

THE WHY & HOW OF TEACHING BIBLE STUDIES

by Rev. Joseph Hanthorn

1. WHY SHOULD YOU TEACH BIBLE STUDIES?

a. Because we are commanded to make disciples:

Matthew 28:19–20 (NKJV)

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Bible Studies are more than a church growth method, they are an essential part of the Great Commission.

b. Because teachers are essential to the process of discipleship:

Jesus placed the mission of His Kingdom into the hands of teachers.

- The Lord captured Saul's attention on the road to Damascus with a blinding light, but when Saul asked what he should do next Jesus referred him to a teacher – Ananias (Acts 9:6).
- An angel visited Cornelius, but he did not instruct him in the gospel or plan of salvation. Instead, he referred Cornelius to a teacher in Joppa – Simon Peter (Acts 10:5-6).
- The Ethiopian understood his need for a teacher:

Acts 8:30–31 (NKJV)

30 So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

31 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.

Acts 8:35 (NKJV)

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

2. HOW DOES A BIBLE STUDY AFFECT PEOPLE?

a. Bible studies build faith (Romans 10:17).

Romans 10:17 (KJV 1900)

17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

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b. Bible studies lead people to truth (2 Peter 2:24-25).

2 Timothy 2:24–25 (KJV 1900)

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

c. Bible studies lead to spiritual growth (1 Peter 2:2).

1 Peter 2:2 (KJV 1900)

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

d. Bible studies connect the dots for the student.

e. Bible studies assist the student in establishing spiritual disciplines. It is more than the impartation truth; it is training people how to learn the Word. Education is about more than learning facts it is about the process of learning.

f. Bible studies help the teacher build a relationship with the student. Discipleship is relational and Bible study facilitate and foster important spiritual relationships for new believers.

g. Teaching a Bible study is a great way for the teacher to grow spiritually and to develop their own ministry.

3. WHAT IS THE GOAL OF EVERY BIBLE STUDY?

Conversion and Discipleship

Bible studies are about guiding people on a journey of faith. God is the one who draws and convicts. It is our job to be there to guide them in the process.

Every Bible study will lead a person to a crisis of faith.

Teachers must be spiritual and wise as they guide the student in truth. Soul work is slow work.

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- a. We honor their past biblical experiences.
- b. We celebrate wins – past and present.
- c. We gently guide them into personal revelation of the truth.

Be unapologetic about your agenda!

2 Corinthians 5:11 (KJV 1900)

11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...

Arm yourself with the right motive – Love! We do not teach Bible studies to win a theological argument, we teach to win a soul.

4. PRACTICAL TIPS FOR TEACHING A BIBLE STUDY:

- a. Take it seriously. Be professional.
 - i. Be on time and never cancel unless it is unavoidable. Canceling lessons sends the signal that this is not all that important to you.
 - ii. The way you treat the study will set the tone for the way they treat it. Remember they do not know the value of a study, you do.
- b. Be time-conscious. When you arrive, try to be very purposeful in your actions and limit your fellowship time to 5 or 10 minutes. Going long may be okay once or twice, but it sets a very bad precedent and can damage the study's long-term viability. Some people may also be lonely and may inadvertently monopolize your time.
- c. Establish and reestablish scriptural authority. Use the phrase; "What does the Bible say?"
- d. Keep it simple. Do not over-complicate the lesson. Studies are best, if kept simple. Do not overload the student with information. Try to see it from their perspective.

You may even ask them a few questions about their familiarity with the Bible before starting a study. Start where your student is.

- e. Teach themes. Use the lessons to teach scriptural themes such as atonement, obedience, faith, forgiveness, etc. Remember the Bible is one story. Find and teach those threads in each lesson.

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- f. Stay on topic. Avoid rabbit chasing. Your primary goal is to get the Word into them. If they have off-topic or complex questions during or before the lesson, politely ask them to write their questions down and address them at the end.

Remember the Bible is not designed to answer every question, but it does answer the important questions.

- g. Assign homework. Encourage the student to read ahead by assigning chapters and offer accountability by asking them if they did their assigned reading. Provide lesson sheets or handouts ahead of time.
- h. Build familiarity with the Bible. Help them become comfortable using the Bible. Encourage them to read from or follow along in their own Bible. It is invaluable for them to see important doctrinal scriptures in their own Bible.
- i. Transparency is key to building their trust. Be honest. If they have questions you do not know the answer to say; "I don't know, but I will find out and get back to you." You are not a theologian and you are not pretending to be.
- j. Relax. Don't feel like you have to teach them everything, all at once. Play the long game. Also, don't feel like you have to change their mind or correct every little error in their thinking. If they say something incorrect it may not be the right time to challenge it. The study will do that in time.
- k. Preparation is critical. Review your lessons ahead of time. Keep it simple, but know your stuff.
- l. Prayer is essential. Pray before going to the lesson. Bible studies are not merely academic pursuit. They are spiritual pursuit.
- m. Be sensitive to the Holy Ghost and the student while you are teaching.

