

THE
World
among
US

SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT IN IFES

The Word Among Us
Scripture Engagement in IFES

Written by:
Sabine Kalthoff (Germany), IFES Secretary
for Scripture Engagement
Annette Arulrajah (Malaysia), IFES Associate
Regional Secretary for East Asia
Emmanuel Ahlijah (Ghana), former IFES Associate
Regional Secretary for English- and Portuguese-
speaking Africa (EPSA)
Lindsay Olesberg (USA), Scripture Engagement
Director for InterVarsity USA
Ricardo Borges (Brazil), IFES Associate Regional
Secretary for Latin America

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Editor: Huw Spanner
Designer: Andreas Sonnhüter, www.sonnhueter.com

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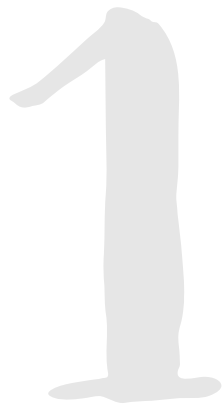
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GETTING STARTED

**How can we make sure that each new generation of students loves,
studies, lives and shares God's Word?**

The booklet you are holding was written with this purpose in mind. It seeks
to help general secretaries, staff and student leaders to reconsider and
strengthen Scripture engagement in their local student groups and national
movements.

PART 1



Cultivating a Clear Vision of Scripture Engagement

A guide for cultivation

This focuses on six core aspects of our interaction with God's Word. Considering these and their importance will help us to be proactive in strengthening Scripture engagement.

These two resources can be used independently of each other.

When you meet in a group to work with one of these resources, make sure that there is time to engage with God's Word directly. One of the following passages could be a good place to start: Genesis 1:1–2:4; Deuteronomy 6; Nehemiah 8; Psalm 119:33–40; Mark 4:1–34; Luke 24:13–35; John 1; 2 Timothy 3:10–4:8.

PART 2



Reflecting on the Impact of Scripture among Us

A tool for reflection

This invites us to stop and reflect. It provides some questions which are designed to spark conversations that can inspire and enrich us. The aim is both to celebrate and renew the impact of Scripture among us.

Scripture Engagement in IFES

A deep commitment to the Bible has always been central to the ministry of IFES. The doctrinal basis of IFES affirms 'the divine inspiration and entire trustworthiness of Scripture, as originally given, and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct'. One distinctive characteristic of our movements is that students meet to read the Bible together.

The Living Stones Vision 2020 introduced to IFES the term 'Scripture engagement'. This highlights the fact that we are invited to approach the Bible in the context of a relationship which affects the whole of our lives. Engaging with Scripture is essentially an interaction with the Living God through his written Word. The Word draws us into the presence of God himself, inviting us to know and trust Jesus, receive his grace, enjoy his fellowship and deepen our commitment to him.

We need to have particular times and places in which we interact with God's Word. However, Scripture engagement is something bigger than studying the Bible. It involves both listening to God and responding to him. It is not just an activity but a lifestyle. God's Word shapes us into disciples of Jesus.

So, engaging with Scripture involves loving, studying, living and sharing God's Word.

The IFES vision is to see students built into communities of disciples, transformed by the gospel and impacting the university, the church and society for the glory of Christ.

FOR MORE DETAILS ON THE LIVING STONES VISION, SEE:
WWW.IFESWORLD.ORG/LIVINGSTONES

Engaging with Scripture is essential in bringing students to Christ, which is at the heart of our vision. Scripture alone shows the way to Jesus and his saving grace. The Holy Spirit uses God's Word to form us into communities of disciples. Through it, we grow in our love for God and others, we learn to see ourselves and our world differently, and we are called to place all of life under the lordship of Christ. As Scripture enables us to see our world as God sees it, it challenges us to bring his truth and hope to our context and our society.

Scripture engagement is not the aim of our ministry, but it is absolutely necessary if we are to fulfil our overall vision. Together with community and prayer, it is one of the three core commitments of the Living Stones Vision, whose role is 'to surround and support every aspect of IFES life'.

We believe in a God who speaks.

