



How To Lead a Bible Study for Elders with Dementia

[Watch the YouTube Video Series](#)

Part 1: The Big Picture

1. Heed and trust the voice of God to serve elders living with dementia.
2. Talk to a long-term home's activity director. Express what you'd like to do and ask if they're receptive. Assure them that you're not there to pressure people but want to love and serve those who would be interested. Go consistently, if possible, maybe once a week.
3. Relax! God is with you. "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). You don't have to finish a study or have a particular agenda other than communicating God's love to the people who join you. Be fully present (remember to silence your cell phone).
4. Do whatever works for you and your group. Choose a Bible study that speaks to you or use a series from my [Bible discussion guides](#).
5. Make it interactive. My question-based discussion guides go slowly, sometimes word by word. Treat elders as adults. Ask questions and wait for responses. If needed, after several seconds, ask again or in a simpler way. Feel free to follow a train of thought.
6. Expect miracles. God is active and alive in these elders!

Part 2: Before You Start

1. Reconfirm with care staff for their permission and blessing. Ask them to suggest good times, but have ideas yourself (e.g., 11-11:30 am, just before lunch).
2. In general, start with a small group, maybe 4-5 people. Sit in a circle rather than teaching from up front.
3. When needed, politely encourage the staff that this is a sacred space and to avoid interrupting the residents if possible. If a resident is on a medication schedule, that's fine, but if they're aware, staff can usually wait before performing a task.

4. Keep the discussion to 30 minutes or so. Plan on coming early to invite people, and build in time to close with a song.
5. Make printouts of the passage (included in my guides) or use extra-large-print Bibles. Everyone should have the same version (e.g., NIV). [Get info on free large-print Bibles.](#)
6. Invite everyone! They don't have to be Christian or have any experience with the Bible. Everyone is welcome. "No conversion required." ☺

Part 3: During the Study

1. Tell people who you are and what the group will be doing: a group discussion on a passage from the Bible.
2. Start with a short prayer, something like: "Dear God, thank you for this time together. We pray that your Holy Spirit would be our teacher today, and that we would learn from you and from each other. We pray in your holy name, Amen."
3. Speak slowly and fairly loudly.
4. Read the passage, or ask for a volunteer to read the passage aloud. (Many people with dementia can still read.) Be ready to know where you'd like them to stop: "That's excellent, let's stop right there and talk about that section."
5. Interactive! Ask questions and wait for the answers. Affirm any response that you get. Elders' participation is key for their dignity and the work of the Holy Spirit. It's OK if the discussion goes off script! Be flexible and creative with questions.
6. Close the time with a short prayer or ask if someone would like to close the group in prayer.
7. End with a hymn (a cappella or with music), or just a verse or two: Amazing Grace, Jesus Loves Me, When the Saints Go Marching In, something most people would know. Try my [sing-along hymns on YouTube.](#)