

Lesson 18: How to Give Bible Studies (Part 3)

Introduction In the first lesson about giving Bible studies, we got to know the method of giving Bible studies by asking questions about specific Bible texts. The next lesson dealt with putting appropriate Bible texts together for a well structured Bible study. In this lesson we will go a step further and consider how to build up a Bible study series. More specifically it will deal with the questions of which topics to choose and in which order they should be discussed. In order to have a well thought-out and suitable sequence it is important to keep the following principles in mind.

Principle #1 **Adapt the order of topics to the people you are studying with.**

People are different. They are in different situations and their previous knowledge about the Bible is different. This is why there isn't *one* correct order of topics. A Bible study that would be very fitting for one person may be completely inappropriate for someone else. We have to meet people where they are and not treat them all the same. Some people grow fast spiritually and are soon ready to be baptized. For these kinds of people it is important not to conduct a long drawn-out Bible study series. It might be better to go through all the topics necessary for baptism and then go through the rest of the topics after the baptism. Other people need a long time till they reach a decision to be baptized. With such people we have to be more careful and cover more topics, which bring them along step by step. We have to keep our eyes open and see how quickly the Holy Spirit leads a person.

If a person doesn't know much about the Bible, it is very easy to overburden them by using too many verses in a Bible study. They will have difficulty finding the texts and might not understand the context of each statement. In this case, it is better to start with stories and parables. The advantage to this approach is that the person only has to find one Bible text and stories are easier to understand. The stories and parables of Jesus are especially fitting because they include the whole gospel. Piece by piece we can explain to our friends the big picture of the Bible. Soon it won't be a problem to use several Bible texts in a Bible study.

Principle #2 **First deal with salvation and then with the law.**

As Adventists we sometimes tend to put the law and the Sabbath in the foreground. But before a person can delight in God's law, they have to first know and love Jesus. This is why it is important to first speak about salvation and afterwards pick up the theme of the law. If someone asks you prior to that why you keep the Sabbath, you will of course give an answer. But do it in a way that is brief so they don't get the feeling that you are trying to persuade them.

Quote #1 "To the Gentiles, he [Paul] preached Christ as their only hope of salvation, but did not at first have anything definite to say upon the law. But after their hearts were warmed with the presentation of Christ as the gift of God to our world, and what was comprehended in the work of the Redeemer in the costly sacrifice to manifest the love of God to man, in the most eloquent simplicity he showed that love for all mankind—Jew and Gentile—that they might be saved by surrendering their hearts to Him. Thus when, melted and subdued, they gave themselves to the Lord, he presented the law of God as the test of their obedience. This was the manner of his working—adapting his methods to win souls." (*Evangelism, p. 230*)

Principle #3 Don't prematurely cover topics, which could create barriers.

When we study the Bible with people we definitely want them to understand the three angels' message. But we have to be careful not to prematurely bring up topics, which would create a barrier between us and our friends.

Quote #2

"In laboring in a new field, do not think it your duty to say at once to the people, We are Seventh-day Adventists; we believe that the seventh day is the Sabbath; we believe in the nonimmortality of the soul. This would often erect a formidable barrier between you and those you wish to reach. Speak to them, as you have opportunity, upon points of doctrine on which you can agree. Dwell on the necessity of practical godliness. Give them evidence that you are a Christian, desiring peace, and that you love their souls. Let them see that you are conscientious. Thus you will gain their confidence; and there will be time enough for doctrines. Let the heart be won, the soil prepared, and then sow the seed, presenting in love the truth as it is in Jesus." (*Evangelism 200.2*)

Principle #4 Speak clearly about salvation through Jesus Christ.

We can not assume that people already know Jesus and are converted simply because they are members of a church. Our most important aim is to bring our friends into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. We want to help them love Jesus above everything else and to make a complete decision to follow Him.

Quote #3

"More people than we think are longing to find the way to Christ. Those who preach the last message of mercy should bear in mind that Christ is to be exalted as the sinner's refuge. Some ministers think that it is not necessary to preach repentance and faith; they take it for granted that their hearers are acquainted with the gospel, and that matters of a different nature must be presented in order to hold their attention. But many people are sadly ignorant in regard to the plan of salvation; they need more instruction upon this all-important subject than upon any other." (*Gospel Workers, p. 140*)

Principle #5 Explain Jesus' central and unique role in the plan of salvation.