As his Word draws us to Jesus and transforms our lives, we become living stones who are being built into a community that will be a blessing to many.

Sabine Kalthoff/Germany

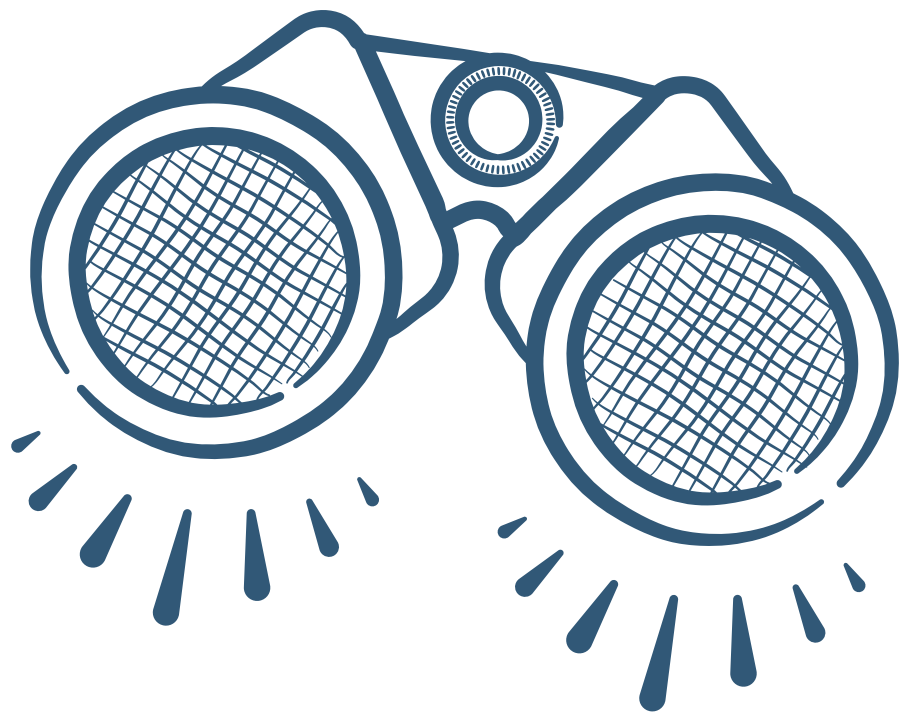
Annette Arulrajah/Malaysia

Emmanuel Ahlijah/Ghana

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Ricardo Borges/Brazil

CULTIVATING A CLEAR *Vision* OF SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT



A guide
for cultivation

1

A clear vision of Scripture engagement is essential if we are going to strengthen the place of God's Word in our student movements. We aim to teach students how to study the Bible, but also to deepen their love for God's Word. We seek both to encourage them to read the Bible and to help them to respond to it in the way they live.

This resource is designed to help to broaden and deepen our overall understanding of Scripture engagement.

It focuses on six core aspects:

- deepening our convictions about the nature and purpose of Scripture
- cultivating an attitude of love, expectant listening and obedience to God's Word
- modelling a lifestyle of Scripture engagement
- trusting the impact of God's Word in evangelism
- nurturing good practices in Scripture engagement
- addressing the challenges of our world biblically

As you consider the importance of these six core aspects, reflect on how you can strengthen them both in your student ministry and in the way you live. For each one, this guide gives an example of an activity that may help you to take a step forward. You will need to take your own context into account as you work with this resource. This will affect the way you address certain themes and might mean adding other aspects of Scripture engagement to this list.

This guide can be used in different ways:

- to reflect on the six core aspects of Scripture engagement (individually or together): why is each of them important?
- to reflect on our ministry as a whole: What role do these six core aspects have in the lives of students and in our movement? How are we addressing these aspects?
- to develop strategies: how can we strengthen these core aspects of Scripture engagement in our student group or movement as we plan for the future?
- to shape the content of student meetings, camps and training events: to what extent do our programmes include and strengthen these six aspects?



DEEPENING OUR
CONVICTIONS
ABOUT THE
NATURE
AND PURPOSE
OF SCRIPTURE

FOCUS. CONSIDER. STRENGTHEN. LIVE.

