

BRUCE WILKINSON

The
Testing
of Your
Faith



LEADER'S GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Leading a group study for the Bible-based video curriculum from Bruce Wilkinson and Teach Every Nation, *The Testing of Your Faith* will be one of the most rewarding activities you've ever taken on. Expect God to do great things! He will be there with you as you prepare for your group and lead them to discover how God is present and active in their lives, and in discovering who they were meant to be!

Pray over every session as you prepare. For your own encouragement, find a prayer partner who can support you as you lead the study. This video curriculum is powerful and LifeChanging -- but you are the one who will make the content personal and applicable to people's lives. So be familiar with this exciting content. And, remember, your group will look to you not only for leadership and direction -- but for your energy and enthusiasm!

This course is powerful, and each member comes to the group at different stages in their faith journey. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you as you lead them, but also allow Him to guide each member in his or her own journey through this exciting course.

This is an 8-session course. The video sessions range from 1 hour to over 2 hours per session. Please use the table below in planning your group/event calendars. (You may wish to split some of the longer sessions across two meeting days.)

The Testing of Your Faith Session	Video Time (Hours:Minutes)
Session One: The Purpose of Tests of Faith	00:59
Session Two: The Patterns of Tests of Faith	01:05
Session Three: The Stages in Test Failure	01:14
Session Four: The Steps for Test Success	01:27
Session Five: The Tests of Belief	01:12
Session Six: The Triggers of Unbelief	02:00
Session Seven: The Catalyst of Life	02:10
Session Eight: The Secret of Overcomers	02:11

OBJECTIVES

You will need to consider three major objectives as you prepare:

1. Choose a time, place and format for holding the sessions.
2. Make arrangements for location and logistics.
3. Build session attendance and plan for a successful series.

The following pages will offer some practical, helpful tips to aid you in achieving these objectives, but there is always room for flexibility. So, apply these guidelines to the specific situations and circumstances of your group -- whether a classroom of a church, a conference room of an office, in your home, at a local restaurant or even as a church wide event.

1. Choose the time, place, and format.

One-hour sessions (Sunday School classes or office environments)

If you use a 60-minute format, such as a Sunday School class or an office small group, you will have slightly less than 20 minutes for activities other than the video curriculum. Encourage people to arrive early and be ready to start on time. Think about the best way to include announcements and prayer requests.

Small group settings (90 minutes to 2 hours)

Allow a few minutes at the beginning of the group to give an overview from the preceding week's session, followed by an introduction to the current session. You will be able to cover more questions and talk about them in a greater depth at the end of the session, with time for personal sharing and prayer. If time permits, have members volunteer to read any Scripture verses from the session, and allow the group to comment and share their experiences.

For either group setting, start by welcoming the group and introducing the material. Hold up the workbook and point out the pages that will be covered in that day's session. At the end of each video session are a series of Discussion Questions. They are to provoke more thought and interest, and hopefully will carry over for them in the week following. If leading a large group, you can break into small groups during this review time.

2. Make arrangements for location and logistics

Whether meeting in your home, office, or in a local restaurant, arrange and walk through your seating and equipment setup beforehand. Be sure to have enough chairs for everyone in the group, with a few extras. Seats should be arranged so that all members can view the monitor easily. Do a test setup of your video player and monitor to ensure you have proper cabling and power outlets, and that everything is running smoothly.

If food or snacks will be served, have a separate area that can be easily accessed, and where cleanup will be easy following the session. Have the location address, directions, and a contact phone number, and send to each member in advance of the first meeting date.

A vertical dotted line on the right side of the page is followed by 20 horizontal lines, providing a space for notes.

3. Building Session Attendance and Planning for a Successful Series

For the Sunday School Class

2 months before the sessions: Call and write class members. Carefully explain the series and its purpose. Begin building attendance by spreading the word throughout the church.

1 month before: Meet with your team to pray and plan. Promote *The Testing of Your Faith* course using the customizable Course Materials (available on the digital media). Spread the word!

