

Handling the Bible

1. Understanding your Role

“God is sovereign in...revelation.” In particular, he has spoken to us authoritatively and reliably in the Bible (2 Tim 3:16, 2 Pet 1:21).

How does this view of the Bible help us when we come to read and teach it? See Isaiah 55:10-11

How should it affect the way we approach the Bible?

So what’s our role? *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”* 2 Tim 2:15

2. Understanding the Passage (See *Dig Deeper, Beynon and Sach*)

There’s no one ‘right way’ to go about understanding a passage. But at root there’s no substitute for reading, re-reading and meditating on the passage, asking lots of questions of the text.

- What’s the Context? Different levels: immediate; book; Bible context.
- What ‘clues’ are in the text? *Linking words, narrator comments, repeated words/phrases, tone.*
- What does it tell you about God? Jesus? Us? (Remember 2 Cor 1:20!)
- Use resources, but be careful.

Finally, it can be helpful to summarise your thinking in a **THEME** (what’s the main point of the passage/session?) and **AIM** (what do you want for your group as a result of the session?).

3. Shaping the Study

Structure:

- Does the text split into sections? Have you got sub points? Is there a narrative/story?
- Have an introduction or open ended question to get group thinking about topic.

3 Basic Types of Question:

- *Observation* (what does it say?)
- *Interpretation* (what does it mean?)
- *Application* (what does it mean for me?)

Good questions take the group into the text, and allow for discussion. Watch out for ‘closed questions’ or questions that are too easy, too hard or too disconnected.

When you’ve written it, ask: *Does your study support your theme and aim? Does it flow?*

Making Someone Else’s Bible Study Your Own:

- Take the time to understand the passage yourself - you can refer to the study as a guide.
- Make sure you’re clear on the theme and aim – after all you’re leading the study!
- Might be helpful to make your own, shorter notes.

Handling the Group

Not all of us will lead a bible study regularly but hopefully all of us will be in bible studies, either in 1:28 groups, growth groups or elsewhere.

Bible study like a train journey

What might some of the dangers be in not knowing clearly where the study is heading?

- Sit where you can see everyone, and establish ground rules (Sunday Club/unruly growth groups!)
- As much as possible, get the group to give the answers.
- Ask follow up, or probing questions. *‘go on...can you say more? ‘what do you mean by that?’ ‘where do we see that in the passage?’ ‘what do others think?’*
- Summarise main points (especially if you’ve been ‘off track’).
- Make sure everyone is on the same page (both literally and metaphorically!)
- Useful phrases: *“what does everyone else think?” “Which verse is that in?” “Let’s all listen to Rodney.”*
- It’s ok to say you don’t know
- If somebody asks a question, don’t feel it’s your job as leader to always answer it straight away – “What do you think?”

Responding to answers:

- **All answers** – value the contribution with good eye contact and running with their way of expressing understanding rather than always ‘translating’ it into the precise phrase you were looking for on the sheet.
- **Wrong answers** – use phrases like ‘anyone else?’; ‘is there more to it than that?’ and don’t be afraid to say ‘no – that’s not what the passage is saying’
- **Right answers** – ‘great...can others see that?’

How might you handle different group members?

Talkative, know-it-all, quiet, bored, argumentative, special needs, dyslexic, ‘single-issue’ people etc...

How might you change your bible studies in light of what we’ve looked at tonight?