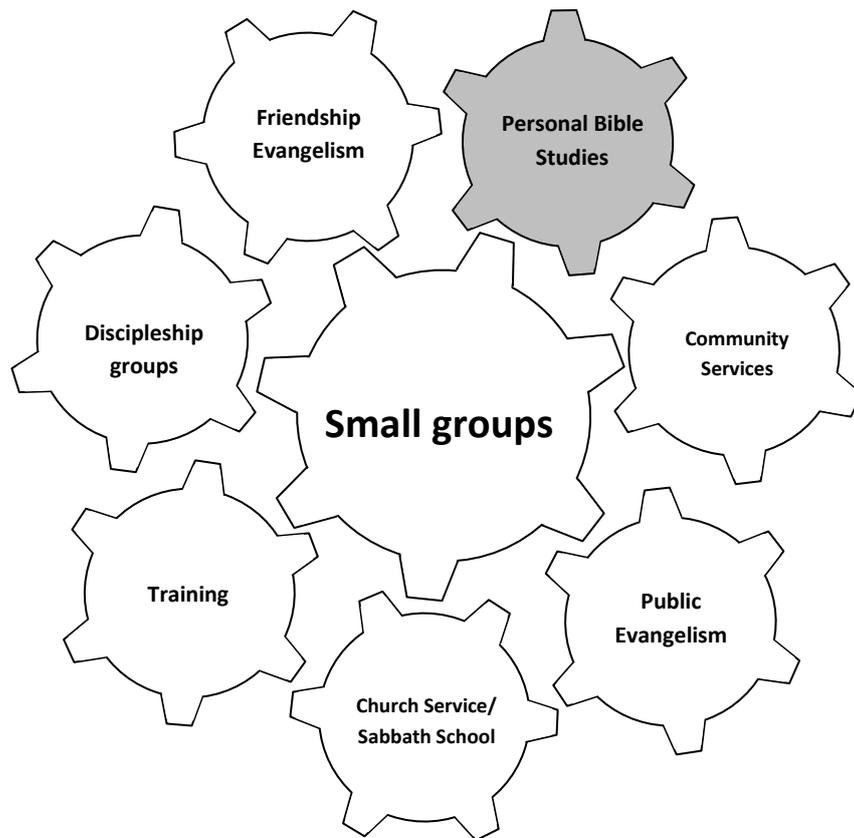


## Lesson 16: How to Give Bible Studies (Part 1)

**Introduction** When we cultivate friendships by winning people’s trust and giving them spiritual encouragement, sooner or later we will have the opportunity to give them personal Bible studies. Usually we meet weekly to systematically study the most important biblical topics.

As we have already seen, Bible studies are an important building stone in every mission strategy. No matter how we get to know people, when they make a decision for baptism the way to the church is through personal Bible studies.

**Integrated  
Mission  
Concept**



Reflect on why personal Bible studies are so important!

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**Why Personal Bible Studies are vital.**

In short, we can say: **A church that has many members giving personal Bible studies, and thus many seekers receiving Bible studies, will grow. On the other hand, a church that relies on the pastor to do this work can't and won't grow.** Therefore it is vital that we learn to give Bible studies and train other church members in this work. Understanding this is really important when it comes to planning the activities of a church. Training church members is much more important than holding large events. A church that understands this and focuses on training could, for example, set the following goals: *"In the coming year we will train 10 people to give Bible studies. We will put forth efforts so that 15 people will receive regular Bible studies."*

**Giving Bible Studies isn't difficult!**

The reality looks quite different. Usually only the pastor and a few church members are actively giving Bible studies. In the eyes of many church members giving Bible studies is something very difficult, that only the pastor and a few talented church members can do. In reality giving Bible studies is not difficult. In fact, God has revealed through Ellen White a very simple method we can use to give Bible studies.