2 weeks before: Contact members again. Make a list of details to check, including:

- ◆ Room availability.
- ◆ Equipment (video player, computer, monitors) is available and working.
- ◆ Workbooks have been ordered and will arrive in time.
- ◆ Spend extra time in prayer.

1 week before: Walk through final room and equipment set-up. Go over *The Testing of Your Faith* video course and workbook materials. While reviewing course video, make note of the fill-in answers to use as a reference. Know the content. Study the verses. Anticipate likely questions. Pray daily.

For the Small Group or Office Setting

1 month before the sessions: Call and write group members. Ask them to consider bringing a friend. Begin talking consistently and excitedly about the series. Promote *The Testing of Your Faith* course using the customizable Course Materials (available on the digital media). Spread the word!

2 weeks before: Discuss the importance of the series with your members. Build excitement. Send each member the location and directions. Make a list of details to check, including:

- ◆ Room availability.
- ◆ Equipment (video player, computer, monitors) is available and working.
- ◆ Workbooks have been ordered and will arrive in time.
- ◆ Spend extra time in prayer.

1 week before: Send reminders to all group members. Walk through final seating and equipment setups. Go over *The Testing of Your Faith* video course and workbook materials. While reviewing course video, make note of the fill-in answers to use as a reference. Know the content. Study the verses. Anticipate likely questions. Pray daily.

IT'S TIME! MAKE THE MOST OF EACH SESSION

Create a friendly learning environment

- ◆ Arrange the room. Are the chairs in the best place for viewing the video session? Is the monitor set up to avoid window glare or light glare if at night? For large groups, arrange for a large-screen monitor for each session.
- ◆ Name tags are always a good idea. Arrange for a friendly host or hostess to greet people as they arrive, start introductions, and create the name tags.
- ◆ Provide extra pens or pencils for note taking. We suggest using a **ballpoint pen** for filling in answers in the course workbook.
- ◆ Refreshments help people relax and feel comfortable. Have group members take turns bringing light refreshments, which can be served before or after your meeting.

Prepare for the Session

- ◆ Pray for God's guidance for each session. Watch for teachable moments when hearts are open to new insights and transformation. Pray for specific participants by name.
- ◆ Be aware of how God is using the material to impact you and be prepared to share how these powerful concepts are transforming you. Allow members to share their transforming experiences.

Keep it moving without rushing

- ◆ Balance time management with sensitive group dynamics. Cover the material, but be flexible enough to deal with your group's needs as the Spirit leads you.
- ◆ Don't be sidetracked. If a member's question is too complex, offer to go over it more thoroughly with them personally after the session. Also make an effort to encourage reticent members to participate. This makes everyone feel valued and adds to the richness of the discussion.

Be personable and responsive

- ◆ Know names!! Keep a list of participants, make notes and review during the week. Greet people by name. It makes a difference!
- ◆ Build group chemistry and participation. Help people interact and get to know each other. Some things that can encourage this are:
 - Create a member roster with their contact info, including their birthday and anniversary, and family members' names.
 - Have a sign-up sheet to rotate bringing snacks or food.
 - Let different group members take turns leading the discussion or praying.



EXAMPLE OF GROUP SESSION FLOW:

Introduce the Session. Welcome everyone enthusiastically. Consider having an ice-breaker at several of the sessions. You can find a lot of ideas for adult small groups at:

<https://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/help-others-grow/leading-small-groups/small-group-icebreakers.html>

Show *The Testing of Your Faith* workbook and materials before starting the video session. Ask them what they were thinking about when they walked through the door. Dinner tonight? A business deal tomorrow? A family Issue? Then drop a hint on what they might glean tonight to re-direct their thinking.

Ask one or two participants on the first week to share why they were attracted to the study. In the following weeks ask one or two to share how the last week's session impacted them.

Play *The Testing of Your Faith* video session. Make sure the volume is sufficient, and that everyone has a good view.

