

Reformed University Fellowship

Bible Studies in RUF

Part 1: Bible Studies and Our Philosophy of Ministry

- I. Bible studies are not optional.
 - A. Not for people who like them.
 - B. Not for people who are gifted at them.
 - C. Bible studies are just as important as one-to-one counseling.
 - D. A ministry without Bible studies is weak and deformed.

- II. Bible studies help fulfill our purpose.
 - A. We reach students, both believers and unbelievers, with the gospel through Bible studies.
 - B. We equip students in Bible studies.
 1. Doctrine and life.
 2. How to study the Bible.
 3. How to lead a Bible study.
 - C. Bible studies are one means of evangelism and discipleship.

- III. Bible studies should impart our principles.
 - A. By submitting ourselves to scripture every week, we communicate the foundational authority of scripture.
 - B. We should be sure that justification and sanctification are emphasized in the texts that are studied.

- IV. Our presuppositions encourage us to use Bible studies.
 - A. The Bible and Reformed Theology.
 1. If the Bible is the authoritative word of life, we should want to get it before students as much as possible – much more than in large group once a week.
 2. If God is sovereign, we can expect Him to work through His word.
 - B. God is at work.
 1. If so, let's encourage students to use the means of grace.
 - C. The Church is God's institution of gospel ministry.
 1. As a ministry of the church and under its oversight, we can risk letting people study the Bible on their own.
 - D. The Individuality of each person.
 1. Some people will learn, grow, and respond better in a discussion setting.
 2. Diverse small groups can accommodate different personalities.
 - E. Demographics.
 1. A flexible method like Bible studies can easily be adapted to diverse campuses.
 2. Residential campuses might emphasize dorm-based studies.
 3. Commuter campuses might emphasize time-slot or major-specific studies.
 - F. Learning is a process.
 1. Cognition is only the beginning of true learning; truth must also shape the heart and change behavior.
 2. Bible studies enable people to interact with truth, thus assisting real learning.
 3. Bible studies enable people to seek out the aspects of the passage which address the questions and problems in their lives at that time.
 4. Bible studies provide an arena for TDOEE.
 - a. Truth is taught in the study.
 - b. Members demonstrate the truth as they start to apply the scripture.
 - c. Members observe each other as they try to apply scripture.
 - d. The relationships in the Bible study provide a context for evaluation and encouragement.

- V. Bible studies dynamically interact with the other avenues of ministry.
 - A. Large group.
 - 1. Systematic Biblical teaching vs. dynamic interaction with the Bible.
 - 2. Campus-wide vision and worship vs. close relationships and prayer.
 - 3. You can use Large Group to cover topics you notice people are missing in Bible studies.
 - B. One-to-ones.
 - 1. Individualized teaching vs. learning with and through others.
 - 2. Focus on specific personal problems vs. general application.
 - 3. You should use one-to-ones to cover points students did not get in the Bible studies.
 - C. It is vital to plan large group, Bible studies, and one-to-ones as a whole ministry package.
 - 1. Teaching should be complimentary (e.g. Decalogue in LG, Sermon on the Mount in Bible studies).
 - 2. Reach all sorts of people on all parts of the campus – how you do large group and Bible studies and one-to-ones is determined by the intersection of your gifts and abilities with campus demographics.

