

Dear Bible Study Leader,

Welcome to *Rally*! I'm so glad you're considering leading a group with this study. It's a great study to help your group members to grow closer to God, develop close relationships with each other, and mature in their character.

This is a 9-week study (8 lessons), but I've given suggestions at the end of this leader's guide if you'd like to make the class shorter or longer. I've also included some general suggestions for leading the class and some ideas for the first week's introduction to the class below.

I'm praying that God will use this study for good in your own life and also the lives of your class members! If you have any questions about leading a class with this Bible study, you can contact me at barb.raveling@gmail.com.

Overall Suggestions

Size of class: This study works well with large groups, but it's also nice with really small groups or even one-on-one discipleship relationships. I've had discussions with a class as big as 25 where women were openly sharing their trials, but that doesn't always happen in a large group. You may want to form smaller discussion groups of 6-10 if you have a large group at your study.

Resources: You can find all the resources I mentioned in *Rally* at barbraveling.com/rally in addition to other resources you might find helpful for your classes, such as short videos to use in class. You don't need the videos but can add them in if you'd like.

Format: You can either assign the lessons as homework and then discuss them in class, or do the Bible study together in class. I've done it both ways and both worked well. If you do the lessons in class, be sure to give them a little time on their own in class to answer any of the questions that are personal reflection types of questions. You'll have a little less time for discussion if you do the work together, but it can easily be done in a 1 ½ hour class. I found that the questions in the book were enough to generate discussion, although I've included extra discussion questions for the first week of the class in this leader's guide in case you want to have an introductory week rather than jumping into the study right away.

Sharing: Because this is a Bible study on growing through trials, you could have the potential for some intense sharing in class. You can take two approaches to this: 1) You can keep the discussion geared to the material in the book without sharing much of personal struggles or 2) you can discuss the Bible study but also see if anyone wants to share what they wrote for the more personal questions. If you do that, make sure you just say something like, "Would anyone like to share what they put for question x?" That way if people don't want to share, they'll feel comfortable not sharing.

It's easier to discuss personal issues with a small group. Keep in mind that some people won't feel comfortable sharing, and some (probably not many) might feel like it's a group therapy session

if you discuss personal problems. But it can also be super helpful to discuss problems. This is something you'll need to decide as a leader, but you can also adjust as you go along depending on the makeup of the class.

Oversharing: There are two different possibilities for oversharing: 1) the person who monopolizes the conversation sharing their own struggles and 2) the person who shares personal details about others (such as their husbands) that those other people may not want shared!

With the first oversharer, try to gently steer the conversation back to the book. If the problem continues, you could talk to the person after class, but try to be kind and affirming as you talk to them about it—I'm usually too chicken to have those conversations, but I've had times where I probably should have done that!

If the same person is monopolizing the conversation—and especially if she's talking about her problems—that can make others not want to go to the class, so it's an important problem to address, but not an easy one!

If you're the person with a tendency to overshare, you may want to ask a friend in the class to let you know if you're talking too much. Often we talk too much without even realizing we're doing it. Since it can get in the way of others sharing and also make people not want to come to our classes if we talk too much, it's a good thing to try to change.

With the second oversharer (the one who talks about others), so much depends on the size of the group, the people in the group, and how the person is talking about their problem person. I would pray about the situation, maybe ask for advice from a mature Christian you know, and then decide how to proceed. If you decide it's not appropriate, you could try redirecting the conversation or talking to the person outside of class. Just remember to be kind and non-judgmental. Renewing your mind and praying for the person before the conversation would be helpful.

Don't let me scare you off with these concerns. This study has the potential to really draw people close together as you share real things about your lives with each other. I taught this study to two groups at my church last year and an early version of the study to seven or eight groups (some for teenagers and some for women) five or six years ago and we had some wonderful conversations. I grew so much during those studies and so did the teenagers and women in my classes.

Preparation and Discussion: Go through the lesson yourself before class and circle any questions or charts you want to go through for sure in class. Once you're in class, go through the questions one by one. If you feel like you're getting behind, don't be afraid to skip ahead to the questions you circled earlier.

