

# Making Good Sense of the Bible Together

## LEADERS'/GROUP FACILITATORS' GUIDE

### Running the course

This course is designed so whether or not you have led a course before, you can facilitate a group in their learning and exploring of the material. Everything you need for running a course is in the book. As a leader/facilitator, your role is to keep an eye on timings, and to enable each person in the group to have a chance to talk if they want to. An integral aim of this course is to get people to explore their Bible. It sounds obvious, but please do encourage each participant to bring a Bible and to get used to opening it and reading it. Please be aware that some people may not have much experience of the Bible, so be careful not to embarrass people who may not know where or how to find verses in the Bible.

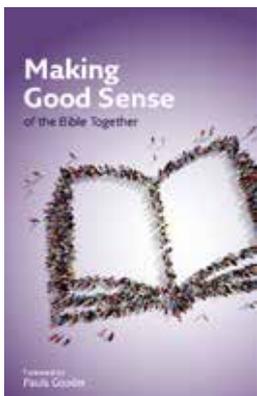
One of the challenges of a course such as this is that it will (and should) evoke strong emotions in people. Inevitably people will disagree with each other over what counts as 'good' or 'bad' interpretation. It is important to allow different opinions to be shared while at the same time taking care not to bruise the faith of people in the room. It can be done but everyone will need to exercise sensitivity as well as honesty. It is worth spelling this out – certainly at the start of the course, and perhaps at the start of each session.

It is also important to point out that there are often no 'right' and 'wrong' answers when you come to making good sense of the Bible. If there were, biblical scholars would have agreed on a single interpretation years ago. Don't feel you all have to agree with each other or with everything said in the course book. The point about this course is that you explore things for yourself and come to your own opinions on the best way to make good sense of the Bible.

As the leader/facilitator, it would be helpful to do a little preparation before the group meets. We would suggest that you familiarise yourself with the aims of each session and read through the content so that you have an idea of what the session covers. In the main course book, you will notice that there are some sections for group work and other parts where you work individually. In the following pages of this document we have given you an overview of the course and some idea of timing for each session. There is also space within the main course book for people to make notes as they go through the session.

### Session structure and timings

Each session is designed to last approximately an hour. Overleaf you will find a suggested breakdown of each section. If you run out of things to talk about before the end of the allotted time, move on. Likewise if your discussion takes off and you want to give more time to it, again adjust your other timings accordingly. If your group becomes really animated, you could even dedicate more than one meeting



to a session to enable the conversation to flow as freely as possible.

Equally the questions are only there to get your conversation flowing – if it is already flowing there is no need to feel as though you must answer them all. There is intentionally a lot of material so that groups who do not talk much can still have lots to do. If you are in a group that does talk a lot, you may need to decide what to leave out.

Each session of the course is structured around the acrostic SENSE.



### **S - Start Out (15 mins)**

Each session begins with a prayer. Feel free to use the written prayer, or to pray freely. Then there will be a way into the subject, and usually some opening discussion questions.



### **E - Explore (10 mins)**

This section raises the big issues of the session. There may be an exercise to do, or questions for discussion.



### **N - Notice (5 mins)**

Here there will be a chunk of teaching to absorb. You should feel free to either read it aloud and move on, or take time to chew it over and discuss it.



### **S - Study (20 minutes)**

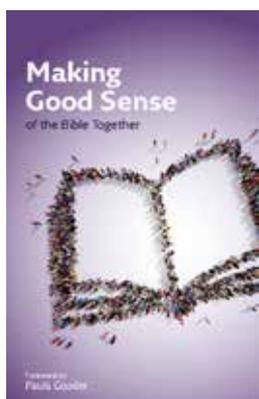
This is a chance to take the teaching principles and apply them to a Bible passage. You need to make sure you have a Bible to hand.



### **E - Engage (10 mins)**

Each session ends with a chance to recap the key points and think about how they might be applied, along with prompts for prayer.

**Please note these are approximate timings for a group to complete each session in one hour. However, some groups may want to talk further or spend more time on one of the sections, so please adapt to make it work for your group and the time you have together.**



# Making Good Sense of the Bible Together: Course Overview

## SESSION 1

### **Making Good Sense of the Bible: Why do we need to?**

This session explores some of the reasons why it is so important to make good sense of the Bible and looks at the key ways in which we go about making sense of things generally in our daily lives.

**\*Please note that this session includes an exercise using four envelopes. You will need to acquire these before the session begins. Please see details on page 12 of the book.**

## SESSION 2

### **Making Good Sense of the World of the Author**

This session looks at the history that lies behind the text of the Bible and asks what difference it makes for us to understand the world of the author and what happens when scholars don't agree.

## SESSION 3

### **Making Good Sense of the Text**

This session explores the text itself and asks how understanding the style of writing and the context in which the passage is set can help us to understand the passage.

## SESSION 4

### **Making Good Sense of Translations**

This session looks at the question of translation, the principles that lie behind the translations we use to read the Bible and asks how this helps us to understand what we are reading better.

## SESSION 5

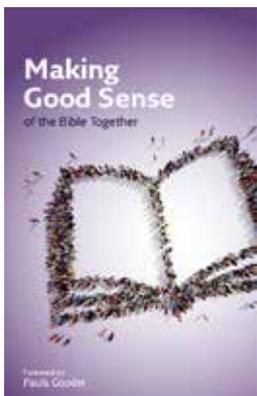
### **Making Good Sense of the Reader**

This session thinks about ourselves as we come to the text and the importance of understanding the lenses through which we read the Bible.

## SESSION 6

### **Making Good Sense of Ourselves: How can the Bible help?**

This session turns full circle and asks how it is that making good sense of the Bible actually helps us to make good sense of ourselves.



## What's Next?

We very much hope that you will have found *Making Good Sense of the Bible Together* a valuable course that will enhance and encourage your Bible reading.

Please do visit [biblesociety.org.uk/refocus](http://biblesociety.org.uk/refocus) for further Bible-focused resources and studies.