The principle theme in the Bible is Jesus Christ, both in the Old and New Testament. When we look at the preaching of the first Christians, we see how clearly they spoke about Christ's death, His resurrection, His ministration in the heavenly sanctuary, His second coming, and His divinity. These topics need a central place in our Bible study series.

Quote #4

"These are our themes—Christ crucified for our sins, Christ risen from the dead, Christ our intercessor before God; and closely connected with these is the office work of the Holy Spirit, the representative of Christ, sent forth with divine power and gifts for men. His pre-existence, His coming the second time in glory and power, His personal dignity, His holy law uplifted, are the themes that have been dwelt upon with simplicity and power." (*Evangelism, p. 187*)

Principle #6 Cover prophetic topics.

God has given us, as Seventh-day Adventists, a special prophetic message, which should prepare the world for Christ's second coming. We have many things in

common with other Christians, but our prophetic view of the Bible distinguishes us from others. We know about the conflict between Christ and Satan regarding God's law, how it began in heaven, how it continued here on this earth, and how it will end one day. People need this comprehensive prophetic view, as found in the books of Daniel and Revelation.

A special way to hold Bible studies is not by teaching prophetic topics as a supplement to many other topics, but rather to study each topic in its prophetic context. When we study the stories and prophecies in the books of Daniel and Revelation closely, we will see that the gospel is always portrayed. Most people have never studied the Bible in this manner. In Gary Gibbs' book "Winsome Witnessing" he explains this method of Bible study. His Bible study series "Prophecies of Hope" consistently implements these principles.

Quote #5 "Ministers should present the sure word of prophecy as the foundation of the faith of Seventh-day Adventists. The prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation should be carefully studied, and in connection with them the words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (*Evangelism, p. 196*)

Quote #6 "Let Daniel speak, let the Revelation speak, and tell what is truth. But whatever phase of the subject is presented, uplift Jesus as the center of all hope, "the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star." (*Evangelism, p. 195*)

Quote #7 "The book of Revelation must be opened to the people. Many have been taught that it is a sealed book; but it is sealed only to those who reject light and truth. The truth it contains must be proclaimed, that people may have an opportunity to prepare for the events which are so soon to transpire. The third angel's message must be presented as the only hope for the salvation of a perishing world. (*Evangelism, p. 195*)

Quote #8 "The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is presented to me again and again as something that is to be brought to the attention of all. We are today living in the time when the predictions of this chapter are fulfilling. Let our ministers and teachers explain these prophecies to those whom they instruct. Let them leave out of their discourses matters of minor consequence, and present the truths that will decide the destiny of souls." (*Evangelism, p. 196*)

Principle #7 Preach the whole truth

In his farewell words to the Ephesians Paul said: "How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house." (Acts 20:20) He withheld nothing from them, but rather faithfully preached the whole message, even when some parts were hard to accept. In the past, as well as in the present, there are parts of Jesus' message, which are hard for people to accept. But these parts are important for people to make a clear decision.

Just as in the past, we are also in danger of diluting the message God gave us because we are afraid we could offend someone. Thus, we should be careful and not prematurely deal with difficult topics. On the other hand, we can not keep them a secret because these truths are touchstones, which challenge a person to make a clear decision. Additionally, it is also not fair for a baptismal candidate to experience a surprise after their baptism, because fundamental points of faith weren't explained beforehand.

Quote #9 “Preachers should have no scruples to preach the truth as it is found in God’s word. Let the truth cut. I have been shown that why ministers have not more success is, they are afraid of hurting feelings, fearful of not being courteous, and they lower the standard of truth, and conceal if possible the peculiarity of our faith. I saw that God could not make such successful. The truth must be made pointed, and the necessity of a decision urged.” (*Spiritual Gifts, Vol.2, p. 284*)

Crucial Steps When we study the Bible with people it is important to be aware of the steps of faith they will encounter. When a person decides to become Jesus’ disciple and part of His end time church, he/she will not get there in *one* step. It will take many successive and progressive steps. When we consider the order of our Bible studies we must keep these steps in mind.





Bible Study

Please study **Matthew 13:31-32** carefully and take notes on the content, meaning and application and write down good questions for each.

What does the Bible text say?

(content, meaning, and application)

How can I ask questions about this?

(Questions on content, meaning, and application)

