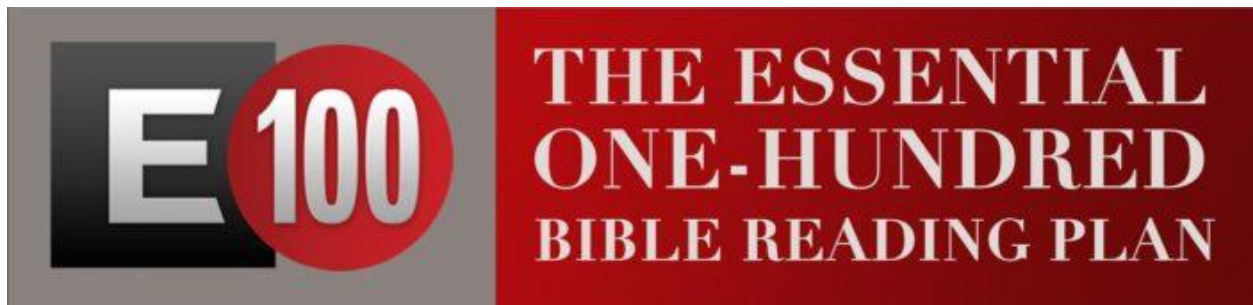


St. Andrew's United Methodist Church
2021



Small Group Discussion Guide



Small Group Discussion Guide

The Discussion Guide is organized according to 20 weeks of 5 daily readings. Your group can be as large or small as you want. You may want to meet with just one other person, a group of 3 or 4, or a group of 20. You may meet however and whenever and wherever you wish – over dinner, at the church, during Sunday school, in someone’s back yard, before work, after exercise class, or via zoom.

This Guide provides questions for each 5 days’ worth of readings. The questions are intended to be discussion starters, but you may talk about whatever your group wants, however it is led by the Holy Spirit! There is no need for a “teacher,” but someone should organize the when and where of the meetings. Someone should also be willing to read the discussion questions. Here are some basic guidelines:

- **Be Prepared:** The group will be most effective if everyone has done the readings, but even if you haven’t read every word, you should attend your group meeting anyway.
- **Start with Prayer:** Invite God into your conversation!
- **Be Respectful:** Each of us has a different level of comfort when it comes to discussing our faith. Some group members will be happy to listen to everyone else talk, others are happy to share, but all should be encouraged to participate in the discussions. There are no stupid questions, and there’s no shame in not understanding some of the readings. Plus, there are many interpretations – all valid – for most Bible stories.
- **Keep Your Eye on the Purpose:** These 100 Bible passages tell the story of God, so as you read, try to keep that in mind. You aren’t just checking off a daily box – you’re getting to know God better!

Enjoy your 100 days of essential Bible stories!

The Old Testament

Week 1, Days 1-5

In the Beginning

Purpose:

To understand basic truths about God, humankind and sin, and how sin affects our relationship with God and others.

Genesis 1-3

- The beginning of Genesis assumes that God exists. What evidence, if any, for God's existence do you see in the world around you? What's your "case for God?"
- Do you think God loves you and that you are important to him? Why or why not?
- Do you believe in sin? If so, how would you define it? Is your definition different from the way most people you know define sin?
- Why do you think sin is so attractive? Share some strategies that have helped you avoid sin and temptation.

Genesis 6:5 - 9:17

- Do you think God judges people for sin today as he did in Noah's time? If so, how and why? Do you think it's fair for God to judge people?
- Do you ever find yourself in a situation where, like Noah, you are surrounded by sin? If so, explain.
- What makes you feel guilty? How do you handle those feelings?
- Have you ever experienced forgiveness from someone close to you? Have you ever experienced God's forgiveness? Share what you learned from these experiences.

Genesis 11:1-9

- The motivation for building the Tower of Babel was pride. When might pride be a sin? When might it be a good thing? Explain.
- Do you think it is always dangerous to want to "make a name" for yourself as the people in Babel did? Why or why not?

Week 2, Days 6-10

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Purpose:

To learn about God's call and test of Abraham and something of how healthy and unhealthy families operate.

Genesis 12

- What do you think it means to be called to something?
- God called Abraham to leave his relatives and country and go to a new place. Do you think God still calls people today? If so, how? To what?
- Do you have a calling in life? If so, how would you describe it?

