

One-to-One Bible Study

Why study one-to-one?

- Easier to schedule
- More effective communication
 - Easier for the international student to understand
 - Easier for the international student to ask questions and be open
 - Easier for you to get feedback
 - More commitment is necessary, therefore the international student is more involved and probably learns more
 - Allows for continuity- you don't miss anything
 - The whole idea of Bible study may have more appeal on the one-to-one level: friendship factor and less fear of not knowing anything
 - Easy to talk about spiritual things. It is your reason for getting together...

Drawbacks

- Time-consuming (travel may mean you meet with fewer people than you would in a group Bible study)
- Danger of producing isolated Christians; you must take special care to incorporate them into the body of Christ
- The student may become too dependent on you
- In group studies, one learns from others, not just the leader

With whom should you study?

Anyone! I found that when the word got round that I had one-to-one studies, many people wanted to study with me. Sometimes I wondered if it was a status thing. Also, some of these students were lonely and just wanted someone to visit them regularly. Sometimes they were not very interested in studying the Bible, but this usually came out before too long. Sometimes language study is the original motive, but it can change as the truth speaks to them.

A one-to-one approach is particularly relevant for those for whom security may be an issue (e.g. PRC students).

Two kinds of study

1. Evangelistic - to know Jesus Christ
2. Discipleship - to grow in Christ. One naturally leads on to the other...

Expectations and limits

- How often are you going to meet? Weekly takes the least maintenance. E.g. "We will meet on Tuesday at 4pm unless you ring me"
- How long will you study each lesson? 1- 1 ½ hours is good. Put a limit so that you can schedule something else and so you don't wear out your welcome. A person is less likely to continue to meet if the lessons go on and on...
- How many weeks will you study? Especially with beginners it is good to say, "Let's meet for six lessons from the gospel of John." Then they have a way out if they do not wish to continue
- Let the student know when to ring you if they have to cancel. Since this is an appointment it is serious if they do not show up
- How long will you wait for each other if you are not meeting at home? Knowing that we are sometimes detained for reasons we cannot foresee (like transport problems), it may be good to agree that you will wait at the appointed spot for 15-20 minutes
- Will you require them to prepare anything in advance of the lesson? Daily Bible reading? Memorization of some Bible verses?

What to study?

Evangelistic: Gospels, Acts. Matthew is good for Muslims. Mark is good for those whose English is not great or whose interest is small. Luke is good for anyone, but it is long and there are lots of parables. John suits the Chinese.

Discipleship:

- Gospels, Acts
- Letters, perhaps starting with Philippians or 1 John.
- Bible studies that teach how to study the Bible for yourself (e.g. Search the Scriptures)
- Topical study on an area of need
- 'Think Home' studies (see Resources section)

General guidelines and practical help

Evangelistic studies: Be sure to give opportunity for response. E.g. what about you? Who do you think Jesus is? What do you believe at this point? What do you think about that?

Discipleship studies: Encourage application of the truth. How could we put that into practice? Follow up on that next week. How did that go? Encourage service. In discipleship studies begin introducing spiritual

disciplines and vision: prayer, quiet time, fellowship, prayer in their own language, fasting, world vision. It may be helpful for you to make a list of things that you feel are essential for their growth.

However, it is good to remember that the Holy Spirit is our primary teacher. Not everything has to be planned out. Leave time for listening to the student in order to hear what is going on in their life. Having coffee together can be a significant part of your time together.

It is important to incorporate students into the larger fellowship - otherwise they may end up looking and sounding just like you!

Use cross-cultural Bible passages that will help the international student. Try to deal with issues that are vital to their returning home: ancestor worship, food offered to idols, marriage to non-Christians, integrity etc.

If a person misses several studies, talk to them to see if they still want to meet. Would another time be more convenient? This may be their way of letting you know they really don't want to study or don't have time.

There is nothing wrong with a study growing in numbers. If an international student asks if their friend can join the study, then great! If they want to invite several of their friends, this will change the direction of your study, but it may be a very effective form of outreach.

When possible, encourage other Christians to do one-to-one studies too. As we know, we can only have so many one-to-one studies. But if many Christians have one-to-one study, we can spread the work and probably be more effective.