

## Evangelistic Bible Studies

We study a short Gospel passage for 30-40 minutes in simple English.

### WHY DO WE HAVE EBS's?

'For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart'  
HEBREWS 4:12

- Students will have the opportunity to hear God speak through his word
- They will understand the passage and so know more about the good news about Jesus.
- They will see that Jesus challenges us to respond to him and his teaching.
- So they will leave with at least one truth to remember or one issue to think about.
- So they will leave excited about the Bible and wanting to return and find out more.
- So they will feel that they can understand the Bible for themselves.

We hope to have a relaxed open and friendly discussion in which everyone engages with the passage.

### PREPARATION

Preparation takes place during the week (in your own time, arrange to meet up with your co-leader to prepare together). The purpose of the preparation time is for us to understand the text ourselves and then think about how we can communicate it's meaning and application to the internationals who will come to the study.

#### Understanding the passage yourself

- Pray for understanding and wisdom. Also pray for the students who will be at the study.
- Read and study the passage carefully.
- Think about:
  - The meaning of the words.
  - The context of the passage (when and where it happened, what happened before, what happened after).
  - Why it has been included in the Gospel and why at this point.
  - What it teaches us about Jesus.
  - How it challenges or encourages us.
- Make sure you understand the whole passage (even if there are parts you don't intend to focus on, since they may ask questions).

#### Communicating meaning and applications

Don't expect to cover everything in the EBS (30-40 minutes for the whole study is short and many of them will have little Biblical background and limited English). Keep it simple, there's no need to cover the whole gospel in one study.

When you're satisfied that you have a good understanding of the whole passage decide what you think the main point of the passage is, the one thing you want people to understand and take away with them. There may be many possible main points. Decide what you think will be most helpful for the students who are likely to be there.

Think about the people who have been coming and those who are likely to come.

Think about:

- What religious background they have.
- What they already know about the Bible
- What they are likely to think when they read the passage, what questions they might have.

- Remember that it is an Evangelistic BS and our aim is to introduce people to Jesus.
- Write down any words or phrases you think people might not understand. For each one think of a simple explanation.
- How much explanation you need will depend on the context of the passage e.g. Passover - 'a Jewish religious festival' is usually alright but may sometimes want to explain more of the details about the Passover lamb if that will help people to understand Jesus' death.
- Some words can be better explained using actions.
- Phrasal verbs are especially difficult (e.g get on, tell off, bend down etc.).
- Note especially any words you think it's really important they understand so as to be able to understand the passage.

## Questions

As you're preparing your questions keep thinking '**What do I want people to take away from this?**' The passage may raise many other interesting questions but try not to get distracted by these - focus on the main point. There are three types of questions:

### **OBSERVATION: (What happened? Who did it? Where did they go? )**

- The answers are found directly in the text.
- They are necessary to make sure people understand what the passage is saying.
- The first question should be an observation question, ideally one with several answers so that several people can say something e.g. 'who were the different people at the synagogue?'

### **INTERPRETATION: (What does this mean? Why did this happen?)**

- These questions should make people think.
- Try to get a discussion going. Don't tell people they're wrong but suggest looking at it in a different way and bring then bring the discussion together with a Biblical interpretation

### **APPLICATION: (What does this mean for me? How should I respond?)**

- Usually you will have one of these questions, at the end of the EBS.
- Often it is best to present this as a question for people to go away and think about rather than asking them to answer in front of other people (we don't want to put pressure on them to give the 'right' answer when they are not yet ready to respond in that way).

Avoid questions where the answer is just yes or no.

During the study be **flexible**, your prepared questions are there as a guide, the idea is to get a discussion going and you may find yourself asking them in a different order or leaving some out or asking supplementary questions. Listen to what they say and let the discussion progress naturally but don't digress from your outline too much.

## ANNOUNCING THE STUDY

Try to think of something interesting/amusing to say or a short drama to act out (with help from others on the team?) that will make people think "that sounds interesting, I'd like to go". Focus on something that relates to the main point that you hope people will take away from the Bible study. Make sure you're not using and in-jokes or specifically British humour that only a small fraction of those there will understand.

### **Tell them:**

- Where you'll be meeting,
- The study/discussion will be 30-40 minutes long
- It will be in simple English
- Everyone is welcome even if have never read the Bible before
- But try to avoid simply repeating a formula. Make it clear that they have a choice: either they can come to the EBS or they can continue talking in the coffee bar.