Deepening Our Convictions about the Nature and Purpose of Scripture

What are the essential character and purpose of the Bible? Our answer to this question lays the foundation for our interaction with God's Word. We need to make sure that our basic beliefs about Scripture are not just abstract theological statements but are filled with meaning. Our desire is that students should have full confidence in this Word, rejoice in its good news and trust its authoritative voice in every situation and issue they face.

Central to our understanding of the Bible is the conviction that God's Word is not primarily a book but a person. God revealed himself to us not by shouting from heaven but by coming to us in the person of Jesus Christ, and Scripture leads us to him. That is why it is so incredibly valuable. We must not reduce the Bible to an object of study – it is more like a room which we enter to meet Jesus. It is this encounter that transforms us into lovers and followers of Jesus who are able to serve him in the world.



SAMPLE ACTIVITY: A GROUP SESSION

- Write down in your own words some of your basic beliefs about the Bible. This can include statements about the nature and character of the Bible, its overall content and its purpose.
- Take some time to share your thoughts with someone sitting next to you.
- As a group, share with each other some of your basic beliefs about the Bible. As you talk about these, you might want to address such questions as: What does it mean to say that the Bible is God's Word? Why is it good news? What do we mean by 'the authority of Scripture'? Where is this authority challenged in our own context?

NOTE:

Questions will probably arise for which you do not immediately find answers. Look out for people and written resources that can help you to grow in your understanding of Scripture.



CULTIVATING AN
ATTITUDE OF
Love,
EXPECTANT
LISTENING
AND OBEDIENCE TO
God's Word

FOCUS. CONSIDER. STRENGTHEN. LIVE.

Cultivating an Attitude of Love, Expectant Listening and Obedience to God's Word

The attitude with which we come to Scripture is as important as the method of study we use – it will influence deeply how we understand God's Word. If we see the Bible as a book of rules, we will primarily hear God's demands when we read it. If we think we already know the text, the danger is that we will hear only the echo of our own thoughts. If we believe that the purpose of the Bible is to solve our problems, we may hear only what addresses our current need.

God invites us to develop a deep love for his Word as the pathway to meeting Jesus, our Saviour, Lover and Friend. His words to us are always life-giving. So, we come to the Bible with a desire to listen carefully, expecting the Holy Spirit to help us to understand God's Word in a fresh way that will nourish us. As we listen, he calls us to open up our hearts and our lives to God. We want to receive God's Word with an attitude of obedient submission because we acknowledge and trust Jesus as our Lord.



SAMPLE ACTIVITY: WRITING A PSALM

- Read Psalm 19 and reflect on the psalmist's attitude to Scripture.
- Write your own psalm expressing your attitude to the Bible – be honest about your thoughts and feelings.



MODELLING
A LIFE-
STYLE
OF SCRIPTURE
ENGAGEMENT

FOCUS. CONSIDER. STRENGTHEN. LIVE.

Modelling a Lifestyle of Scripture Engagement

There is a great need for good role models in this area – people who listen to God’s Word and are honest about their struggles and deeply committed to letting Scripture shape the way they live. If we are going to strengthen Scripture engagement in our student movements, the most important thing is how we ourselves are living with God and his Word. If we are passionate about God’s Word, this will come across in everything we do.

We can model a lifestyle of Scripture engagement both individually and communally. We communicate a commitment to God’s Word by giving it a central place in all our gatherings. We help others to discover the richness of God’s Word by inviting them into experiences of Scripture engagement that are deep and relevant. This includes encouraging a willingness to think hard and to respond in prayer and obedience.



SAMPLE ACTIVITY: REMEMBERING YOUR ROLE MODELS

- Reflect on your own journey: who showed you what it means to engage with Scripture and wrestle with its implications in daily life?
- Describe these people and their impact on your life.
- Maybe write a short note of thanks to them.

This can all be done on your own or in a group.



TRUSTING THE
IMPACT
of God's Word
IN EVANGELISM

FOCUS. CONSIDER. STRENGTHEN. LIVE.