Part 2: Perspectives on Bible Study

- I. Introduction.
 - A. My experience at Virginia Tech.
 - 1. The disaster of untrained and unsupported Bible study leaders in InterVarsity.
 - 2. The transferable concepts of Campus Crusade.
 - 3. The thoroughness of Navigator training.
 - B. My experience at Hopkins: success in training Bible study leaders.
 - C. My experience as staff: success in training staff and student Bible study leaders.
 - D. Conclusion: Staff and students can be trained to lead excellent Bible studies, but without training most will be mediocre.
- II. The Essence of Scripture.
 - A. False (incomplete) evangelical views of the Bible.
 - 1. Guidance for life.
 - 2. Directions for getting saved.
 - 3. Moral instruction and example.
 - 4. Instruction for ministry.
 - B. True evangelical view of the Bible.
 - 1. The word of God (2 Tim. 3:16).
 - 2. The source of life (Ps. 119:50; John 6:68).
 - 3. The gospel of Christ.
 - C. As ministers of God's word we want to avoid a completely utilitarian view of scripture, but in our ministry bring the dead to life, give hope to the hopeless, and enable people to encounter the living God.
- III. Receiving Scripture.
 - A. The Navigator Hand: hearing, discussing, reading, memorizing, meditating.
 - B. Hearing.
 - 1. The unique benefit: clear, accurate explanation and application of scripture.
 - 2. Thus the preacher must strive for careful exegesis and thoughtful application.

- C. Reading.
 - 1. The unique benefit: personal focus.
 - 2. Thus the individual can freely pursue his own personal interests.
 - D. Discussion.
 - 1. The unique benefit: individual verbalization.
 - 2. Thus the leader must strive to involve everyone in discussing the passage.
 - E. Accuracy in Bible study groups.
 - 1. Accuracy of interpretation and application must be pursued in Bible studies, but it is not the highest goal.
 - 2. The highest goal is to get everyone involved in talking and struggling with the passage.
 - 3. If accuracy were the highest goal, we would lecture.
 - 4. Bible studies can never be the only source of biblical input; preaching and teaching are necessary to provide that clear, accurate exposition of scripture.
 - 5. In the Bible studies, people will at times say things that are wrong.
 - 6. Mark Lowrey: if there isn't some heresy being articulated in your small groups, something isn't right.
 - 7. In the process of talking, their own thoughts become clearer.
 - 8. Sometimes people will leave the study with wrong views.
 - 9. We trust God to correct this in His time, using preaching, teaching, etc.
 - 10. Our role is to follow up the Bible study with one-to-one meetings.
 - 11. What you see in Bible studies should also influence your Large Group teaching. (See Part 5.)
- IV. The Goal of Bible Study.
- A. To be transformed (Rom. 12:2).
 - B. Renewing of the mind comes first.
 - C. Moving from knowledge to assent to trust.
 - D. A changed mind changes the will, body (behavior), emotions, and conscience.
 - E. Interaction: changes in the will affect the behavior, emotions, and conscience – etc.
 - F. Feedback loop: changes in will, behavior, emotions, and conscience promote further changes in knowledge and belief.

Part 3: Basic Hermeneutics Review

- I. Observation – What does it say?
 - A. Narrative (story).
 - 1. Narrative is a series of events.
 - 2. The event is the main structural element.
 - 3. Observation in narrative literature must make careful note of the individual events and how they build to a complete story.
 - B. Discourse (command).
 - 1. Discourse is a series of propositions.
 - 2. The proposition is the main structural element.
 - 3. Observation in discourse literature must make careful note of the individual propositions and how they build to a conclusion.
 - C. Poetry.
 - 1. Poetry is a series of images.
 - 2. The image is the main structural element.
 - 3. Observation in poetic literature must make careful note of the individual images and how they combine to form a complete picture.

- II. Interpretation – What does it mean?
 - A. The goal of interpretation: to discover the main point of the passage.
 - 1. Not to decode secret messages or to clear up all possible ambiguities.
 - B. The main point is *the primary timeless principle* revealed in this ancient text.
 - C. Every verse in the passage will contribute some way to establishing the main point.
- III. Application – Flesh out in our 21st century context how the timeless principle of the main point works out.
- IV. Last words.
 - A. Narrative passages tell us what other people did; they do not tell us what to do – we must figure out from the story which principles to apply to our lives.
 - B. Discourse passages tell us in general what to do – we are left to decide the specifics of applications.
 - C. Poetic passages paint pictures; they are more evocative than instructive, yet they do contain some commands – we must think about where we fit into the picture.