## Team sitting at the tables talking to the students

- Ask the people at your table if they've understood the announcements and if they haven't understood that the Bible study will involve then explain it to them
- If they look as if they'd like to go but are nervous going alone then offer to go with them (but make sure there aren't too many team going). If you do go then stay quiet during the study as you won't know what the leader has planned and may say something that will interrupt the flow of their questions.

## LEADING THE STUDY

On the way up try to talk to those least likely to have read Bible before and find out how much they know. The structure of the EBS should be:

1. Welcome everyone
2. Names – ask people to introduce themselves to the group and try to remember their names (ask them to repeat their name if necessary, writing names down can help)
3. Explain what will happen
4. Try to appear relaxed even though you will probably be feeling nervous.
5. Try especially hard to speak slowly and clearly if you are feeling nervous.
6. Try to create a friendly atmosphere (Your body language and tone of voice are very important - try to communicate enthusiasm)
7. Give out the Bibles - avoid throwing them and if there are Muslims present avoid passing with your left hand, or putting any on the floor.
8. Show them where the passage is - tell them the page number and show them from your copy where the passage starts.
9. Pray – explain to them that we are asking God to help us understand what we read. If there are Muslims then avoid praying 'in Jesus name'
10. Introduce the passage – if necessary explain the context of the passage, maps and visual aids may be helpful.
11. Read the passage – ask your co-leader to read it. Co-leader, read slowly.
12. Ask them to re-read the passage themselves and to ask if there are any words they don't understand.
13. Study the passage – ask your questions and encourage discussion.
14. If after a few questions someone in the group hasn't said anything, ask an observation question to them directly, if you know them and are fairly confident their English is good enough
15. If they say pardon then repeat the question using the same words - but if they still don't understand then re-phrase it or ask secondary questions rather than answering it yourself
16. Finish on time – don't allow the study to go beyond 40mins, someone might need to leave to catch a bus and it's better to stop while people are enjoying the discussion. We've told them it won't take more than 40mins and it's important that we are faithful to that promise.
17. Thank people for coming. Give your Bible to your co-leader. If anyone looks interested in reading more the offer to lend the gospel.

Our aim is to **ask questions that will help everyone to understand the passage for themselves**

Don't be afraid to teach as well as asking them questions but don't preach and avoid talking for too long. Don't be concerned if no one answers immediately, in East Asian culture it is impolite to answer a question without first taking time to think about it. If their English is limited they will need time to formulate their answers anyway. Many East Asians are unaccustomed to discussing things and may just want to sit and listen.

Our attitude should be humble, avoid giving the impression that you know all the answers and are therefore superior. Avoid cross-references and 'extra-knowledge' beyond the passage. Help them to see that they can understand the passage for themselves.

A group with a range of background and language levels can be difficult. Keep it simple so that hopefully everyone will understand, although sometimes people will just not have sufficient language so don't be discouraged if they still don't understand.

Keep the group together rather than getting into deep discussion with an individual - if necessary say that you'll talk with someone further after the discussion has finished.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CO-LEADER?

The co-leader role is very important, although quite different from the role of the leader.

He/she:

- Observes what is happening and how the students respond to what is said (you may notice a student looks confused or especially interested and can then pick up on this with them after the study).
- Prays during study (but keep your eyes open!).
- Says very little unless specifically asked by leader. The worst thing that can happen is if the co-leader answers the first question – the students then think the idea is that the leader will ask the questions and the co-leader will answer and they are expected to just sit and listen.
- May be able to help out with any difficult questions.
- The leader should aim to bring the co-leader into the discussion after 3 or 4 questions (it seems strange if the co-leader just sits and listens).
- Leader and co-leader should avoid sitting next to or directly opposite each other.
- If there are more than about 10 people try to divide the group into two, (co-leader must be ready to lead).
- Try to separate on the basis of background knowledge or level of English but be sensitive, keeping friends together.

## EXPECTATIONS

- Be realistic
- Don't be disappointed if no-one seems especially challenged or comes back to future studies (2 Corinthians 4:4,6 - it's God who opens blind eyes not us),
- Don't get overly excited if someone asks lots of questions (for many this will just be the beginning of an interest in Christ and it may be years before they're ready to follow him themselves).