Trusting the Impact of God's Word in Evangelism

Through Scripture, people can come to know and learn to trust Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God. When they have a first-hand encounter with Jesus in the Bible, their view of the Christian faith begins to change as God shines his light into their darkness and extends his invitation to salvation. The Holy Spirit loves using God's Word to change hearts and renew minds, creating faith. Thus, the Bible is essential for evangelism.

We can trust the Bible to speak for itself. We can expect non-believers to meet the Living God as they start to explore Scripture. However, if they are going to engage honestly with his Word, non-believers need a safe space where they can openly ask their questions and share their opinions. So, love prompts us to seek creative ways to bring students into contact with God's Word.



SAMPLE ACTIVITY: INTERVIEWS

Interview three to five non-Christian students about their experience of the Bible and ask them:

- Have you had any contact with the Bible? If so, where and when?
- What is your impression of the Bible? How would you describe it to a friend?
- Would you find it interesting to know more about the Bible and its content? If so, why? If not, why not?

Listening to and understanding what students around us think about the Bible are significant steps towards creating safe places where non-believers can engage with Scripture.



NURTURING GOOD PRACTICES IN SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT

FOCUS. CONSIDER. STRENGTHEN. LIVE.

Nurturing Good Practices in Scripture Engagement

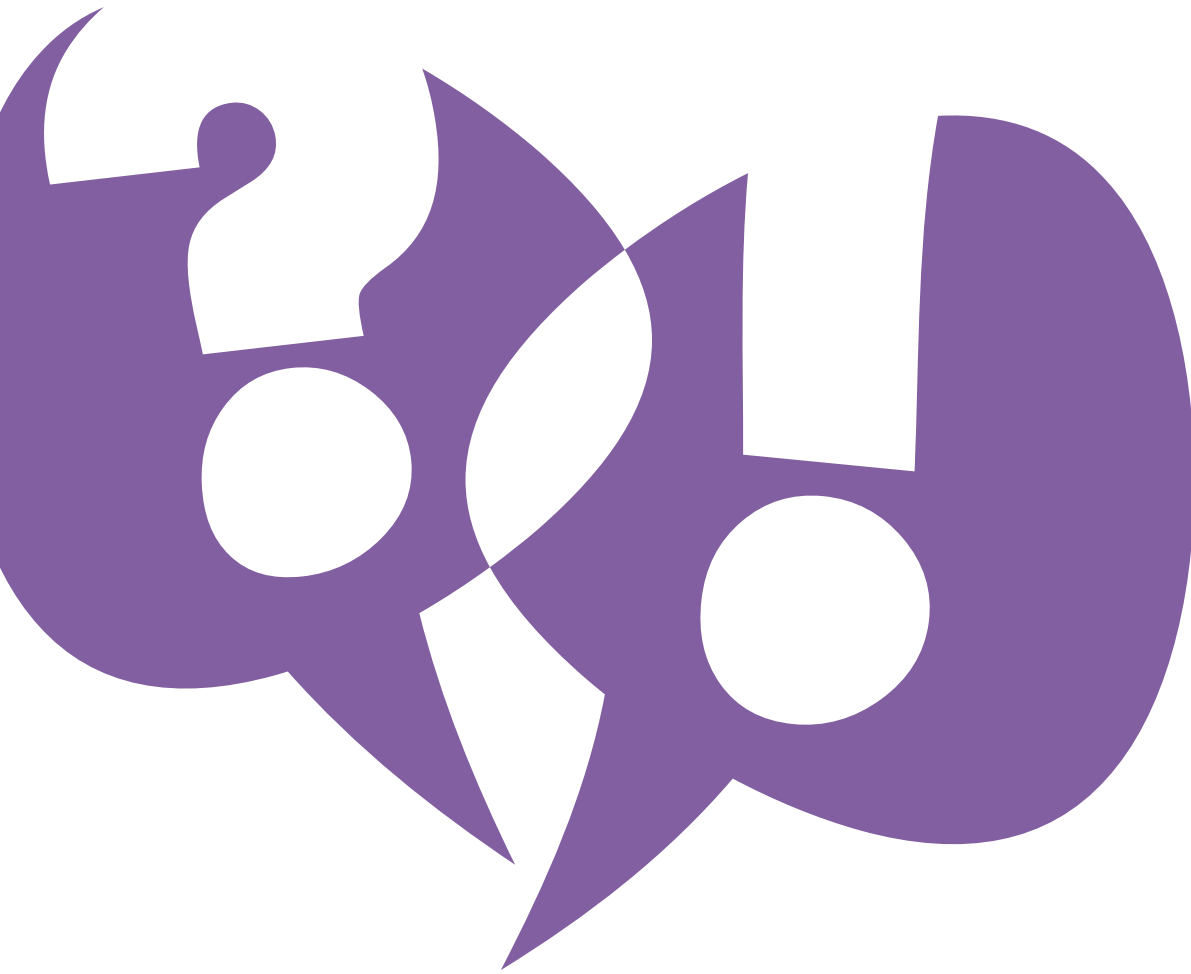
How can we engage with Scripture with both our hearts and our minds? It is not enough just to keep our programmes running – instead, we seek to interact with the Bible in such a way that it leads us into the presence of God and allows him to shape our lives. We want students to grow in their ability to feed themselves from the Bible, to interpret God's Word faithfully and to see the relevance of Scripture for all areas of life. Furthermore, students who have learned to lead effective Bible studies with both Christian and non-Christian friends will be strong multipliers.