Part 4: Preparing a Bible Study

- I. Goal of preparation: get everyone involved in thinking and talking about the passage.
 - A. Thus your preparation must be oriented toward provoking conversation about the passage.
 - B. Must know well both the passage and the people.
 - 1. Commentaries can help you understand the passage, but don't take the place of your own study of scripture.
 - 2. Study guides can help you understand how to engage people with the passage, but can't take the place of your understanding the specific people in your group.
 - 3. Using a study guide to lead a Bible study is like reading a sermon in your large group meeting that someone else wrote.
- II. Study the passage carefully yourself (See Part 3).
- III. *The key to a fascinating Bible study: lead them through a natural thought process.*
 - A. Difference between preaching and a Bible study.
 - 1. Preaching.
 - a. You present a carefully prepared explanation of the passage
 - b. The whole message is a presentation of your conclusions about the passage.
 - c. It is generally undesirable and unhelpful to burden the congregation with an explanation of *how* you studied and prepared your sermon.
 - d. People benefit by understanding and responding to the word of God.
 - 2. Bible study.
 - a. You assist the group in studying the passage.
 - b. You don't get to the conclusions until the end of the hour.
 - c. The whole point is to go through the study process.
 - d. People benefit by understanding and responding to the word of God – **and** by learning *how* to study scripture.
 - 3. Summary.
 - a. Through preaching people gain knowledge about scripture.
 - b. Through Bible study people learn how to think about the scripture as well as gain knowledge about it.
 - c. Thinking is hard work.
 - i. Some people are lazy and will not want to think about the scripture.
 - ii. They will try to get you to give them answers.
 - iii. Your job is to help them grow to maturity by developing their thinking ability. (Ephesians 4:11-15)

- B. Respond naturally to the text.
 - 1. How did *you* respond to it when you studied? What caught your eye?
 - 2. What is naturally eye-catching, perplexing, shocking, heart-warming, comforting, etc.?
 - 3. What in this passage will your students in particular especially respond to? *How* will they respond?
 - C. Let OIA fall out naturally.
 - 1. Don't ask all the observation questions first, then all the interpretation questions, then the application questions.
 - D. Ask well-worded questions.
 - 1. Not too simple – they will insult or embarrass people.
 - Who approached Jesus in this passage?
 - 2. Not too complex – they will confuse people.
 - In light of the fact that leprosy was a serious disease with significant Old Covenant spiritual overtones, and considering the social customs surrounding it, what was Jesus thinking when He reached out and touched the leper?
 - 3. Must be clear: simple structure and obvious intent.
 - What do we learn about the man who approached Jesus?
 - 4. Not binary (answered by “yes” or “no”) – they halt conversation.
 - Did Jesus have compassion on the leper?
 - 5. Not too narrow – they do not promote conversation.
 - Why did Jesus cleanse the leper?
 - 6. Not too broad – they are difficult to answer.
 - How do the characters interact in this passage?
 - 7. Must be simple in concept, but rich in possible answers.
 - What does Jesus' response to the leper reveal about Jesus?
 - 8. Must lead to the main point.
 - 9. Must drive application to the heart.
 - Where in your life do you resist believing Jesus cares about you?
 - E. Creative questions.
 - 1. Identify with the perspectives and attitudes of your students; e.g. “those tiresome Old Testament laws” (see the study below).
 - 2. Play the devil's advocate; promote a wrong, but plausible interpretation, and see how long it takes them to figure out the problem.
 - 3. Suggest real situations in their own lives where the passage applies.
 - F. Differences between male and female thought patterns.
 - 1. Among men understanding tends to grow through challenge; among women understanding tends to grow through cooperation.
 - 2. Men tend to be more conceptual (focused on ideas), women more personal (focused on the people involved).
 - 3. Men gravitate toward interpretation, women toward application.
 - 4. The type of questions you pose should reflect the sex composition of your group.
 - a. Encourage men to argue, encourage women to affirm.
 - b. Help women do better interpretation, push men to application.
- IV. Write out your questions.
- A. This will discipline you to make them clear.
 - B. Write the answers to any questions which are not completely obvious to you.