**A Glance at History**

In the first few decades of the Adventist church, mission work was predominately done by distributing literature and periodicals and by giving public lectures. In 1883 God revealed to the church another pillar of His mission strategy. In May 1883 Stephen N. Haskell held a tent meeting in Lemoore, Southern California. One evening, while Stephen N. Haskell was preaching, a severe storm came up. The storm made so much noise that it seemed as if the service would have to be discontinued, because the people could not hear what the preacher said. It was then, that the Holy Spirit impressed Stephen Haskell to try another plan. Stepping down from the pulpit, he took his place in the center of the tent and gathered the people close around him. Then, instead of continuing to preach to them, he gave out texts of Scripture, to be read by different persons in the congregation in response to questions he asked. We don't know anymore which Bible texts he used, but it could have gone something like this: Question: "How were the Holy Scriptures given?" Someone arose and read 2 Timothy 3:16 in a clear voice: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." In another section of the audience, another person stood up and read from 2 Peter 1:21: "...holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit." Then Elder Haskell asked the next question: "For what purpose were the Scriptures written?" Back came the reply in the words of Paul, "They are 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.'" (2. Timothy 3:16, 17) All the people listened intently for the next question: "What is necessary on our part?" Someone arose and read: "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalm 119:11) The truth presented in this manner made a deep impression on the minds of the people. It was evident that here was a new and very effective way of teaching the truth.

Ellen White was at this camp meeting, but she was not present during this "stormy" service. However, her son, W.C. White, knew of the experience and gave a glowing description of the meeting to his mother. The very next day Elder Haskell and other ministers were called to meet Ellen White, and then the messenger of the Lord told them that this plan for Bible reading came from God. In the following years Ellen White again and again encouraged church members to hold Bible readings – asking questions and reading the answers in the Bible. Please read the following passages carefully and mark the parts that you find particularly important.

- Quote #1** “The plan of holding Bible readings was a heaven-born idea. There are many, both men and women, who can engage in this branch of missionary labor. Workers may thus be developed who will become mighty men of God. By this means the Word of God has been given to thousands; and the workers are brought into personal contact with people of all nations and tongues. The Bible is brought into families, and its sacred truths come home to the conscience. Men are entreated to read, examine, and judge for themselves, and they must abide the responsibility of receiving or rejecting the divine enlightenment. God will not permit this precious work for Him to go unrewarded. He will crown with success every humble effort made in His name.” (*Christian Service, p. 141*)
- Quote #2** “Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families, and opening before them the Word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest.” (*Evangelism, p. 699*)
- Quote #3** “The minister should not feel that it is his duty to do all the talking and all the laboring and all the praying; he should educate helpers in every church. Let different ones take turns in leading the meetings, and in giving Bible readings; in so doing they will be calling into use the talents which God has given them, and at the same time be receiving a training as workers.” (*Christian Service p. 69*)
- Quote #4** “Among the members of our churches there should be more house-to-house labor, in giving Bible readings and distributing literature.” (*Christian Service, p. 113*)
- Quote #5** “Many will be called into the field to labor from house to house, giving Bible readings, and praying with those who are interested.” (*Christian Service, p. 141*)
- Quote #6** “Many workers are to act their part, doing house-to-house work, and giving Bible readings in families.” (*Christian Service, p. 141*)

**The Result of these Statements**

Of course, Stephen Haskell was very encouraged to hear that the plan to hold Bible readings was a heaven-born idea. He began at once to prepare question-and-answer Bible studies, which were called Bible readings, because the student did the reading, and the teacher asked the questions which the Bible texts answered. These Bible readings were printed right away in our church’s periodicals. They simply consisted of Bible texts with appropriate questions and an occasional comment. The church members quickly embraced them and began to hold Bible readings with their friends and neighbors.

From that time on, decided emphasis was placed on the importance of Bible studies being given by workers and laymen. Adventist colleges adopted this method in their curriculum. The same year, 1883, a 10 day training program called the *Bible Reading Institute* was held in Battle Creek and was attended by more than 300 participants. It led to a true paradigm shift. Suddenly church members realized that they could do more than just distribute our literature. They understood that they could give Bible studies in a fascinatingly simple and effective manner. What they couldn’t even imagine before now became a reality. As a result a true mission movement was triggered in the Adventist church, which led to enormous growth.

