

Lesson 19: How to Give Bible Studies (Part 4)

Introduction When we give people Bible studies, we can do a lot of things right or wrong. But being afraid we could do something wrong shouldn't keep us from trying. It should rather motivate us to learn principles, which have proven successful and prevent us from making serious mistakes. This lesson has to do with these principles. Naturally everything which was discussed in the lesson "Winning Friends" applies here as well. Therefore only the principles, which deal specifically with giving Bible studies, will be discussed here.

Principle #1 **In every Bible study make salvation through Jesus Christ the central focus.**

We don't discuss salvation first and then topics like the Sabbath, judgment, state of the dead, and the sanctuary. The topic of salvation should run like a golden thread through all the lessons. Therefore it is essential that we teach each topic in such a manner that salvation through Jesus Christ is the central focus. Regardless which biblical topic we are studying, each one helps us to better understand salvation through Jesus. To be more explicit – it can only be correctly understood in this manner.

Quote #1 "The wonderful love of Christ will melt and subdue hearts, when the mere reiteration of doctrines would accomplish nothing." (*Desire of Ages*, p. 826)

Quote #2 "Theoretical discourses are essential, that people may see the chain of truth, link after link, uniting in a perfect whole; but no discourse should ever be preached without presenting Christ and Him crucified as the foundation of the gospel. Ministers would reach more hearts if they would dwell more upon practical godliness." (*Gospel Workers*, p. 158)

Principle #2 **Stay on topic.**

Your Bible study needs a clearly defined central theme, which you can follow. It's important that you can state your goal in 1 or 2 sentences. At the end of the study your friend should be able to state what he has learned. When giving a Bible study it is important to stick to the topic and not become distracted. Of course there may be situations where another question has precedence, for instance when someone starts to talk about a personal problem. In such cases it is better to hold back on the Bible study. But as a rule we should stick to the topic and not get sidetracked.

But how do we handle questions that come up during the Bible study and don't have anything to do with the topic? Depending on the situation there are several possibilities:

- If you can give a quick answer to the question, then do so in one or two sentences and continue with the Bible study.
- If the question is out of place promise to answer it after the study and take time to do so afterwards.
- If the answer to the question would take you too far into other topics, then tell them you will deal with that question in a future lesson. It is good to jot a question down so you don't forget it. When the time is right then go back to their question.

In any case it is important that we value and appreciate questions. Honest questions show that our friends are thinking. Say: “That is a good question.” It is even good to encourage people to ask questions.

The fear of not being able to answer a question keeps many people from holding Bible studies. But it’s not a problem at all when we don’t know all the answers. It only shows that we are still learning too! We can simply say that we will study, find an answer, and share it with them next time.

Principle #3 Use only the Bible

Only use the Bible in your Bible study and don’t support any statement with the writings of Ellen White. Also be careful not to make a detailed statement, which you can only find in Ellen White’s writings, but not in the Bible. We don’t need any statements from Ellen White to support our beliefs. Show them that everything we believe comes directly from the Bible!

Quote #3 “The testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front. God’s Word is the unerring standard. The Testimonies are not to take the place of the Word. Great care should be exercised by all believers to advance these questions carefully, and always stop when you have said enough. Let all prove their positions from the Scriptures and substantiate every point they claim as truth from the revealed Word of God.” (*Evangelism, p. 256*)

Principle #4 Encourage personal Bible study.

Bible studies will have only reached their goal when people also personally read the Bible. Encourage them again and again to read God’s Word. Show them where they can best start reading. Give them a Bible reading plan. Show them how to profitably study the Bible. Tell them about your own personal worship. You can give them the Bible texts for the next lesson and ask them to read them through ahead of time. Even when they ask you a question, instead of giving them an answer you can write a few Bible texts down, which contain the answer, thus giving them the possibility of discovering the answer for themselves.

Quote #4 “Those who desire to investigate the truth need to be taught to study diligently the word of God.” (*Gospel Workers, p. 364*)

Principle #5 Use Bible study materials from others first.

If you don’t have much experience in giving Bible studies, then use the material from others first, which was developed with a lot of effort and drawn from experience. You don’t have to reinvent the wheel when you can profit from the experience of others. In time you will adapt the topics and develop your own Bible studies.

