

## How can we learn to lead better Bible studies?

### Preparation

The best Bible studies are well prepared.

Our Bible studies will be dull if we don't consider the context of the passage. We need to ask 'Why was it written?', 'What were the issues being dealt with?'. To get a feeling for the context we need to read the whole book or the relevant section. How does the passage fit in with what comes before and after? Help them to see how the passage relates to previous passages you've studied together.

We need to think 'What are the questions I want to ask about this passage?', 'What are the things in this passage that I really don't understand?'. Use commentaries to help you understand and then think about how you can help others to understand.

Think very carefully about what questions you will ask in advance. Find the simplest way of phrasing your questions and think of alternative ways of expressing them in case they don't understand the first time.

Help people to get inside the passage. Encourage them to imagine they were there and to think how they would feel/react/respond etc.

Prepare application questions and ask questions that will make people think about how they should respond to the passage (but don't push them to express their response to the rest of the group).

### How can we lead good Bible studies?

- Make sure we have a good understanding of the passage and its context.
- Give people plenty of time to answer before rephrasing the question (unless they've obviously not understood), don't be afraid of pauses – they need time to think.
- Listen carefully to what people say and pick up on anything that's interesting. Be willing to digress a little from our prepared questions, and allow them to discuss things among themselves/answer each other's questions, but also be able to draw the discussion together and bring people back to the main points of the passage.
- Keep directing people to look at the text - teach them to look in the passage to find the answers to our questions (except when the answer isn't in the text!).
- Give testimony/real life examples to illustrate a point. Show by the way we live 'between studies' that what we learn from the Bible affects us.
- Include humour to help people relax, while also helping them to understand that studying the Bible is a serious thing to do.

- If someone is being very quiet, gently direct a question at them, or ask them specifically if they have any questions.
- Summarise things as you go along, and at the end of the study.
- Bible studies tend to be more relaxed and discussion more open when the people in the group know each other and feel comfortable together, so spend time together socially.

## How to improve in leading Bible studies

We need lots of opportunities to practise. After leading a study, think back over it and be prayerfully critical of yourself. If it went badly, why didn't it work? If it went well, why did it go well? What would have made it even better?

Ask your co-leaders to give you feedback on how the study went but warn them in advance that this is what we'd like them to do!

Observe other people leading Bible studies and try to analyse how they do it. If it went badly, why didn't it work? If it went well, why did it go well? What would have made it even better? This will help us to see more clearly what does make a good Bible study – we can learn from their successes and their mistakes.

Pray that God will gift us and help us to grow in this gifting.

## An example of a Bible study that didn't work!

Last Monday I led a Bible study in my international homegroup. It didn't work very well, possibly because:

- 1) They didn't know each other
- 2) They had a wide variety of Biblical understanding, Biblical background, language ability and some were Christians and some were not.
- 3) It was a fairly difficult passage (JOHN 1:1-18) – should we keep to 'easy' passages e.g. gospels and narratives?