



Conducting the Bible Studies

While there are many good soul-winning methods, one of the most effective ways to obey the instructions of Jesus in Matthew 28 to “go . . . make disciples” is to teach others in personal Bible study. This publication presents the “Using the Bible To Teach the Bible” method, one tool for those wanting “to seek and to save the lost.”¹

TEACHING OBJECTIVES FOR THE BIBLE STUDIES

With the “Using the Bible To Teach the Bible” approach, teachers encourage their students to become “disciples” by telling them nothing that they can learn for themselves. The Bible studies, when done correctly, are student-centered instead of teacher-centered.

Successful Bible-study teachers avoid *telling* their students biblical truths. Instead, with a Bible to examine and systematic studies to follow, students are guided, encouraged, and assisted as they discover truths for themselves by reading and responding to the Word of God. As the Bible is opened, read, and applied, honest souls learn to accept God’s Word and its authority and to make personal application of Bible truths. Any pressure on the student, then, comes from the Word of God—not from the teacher.

ASSUMPTIONS NEVER TO MAKE IN THE BIBLE STUDIES

In using the Bible studies, there are some assumptions you should not make. You should not assume that your student believes in God. Hebrews 11:6 says that “without faith it is impossible to please [God].” While you may be inclined to hurry past studies designed to build faith in God, it is unwise to do so. If your student already believes in God, you will have

established a common ground. Confirming or establishing faith in God, the authority of the Word of God, and the deity of Christ is crucial. You cannot presume that a student knows who Jesus is and why He had to die on the cross. He may not understand terms such as “sin” and “repentance.” Be careful to address topics like these.

METHODS FOR CONDUCTING THE BIBLE STUDIES

As a rule, a study should be no longer than an hour or an hour and a half. Experienced soul-winners do not give a truckload of information when the student is asking for a shovelful.

Because of the nature of the “Using the Bible To Teach the Bible” method, trying to study with more than two non-Christians at one time is ineffective. If unexpected guests arrive while the study is going on, come back another time. If the guests insist that they are interested in studying too, set up a different time to study with them.

It is always best to have another Christian assist you with the study. The helper will need to be careful not to interrupt the lead teacher. This is, however, a good way for an experienced soul-winner to train and encourage less experienced soul-winners.

If possible, ask to sit around a table for the study. After everyone is seated around the table, suggest having a prayer. Distribute copies of the Bible-study sheets, if possible (see the lesson “Using the Bible Studies (Part 1)”), and ask each person to write his or her name on his paper. Be sure to bring extra Bibles and pencils. (Identical Bibles are helpful if you study with someone who is unfamiliar with the books of the Bible, because you can give page numbers to help the student find specific passages.) Do not assume that Bibles or sharpened pencils will be available in the home. As you start the study, explain that you will be asking the student to read each

¹The first lesson for you to use in teaching non-Christians is called “The Beginning.”

Scripture and question aloud in order to keep the focus on the topic and increase understanding. Ask that answers be given out loud. Also be sure to have the student write his answers on his study sheet or on a piece of paper.

To begin a study, simply ask the student to turn to the first Scripture and read it aloud. Then ask the student to read the appropriate question and give his answer. If he does not answer after a reasonable amount of time, ask, "How would you answer that question?"

If he gives a wrong answer, you can respond either with silence or by saying something like "Why did you answer that way? Please look at that verse again" or "Please read that question again." Be careful about the tone of your voice. Sometimes a student's answers will include phrases such as "I guess"; "I would say. . . ."; "That would be. . . ."; "According to that. . . ."; or "You want me to say. . . ." When such answers are given, be sure to check the student's understanding and commitment to the truth being considered.

Throughout these studies, make use of open questions. Open questions help to create interest, stimulate thinking, and encourage feedback. They also draw out a person's true feelings, thoughts, and attitudes. Personal application is also encouraged by open questions. For example, you might ask, "How would you apply that to your life?" or "How does that make you feel?" Open questions can also help to avoid arguing and prevent lecturing. It is sometimes helpful, when a difficult or potentially inflammatory question arises, to ask, "Why did you ask that question?" Open questions encourage your student to analyze the Scriptures for himself. Closed questions (with simple, one-word answers like "yes" and "no") can be used to help establish facts and gain commitment.

As each lesson is studied, it is important to reinforce relevant questions and to avoid "loaded," premature, or irrelevant questions. For the purposes of this lesson, a *relevant question* is defined as one that is to be covered in one of the five lessons in the studies. An irrelevant question is one about any subject that will not be covered in the study series. This observation is not meant to imply that such a question is unimportant; but in order to avoid arguing, lecturing, or becoming distracted, it is best to re-

main focused on the lessons as much as possible. A *premature question* is one that will be covered in a future lesson, and a *loaded question* is one that is designed to cause an argument.

When a relevant question is asked, it may be helpful to say something like this: "That's a very good question. How do you feel about that?" Or you may want to say, "That's an excellent question. What made you ask it?" Be sure to listen carefully to the answer and then respond appropriately. If it is a question that will be answered in a future lesson, ask the student to wait until that future lesson to discuss the answer. Write down the question(s), and be sure to lead the student to the relevant Scriptures later, when the question is appropriate to the lesson topic. It is tempting to jump ahead, but that usually puts the teacher in the "telling mode."

Another good teaching method to remember is to reinforce correct answers and positive changes in attitudes or thinking. Many students have never had a systematic study of the Bible and are anxious about their ability to read and understand it. As you reinforce correct answers, you help the student to discover that the Bible can be understood and is relevant to his life. Do not reinforce foolish or incorrect answers.

Be sure to establish a time for the next Bible study session before you leave. Encourage the student to think about what he has learned as he awaits the next appointment.

CONCLUSION

The "Using the Bible To Teach the Bible" method is easy to use. The sample dialogues in the lessons "Using the Bible Studies (Part 1)" and "Special Challenges Regarding the Bible Studies" illustrate how the Bible studies are conducted. As you lead students through these studies, you will see them grow in their appreciation for and acceptance of the Bible, becoming true students of the Word. It will come alive for them as they see the amazing grace of God's plan for their salvation. Some will want to become Christians. Even if others do not obey the gospel, you can take satisfaction in your effort and faithfulness. Trust God's Word and the honesty of your students. Do your best, and watch the gospel work in the lives of the lost souls whom you have been blessed to lead in Bible study. ❖