In order to develop good practices, we need to be equipping students purposefully. This will involve modelling, training, mentoring and giving practical learning opportunities. This can't be done only through training events – it is just as important to invest in individuals patiently and model good practices in our small group Bible studies and our biblical teaching.



SAMPLE ACTIVITY: IDENTIFYING WHAT NEEDS TO BE STRENGTHENED

- As a team, whether of student leaders or staff, list good practices in Scripture engagement which you think are important for Christian students. Take some time to choose and define five key practices which you would like all Christian students to follow in their lives. How are these already being nurtured? What can you do to strengthen them further?
- What good practices or other abilities do student leaders or staff need in the area of Scripture engagement?



ADDRESSING THE
CHALLENGES
of Our
World
BIBLICALLY

FOCUS. CONSIDER. STRENGTHEN. LIVE.

Addressing the Challenges of Our World Biblically

Since God is the Creator, Redeemer and Lord of everything, his Word addresses all of life. It has the potential to bring hope and change everywhere. So we seek to develop a biblical view of the current needs and issues in our context – our university and our society. As we take part in the conversations going on around us, we want to find ways to communicate this perspective. We have to avoid offering shallow, simplistic answers to deep and complex needs and so we need to understand the issues at stake and develop an approach based on the whole of Scripture and not on isolated texts.

As we start to explore Scripture, we soon discover that God's Word and its purpose are bigger than our agenda. The Bible may well change the questions we ask, raising new and more important issues or giving us answers we had not expected. As we come to Scripture with specific questions, we do not just want answers; we desire to understand what is on God's heart and mind for our world.



SAMPLE ACTIVITY: LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS

- Do a survey on campus asking students what one question they would like to ask God.
- Reflect on two or three of these questions more deeply and start to consider them in the light of Scripture.
- Host an event that addresses some of the most frequently asked questions. Who could help you to address these questions well?

A number of student movements have had positive experiences with this kind of activity.

SUMMARY



**Cultivating a Clear Vision of
Scripture Engagement**
Collecting our thoughts so far...

**Reflect on your own
or in a group:**

*After reading the guide for cultivation,
what insights stood out for you?*

*Which two of the following six core aspects
are most significant for your group or
movement at this time? Why?*

- deepening our convictions about the nature and purpose of Scripture
- cultivating an attitude of love, expectant listening and obedience to God's Word
- modelling a lifestyle of Scripture engagement
- trusting the impact of God's Word in evangelism
- nurturing good practices in Scripture engagement
- addressing the challenges of our world biblically

Brainstorm ways to strengthen your group or movement in these two areas. Prayerfully decide on one or two concrete (and realistic) first steps to take towards achieving this.



