

# PREPARE *to* THRIVE

LEADER GUIDE

Prepare to Thrive Leader Study Guide

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# TABLE *of* CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
Study Guide Description.....	3
Suggestions for Group Leaders .....	7
Optional Group Activity Ideas .....	11
Introductory Session.....	15
Chapter 1 .....	23
Chapter 2 .....	31
Chapter 3 .....	39
Chapter 4 .....	47
Chapter 5 .....	55
Chapter 6 .....	61
Chapter 7.....	69
Chapter 8 .....	77
Chapter 9 .....	85
Chapter 10.....	95
Chapter 11 .....	105
Chapter 12.....	115
Chapter 13.....	127
Chapter 14.....	135





# INTRODUCTION

## **It's time to help students prepare for the challenges ahead.**

For decades, researchers have known that youth are leaving church at alarming rates. Far too many Christian-raised young people are not being equipped with the foundations, answers, and biblical thinking skills they need to navigate secular classrooms and cultures with a biblical worldview intact.

But what if this trend could change? What practical steps can help Christian students prepare for—and survive—the worldview battle in real classrooms?

That's what this study is about.


With sessions spanning 15 weeks, the *Prepare to Thrive Study Guide* unites different generations of believers around the common purpose of equipping students to keep—and live out—a strong biblical worldview in college and beyond. This study includes:

- Vital facts revealing the challenges Christian students can expect to face on many campuses.
- Biblical strategies for keeping an uncompromised biblical worldview at college—and applying that worldview to impact culture.
- Practical tips for navigating the trenches of secular college, including tools to think through

faith-challenging messages, handle worldview questions, and resist “brainwashing.”

Along the way, opportunities for meaningful discussion, activities, and optional challenges will enable students to strengthen connections with godly adults while building foundations for surviving today’s classrooms and culture.

**Ready to get started?**



# STUDY GUIDE DESCRIPTION

## WHAT IT IS

The *Prepare to Thrive Study Guide* contains materials for 15 weekly sessions, each of which corresponds to a chapter or section of the book *Prepare to Thrive: A Survival Guide for Christian Students*. Sessions are designed to help Christian students—and the adults who support them—work together to unpack, engage with, and apply the concepts they’ll learn in *Prepare to Thrive*.

## WHO IT’S FOR

The tools and concepts in the *Prepare to Thrive Study Guide* can benefit any Christian. However, this guide is most geared toward Christian high school or college students and the older believers who support them, collectively referred to here as *mentors*. Mentors may include parents, grandparents, youth leaders, pastors, godly senior acquaintances, or other older Christians. While mentors or students can work through these materials by themselves, the best-case scenario is for mentors and students to experience this study together. Just a few possible group makeups include:

- Individual families studying together as youth with parents and/or grandparents
- Two or more family groups meeting to journey through the study together
- Churches combining members of their youth, parent, and senior groups for the study
- Campus ministries inviting godly older community members to join with students for the study

## HOW IT WORKS

The *Prepare to Thrive Study Guide* features a series of flexible session templates which leaders can configure to suit their unique groups.

For each session, leaders are encouraged to select questions and activities that best meet their group's needs. Leaders may also choose to add other questions or activities at their discretion.

### **A typical session template includes:**

- Scripture references related to the week's chapter of *Prepare to Thrive* (As an optional challenge, participants are encouraged to memorize each week's Scripture passages.)
- References to relevant Answers TV videos where participants can find more information
- Discussion questions to check comprehension and spark intergenerational dialogue (Note that certain questions may be directed specifically toward students or mentors.)



- Application questions guiding students and mentors to work together to implement concepts from the chapter
- Optional challenges to help participants put their learning into practice throughout each week

In addition to weekly session templates, this study guide also features student handouts for each session, along with optional group activity ideas designed to foster intergenerational team-building connections.





# SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP LEADERS

## BEFORE EACH SESSION

Make sure participants have access to the week's handout so they can anticipate the learning objectives, discussion questions, and application activities for the session. Ask participants to read the assigned book section, encouraging them to take notes to prepare for the session's discussion questions. Additionally, encourage participants to write down any questions they have while reading the section. These questions can later be addressed during open discussion times or individually with mentors.