It's easy to get off-topic in this study since class members will be sharing about their trials. Try to keep an eye on the time and gently steer the conversation back to the study when necessary so that you're able to cover the whole lesson in class.

Also, sometimes I've assigned longer portions of Scripture for the class to read, such as with the example of David and Jonah on page 67. I wouldn't take the time to read those passages since they can be easily summarized with one or two sentences.

Prayer: I would suggest opening with prayer and then sharing prayer requests at the end of the study, rather than the beginning, since topics of prayer may come up during the study. If you're short on time, ask the group to just pray out loud for their requests during a group prayer rather than making a list of requests first and then praying.

General Tips:

1. Try to mention at the beginning of the class that everything shared in the class is confidential and shouldn't be shared outside the group.
2. Don't be afraid of a little silence. People may need to think a bit before coming up with a response to your questions.
3. I use the NASB version of the Bible for my own study so if you see a question you don't understand, try looking up the verse in the NASB version to see if it makes sense that way. If it still doesn't make sense and you'd like my input, email me through the contact button at my blog.
4. Allow people to have different opinions. Sometimes we disagree on minor issues, but we can always agree to disagree. The more polite we are about our disagreements, the more likely people will be to change their minds if they're wrong or the more open we'll be to changing our minds if we're wrong! Sometimes there is no right or wrong. It's just a matter of personal preference.
5. This class is about growing through trials, but sometimes people hear the word trials and they think of only major trials. If this is the case, remind them that God can use even our little daily struggles—which everyone has—to grow. If they can't think of anything to RALLY about, tell them to think of the last time they felt insecure, annoyed, stressed out, jealous, worried, or even bored. All of those emotions should point to a situation they can use to do the RALLY exercises in the book.

1st Class: You have two options for the first class: 1) Do chapter 1 together the first week, or 2) Have an introductory class and assign chapter 1 for the next week. Here are some suggestions for each option:

Option 1: Do chapter 1 together in class the first week: Go through the chapter, taking turns reading, and discuss the questions as you get to them. I would skip questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, and 10 in the group discussion, but give them time to write their answers down in their books when you get to each question. With question 11, I'd let them do it on their own but then ask for responses. The reason I would do it this way is because there's so much material to cover that it would be easy to get sidetracked if you talk about their problems right at the beginning and you would have a hard time covering all of the material. If you decide to give them opportunities to share with all of the questions and aren't able to complete the first chapter, you could always assign the rest of the chapter for the next week.

Option 2: Have an introductory class and assign chapter 1 for the next week:

Here's one plan you could follow if you'd like:

1. Hand out books as they're coming in.
2. Open with prayer.
3. Do some sort of get acquainted activity.
4. Go through the following discussion questions. Could intro them with something like the following: "In this book, we'll be focusing on personal growth. In the first chapter, we'll look at how God uses trials to help us grow, and in the second chapter, we'll look at some of the things we do instead of going to God to get that growth. Then, beginning with chapter 3, we'll start going to God together for that growth. Let's begin by looking at the process of personal growth."

Discussion Questions

1. Pretend you're a fitness trainer at the local athletic club and your client wants you to help her lose 50 pounds and get in shape. How would you help your client reach her goal?
- Answers might include help her establish a weight loss plan and an exercise plan, teach her how to do exercises, etc.
2. We've talked about what you can do for your client. What can you not do for her?
- you can't force her to follow her exercise or weight loss plan; she has to be willing to do that on her own.
3. We've talked about physical training (trying to lose weight and get in shape). This a personal growth study, so it's more about character training. How is physical training different than character training?
- Physical training is about making our outsides look good; character training is about making our insides look good. Physical training is about the body; character training is about the soul. With physical training it's a more obvious what we need to change and pretty simple: lose weight and get in shape. With character training, it's not always obvious what we need to change. We'll have to spend time in prayer, maybe ask friends for input, and watch ourselves to see what we need to change to be more Christlike. With physical training it helps to have a trainer and friends who are also trying to get in shape. Same with character training. Our trainer is the Holy Spirit and it helps to have a group of friends or a Bible study group who are also working on growth.
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- 4. If we were doing a physical training project, it would be easy to see what our goals are: lose weight and get in shape. Do you think God has goals for us in the area of our character? What are those goals?
- Note: the goal here is to get them to realize that God wants us to be more Christlike - to be kind, forgiving, self-controlled, patient, etc. So hopefully your class will be giving those kinds of answers.