Genesis 15

- Without a son and heir, it would be impossible for Abraham to realize his calling as the father of a "great nation." Are you facing things now that seem impossible to handle or a calling that seems impossible to fulfill? How could faith make a difference, as it did for Abraham? What's your first step?

Genesis 21:1 - 22:19

- Some consider the call to sacrifice his son a "test" of Abraham; others consider it a time for Abraham to acknowledge and fully understand his faith. Have you ever had a time when your faith was illuminated and made stronger by sacrifice or the call to sacrifice?
- How much are you willing to sacrifice for God if you feel called to do so?

Genesis 27 - 28

- In what ways has your family of origin shaped you, for good or bad?
- Jacob and Esau didn't have a healthy family of origin. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a healthy family?

Genesis 32 - 33

- Jacob and Esau were severely estranged. Have you ever had a strained or broken relationship with a close friend or family member? If so, how did you deal with it?

Week 3, Days 11-15

The Story of Joseph

Purpose:

To learn lessons from Joseph's story about unfair treatment, family conflicts, and how to resolve and deal constructively with them.

Genesis 37

- Like most families, Joseph's family experienced conflict and tension. What causes tension and conflict in your family or families you know?
- From your experience, what is the best way to resolve family conflict?

Genesis 39-41

- Have you, like Joseph, ever been unfairly put in a tough situation?
- Have you ever learned an important lesson from being put in an unfair or tough situation?

Genesis 42

- Have you ever been in a situation where you felt it necessary to hide your true feelings?
- In what kind of situations do you feel most comfortable sharing the "real you?" Why?

Genesis 43-44

- Joseph had a plan to see if his brothers, who'd hurt him so badly in the past, had changed. How have you found healing from the unresolved hurts from the past?
- How could you help others who are struggling with past hurts? What can you share from your own experience?

Genesis 45:1 - 46:7

- Are there issues from your past that still shape who you are and what you do today? Is their effect positive or negative?
- What lessons have you learned from the life of Joseph?

Week 4, Days 16-20

Moses and the Exodus

Purpose:

To learn from the way Moses encounters God and how God's actions in the special times of our lives shape and define us.

Exodus 1-2

- Moses faced both challenges and opportunities growing up in Pharaoh's household. How have the difficulties and opportunities in your past prepared you for your life today?

Exodus 3:1 - 4:17

- Have you ever had a "burning bush" experience? How do we encounter God today?
- Moses was afraid to look at God. How would you describe your relationship with God? Is fear involved? Why or why not?
- Have you, like Moses, ever felt inadequate and unprepared for something God wanted you to do? Did God help you in any way?

Exodus 6:28 - 11:10

- God was clearly involved in the affairs of Egypt at that time. How involved do you think God is in the world today?
- Some people think that natural disasters, like the plagues on Egypt, are expressions of God's judgment. What do you think?

Exodus 12:1-42

- What does the account of the Passover and Exodus show you about God?
- Why do you suppose the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt has inspired people throughout the ages? What do these events say to you?

Exodus 13:17 - 14:31

- The Exodus and crossing the Red Sea were defining moments for the Israelites. Have you had any defining moments with God? What happened?

Week 5, Days 21-25

The Law and the Land

Purpose:

To see how God wants his people to live and act as those called to be holy and live in close relationship with him.

Exodus 19:1 - 20:21

- There's a lot of controversy today surrounding the Ten Commandments. What place do you think they should have in our pluralistic society?
- Which of the Ten Commandments is most challenging to you? Why?

Exodus 32 - 34

- What do you think motivated the Israelites to worship the Golden Calf instead of God? What motivates people to worship "things" rather than God today?
- What things pull you away from God? What makes you feel closer to God?

Joshua 1

- Moses was Joshua's mentor. What would you say makes a person a good mentor? Have you ever been one?
- From what you know about Moses, why was he a good spiritual mentor for the young Joshua?
- Is there someone you view as a spiritual mentor for you - either living or someone from history? How does their example help you?

Joshua 3 - 4

- What is your Promised Land? Do you think you'll ever reach it? Why or why not?

Joshua 5:13 - 6:27

- What do you think the Israelites were thinking as they marched around Jericho? Have you or someone you know ever taken a step of faith that seemed odd or impossible? If so, what did you learn?