## SUGGESTED SESSION OUTLINE

- Open with prayer.
- As an option, allow time for an initial connection-building activity like an icebreaker game or a meal.
- Transition into discussion time. Go through selected questions and activities, breaking into smaller groups as needed. Remember to allow open discussion time for participants to share other thoughts and questions. (See **Prompts for Open Discussion** below.)

- For groups doing weekly challenges, allow time for participants to complete, discuss, or share results from the previous week's challenge. Highlight any instructions for the next week's challenge.
- Ask participants to read the next chapter in preparation for the following session.
- As an option, allow time for final team-building activities, mentorship sessions, or fellowship.

**Note:** A version of this outline is included in the template for the Introductory Session. However, subsequent session templates do not contain an outline to avoid repetition.

## PROMPTS FOR OPEN DISCUSSION

Open discussion time allows participants to share their personal reflections about each week's reading. Here are just some of the many possible questions which can encourage open discussion:

- What are your thoughts about this chapter?
- What stood out to you from this chapter?
- What's something new you learned?
- What information did you find the most useful?
- What did you find the most surprising?
- What story or statement from this chapter did you especially relate to?
- Did this chapter raise any concerns for you? If so, what were they?
- What reactions did you feel in response to what you read? For example, did something make you feel especially encouraged, apprehensive, or excited?

- What is one action you plan to take in response to what you've read?
- Did you have any questions after reading this chapter?

## MENTORSHIP ENHANCEMENT OPTIONS

To further build intergenerational connections, participants may form “small groups” consisting of a mentor (or pair of mentors) and one or more students. (Remember to follow appropriate protocols for any meetings between group members.) Members of small groups will work together for the application activities and follow-up discussions of weekly challenges. Other ideas for challenges that bring together students and mentors are available under Optional Group Activity Ideas.

## TIPS FOR RECRUITING MENTORS

The word *mentorship* can sound intimidating, potentially making older Christians hesitant to participate in the study. Would-be mentors may also be concerned about the level of commitment participation may require. Here are a few tips to help with overcoming these barriers when recruiting mentors:

- Clarify what mentorship means. As chapter 8 of *Prepare to Thrive* explains, a mentor is simply anyone with valuable experience, knowledge, and insights which can benefit someone else—especially someone younger. Mentorship may take many forms, from formal discipleship to informal friendship.
- Reassure mentors that they don't need to be perfect, have all the answers, or possess special skills to

make a difference in a young person's life. A mentor can simply be anyone with a story of God's faithfulness to share.<sup>1</sup>

- Emphasize the value and importance of mentorship. For example, much research confirms that connections with older Christians are a major common denominator setting apart the church-raised youth who keep the strongest faith into adulthood.<sup>2</sup>

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1 See insights from student ministry leader in Holland, quoted in chapter 5 of *Prepare to Thrive*.

2 For study citations, see the endnotes of *Prepare to Thrive* chapter 8.



# OPTIONAL GROUP ACTIVITY IDEAS

## INTERGENERATIONAL TEAM- BUILDING CHALLENGES

In addition to using the optional weekly challenges listed in each session handout for individual participants, try these challenges to strengthen intergenerational connections within your group.

### Story-Sharing Night

A campus minister quoted in chapter 5 of *Prepare to Thrive* said that a mentor can be anyone with a story of God's faithfulness to share. Why not host a testimony night where older Christians can share stories of what God has done for them?

### Q&A Night

Recruit older people from church or the community who are experienced in a particular field or—most importantly—who have a close personal walk with God. Let youth think about questions ahead of time and have option of submitting questions anonymously. The Q&A panelists shouldn't feel pressure to know all the answers immediately. Instead, the group should be

committed to working through questions together as needed, knowing where to find biblical answers.

