

Reformed University Fellowship

Leading Bible Studies Review

- I. Perspectives on Bible Study.
 - A. The Essence of Scripture.
 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.
 4. As ministers of God's word we want to bring the dead to life, give hope to the hopeless, and enable people to encounter the living God.
 - B. Receiving Scripture.
 1. The Navigator Hand: hearing, discussing, reading, memorizing, meditating.
 2. Discussion.
 - a. The unique benefit: individual verbalization.
 - b. Thus the leader must strive to involve everyone in discussing the passage.
 3. Accuracy in Bible study groups.
 - a. Accuracy of interpretation and application must be pursued in Bible studies, but it is not the highest goal.
 - b. The highest goal is to get everyone involved in talking and struggling with the passage.
 - c. If accuracy were the highest goal, we would lecture.
 - d. We trust God to teach students in His time while we continue teaching in Large Group and one-to-ones.
 - C. The Goal of Bible Study.
 1. To be transformed (Rom. 12:2).
 2. Renewing of the mind comes first.
 3. Moving from knowledge to assent to trust.
 4. A changed mind changes the will, body (behavior), emotions, and conscience.
 5. Interaction: changes in the will affect the behavior, emotions, and conscience – etc.
 6. Feedback loop: changes in will, behavior, emotions, and conscience promote further changes in knowledge and belief.
- II. Hermeneutics.
 - A. Observation – What does it say?
 1. Narrative (story).
 - a. Narrative is a series of events.
 - b. The event is the main structural element.
 2. Discourse (command).
 - a. Discourse is a series of propositions.
 - b. The proposition is the main structural element.
 3. Poetry.
 - a. Poetry is a series of images.
 - b. The image is the main structural element.
 - B. Interpretation – What does it mean?
 1. The goal of interpretation: to discover the main point of the passage.
 2. The main point is *the primary timeless principle* revealed in this ancient text.
 3. Every verse in the passage will contribute some way to establishing the main point.
 - C. Application – Flesh out in our 21st century context how the timeless principle of the main point works out.
 - D. Last words.
 1. 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.
 2. Discourse passages tell us in general what to do – we are left to decide the specifics of applications.

3. 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.

III. Preparation.

- A. Goal of preparation: get everyone involved in thinking and talking about the passage.
 1. Thus your preparation must be oriented toward provoking conversation about the passage.
 2. Must know well both the passage and the people.
 - a. Commentaries can help you understand the passage, but don't take the place of your own study of scripture.
 - b. 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.
 - c. Using a study guide to lead a Bible study is like reading a sermon in your large group meeting that someone else wrote.
- B. *The key to a fascinating Bible study: lead them through a natural thought process.*
 1. Difference between preaching and a Bible study.
 - 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.
 2. Respond naturally to the text.
 - a. How did *you* respond to it when you studied? What caught your eye?
 - b. What is naturally eye-catching, perplexing, shocking, heart-warming, comforting, etc.?
 - c. What in this passage will your students in particular especially respond to? *How* will they respond?
 3. Let OIA fall out naturally.
 4. Ask well-worded questions.
 - a. Not too simple – they will insult or embarrass people.
 - b. Not too complex – they will confuse people.
 - c. Must be clear: simple structure and obvious intent.
 - d. Not binary (answered by “yes” or “no”) – they halt conversation.
 - e. Not too narrow – they do not promote conversation.
 - f. Not too broad – they are difficult to answer.
 - g. Must be simple in concept, but rich in possible answers.
 - h. Must lead to the main point.
 - i. Must drive application to the heart.
 5. Creative questions.
 - a. Identify with the perspectives and attitudes of your students; e.g. “those tiresome Old Testament laws” (see the study below).
 - b. Play the devil's advocate; promote a wrong, but plausible interpretation, and see how long it takes them to figure out the problem.
 - c. Suggest real situations in their own lives where the passage applies.
 6. Differences between male and female thought patterns.
 - a. Among men understanding tends to grow through challenge; among women understanding tends to grow through cooperation.
 - b. Men tend to be more conceptual (focused on ideas), women more personal (focused on the people involved).
 - c. Men gravitate toward interpretation, women toward application.
- C. Write out your questions!

D. Common Bible Study Pitfalls.

1. Stiffly march through OIA.
2. Questions are not written out, resulting in a study that wanders.
3. Questions are so simple they insult or embarrass people.
4. Questions are so complex they confuse people.
5. Questions are just murky or vague.
6. Questions don't lead to the main point – the leader fails to discipline himself to avoid delicious but irrelevant side issues.
7. Application fails to grab the heart.

E. Monologues.

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

IV. Leading a Bible study.

A. Preparing for the meeting.

1. Recruit the people.
2. Select a place which is quiet and convenient to get to.
3. Pick a time when students will be receptive.
4. Set up the room so it is comfortable and everyone can easily participate.

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.
 - c. Summarize the discussion.
4. Encourage interaction among the group members.
 - a. Set the example by using one person's comment as the basis for your next question.
 - b. Call attention to agreement or disagreement among members.
 - c. Encourage them to resolve differences of opinion themselves.
 - d. Ask one what he thinks of another's statement.
 - e. If they too easily (unthinkingly) state a position, express doubt so they can gang up on you.

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. End on time!

C. Tips for Stimulating Conversation.

1. Communicate that you are really interested in the views of the people attending.
2. Always try to involve the group in answering questions that arise.
 - a. Refuse to answer questions they can figure out for themselves.
 - b. Redirect questions to the rest of the group.
3. Identify with the perspectives and attitudes of your students in asking your questions.
4. Play the devil's advocate; promote a wrong, but plausible interpretation, and see how long it takes them to figure out the problem.

5. Let them pass by an essential point until they get stuck, then point them back to it.
 6. Occasionally refuse to clear up a murky secondary point for them – let them stew on it for a few weeks.
 7. Ask for or suggest real situations in their own lives where the passage applies.
- B. Tone of the Group.
1. You want to create a warm and accepting, but also stimulating and exciting environment.
 2. You want to create a sense that scripture is both understandable, but also mysterious; practical, yet rich literature; serious, but enjoyable.
 3. You want to develop an insatiable appetite for discussing God's word.
- V. Bible Studies and Our Philosophy of Ministry.
- A. 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.
- B. Bible Studies Dynamically Interact With The Other Avenues of Ministry.
1. Large group.
 - a. Systematic Biblical teaching vs. dynamic interaction with the Bible.
 - b. Campus-wide vision and worship vs. close relationships and prayer.
 - c. Cover topics you notice people are missing in Bible studies.
 2. One-to-ones.
 - a. Individualized teaching vs. learning with and through others.
 - b. Focus on specific personal problems vs. general application.
 - c. Use one-to-ones to cover points students did not get in the Bible studies.
 3. It is vital to plan large group, Bible studies, and one-to-ones as a whole ministry package.
 - a. Teaching should be complimentary (e.g. Decalogue in LG, Sermon on the Mount in Bible studies).
 - b. 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.
- VI. Summary.
- A. The goal of a Bible study is to transform people.
- B. The means of accomplishing this goal is conversation – discussion among everyone in the group.
- C. Your personal thorough study of the text is essential.
- D. Carefully prepare questions which will engage the group.
1. Follow a natural thought process.
 2. Use creative questions.
 3. Drive application to the heart.
- E. Keep the study moving in the right direction.
1. Keep moving toward the main point.
 2. Prompt students to interact with each other.
- F. Remember that the scripture is the word of God, the source of life, and the gospel of Christ.