Week 6, Days 26-30

The Judges

Purpose:

To learn from the experience of those in these stories who obeyed or disobeyed God and how that affected their relationship with him and others.

Judges 2:6-3:6

- How would you explain the Israelites' pattern of falling away from God, getting in trouble, crying out for help, being delivered and falling away again?
- Do you experience ups and downs in your relationship with God? With others? Why is that so?

Judges 4 - 5

- What lessons do you learn from the experiences of Deborah?
- Do you think faith can be a source of courage?

Judges 6 - 7

- Do you think Gideon was bold or timid? Why?
- God was clearly guiding Gideon. Does God still guide people today? How? How can you find God's guidance?

Judges 13 - 16

- How would you characterize the way Samson related to women? Why do you think he was that way?
- How can (or do) you develop healthy relationships with those of the opposite sex? What helps or hinders that development?

Ruth 1 - 4

- What character traits are most evident in Ruth's life? Which do you admire most?
- What character traits would others say are most evident in your life? Which of Ruth's character traits would you like to develop or develop more?

Week 7, Days 31-35

The Rise of Israel

Purpose:

To discover the qualities that God desires in those who lead his people.

1 Samuel 1 - 3

- Hannah cried out in desperation to God for a son. Have you ever cried out to God in desperation? What happened? How did you react?
- To what extent do you think young children such as Samuel can hear from the Lord, and understand and respond? Do you know any children like that?

1 Samuel 8 - 10

- God directed Samuel to anoint Saul as king and leader of his people. What would you say are the traits of a good leader?
- Are there Christian leaders - today or from history - that you admire?

1 Samuel 16:1 - 18:16

- What do you think really motivated David to challenge Goliath? Have you ever experienced that same motivation?

1 Samuel 23:7 - 24:22

- What underlying issues do you think affected Saul's attitude toward David?
- Is there anyone who has an irrationally negative attitude toward you? How should you respond?

2 Samuel 5 - 7

- What would you say made David such a great king? What were his weaknesses?
- From what you know, what lessons from David's life could you apply to yours?

Week 8, Days 36-40

The Fall of Israel

Purpose:

To see how the sin of Israel's leaders and people led to the destruction and exile of the Israelite nation.

2 Samuel 11:1 - 12:25

- "What I do in my personal life is nobody's business but my own." Agree? Disagree?
- What do you learn from Nathan's response to David about how to act when people you care about make bad choices? Have you ever had to act as Nathan did?

1 Kings 2 - 3

- How would you answer if God said to you, as he did to Solomon, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you?" Be honest!
- Solomon asked for and received great wisdom from God. What are the greatest sources of wisdom in your life? Who is the wisest person you've ever known?

1 Kings 8:1 - 9:9

- The worship of Solomon and the people in dedicating the temple was lively and heartfelt. What makes worship come alive for you? Why?
- If you could, what would you change about the worship services you've attended recently? What would you want the changes to do?

1 Kings 16:29 - 19:18

- Elijah was spiritually dry. What do you do when you feel spiritually dry? What gives you a sense of personal and spiritual renewal?

2 Kings 25

- The capture of Jerusalem and sacking of the Temple was a terrible disaster. Have you experienced any terrible disasters in your life? If so, what did you learn from them?
- Have you ever felt closer to God during, or as a result of, any tough times in your life? If so, in what way?

Week 9, Days 41- 45

Psalms and Proverbs

Purpose:

To discover more of God's character and the nature of right living as expressed in the praise, worship, laments and wise sayings of these books, and to see how these insights apply to our life.

Psalm 23

- Of the many images in Psalm 23, which are most comforting to you? Why?
- What contemporary image(s) would you use in describing the Lord to a friend? "The Lord is my"?"

Psalm 51

- What do you learn from Psalm 51 about confessing your sins? In what ways is this psalm helpful or encouraging to you?
- Have you ever experienced a deep sense of God's forgiveness for something you've done wrong? How did it come about? What happened as a result?

Psalm 103

- What things motivated David to praise God in Psalm 103? What most impresses you about the Lord as David describes him?

Proverbs 1 - 4

- In the Book of Proverbs, a father imparts wisdom to his son. What wisdom did your parents or other significant adults impart to you?
- What do you think it means to be wise? Is it different from simply being knowledgeable?

Proverbs 16 - 18

- Would you say you are wise? Why or why not? What wisdom have you gained from your experiences in life? From your relationship with God?
- If you were writing a few "proverbs," what would you say?