## Intergenerational Prayer

Chapter 8 of *Prepare to Thrive* described a retired pastor who would walk around a university campus with Christian students, praying for the campus and student ministries. Try a similar intergenerational prayer initiative, whether a prayer walk or a sit-down gathering to accommodate participants with limited mobility.

## Intergenerational Service Project

A fantastic way to build intergenerational connections is to allow younger and older people to serve each other or to serve alongside each other. Arrange for your whole group to complete a service project together or encourage small groups to complete their own service projects.

# PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT IDEAS

Here are a few ideas to encourage participant involvement throughout the study:

- Include fellowship time with snacks, coffee, or meals at sessions to encourage intergenerational discussion. This also doubles as a way to involve other church or community members. For instance, you could invite seniors to bring food or bake for the students and stay for discussion.

**Note:** If participants will be seated at tables during fellowship or discussion times, you can use random draw games to break up cliques and make sure each



table has a mix of seniors and students—especially at the beginning of the study.

- Offer prizes (even as simple as chocolate) for answered questions and completed challenges.
- Create a social media group or chat for the study where students can keep the discussion running, ask questions, and post pictures or stories from their weekly challenges.

## **STUDY COMPLETION AND FOLLOW-UP IDEAS**

- Have a celebratory wrap-up party or outing at the end of the study.
- Throughout the study, keep a running collection of photos, stories, and testimonials from the sessions or weekly challenges to create a presentation for your church at the end.

Allow students to show their church what they learned—for instance, by sharing a story of a new mentorship connection or an example of how they applied critical thinking tools.

- Invite high school seniors or graduates from the study to share their future plans with the church and to have the church pray for/commission them.
- Create a contact list or social media page which students and mentors can use to stay connected after the study.





# INTRODUCTORY SESSION

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Form (or deepen) connections between group members
- Inspire excitement about the study and motivate active participation in it
- Introduce the concept of the worldview battle in today's classrooms and culture
- Help participants create a plan for making the most of the study

## BEFORE THE SESSION

Ask participants to read the introductory portion of *Prepare to Thrive*, from “Foreword” up through “How to Use This Book.” Encourage them to write down thoughts, questions, and other notes as they read for use in later discussion.

## SUGGESTED SESSION OUTLINE

- Open with prayer, followed by an optional icebreaker, meal, or other activity to encourage connections between group members.

In the end, participants should know one another's names, backgrounds, general interests, and (in the case of students) plans for the future, if any.

- Inspire excitement by reminding participants of the reasons for (and benefits of) journeying through this study together.
- Describe how the study will work, including session formats, expectations for students, and plans for any celebratory or follow-up events upon completion of the study. (See **Optional Group Activity Ideas.**)
- Go through discussion starters and selected activities, breaking into smaller groups as necessary. Remember to allow open discussion time as well for participants to share other thoughts and questions.
- Ask participants to read chapter 1 and complete any selected challenges in preparation for the next session.

## VERSES

1 Corinthians 10:3–5



## QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

4. What are you interested in doing after you graduate (from high school or college)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What specific challenges might you expect to face in that setting?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Considering the three foundations students need, what are some practical steps you could take now to prepare for those challenges?

7. What worldview-related challenges have you witnessed or experienced in the settings you're already in?

8. How might this study help with navigating these challenges?

## QUESTIONS FOR MENTORS

9. What past challenges have you faced as a Christian in the spiritual battlefield of classrooms or culture?

10. What advice would you give to another Christian experiencing those challenges?



# APPLICATION ACTIVITY

**Have students and mentors break into small groups to complete the following activity.**

Based on what you've read and discussed so far, take a minute to think about some goals you'd like to accomplish through this study. What are some simple steps you can be taking along the way to make sure you complete these goals? Share your ideas with your group or mentor, writing down your plans and goals for future reference.

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# WEEKLY CHALLENGE

**Ask participants to complete the following take-home challenge (optional).**

During the week, watch for evidence of the world-view battle being waged in our culture (for instance, advertisements that promote unbiblical ideas as facts). How many different settings, subjects, or aspects of everyday life do you notice the battle affecting? Jot down your observations to discuss with your mentor or group next week.

