

Leading a Prison Bible Study

Do you love to study and share God's Word with others? If so, leading a prison Bible study may be a great way to be involved in prison ministry.

This ministry requires a considerable time commitment for class preparation. Most in-prison Bible study groups meet weekly. Some studies may last 6-8 weeks, while others may be year-round with breaks taken only for holidays.

Prison Fellowship recommends team facilitation, so that no one is over-burdened with the responsibility of weekly lessons. Some other benefits of working in teams are:

- More creativity and variety in lesson content because of the additional skills, talents, and life experiences of team members
- Having others to help counsel and pray with inmates who need one-on-one attention
- More flexibility to break into small groups for discussions since team members can help facilitate small groups
- Shared administrative tasks such as making handouts or keeping attendance
- Having a back-up replacement in case of an emergency

The goal of in-prison Bible study is to help prisoners come to know Jesus Christ personally and learn how to apply His Word to their lives. An effective ministry team plans lessons 6-12 months at a time, so participants may receive instruction on a wide variety of topics such as:

- Receiving Christ; becoming like Christ
- How to pray for myself and others
- Forgiving others; forgiving myself
- Dealing with emotions (shame, fear, anger, etc.)
- Obedience to Christ; respect for authority
- Having a Christian worldview

PF has a list of approved curriculum materials for in-prison classes. Volunteers should work with their local PF field staff to identify the best offerings for a local prison facility. For those just getting started, PF has a series of five Bible studies, each taking eight sessions to complete.

Another effective study plan is to pick books of the Bible such as the Gospel of John. But remember – this isn't a Sunday School class. Your challenge will be to make the 60-90 minutes you have with those inmates the most practical, interesting, and relevant experience of their week.

From the moment people enter the room, participants need to feel the love of God surrounding them. Greet each one warmly. Encourage a worshipful atmosphere with inspirational music, singing, praise reports, and a time of prayer for specific needs.

Always build thoughtful discussion questions into your lessons and make sure people are participating in class – not just sitting and listening to you talk. Each person should come away from your class having spent time studying God's Word, praying together, and enjoying fellowship with other believers.