In order to support this movement a magazine called *The Bible Reading Gazette* was published, which appeared once a month and always provided new Bible study topics. Eventually, the Bible studies were published in book format called *Bible Readings for the Home*, which has been translated into many languages and has been widely circulated. (*see Training Light Bearers for Laymen, p. 11-19*)

**The Key is the Questions** What's special about these Bible studies is that they aren't in the form of a monolog. The teacher selects good Bible texts about the topic and prepares good questions. The student then reads the Bible texts and the teacher asks the questions to help the student find the answer *by himself* in the Bible text.

**Jesus asked Questions** Jesus also asked questions in order to help people see where they stood and what the correct answer was. Here are a few examples:

- "When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:13-16)
- "Which of the two did the will of *his* father?" They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you." (Matthew 21:31)
- "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" (Matthew 21:40)
- "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David." He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"'? If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?" (Matthew 22:42-45)
- "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'?" (Mark 2:9)
- "So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." (Mark 10:51)
- "The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me." (Mark 11:30)
- "Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see *it*." So they brought *it*. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription *is* this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." (Mark 12:15-16)
- "He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading *of it*?" (Luke 10:26)
- "Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25-26)
- "When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been *in that condition* a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" (John 5:6)

**3 Types of Questions** In module 2, lesson 4 (How to Study the Bible) we learned how we can personally benefit from effective Bible study and discussed in detail three steps for Bible study. These steps are content (observation), interpretation (meaning) and application. If need be, review the lesson again.

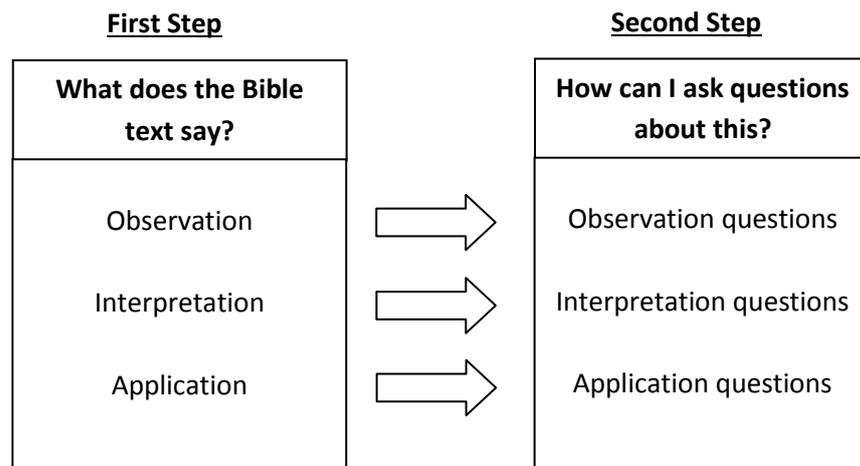
If we want to find good questions for Bible texts, it is necessary that we first study the Bible texts using these 3 steps. When we have discovered the observation,



**Advantages of Questions** Giving Bible studies by asking questions that can be answered by Bible texts has many advantages:

- You don't give a monolog, but rather give your friends the chance to discover the answers for themselves. In this manner it is much more valuable for your friend.
- By asking good questions you encourage people to think for themselves.
- It creates a real conversation, which helps you to understand the other person and see where they are spiritually.
- You confront them with God's Word and not with your opinion. They can see for themselves if it is biblical or not. Thereby you are emphasizing the importance of God's Word. You simply say: "Look for yourself and see what answer God has for your question." and lead him directly to the source. In this manner God can work much more powerfully.
- The application questions always challenges a person to make a practical application of what was read. They are also decision questions and encourage a person in a natural and open manner to implement practical decisions.
- This method of giving Bible studies is very simple. Many church members could be trained in this method to hold Bible studies. They can do away with the thought that they have to preach an hour-long sermon.
- Since the answers to your questions can be quite different depending on the situation, each Bible study is unique and a special experience.