- V. Monologues.
 - A. Useful for introduction, conclusion, and explanation of points they need to know to understand the passage but could not know themselves.
 - B. None is better than too much.
 - C. Must be essential and brief.
 - D. Most useful to explain some necessary cultural data.
 - E. Suspense is desirable; it promotes curiosity and desire to learn. Don't always answer the questions they direct to you.

Bible Study – Mark 1:40-45

1. What do we learn about the man who approached Jesus?
 - a. What is significant about leprosy?
 - b. What does his question reveal about him?
2. How did Jesus answer his question/meet his need?
 - a. Why did Jesus touch him?
 - b. What does Jesus' response reveal about Jesus?
3. Why did Jesus burden this poor man with those tiresome Old Testament laws?
 - a. Which laws are meant here?
 - b. Where are they found? (Read them.)
 - c. The man was already healed. Why bother with the ceremonies?
4. Why did Jesus forbid him to tell anyone about his healing?
5. (Why did the man disobey Jesus?)
6. What happened as a result of the man's disobedience?
 - a. How much did that matter?
7. What is the main point of this passage?
 - a. What characteristic of Jesus does this passage seem to focus on?
8. How does this passage apply to us?
 - a. Who are the people around you at Lehigh that you can care for this way?
 - b. Where in your life do you resist believing Jesus cares about you?

Part 5: Leading a Bible Study

- I. Preparing for the Meeting
 - A. Recruiting the people.
 - B. Selecting a place.
 - C. Choosing a time.
 - D. Setting up the room.
- II. Mechanics of the Meeting.
 - A. Beginning the meeting.
 1. Welcome everyone and make introductions.
 2. Use an ice-breaker for a few weeks to facilitate relationships.
 3. Explain the process and expectations of the Bible study to the people in the group.
 4. Begin with prayer.

- B. Leading the meeting.
 - 1. Encourage everyone to speak.
 - 2. Affirm all contributions; learn to find something positive to say about anyone's contribution, even false ideas – be encouraging.
 - 3. Keep the study moving.
 - a. Develop a sense of pace that is appropriate for your group.
 - b. Don't get bogged down on minor points.
 - 4. Encourage interaction among the group members.
 - C. Keep the study moving, in the right direction.
 - 1. Try to avoid dead periods in conversation, but give people time to think.
 - 2. If you get a glazed look from one of your questions, reword it to make it clearer.
 - 3. *Never* answer your own questions!
 - 4. Try to avoid conversation off the topic.
 - D. Ending the meeting.
 - 1. Close in prayer.
 - 2. End on time!!!
- III. Tips for Stimulating Conversation.
- A. Communicate that you are really interested in the views of the people attending.
 - 1. If you are genuinely interested in their views, they will share their views with the group.
 - B. Always try to involve the group in answering questions that arise.
- IV. Tone of the Group.
- A. You want to create a warm and accepting, but also stimulating and exciting environment.
 - B. You want to create a sense that scripture is both understandable, but also mysterious; practical, yet rich literature; serious, but enjoyable.
 - C. You want to develop an insatiable appetite for discussing God's word.
- V. Summary.
- A. Most people can lead effective Bible studies if they are trained and supervised, and if they practice.
 - B. The goal of a Bible study is to transform people.
 - C. The means of accomplishing this goal is conversation – discussion among everyone in the group.
 - D. Your personal thorough study of the text is essential.
 - E. Carefully prepare questions which will engage the group.
 - 1. Follow a natural thought process.
 - 2. Use creative questions.
 - 3. Drive application to the heart.
 - F. Keep the study moving in the right direction.
 - 1. Keep moving toward the main point.
 - 2. Prompt students to interact with each other.
 - G. Remember that the scripture is the word of God, the source of life, and the gospel of Christ.