Week 10, Days 46-50

The Prophets

Purpose:

To look at an important Old Testament prophecy of the coming Messiah and to examine the calling, character and motivation of some of the prophets.

Isaiah 51 - 53

- In what ways does the passage from Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12 seem to describe what happened to Jesus Christ hundreds of years later?
- Why do you think that the servant of God described by Isaiah had to suffer?

Jeremiah 1:1 - 3:5

- Why did Jeremiah resist God's plan for him? Do you ever feel that you, like Jeremiah, are resisting something God wants you to do? Why did or didn't you?
- Jeremiah was sent to speak God's message to Jerusalem. If God sent you to speak to your community or country, what would you say?

Daniel 6

- Daniel took a great risk to stand up for his faith. Have you ever had to stand up for what you believe, in spite of significant consequences? What happened?
- Do you think people today should be more "up front" about their religious beliefs?

Jonah 1 - 4

- Have you, like Jonah, ever "run away from God?"
- Jonah was disappointed in God for his compassion on Ninevah. Have you ever been disappointed with God? What did you learn as a result?

Malachi 1 - 4

- Malachi talks about "the day of judgment." What do you believe about judgment? Do we really need it?

The New Testament

Week 11, Days 51-55

The Living Word

Purpose:

To learn more about Jesus, the various ways people respond to him, and how he dealt with temptation.

John 1:1-18

- If someone asked you, "What do you believe about Jesus?" what would you say?
- What does this passage in the Gospel of John teach about Jesus? Does any of it surprise you?

Luke 1

- How would you have felt if you were Elizabeth or Mary, Zechariah or Joseph?
- Zechariah and Mary must have been quite surprised by the angel's visit. Has God ever done something surprising in your life?

Luke 2:1-40

- Why do you suppose God allowed his son to be born where and how he did?
- For some, Christmas has become materialistic and unfocused on the real celebration (the arrival of the Messiah). How can the nativity story help you center yourself on the real joy of the Christmas season?

Luke 3:1-20

- Would you consider John the Baptist to be a "religious extremist"? Is it bad to be passionate and public about what we believe?
- Is there anyone you consider to be a modern example of John the Baptist?

Matthew 3:13 - 4:17

- What situations pose the greatest temptation for you today? Why?
- What helped Jesus resist temptation? What could you do to resist temptation?

Week 12, Days 56-60

The Teachings of Jesus

Purpose:

To discover some major teachings of Jesus and what they say about living as one of his followers.

Matthew 5:1 - 6:4

- What would you say is the secret to true happiness? How does one achieve it?
- How would you describe Jesus' idea of true happiness given in the Sermon on the Mount? How does it compare with that of most people in our society?

Matthew 6:5 - 7:29

- What do you suppose Jesus would say to people he met who were walking through a shopping mall today?
- Which parts of the Sermon on the Mount are most challenging to you? Why?

Matthew 13

- Jesus used some parables to talk about the Kingdom of Heaven. How would you explain the Kingdom of Heaven to someone you know? To a skeptic?

Luke 10:25-37

- When he was asked, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan. In our global community, what does it mean to be a "neighbor?"
- Who do you consider to be your neighbor(s) today? What is your responsibility towards that person or persons?

Luke 15

- How would you have felt and reacted if you were the father in the parable of The Lost Son?
- What do you think is the main point Jesus is making through the three "los" parables in Luke 15? What impresses you most about them?

Week 13, Days 61-65

The Miracles of Jesus

Purpose:

To explore Jesus' miracles and ask what they tell us about him and what he was teaching when he performed them.

Luke 9:1-36

- Do you believe that miracles still happen today? Why or why not? Have you been involved in any?
- What's your view of the miracles of Jesus? Do you believe they actually happened as reported in the Bible? Does it matter? Why or why not?

Matthew 14:22-36

- What does the miracle of Jesus walking on the water teach you about him?

John 9

- Why do you suppose the religious leaders were so skeptical about the blind man's healing? Would you have been? If so, is there any way to overcome that skepticism?
- What does this miracle - the healing of the blind man - teach you about Jesus?

Mark 5:1-20

- What is your view of evil? How would you define it? What's a clear example of evil in the world today?
- What does the healing of a demon-possessed man teach you about Jesus?