REFLECTING ON THE IMPACT OF SCRIPTURE AMONG US

2 A tool
for reflection

Reflecting on the Impact of Scripture among Us

A tool for reflection

Loving, studying, living and sharing God's Word will not happen automatically. This resource is designed to help you to stop and reflect. We need to look carefully at the impact of God's Word in our student movements in order to see where there is a need for renewal. This will involve looking not only at our programmes but also at the lives of students and their interaction with God's Word.

The aim of this tool goes beyond reflection to change and renewal. As you become aware of challenges and weaknesses, talk together and pray about how you can strengthen this area of Scripture engagement – and decide on the next step you will take.

Make sure that you also identify what is going well and celebrate it. This tool is also an invitation to rejoice in what God is doing through his Word among us. It is not comprehensive, but just one possible way of reflecting on Scripture engagement in our student groups and movements.

In using this resource, you may find it helpful first to read the guide for cultivation in part one of this booklet. As you think and talk about the following questions, you may find that they lead you into prayer or to God's Word. Let us trust in the work of the Holy Spirit among us to bring change and renewal!

This tool can be used in different ways:

- **to initiate conversations** in student groups, in staff meetings, in one-to-one meetings of staff with students;
- **to reflect individually** on the place of God's Word in our life and student ministry;
- **to assess strengths and weaknesses** in our student ministry. You can then go on to develop strategies for Scripture engagement (for example, at a gathering of student leaders or staff);
- **to evaluate and celebrate our Scripture engagement** after a major event or at the end of an academic year;
- **to focus on a single topic for reflection or to work through the whole tool** (in one session of two to three hours or over a period of time). Each topic for reflection can stand on its own.

Note: Depending on the context in which you are using this tool, you can read the questions as referring to you personally or to a student group, a staff team or the whole student movement.



The Heart of the Matter: Encounters that Transform Us

‘WE ALL, WHO WITH UNVEILED FACES CONTEMPLATE THE LORD’S GLORY, ARE BEING TRANSFORMED INTO HIS IMAGE WITH EVER-INCREASING GLORY, WHICH COMES FROM THE LORD, WHO IS THE SPIRIT.’
2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

- Share some stories that tell how particular Bible passages have led to a transforming encounter with Jesus.
- Reflect on how we approach Scripture in our own life and in our student group or movement. To what extent is our interaction with God’s Word shaped by an awareness of his presence? Where are we in danger of reducing the Bible to nothing more than an object of study?
- What helps students to encounter God through his Word? What hinders them?
- What changes in our methods and practices could help to strengthen the relational aspect of Scripture engagement?

STOP. REFLECT. CELEBRATE. RENEW.



The Unseen: Stirring Up Appetite

‘WHEN YOUR WORDS CAME, I ATE THEM; THEY WERE MY JOY AND MY HEART’S DELIGHT, FOR I BEAR YOUR NAME, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY.’

JEREMIAH 15:16

- Describe the feelings and attitudes with which Christian students come to Scripture. What are the beliefs about God and his Word that lie behind them?
- What motivates us to come to God’s Word? What keeps us away from it (for example, doubts, low expectations, a wrong view of the Bible)?
- What images or metaphors of Scripture engagement do we want to give this generation of students (for example, a delicious meal that satisfies our hunger)?
- What can we do differently to help cultivate a positive attitude of love and joy with regard to the Bible?

STOP. REFLECT. CELEBRATE. RENEW.



Daily Reality: Embracing the Word

‘SEARCH ME, GOD, AND KNOW MY HEART; TEST ME AND KNOW MY ANXIOUS THOUGHTS. SEE IF THERE IS ANY OFFENSIVE WAY IN ME, AND LEAD ME IN THE WAY EVERLASTING.’

PSALM 139:23-24

- What place does Scripture have in our life and the life of our community? How much time do we give it, and how do we allow it to shape our convictions and commitments?
- Meeting Jesus in Scripture invites us to respond to him in a way that impacts our lives. How are we making sure that we are not only listening to God’s Word, but also responding to it (for example in worship, prayer, obedient living etc.)?
- In what ways are we called to be counter-cultural in our context? How does our lifestyle reveal that we are people of the Word?
- What has encouraged us when we found it difficult to embrace God’s Word?