Watch for the big idea and make sure they got it! When the video has concluded, ask for questions and comments. Some will ask for the answers for fill-in blanks in the workbook. Ask others in the group to share answers or give them the answers using your reference notes, or return to the appropriate screen in the video course session to view the answer. Then, launch into your discussion without delay.

Guide the Discussion. Ask them what they remember most about the session. Then go straight into the Session Questions.

Encourage everyone to ask questions, read the question and share responses, or read a passage aloud if it is applicable. No one dominates – not even the leader. Be sure your time as a leader takes up less than half your time together as a group. Politely guide discussion if anyone dominates. Don't feel that a moment of silence is a bad thing. People often need time to think about their responses or to gain courage to share what God is stirring in their hearts.

Input is affirmed and followed up. Build community with follow-up questions, asking how others have experienced similar things or how a truth has shaped their understanding of God and what you are studying.

Connect Think of ways to connect with group members during the week. The more people are comfortable with and involved in one another's lives, the more they will look forward to being together. Some ideas are:

- ◆ Coffee with individuals.
- ◆ Attend something their children are involved in.
- ◆ Congratulate them on any accomplishment you hear about.
- ◆ Do an outreach together as a group in the community.
- ◆ Have someone in the group be in charge of socials or outings.

Pray Most importantly, continuously pray and let the Holy Spirit guide you as you view and study *The Testing of Your Faith*, and lead your group to become Extraordinary!

POST-SESSION

Questions

Questions are shown at the end of each session in the video course. After viewing a session, you can pause the video to allow more time to answer the questions – or you can navigate back to this screen at a later time using the chapter marks in the menu/index of your player.

Post-Session 1: The Purpose of Tests of Faith

Review: Sketch out the main chart of this section and fill in as many details you can. Review together until you can repeat all five key concepts in order.

Reflect: Describe a couple of ways that your ideas and feelings about the trials and tests you experience changed as a result of this session.

Respond: List as many differences as you can between how God feels about the tests of faith and how most people feel. Have you been able to agree with the Lord's perspective yet? How would it change your life if you did?

Resolve: Responding with “joy” and “rejoicing” in your tests brings great freedom and peace to us—and joy to the Lord because it proves you really understand God's heart and motives. Write a short note to yourself about how you're going to respond in your next test of faith.

Post-Session 2: The Patterns of Tests of Faith

Review: Sketch out the main chart of this session with the five arrows, including how we often respond in each pattern (e.g., “Too long”). Review together until you can repeat all five key patterns in order, and then review the Session One chart.

Reflect: Think back over your life and share with each other (or write below) one difficult test of faith you experienced. Which pattern was it? How did you feel during the process?

Respond: Most of us can identify with the words, “It's just not worth it” when enduring a test of faith. Describe how the “Cost-to-Benefit” chart challenged that thinking.

Resolve: Nearly everyone identifies with the Loop Pattern when the Lord reteaches and retests us -- because we repeatedly fail His test. Common Loops focus on our finances, broken relationships, and our response to authority. Describe one Loop in your life. What do you want to tell the Lord about it?

Post-Session 3: The Stages In Test Failure

Review: Sketch out the main chart of this session with the 3 main stages, then with the five responses people typically have under each stage. Review together until you can repeat the stages with the five key responses, and review Sessions One and Two charts.

Reflect: What do you think causes people to move from complaining about the Situation to complaining about the human Source, and finally to complaining against our Sovereign God? What builds up and then overflows, pushing us into the next stage?

Respond: Can you figure out the missing link? Why does God state we are complaining against Him when we are only complaining about the distressing Situation? Discuss God's perspective and contrast His with ours.

Resolve: For many people, the most lifechanging insight of this session is the role and seriousness of our complaining. Describe how your life would change if you absolutely stopped all internal and external complaining.

Post-Session 4: The Steps for Test Success

Review: Sketch out the main chart in this session with the five Steps to Success—why not do all the hand signs together while stating each of the steps. Then, see if you or someone in your group can review all the key words for Sessions One through Three.

Reflect: How did you process the Biblical insight that we can take steps to increase our faith when it begins to weaken? Did you find newfound hope in these steps? Which step will you likely use the most?

