day 200 years ago? How about 2 years ago? Why is that we can't remember things of the past?

notes

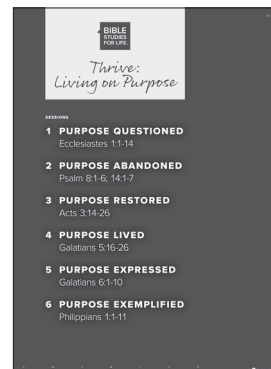
- Allow for a time of discussion, then use the information from the paragraphs that begin “The present will” through “How pitiful” to help explain to the group why we struggle with this issue.
- Explain that from kings to those who struggle in life, no one has the corner on understanding why we struggle to find meaning, satisfaction, and purpose in life. Whether a person has unlimited resources or limited ones, wisdom and purpose cannot be found by ourselves.
- Using information from the paragraph that begins “He went on to say” to point out that God didn’t give us this struggle to find purpose as a miserable task. He wanted us to know that He is a Sovereign God and that without Him, life will have no purpose or meaning.
- Discuss how, as Christians, we can help others to live a life of meaning and purpose?
- Say: The Preacher gave a great example by asking us if we could catch the wind.
- Emphasize that even if we did, what would we have to show for it?
- Say: The bottom line is, apart from God, what we do in life will be a meaningless task.

**DIG DEEPER:** Review and share the teaching idea on the next page to aid in your discussion.

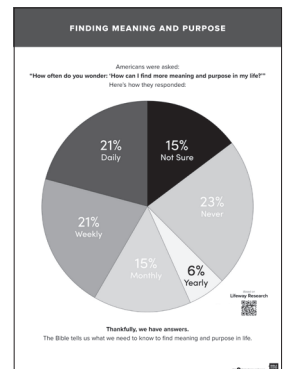
## LIVE IT OUT

### What does a life of purpose look like?

- Create a list of things that you have done in the past that looking back on—if you were honest with yourself—you would now say were pointless.
- When you live for God, you will find purpose for your life.
- When you truly live for God, you will ultimately feel satisfied in this life.
- When you live faithfully for God, your life will have joy and bring joy to others.



Pack Item 1



Pack Item 2



## OPTIONAL IDEA

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Prior to your group time, spend some time planning a game that has no purpose. Create a variety of rules that don't make any sense but require volunteers to do a variety of activities.

For example: clap their hands, put their nose to the wall, stand on one leg, and so on. Award points at random but don't keep track of them.

When all group members have arrived, explain to them that you are going to be playing a game. Assign an activity to each volunteer and announce that on your call they are to begin doing their assigned task. As you walk around the room, yell out a given point value to volunteers and assign a different task. Continue to play the game as time allows.

As you bring the game to a close, announce that there is no winner.

Following the game, ask the group to respond to the following questions: Was there any purpose to the

game we just played? What were your thoughts as you were asked to do different tasks that didn't make any sense?

Allow for a time of discussion and then say: In this session, we aren't going to be playing meaningless games that have no real purpose, but we will be discussing whether or not life is a meaningless task without any purpose.

Open in a time of prayer: "God, we ask You to speak to each of us today as we study Your Word about what brings meaning to our lives."



## DIG DEEPER

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Memories are funny. We try to remember every detail that is presented to us; but more importantly, we want to be remembered. Humans have a difficult time being forgettable. Research indicates that within one hour, people will forget about 50 percent of what they were presented. Within 24 hours, they will have forgotten roughly 70 percent. Within a week, 90 percent of information will be lost. And yet, humans don't want to be forgotten.

We spend countless hours trying to preserve our legacies. We attempt to buy things, build things, or write things so we will be remembered. Truthfully, how many people know anything about their great grandparents? What about your second and third great-grandparents? Thanks to organizations such as Ancestry and 23andMe, some people are

reconnecting with their past, but to what overall benefit? It can't change their life, and for that matter, we can't change ours either. But these companies are making millions of dollars from people who are trying to remember their ancestors all in an effort to one day be remembered themselves.

It's depressing to think about, but how many of our descendants will know very much about us? The Preacher in Ecclesiastes 1:11 taught that there is more to life than memories. Jesus warned His hearers in Matthew 6:19-21 to store up treasures in heaven where they will not be destroyed. Things done on this earth will soon not only be forgotten but destroyed. We are to seek God first and His kingdom. These are the things that will last eternally.