Principle #6 Leave something to read with the people.

We forget much of what we hear or read if we don’t repeat it. In order for your Bible study to be really effective give your friend a summary of the topic. It is best if the person thoroughly studies the material, answers the questions, and then reviews it together at the next Bible study. The Bible study series from Gary Gibbs “Prophecies of Hope” can be used this way. It is also helpful to loan them good books now and

again.

Principle #7 Share your personal experiences.

Use personal experiences (your own or those of others), which relate to the lesson. This emphasizes that the biblical message is a message for real life and encourages a person to make decisions. In addition it helps you to win their trust and encourages them to share things about themselves.

Principle #8 Don't get involved in debates.

Debates seldom do any good. You may win a debate, but in so doing lose the person. There are people who have no interest in an honest Bible study, but rather only want to argue about opinions. We shouldn't let ourselves to lose valuable time by getting involved in such discussions. But if it is necessary to discuss controversial topics, make sure you do it with great caution.

Quote #5 "Often, as you seek to present the truth, opposition will be aroused; but if you seek to meet the opposition with argument, you will only multiply it, and this you cannot afford to do. Hold to the affirmative. Angels of God are watching you, and they understand how to impress those whose opposition you refuse to meet with arguments. Dwell not on the negative points of questions that arise, but gather to your minds affirmative truths, and fasten them there by much study, earnest prayer, and heart consecration. Keep your lamps trimmed and burning, and let bright rays shine forth, that men, beholding your good works, may be led to glorify your Father who is in heaven." (*Evangelism, p. 302*)

Quote #6 "Do not cherish a spirit of controversy. Little good is accomplished by denunciatory speeches. The surest way to destroy false doctrine is to preach the truth. Keep to the affirmative. Let the precious truths of the gospel kill the force of evil. Show a tender, pitiful spirit toward the erring. Come close to hearts." (*Evangelism, p. 304*)

Principle #9 Keep your Bible studies relatively short and spark their interest in future lessons.

As a rule a Bible study should be no longer than 45 minutes. This leaves time for a social get-together before the Bible study. If we make a habit of staying too long at a people's homes, they want to discontinue the Bible studies because it simply takes too much time. It's better to end the Bible study while the people are still hungry for more. That's why it is important to consistently pose good questions and point out that these questions will be answered in a future lesson.

Principle #10 Go in pairs.

Whenever possible we should go in pairs to Bible studies. On the one hand, people can thus be trained into this work and gather practical experience. On the other hand, it creates the possibility to reflect on the Bible study and to get feedback. Lastly, the person receiving the Bible study has a personal acquaintance with a second person.

Principle #11 **Speak enthusiastically and clearly**

People have to see that we are enthusiastic about the Bible message and that it is a daily reality in our lives. Furthermore, it is important that we speak clearly and at the right speed.

Quote #7 “All the workers, whether they speak from the pulpit or give Bible readings, are to be taught to speak in a clear, expressive manner.” (*Evangelism 665.3*)

Principle #12 **Be persevering and patient.**

When we work with people we need perseverance and patience, because they don't always reach a decision as quickly as we would like. However, there are situations in which it is better to discontinue the Bible studies completely or for a period of time. This can happen when Bible studies are often canceled or you have just been going in circles. Sometimes people terminate the Bible studies themselves. Naturally this is sad, but we don't need to be discouraged. The word that was sown in their hearts will continue to work. And the Holy Spirit will remind them over and over again of what they learned.

Quote #7 “But when we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to co-operate with One who knows no failure. We should not talk of our own weakness and inability. (*Christ's Object Lessons, p. 359*)

Book Recommendation If you want to read more about giving Bible studies, then get the book by Gary Gibbs, which was already mentioned: “Winsome Witnessing“. It is one of the best books on the subject.

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.



Please study **Acts 17:1-15** carefully and take notes on the content, meaning, and application and write down good questions for each.

Bible Study

What does the Bible text say?
(content, meaning, application)

How can I ask questions about this?
(Questions on content, meaning, and application)