Respond: Take a moment or two and write a short prayer of appreciation to the Lord about His amazing promise to grant abundant wisdom when you ask Him. Promise Him not to doubt -- because He always keeps His promises!

Resolve: Let's get started by practicing Step #2, "Remember God's Works." In the next 60 seconds, list as many miracles and works of God from both the Old and New Testament as you can. Then write your commitment to increase your faith the next time you face a Test of Faith.

Post-Session 5: The Tests of Belief

Review: Sketch out the main chart in this session with the five main Faith Tests. Review together until you can repeat all five in order. Then, see if you can review together all the main charts in Session One through Five from memory.

Reflect: Think through those five Faith Tests and identify the most difficult one for you. What happened in your life or family to cause you to doubt or question God in that area?

Respond: The deepest Faith Test focuses on the question “Why?”— the Purpose of God. List three statements or questions where we challenge God’s Purpose when we are suffering under despair, like “How could a good God allow that to happen?”

Resolve: How are you going to successfully handle the next Faith Test that challenges you in your weakest area? You’ll move into doubting and questioning God, right before unbelief raises its ugly head in rebellion. What steps will you take to reverse your path and pass the next Faith Test?

Post-Session 6: The Triggers for Unbelief

Review: Sketch out the main chart in this session with the three main Trigger Types and the five Unbelief Triggers. Review together until you can repeat in order all five. How about another course review for Sessions One through Six?

Reflect: Think about the roots of unbelief—often something that causes us to be offended at God for what He did or didn’t do. Describe what in the world causes you to be potentially offended at God. Why will that offense disappear in heaven when you see the full truth?

Respond: This session purposefully pushed you “into the corner” by focusing on the most extreme Unbelief Triggers. Undoubtedly you wrestled with some strong or negative emotions. Describe how you think God feels when we rise above His wisdom and judge Him as unjust or unloving because we can only see life from our perspective and not His?

Resolve: By investigating those five Triggers of Unbelief, you are now equipped to recognize when unbelief is being triggered in your life. How can Romans 8:35-37 defeat any and all Unbelief Triggers in your life?

Post-Session 7: The Catalyst for Life

Review: Sketch out the main chart in this session with the five areas where our Faith can serve as a major Catalyst for our benefit. Review together until you can repeat all five in order. How about another course review for Sessions One through Seven? You will be able to remember most by now!

Reflect: Many Christians only use their faith very little beyond believing in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Faith tragically then remains locked and rarely used. Describe how you felt as you learned how your faith could radically change every part of your life.

Respond: Think through the five Catalytic areas. Which one touched your heart the most and you longed to unlock more of your faith in that area? What did you desire?

Resolve: The greater we use Catalytic Faith, the more we must take risks and trust the Lord. How can you overcome your fears with Christ's promise that "all things are possible to him who believes"?

Post-Session 8: The Secrets of Overcomers

Review: Sketch out the main chart in this session with the five Overcomer Secrets. Review together until you can repeat all five in order. How about the final course review for Sessions One through Eight? Who in your group can list them all!

Reflect: A tree can only grow upward based upon the size and health of its hidden roots. If you long for the Overcomer's life, you must Pursue the Lord by abiding and Purify Yourself by personal cleansing from sin. Which of those two Secrets do you need to focus on the most and why?

Respond: Since you were uniquely "created in Christ Jesus for good works," you must prioritize your goals according to Christ's priorities. List your top three most important "good works" and why they are so important to you and God. Discuss and encourage each other.

Resolve: Well, we have finally come to the conclusion of this course. We at Teach Every Nation (TEN) pray that this course has been an encouraging and lifechanging experience—filled with lasting lifechange. TEN has over 30 courses for you to choose to study next. Why not pause and reflect—how has The Testing of Your Faith course helped you the most? If you would like, we at TEN would love to hear your response—email at help@teacheverynation.org -- or text or WhatsApp to +27-73-923-2922. Until next time, we stand ready to serve.