Bible studies will bring people to point of decision. Being sensitive to the Holy Ghost, allows us to know when to push a little and when to hold back.

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- n. It takes practice to become a successful Bible Study teacher. Don't be afraid of failure or rejection! We never learn, if we do not risk the pain and embarrassment failure and rejection. God's grace is sufficient to make up what lacks in us.
- o. Use an extended study when possible. If you think that you may only have one session, it is good to teach a one lesson, evangelistic study.

5. PRACTICAL TIPS FOR SCHEDULING A BIBLE STUDY:

- a. Scheduling is key. An unscheduled Bible Study is not a Bible Study. When someone agrees to a Bible Study try to schedule the date and time right away. In subsequent Bible Study lessons, always try to schedule the next study, before you leave.
- b. Be flexible. If you are going to be an effective disciple-maker, you will have to be flexible about the location and time of the Bible Study. Initially offer them a couple of choices. Be mindful of the fact that there may be situations in their home which make it impractical or challenging for them to host.
 - i. Offer to teach at the following places:
 1. Their home
 2. Your home
 3. The church
 4. A coffee shop
 - ii. Bible studies, like most Christian disciplines are never convenient.
- c. Confirm the study with a call or text the day before you are scheduled.
- d. Don't be pushy. If they have not committed after one or two attempts, give them some space.

6. PRACTICAL TIPS FOR OBTAINING A BIBLE STUDY:

- a. Pray for spiritual sensitivity and expect God to lead you to hungry people (John 4:35 "...lift up your eyes and look at the fields")
- b. We looking for "the lookers".
- c. View every new relationship as a potential Bible Study.

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- d. Work the altar. One of the best places to secure a Bible Study is when people are in the altar at church (especially if you have been praying with them).

Greet them and introduce yourself. Ask them some open ended questions about their experience and congratulate them on the fact that God is obviously working in their life. Ask them if they would like to get together and talk about the Bible. If they seem open, you can proceed by mentioning the bible study

In the course of making conversation with someone, just simply ASK!

A	S	K
Ask...	Sell...	Keep...
Friendly questions about their family and occupation leading up to religious subjects.	Them enthusiastically on the beauty and simplicity of a Home Bible Study	Your goal in mind (to involve them in a Home Bible Study as soon as possible).
Do you go to church anywhere? If not, did you ever go?	I have found a great study going through the bible from Genesis to Revelation.	What is a good day for you? What is a convenient time to have it?
What is your experience with the Lord? Affirm any experiences they may relate.	This study covers the highlights of the Old and New Testaments clearly and simply.	Where would you be the most comfortable? Your home, my home, the church or even Starbucks?
Do you study the bible much? Or have you ever studied the bible?	It only takes about one hour per week for around twelve weeks.	Can I have your name, phone number and address?
Have you ever gone through the bible from beginning to end?	It's free, you do not have to be a member of our church and you can discontinue the study any time.	Try to leave a church card in their hand. Call the day of the study in order to confirm the appointment.
Are you interested in studying the bible?	Would you like to get together for a study? Note: Wait for an answer.	If they say, "No", respond kindly with: "No problem. If you ever change your mind, I'd be happy to give one."

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7. REPORTING:

- a. Importance of reporting:
 - i. Accountability
 - ii. Helps pastoral team know where a student is in discipleship.
 - iii. Helps us know how many studies our church is doing.
 - iv. Helps us to know who to ask to teach a study:
 - 1. If you are reporting 2-3 bible studies per week, we would not want to overload you.
 - 2. Conversely, when we see faithfulness, it leads to a greater degree of trust concerning new studies.
- b. Digital reporting:
 - i. Website
 - ii. Church App

8. BIBLE STUDY CURRICULUM OPTIONS:

Generally speaking, it is best to use an extended Bible Study curriculum. So much of disciple making is based on the development of a relationship and giving a person time to growth and process the truth of God's Word.

- a. *Exploring God's Word* by NAM Division UPCI – 12 Lessons
 - i. Available in Spanish
- b. *Search for Truth* by NAM Division UPCI – 12 Lessons
 - i. Available in Spanish
- c. *The Bible Made Simple* by Ryan Franklin – 13 Lessons
- d. *Grace Through Faith* by Joseph Hanthorn – 1 Lesson
 - i. Available in Spanish
- e. *Into His Marvelous Light* by Galen Walters – 2 Lessons *
 - i. www.intohismarvelouslight.com
 - ii. Available in Spanish
 - iii. Evangelistic
- f. *Rightly Dividing the Word* by Larry Smith – 2 Lessons
 - i. Evangelistic
 - ii. Best for those who have some knowledge of the Bible
- g. *The Gospel* by General Youth Division UPCI – 4 Lessons
 - i. Great for teens.