STOP. REFLECT. CELEBRATE. RENEW.



Powerful Word: Opening Doors to Jesus

‘JESUS PERFORMED MANY OTHER SIGNS IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS DISCIPLES, WHICH ARE NOT RECORDED IN THIS BOOK. BUT THESE ARE WRITTEN THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH, THE SON OF GOD, AND THAT BY BELIEVING YOU MAY HAVE LIFE IN HIS NAME.’

JOHN 20:30-31

- How has the Holy Spirit used God’s Word to bring students we know to Jesus Christ? What was it that attracted them to Jesus?
- What discourages non-Christians and nominal Christians in our university or college from reading the Bible? What might interest them in reading it?
- What good ways have we found to create spaces in which non-believing friends feel safe to explore God’s Word honestly?
- What needs to change in the lives of Christian students – in their beliefs or attitudes or behaviour – so that their fellow students are brought more into contact with Jesus and his Word?

STOP. REFLECT. CELEBRATE. RENEW.



Living Formats: Creating Space for the Word

‘MY SHEEP LISTEN TO MY VOICE; I KNOW THEM AND THEY FOLLOW ME.’

JOHN 10:27

- What is our experience of personal Bible reading? How much do we know about each other's experiences? How are we encouraging and training others to spend meaningful time alone with God's Word?
- Which approaches and methods are most common in our small group Bible studies? Take some time to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each one.
- How do personal Bible reading, small group Bible studies and biblical teaching complement each other? In which of these areas do we feel that our group or movement is weakest? Which steps can we take to grow in this area?
- Sometimes we are so close to receiving the Word but are too preoccupied or distracted by other things. When have we experienced this? How do we prepare ourselves to hear the Word well both individually and in a group?

STOP. REFLECT. CELEBRATE. RENEW.



Amidst Changes: The Word for Today

‘BUT YOU ARE A CHOSEN PEOPLE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, GOD’S SPECIAL POSSESSION, THAT YOU MAY DECLARE THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS WONDERFUL LIGHT.’

1 PETER 2:9

- What issues and concerns preoccupy students in university or college life? How are we engaging in conversations about them in the light of Scripture?
- What trends – both open doors and challenges – do we see in this generation of students with regard to engaging with God’s Word?
- What needs to change in the way we help students to connect with God’s Word? How do we make sure that the message of the Bible remains central in the midst of these changes?
- Our desire is to see every generation of students living in the Word. What would this look like? Feel free to dream! What part can you play in turning that dream into reality?

STOP. REFLECT. CELEBRATE. RENEW.



SUMMARY

REFLECTING
ON THE IMPACT
OF SCRIPTURE
AMONG US

Collecting our thoughts so far...

Now that you have taken time to stop and reflect on the impact of Scripture in your student group or movement, what insights stood out?

List some of the ways you see God at work, and celebrate them.

Identify one or two challenges or weaknesses that should be addressed as a priority.

Brainstorm ways to move forward in these areas. Prayerfully decide on one or two concrete (and realistic) first steps to take.

Becoming a Catalyst for Scripture Engagement

Strengthening Scripture engagement in our student movements will mainly happen not through programmes but through people – people who are passionate about God’s Word and willing to invest in the lives of students. Explore ways in which you can be a catalyst for Scripture engagement.

HERE ARE SOME POSSIBLE PLACES TO START:

- being a student of the Word and allowing Jesus and his Word to shape your life;
- looking for open doors for God’s Word;
- identifying things that take the joy and love out of engaging with Scripture;
- opening up conversations about our struggles in reading the Bible;
- seeking ways to invite others to experience God’s Word in a deep and relevant way;
- sparking communal reflection about how we interact with God’s Word;
- calling others to make space for God’s Word and to obey Jesus as Lord;
- praying for a renewed hunger for God’s Word among students.
- ...
- ...

More reflections and materials
on various themes of this booklet
can be found at

www.scriptureengagement.ifesworld.org

You will find a digital version of this booklet, which
you can download and use in your student movement, at
scriptureengagement.ifesworld.org/the-word-among-us.