John 11

- What does the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead teach you about Jesus? What do you think those who witnessed it felt and thought?
- How do you feel about your own death? Explain why you feel that way. What is your greatest source of hope for the future?

Week 14, Days 66-70

The Cross of Christ

Purpose:

To take a fresh look at the death and resurrection of Jesus and what that means for his followers today.

Luke 22:1-46

- Imagine you were at the Last Supper. What might you have felt and thought at this “first communion?”
- What helps or causes you to “remember Jesus?” Does anything ever cause you to “forget Jesus?”

John 18

- How would you explain the motives and actions of Caiaphas, Pilate and Peter during the arrest and trial of Jesus? What was their attitude toward him?
- Pilate asked “what is truth?” Do you believe there is such a thing as “absolute truth?”

John 19

- Why did so many people seem to hate Jesus? Do people still feel that way about him?
- What is the significance for you of Jesus’ death on the cross?

John 20 - 21

- What is the most convincing evidence for you of the resurrection of Jesus?
- Some people say that Jesus’ resurrection is the “lynchpin” of the Christian faith. Do you agree?

Acts 1:1-11

- Imagine that you had witnessed Jesus’ ascension into heaven. How do you think you would have felt?
- Do you think that Jesus will return to earth some day? If so, how does that affect the way you live now?

Week 15, Days 71-75

The Church is Born

Purpose:

To examine the events surrounding the birth and growth of the early church and discover what they might mean for us today.

Acts 2

- The Holy Spirit came upon believers that first Pentecost. What do you believe about the Holy Spirit?
- Have you ever sensed the Holy Spirit at work in your life?

Acts 3 - 4

- Share your view of the church. What should it be like? Why does it exist?
- What would you suggest as the best "church growth strategy?"

Acts 6:8 - 8:8

- Why do you think the religious leaders were so threatened by Stephen's sermon? What "threatens" the religious people you know? Why? Is it bad to be religious?
- Have you ever been ridiculed or persecuted for what you believe?

Acts 8:26-40

- Some people say "religion may be important but it should be kept private." Do you agree?
- The new church grew as people like Philip shared their faith. Have you ever shared your religious beliefs with another person? If so, what happened?

Acts 10:1 - 11:18

- How would you describe the good news of the Gospel?
- Peter learned to accept Cornelius, someone very different, and not exclude him from fellowship in the early church. Do you think the church today is inclusive or exclusive? Why? What should it be like?

Week 16, Days 76-80

The Travels of Paul

Purpose:

To see how God can use the most unlikely people to spread the Good News about Jesus and to think about how we can do it, too.

Acts 9:1-31

- Paul had a dramatic experience of God on the road to Damascus. Have you or someone you know had a dramatic experience of God?
- Do you think it is possible to “see the light” about Jesus without having a dramatic experience like Paul’s?

Acts 13 - 14

- It seems that Paul and Barnabus risked mistreatment or death almost everywhere they went. What risks have you taken for what you believe?

Acts 15

- What does the passage on the Council of Jerusalem teach you about how to resolve disagreements in the church? In your family? In other relationships?

Acts 16 - 20

- Paul traveled across Asia sharing the Gospel in spite of long distances or fierce opposition. Why do you think he was such a tenacious witness for Jesus?
- Paul detoured from his intended destination to go to Macedonia. Has God used a detour in your life to accomplish something good for you or others?

Acts 25 - 28

- During the time he was on trial, sailing to Rome and then in prison, how do you think Paul felt - that things were out of control or all going according to plan?
- Paul’s purpose in life was to fulfill the call God gave him on the road to Damascus. Do you have a God-given purpose in life? If so, what is it? How are you fulfilling it?

Week 17, Days 81-85

Paul to the Churches

Purpose:

To discover more about the nature of Jesus, and how his death and resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit shape what we believe and how we are to live.

Romans 8

- Would you say anything “controls” you? If so, what?
- What might it mean to be “controlled by the Spirit?” Are you?

Galatians 5:16 - 6:10

- Which of the qualities of the “fruit of the Spirit” do you think are hardest to cultivate in one’s life? Which are hardest for you?
- What “fruit” would you like to see more of in your life? How can you cultivate it?

Ephesians 6:10-20

- Do you believe there is such a thing as spiritual warfare? If so, what is it like?
- Have you ever been in a spiritual battle? What happened?

