

Reformed University Fellowship

Leading Bible Studies Conference

Session 4: Preparing a Bible Study

- I. Goal of preparation: get everyone involved in talking about the passage.
 - A. Thus your preparation must be oriented toward provoking conversation about the passage.
 - B. Must know well both the passage and the people.
 1. Commentaries can help you understand the passage, but don't take the place of your own study of scripture.
 2. Study guides can help you understand how to engage people with the passage, but can't take the place of your understanding the specific people in your group.
 3. Using a study guide to lead a Bible study is like reading a sermon in your large group meeting that someone else wrote.
 - C. Try to avoid dead periods in conversation, but give time to think.
 - D. Try to avoid conversation on other topics.
- II. Study the passage carefully yourself (See Part 2).
- III. The key to a fascinating Bible study: lead them through a natural thought process.
 - A. Difference between preaching and a Bible study.
 1. Preaching.
 - a. You present a carefully prepared explanation of the passage
 - b. The whole message is a presentation of your conclusions about the passage.
 - c. It is generally undesirable and unhelpful to burden the congregation with an explanation of *how* you studied and prepared your sermon.
 - d. People benefit by understanding and responding to the word of God.
 2. Bible study.
 - a. You assist the group in studying the passage.
 - b. You don't get to the conclusions until the end of the hour.
 - c. The whole point is to go through the study process.
 - d. People benefit by understanding and responding to the word of God – **and** by learning *how* to study scripture.
 - B. Respond naturally to the text.
 1. How did *you* respond to it when you studied? What caught your eye?
 2. What is naturally eye-catching, perplexing, shocking, etc.?
 3. What in this passage will your students in particular especially respond to? How will they respond?
 - C. Let OIA fall out naturally.
 1. Don't ask all the observation questions first, then all the interpretation questions, then the application questions.
 2. Often, especially with attentive people, it works best to mingle observation and interpretation questions.
 3. In fact, sometimes if the facts are rather obvious you can jump right to interpretive questions ("Why did this happen?").
 4. You can tell if they missed an important observation – their interpretation will be off; then you can go back and observe some more ("Wait a minute, I think we missed something in verse 2").
 5. If you have spent a good portion of your time on a part of the passage and there is a significant application in it, go ahead and discuss that application before you finish the passage.
 6. If they can't resist discussing the end of the passage first, let them – then go back and pick up the beginning.

7. People are impatient; they want to rush to application, but maybe they will pause to consider a puzzling interpretation. Occasionally let them race ahead until they get stumped; then go back and observe what the passage actually says.
 8. Always make sure the application cuts to the heart – of the passage and of your students; don't let them apply it to hypothetical people out there – make them apply it to themselves, their roommates, their families and friends.
- D. Ask well-worded questions.
1. Not too simple; they will insult or embarrass people.
 2. Not too complex; they will confuse people.
 3. Must be clear: simple structure and obvious intent.
 4. Must lead to the main point.
 5. Must drive application to the heart.
- E. Creative questions.
1. Identify with the perspectives and attitudes of your students; e.g. “those tiresome Old Testament laws” (see the study below).
 2. Play the devil's advocate; promote a wrong, but plausible interpretation, and see how long it takes them to figure out the problem.
 3. Suggest real situations in their own lives where the passage applies.
- F. Differences between male and female thought patterns.
1. Among men understanding tends to grow through contrast; among women understanding tends to grow through cooperation.
- IV. Write out your questions.
- A. This will discipline you to make them clear.
 - B. Write them on note cards or half-sheets of paper.
 - C. Write the main questions at the left margin.
 - D. Write secondary, support and clarifying questions indented under the main question.
 - E. Write optional questions in parentheses.
 - F. Write the answers to any questions which are not completely obvious to you.
- V. Common Bible Study Pitfalls.
- A. Stiffly march through OIA.
 - B. Questions are not written out, resulting in a study that wanders.
 - C. Questions are so simple they insult or embarrass people.
 - D. Questions are so complex they confuse people.
 - E. Questions are just murky or vague.
 - F. Questions don't lead to the main point – the leader fails to discipline himself to avoid delicious but irrelevant side issues.
 - G. Application fails to grab the heart.
- VI. Monologues.
- A. Useful for introduction, conclusion, and explanation of points they need to know to understand the passage but could not know themselves.
 - B. None is better than too much.
 - C. Must be essential and brief.
 - D. Most useful to explain some necessary cultural data.
 - E. Suspense is desirable; it promotes curiosity and desire to learn. Don't always answer the questions they direct to you.

Sample Bible Study – Mark 1:40-45

What do we learn about the man who approached Jesus?

What is significant about leprosy?

What does his question reveal about him?

How did Jesus answer his question/meet his need?

Why did Jesus touch him?

What does Jesus' response reveal about Jesus?

Why did Jesus burden this poor man with those tiresome Old Testament laws?

Which laws are meant here? Where are they found? (Read them.)

The man was already healed. Why bother with the ceremonies?

Why did Jesus forbid him to tell anyone about his healing?

(Why did the man disobey Jesus?)

What happened as a result of the man's disobedience?

How much did that matter?

What is the main point of this passage?

What characteristic of Jesus does this passage seem to focus on?

How does this passage apply to us?

Where in your life do you resist believing Jesus cares about you?

Who are the people around you at Lehigh that you can care for this way?