

Tools and Tips to Create Your Own Online Bible Course

Ideas for innovative ministry wherever you are.

Have you ever considered doing online Bible studies for your congregation? Maybe an online book discussion?

For both younger and older church members, it is becoming harder and harder to bring folks together mid-week. Young families with busy work schedules, older members with mobility issues, or those who can't drive at night might be open to building community via an online Bible study or discussion group covering any number of topics. Consider this for Advent or the Lenten season!



If you plan to create your own online course, follow these tips for course design from Berkeley Collins, Wesley's director of educational technology. Collins was responsible for developing the online training in online course development for Wesley professors this summer.

- **Be present:** Engage with students early and often. Introduce yourself, participate in discussions, use the virtual tools to make your presence known to students.
- **Create a supportive online community:** The number one reason participants do not succeed in online learning is a failure to build an emotional connection. Create a learning environment where they can connect with you, one another, and the course content.
- **Be very clear on expectations for course participants and for yourself:** Make sure participants know what is expected of them - when you will give feedback, when you will respond to emails, how much you will participate in discussions, etc. Try to design your course in a way that answers questions before they are asked. Remember, if one person asks, three more probably have that same question, so answer it for the entire group.
- **Use the right tool for the job:** Build your activities around your learning goals for the course and make sure there is a survey at the end of the course to learn

what worked, what didn't and gather participants' feedback to enhance your course.

- **Help participants be successful online learners:** You are the first line of technical support. Quality check your course and make sure you eliminate any questions that may come up. Redundancy and over-informing are of great value in the online environment.
- **Try to make all content digital or easy to access:** If participants feel it is difficult to access content, they just won't do it. Try to make the content as easy to access as possible. Provide readings online when you can or select online journals or e-books. If you use videos, put them online in the course, or link to them via YouTube. If you use other technologies, give clear explanations and links.
- **Provide effective feedback:** The online environment requires very clear feedback. Give feedback that cannot be misread or misinterpreted. Let participants know where they can find the feedback.
- **Make sure the course is accessible to all potential participants:** Take into account the great and small obstacles for learners. Think of students who may have color blindness, 'old eyes,' and various undiagnosed learning disabilities. Aim to make your course accessible to at least 85 percent of the global learning population.