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# CHAPTER 1

## *The Foundation of Our Faith*

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this session, participants should be able to:**

- Define evolution as a “big picture” origins story including four subtypes (cosmic, geological, chemical, and biological)
- Recognize how the moral and spiritual decay of Western culture stems from rejecting the authority of God’s Word
- Explain the 7 C’s of Biblical History and their significance
- Describe how the Bible teaches about “earthly things” (John 3:12) like cosmology, biology, anthropology, and geology
- Explain why Genesis is the foundation of Christian doctrines, morals, and ministries

### VERSES

2 Timothy 3:14–17



4. What are some examples of “earthly things” that Genesis teaches us about (John 3:12)?

5. The book listed defending marriage and protecting the unborn as two examples of Christian ministries which are founded on Christian morals. These morals are founded on biblical doctrines, which in turn are founded on Genesis. What is another example of how a Christian ministry’s significance traces back to Genesis?

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

6. What is a specific message you've encountered in your classes or culture that attacks one of the 7 C's of Biblical History?
7. How would believing that message negatively impact our understanding of a Christian doctrine, moral, or ministry?

# QUESTIONS FOR MENTORS

8. Which of the 7 C's of Biblical History have you seen being compromised during your lifetime?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How did you see that compromise unfold?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. What were some effects or consequences which resulted from that compromise?

# APPLICATION ACTIVITY

**Have students and mentors break into small groups to complete the following activity.**

Using the 7 C's of Biblical History, practice explaining the "big picture" of the gospel to someone else.

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# WEEKLY CHALLENGE

**Ask participants to complete the following take-home challenge (optional).**

Over the next week, jot down some of the messages you encounter from your surrounding culture—whether through movies, books, social media, advertisements, the news, classes, conversations, or other communicational settings. Practice thinking biblically about these messages by viewing them through the lens of the 7 C’s of Biblical History. Here’s an example to get you started:

**Message:** Social media post said, “Follow your heart.”

**Biblical response:** All human hearts are fallen and fallible, affected by the sin that spread to all of Adam’s descendants (Romans 5:12; see the second “C” of Biblical History, Corruption). So we must not use our sinful hearts as compasses for making decisions; instead, we must base our decisions on the Word of our sinless, infallible Creator (see the first “C” of Biblical History, Creation).

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# CHAPTER 2

## *The Assault on Scripture*

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**By the end of this session, participants should be able to:**

- Explain the difference between observational and historical science
- Understand that there are only two kinds of worldview “glasses”
- Describe how people wearing different worldview glasses often reach different interpretations about the same facts
- Explain why the concept of millions of years is incompatible with God’s Word
- Describe the consequences for society and the church that result from compromising Genesis

### VERSE

Jude 3



4. Does the idea that the earth is millions of years old “fit” with the Bible? Why or why not?
5. How does compromising on Genesis impact society and the church?

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

6. Is there a cause or ministry that you're especially passionate about?
7. How might a compromised view of Genesis affect that cause?

## QUESTIONS FOR MENTORS

8. How have you seen a Christian ministry or moral value lose its cultural significance based on society's rejection of Genesis?
9. On the brighter side, what is a positive result you've seen from a Christian living out an uncompromised stand on God's Word?

# APPLICATION ACTIVITY

**Have students and mentors break into small groups to complete the following activity.**

As students and mentors work together, brainstorm some practical ways your group, community, or family can work together to actively defend the authority of God's Word and respond to the cultural collapse caused by compromise.

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## WEEKLY CHALLENGE

**Ask participants to complete the following take-home challenge (optional).**

To restore the church's Genesis foundation, we need to help other Christians understand how protecting this foundation is a gospel issue, a moral issue, and a justice issue. So this week's challenge is to practice raising awareness about the importance of Genesis—even simply by sharing the concepts you've learned over the last few weeks with a friend.

You could also get creative by sharing the message through artwork, video, social media, poetry, blog post, or story. There are so many ways to communicate truth! You can work either by yourself or with others in your group. Praying for ideas and opportunities is a great way to start.

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