**How to find good questions** When you prepare a Bible study you have to select the right Bible texts and then find good questions for them. This is done in two steps. In the first step you must thoroughly study for yourself and go through the 3 steps of Bible study: observation, interpretation, and application. In the second step you develop questions, which will help your friend discover these things for himself in the text.



When we prepare questions to use in a Bible study, it is important to keep a few things in mind.

1. Write down all the questions that cross your mind, even if they seem very easy. Then pick out the best questions from the list.
2. It is usually helpful to give a short explanation of the context for the Bible verse before asking questions.
3. We have to be flexible when we use our questions. Sometimes a question becomes unnecessary, because the answer was already given. Other times questions are needed that you didn't even write down beforehand.
4. Sometimes the content of a Bible text is so simple that it is more fitting not to ask about it, since the question would be too easy. In this case you can summarize the content yourself and use this summary to introduce your interpretation questions.

**Example 1**



Let's practice the whole thing with an example. Please open your Bible to **John 5:39-40** and read through the verses several times. With the help of a chart you can take some notes.

What does the Bible text say? (observation, interpretation, and application)	How can I ask questions about this? (Questions about observation, interpretation, and application)
<p>Here Jesus was speaking to the Jews, who didn't want to believe His words.</p> <p>They knew the scriptures well. They were scribes and thought that by studying the scriptures they could earn eternal life.</p> <p>The Bible testifies of Jesus, which means it predicted His ministry.</p> <p>Even though the Bible speaks about eternal life, the Jews didn't want to come to Jesus to receive this life.</p> <p>Just reading the Bible isn't enough. We also have to come to Jesus.</p>	<p>Here Jesus was speaking with the scribes, who knew the Bible very well.</p> <p>What does the Bible reveal according to these words?</p> <p>What does it mean that the scriptures testified about Jesus?</p> <p>The Jews diligently studied the scriptures, but they had a problem. What was their problem?</p> <p>If we apply this to ourselves, is it enough to just read the Bible?</p> <p>What does it mean in practice to come to Jesus?</p>

**Example 2**

Let's do a second example. Please turn to **Matthew 6:5-8**.



<b>What does the Bible text say?</b> (observation, interpretation, and application)	<b>How can I ask questions about this?</b> (Questions about observation, interpretation, and application)
<p>Here Jesus speaks about prayer and shows us how we shouldn't pray.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the hypocrites (wanted to impress others with their prayers)</li> <li>• As the heathen (used many useless words)</li> </ul> <p>On the other hand, He shows us how we should pray.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In your room, in secret (i.e. in the quiet)</li> <li>• God hears us there</li> </ul> <p>God knows ahead of time what we are going to pray for.</p> <p>Then why pray? It doesn't have to do with informing Him or changing Him. Prayer changes us.</p>	<p>Introduction: Jesus is speaking about prayer here.</p> <p>How should we not pray according to what Jesus says here?</p> <p>What were the prayers of the hypocrites and heathen like?</p> <p>What was the purpose of their prayers?</p> <p>What kind of prayer does God want?</p> <p>What does it mean to pray in your room?</p> <p>What is prayer in secret really like?</p> <p>Jesus says here that the Father already knows what we are going to ask for, before we ask it. Why should we even pray then?</p> <p>What promise about prayer can you take from Jesus' words for yourself personally?</p>

**Challenge**

1. Continue to pray for the people on your prayer list and keep your eyes open for the opportunity to do something good for them and to give them spiritual impulses.
2. Keep on praying specifically for a person that you can give personal Bible studies to.



**Bible Study**

Please study **Matthew 7:24-29** thoroughly and take notes on content, meaning and application and write down question for each.

**What does the Bible text say?**

(observation, interpretation, and application)

**How can I ask questions about this?**

(Questions on observation, interpretation, and application)