Philippians 4:2-9

- Paul tells that church to “rejoice in the Lord always.” Is that really possible? Is rejoicing a regular part of your life? How could you rejoice in the Lord more?
- What would you say is the key to real, inner peace? Have you experienced it?

Colossians 1:1-23

- How did Paul describe Jesus? How would you? “He is
- “If you act like a Christian, you are a Christian, whether you believe in Jesus Christ or not.” Do you agree? Is the reverse true (“If you don’t act like a Christian ...?”)?

Week 18, Days 86-90

Paul to the Leaders

Purpose:

To learn more about the qualifications for leadership in the church, how to live a godly life, and the importance of the Bible.

1 Timothy 3

- Which leadership characteristics given by Paul in this passage are most common and most uncommon among Christian leaders you know?
- In what ways should a leader of a church or Christian organization be different from leaders of other organizations?

1 Timothy 6:3-21

- How would you summarize Paul's teaching about money? Do you agree?
- What is our society's view of money? What is yours?

2 Timothy 2

- What do Paul's images of a soldier, athlete and farmer teach you about being a follower of Jesus Christ?
- What are some things that tend to distract you from doing the things God wants you to do? How can you avoid those distractions?

2 Timothy 3:10 - 4:8

- Paul says that those who want to live a godly life will be persecuted. What do you suppose he meant? Has it happened to you?
- According to Paul, the Bible comes directly from God. Does it really matter if the Bible is true? Why?

1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 5:11

- What do you think it means to be "alert" for Christ's return? Are you?
- How does the promise of Christ's return affect the way you live now?

Week 19, Days 91-95

The Apostles' Teaching

Purpose:

To explore in greater depth more of what it means to live a life that pleases God and reflects his Spirit working within us.

1 Corinthians 13

- This is often called the “love chapter” because it describes the essence of real love. What’s the greatest example of love you’ve seen or experienced?
- Why do you think that Paul says love is the greatest virtue? Do you agree?

2 Corinthians 4:1 - 6:2

- In what ways do you think one becomes a “new creation” as a result of following Jesus? What was your own experience?
- How can an ordinary person be an effective ambassador for Christ? Do you know one?

1 Peter 1:1 - 2:12

- Do you think it’s possible to be sure about matters of faith? How would you explain your own certainty?
- Peter speaks of our “living hope” through Christ’s resurrection. What makes you the most hopeful in life?

James 1 - 2

- What are the biggest trials you’ve faced? Did they make you a better person?
- What do you think is the proper relationship between faith and works? How do they relate in your life?

1 John 3:11 - 4:21

- What would you say are the marks or characteristics of a true Christian?
- Do most Christians you know exhibit the characteristics John gives?

Week 20, Days 96-100

Revelation

Purpose:

To understand how the end of this age will herald the beginning of the next, and to see how Christ and his followers continue to be an integral part of God's plan for the world.

Revelation 1

- What would you say are the benefits and dangers of wanting to know more about the future? What can and can't we know?
- What do you learn about Jesus in the first chapter of Revelation? Does any of it surprise, confuse or upset you?

Revelation 2-3

- After reading John's letters to the seven churches, how do you think Jesus would feel about your church and churches in your area? What might he say to them?
- What's your view of heaven? What is it like and who is it for?

Revelation 4-7

- The later chapters of Revelation speak of the final judgment and the return of Jesus Christ. Do you think this could happen in your lifetime?

Revelation 19-20

- What is your view of a "final judgment?" How is your view different from that of the people you work with or who live on your street?
- Does the reality of a final judgment affect the way you live now?

Revelation 21-22

- How does the idea of a "new heaven and a new earth" strike you? What do you think the "new earth" will be like?
- Are you looking forward to the return of Jesus Christ?

About Scripture Union

Scripture Union is an interdenominational Christian ministry with a twofold mission: helping people of all ages meet God in the Bible and prayer, and reaching at-risk children with God's Word.

Scripture Union produces Bible reading programs for churches and groups, including The Essential 100 Bible Challenge and The Essential 100 Jesus Challenge, and publishes Bible reading guides for individuals, including *Encounter with God* and *Discovery*. Scripture Union also conducts Bible-based outreach programs for at-risk children including *SuperKids* summer missions and *PrimeTime* after school programs. Scripture Union was founded in 1867 and has national ministries in 130 countries.