If they don't, try to steer them in that direction.

5. Think about everything you've read in the Bible. What does God use to help us grow?

- Note: they may say all kinds of things including other people, prayer, fellowship, the fact that Jesus died on the cross to set us free from sin. Try to make sure they also bring up 1) Holy Spirit to help us grow (John 14:26), 2) trials to help us grow (James 1:2-4), 3) the Word to help us grown and 4) a method to help us grow: The Bible says we're transformed by the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:2).

After the discussion questions, you could read the introduction to the book and/or watch the introductory video. If you'd like, you could ask if anyone has thoughts on the video or introduction afterwards for just a bit of general discussion or just end the class with prayer.

RALLY Sections: Throughout the book, beginning with chapter 3, I've included room at the end of each chapter for participants to go to God for help with their problems. RALLY is an acronym I've used for them to engage in relational prayer with God, visiting with Him about life. The first step of RALLY is "renew your mind."

In my early version of the study (the one I taught locally), I used the questions that would later go into the *Renewing of the Mind Project* and *I Deserve a Donut (And Other Lies That Make You Eat)* for the class members to renew their minds. One of my friends loved the questions but she commented that she wished she had a set of questions she could use in any situation.

We brainstormed together and came up with the RALLY acronym and questions. I used those questions in this study because I already have two books that contain the other questions and I wanted to give readers a tool to use to renew their minds in any situation. Something that was easy to remember. My hope is that by the end of the study the class members will have the RALLY questions firmly enough in their minds that they can renew their minds anywhere.

If you find that the people in your class aren't filling out the RALLY section of their Bible study which begins on chapter 4, provide some time for them in class to do the questions. You can also download printable RALLY sheets at barbraveling.com/rally.

If you have a person in your class who has a hard time with the truth journaling step of RALLY, you could suggest that they try the questions from the *Renewing of the Mind Project* or *I Deserve a Donut* instead. *I Deserve a Donut* is also available as a free app. Another option would be to try my other method of truth journaling which you can find at barbraveling.com/rally.

Expectations: When I first started teaching about the renewing of the mind locally, I was all excited about helping people grow because God had done so much for me when I started renewing my mind and actively growing as a Christian. I was soon disappointed when I learned that not everyone in the class was willing to do the work necessary to grow! Many would just do the lessons, some doing them quickly to just get ready for class (I think we've all done that at times, right?), and then not do anything beyond class.

What I've found is that there will usually only be a small percentage of people in the class that

will really take hold of the material beyond the Bible study lessons and start using it for personal growth on their own with God - maybe 20-30%. That's okay though because it's pretty exciting for those who do. Just don't get disappointed when everyone isn't growing. There are many different reasons people don't actively pursue God and growth on their own. Just accept them where they're at, love them, give grace, set a good example, enjoy them, and let God be in charge of the results since we can't control everyone anyway!

Class Length:

Typical length: 8 or 9 weeks, depending on whether or not you do the first lesson the first week of class.

If you'd like a longer class: You could add an extra day just to practice truth journaling or rallying in class, or you could supplement the material with any of the following Bible studies which you can find at barbraveling.com/rally:

- Keeping the Faith in the Storms of Life
- When Life is Hard: Bible Study on Trials
- When Life or Ministry is hard

If you'd like a shorter class: You could do the first lesson together in class or assign the first two chapters the first week. (This will make it a little harder if anyone joins late though.) Or you could assign chapters 6 and 7 at the same time (or 7 and 8).

That should be about it. Don't forget to check out the resources available at barbraveling.com/rally. I hope you have a wonderful class and enjoy the study! If you get a chance, write and tell me how your class went when you're finished! Also, if you have any suggestions for the class that you've found helpful, let me know!

In Christ,
Barb Raveling