

14 DAY STUDY/PREPARATION PLAN FOR A BIBLE STUDY LESSON

INTRODUCTION

The following is a suggested 14 day study/preparation plan for developing a Bible Study lesson. It is based on the principle that smaller segments of study spread over a longer period of time is more beneficial than one or two long “cramming” sessions. Why? Between your times of study the Holy Spirit will work with your subconscious mind to deepen the truths you have studied. When you put your lesson on the back burner the Holy Spirit is still working! Time allows the truths to simmer like a pot of soup. Your mind will work on the material if you feed it. You will be working smarter, not harder. You cheat yourself and your class if you do all of your preparation 2 or 3 days before teaching. The average amount of preparation time for a lesson by our Bible Study teachers is 12-20 hours.

This plan assumes that you know how to use such tools as a Concordance, Bible Dictionary, Bible Encyclopedia, and commentaries. Thus, you will not find instructions on how to use those sources in this guide.

You will notice that the first few days involve primarily reading of the text. It is just you and the text. Resist the temptation to read your passage 1 or 2 times and then reach for the quarterly or your favorite commentary. Suggested rules for reading:

- Read as if for the first time. Avoid bringing preconceived ideas to the passage.
- Read thoughtfully. Use mental discipline. As you read, pry the text with questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? So What? Context? Parallel passages?
- Read repeatedly. Half the books of the Bible could be read in 10 minutes.
- Read patiently. Don't give up too soon. It takes time but it is time well spent!
- Read prayerfully. It is not a novel or the newspaper. It is God's word – talk to the One Who wrote it!
- Read imaginatively. Re-create it in your mind; hear, see, feel, touch, smell.
- Read reflectively. Meditate; let it simmer; slow down; take time exposures; let it stay on the back burner.
- Read purposefully. Look for the aim of the writer. What is God saying through that human writer?

Days 1-3: Read, read, read!

If your passage comes from a shorter book such as Ephesians, Philippians, Jonah, etc., read the entire book. If your passage is part of a longer book such as Matthew or Isaiah, read the 2 or 3 chapters before and after your passage. Read them over and over again. Your goal in these first 3 days is to place your passage in its broader context. As you read, see if you can determine the writers' purpose in writing the book. Identify the type of literature which determines how the passage should be studied. The main types with some examples are:

- Prophecy – Isaiah, Ezekiel, Revelation.

- Narrative History – Genesis, the Gospels, Acts.
- Poetry – Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes.
- Epistle (letter) – Romans, Ephesians, Colossians.

Pry your passage with questions and write down all questions and observations. You need not have answers yet, just good questions based on your reading.

Day 4: Read your passage again several times and seek to place it in its immediate context. How does it relate to the passage immediately preceding and following your passage? Are there terms that are not clear to you? Is there background information that would shed light on your understanding of the passage? Make notes of all of your observations and questions. Can you state, even in a rough fashion, what is the writers' subject? What is he saying about that subject? This is a preliminary rough idea or thesis statement. Don't put it in stone; it may change as you do further study.

Day 5: Read your passage several times (are you seeing a pattern here?). Consult a concordance to see how key terms in your passage are used elsewhere in scripture. A "key term" in your passage is a term that is repeated several times or a theological term such as faith, grace, love, gospel, etc. Continue to refine your thesis statement or "big idea" as you search for the writers' main idea.

Day 6: Read your passage several more times. Consult a Bible Dictionary or Bible Encyclopedia for any background information you may need. Consult a commentary for an introduction to your book: author, times in which he wrote, his purposes for writing, date, etc. Try to put your idea/thesis statement into a clear, concise complete sentence. In one sentence answer the question: what is my passage saying? Note: this is not a title or a topic but a complete sentence. Now that you have done a considerable amount of study and are fairly confident of your thesis idea, you are ready to consult commentaries.

Day 7: Read your passage several times. Begin consulting commentaries. It is suggested that you read at least 3 or 4 commentaries on your passage. Compare what the commentator says with the truths you have discovered. If you have lingering questions about your passage, perhaps they will be answered as you read the commentaries. Continue to refine your main idea and begin to construct an outline of your lesson. See if you can determine the main points of your outline. Your main points should relate to your main idea and flow from it. An effective lesson has no more than 4 and preferably 3 main points.

Day 8: Read your passage several times. Finish reading the commentaries. Continue refining your main idea if need be. Firm up the main points of your outline. Begin to fill in the sub points of your outline. Just as your main points should flow from your idea, your sub points should flow from the main points.

Day 9: Read your passage several times. Begin looking up cross- references to your passage. You MUST have a good cross- reference Bible! The best commentary on the Scriptures is the Scriptures. Use cross-references in this fashion: begin with

scriptures within the book you are studying, then go to other books by the same writer, then the same section of scripture and finally, to the rest of the Bible. Your main idea should be pretty well set by now. Continue to refine your outline.

Day 10: Read your passage several times. Finish looking up cross-references. Try to determine the best cross-references, that is, those that shed the most light on your passage. Determine which of those verses you will use in your lesson. Limit your cross-reference scriptures to no more than 3 or 4 for your entire lesson. Remember, you may have people in your class who are unfamiliar with the Bible and we don't want them to become discouraged if we are flipping back and forth looking up numerous verses. Also, looking up too many verses can be confusing for everyone. Finish your outline: main points and sub points. Your idea and outline should be set by now. Begin working on your introduction.

Day 11: Read your passage. Finish your introduction. Your introduction should not only grab the attention of your class, but also introduce them to your main idea. Your introduction should also create a need in your class to listen to your lesson. Ask yourself – why does my class need this lesson? Why should they listen? Your introduction should flow naturally into your idea and then to your first point. Write out your introduction word for word. Writing is a great discipline; it forces you to use good word choice and to be fresh in your approach.

Day 12: Read your passage. Read and polish your introduction, idea and outline. Work on your conclusion. A good conclusion ties up loose ends, reviews the main truths of the lesson and sends the class home with a vivid picture in their minds. Plug in illustrations to your lesson. Determine the most important points that need further illustration or explanation. You need not illustrate every point.

Day 13: Read your passage. Read and polish your introduction, idea, outline, illustrations and conclusion. You may not need to change anything. Avoid too much fiddling and tinkering with your lesson. Now, work on the applications. This is the “so what?” of your lesson. What do you want your class members to do as a result of the truths taught? Make concrete, specific suggestions with your class in mind. Applications can be sprinkled throughout the lesson or all at the end, whatever works best for you.

Day 14: Practice giving your lesson and time it to make sure it is the right length. You are ready – trust the Lord for the results!!