

HOW TO TEACH BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE is a study for adults of all ages who want to be better informed about the contents of the Bible. BOOKS OF THE BIBLE includes illustrative drawings, photographs, maps, and other information that will shed light on the Scripture that is being discussed.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THIS BIBLE STUDY

- BOOKS OF THE BIBLE emphasizes the content of the biblical books. Most persons are familiar with some of the Bible stories and with some parts of the Bible more than other parts. After completing this study, class members will be able to locate these Bible stories and will have a good general knowledge of what is in the Bible.
- BOOKS OF THE BIBLE uses the Bible itself. During each class session, group members will explore the appropriate books in the Bible. Class members will learn about all sixty-six books of the Bible in the order in which they appear. At the end of the study persons will have paged through the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.
- BOOKS OF THE BIBLE contains a pronunciation guide for use while teaching or participating in the class sessions. How many times have you stumbled over a biblical name or avoided discussing a person or place because you could not pronounce the word? While you are using this Bible study, you will find pronunciations of biblical names and places readily available on pages 179–181.
- BOOKS OF THE BIBLE contains six “Review Sheets.” These are for use by class members either individually or during the

class sessions. Answers to these review questions are given on pages 182–183.

- BOOKS OF THE BIBLE contains six articles that give general, introductory information on major portions of Scripture. These introductions are found on pages 7, 29, 61, 79, 121, and 143. As the teacher of BOOKS OF THE BIBLE you will want to present this information to class members at appropriate times throughout the study.

ORGANIZING THE CLASS SESSIONS

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE takes six months, or two quarters, or twenty-six weeks to complete. Although this study is designed primarily with the Sunday morning church school setting in mind, it would also be appropriate for a weekly Bible study class. Each lesson will take approximately forty-five minutes to complete. However, should your group decide to meet for longer than forty-five minutes, each lesson contains enough material to be easily adapted to longer sessions.

Begin preparing for each session by looking over the workbook questions, as well as by reading the content in the each lesson.

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE also contains a number of discussion questions at the end of each lesson. You may want to read these questions before leading the discussion in each lesson.

ASSEMBLING YOUR MATERIALS

You will need these items to conduct each session.

- (1) BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
- (2) A Bible—you may choose any translation; the answers in this book are

from the New Revised Standard Version.

(3) Maps of Palestine and the Middle East in Bible times (Some maps are printed with the lessons.)

HOW TO ADAPT

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

You may want to adapt BOOKS OF THE BIBLE in a number of ways and for a variety of settings. One possible setting would be a youth Bible study or a church school class. Here are some suggestions to help you.

The class members may want to take occasional breaks during the study. Twenty-six sessions is a long study of one topic using the same format during each session. To avoid a sense of boredom among class members, you might break up the study by skipping a week here and there and studying something else. Convenient stopping places would be where the review sheets are located. If you are using BOOKS OF THE BIBLE in youth classes, you might vary the approach using roleplays or other activities especially appropriate for youth.

The class members may want to study only a certain portion or portions of Scripture. Perhaps the group is scheduled to meet for fewer than twenty-six sessions. Or, perhaps class members are not interested in studying the whole Bible. Again, segments of Scripture that would be appropriate for short-term study are located between the review sheets.

If the group is scheduled to meet for fewer than twenty-six sessions, you might ask class members to choose a certain number of books that they would most like to study. This method would insure that class members are able to study what interests them most.

Perhaps class members will want to spend more than one session on each lesson. Each lesson in BOOKS OF THE BIBLE contains plenty of information, and some groups may want to spread the content over two or more sessions. Groups that

choose this approach should be aware that they will not be studying a “summary” or “survey.”

Perhaps the class session will be held in a room that does not have tables and chairs. You might consider meeting in the sanctuary of your church, where persons could use the pews to balance workbooks and Bibles.

Without tables, using workbooks is difficult but not impossible. You might have students pull extra chairs in front of the chairs they are sitting in. Or, perhaps someone in the group would volunteer to make a plywood lapboard for each student.

Perhaps you intend to use BOOKS OF THE BIBLE in a setting other than the Sunday morning church school. This study would be appropriate for church school teacher training, a pastor’s Bible study, individual Bible study, or many other settings.

THE TEACHER AS DISCUSSION LEADER

As the teacher of BOOKS OF THE BIBLE, your main responsibility during each class period will be to lead the class discussion. The amount of time available for discussion will vary from group to group. The workbook will take about twenty to twenty-five minutes to complete. Use the remaining time to discuss the workbook and the discussion questions.

Some teachers are apprehensive about leading a discussion. In many ways, it is easier to lecture than it is to lead a class discussion. But remember that the class members will probably benefit more from the sessions when they actively participate in a discussion of the material.

Leading a discussion is a skill that any teacher can master with a little practice. And keep in mind—especially if your class members are not used to discussion—that they will also be learning through practice. Here are some pointers on how to lead interesting and thought-provoking discussions in your study group.¹

Preparing for a Discussion

1. Focus on the subject that will be discussed and on the goal you want to achieve through that discussion.
2. Prepare by collecting information and data that you will need; jot down these ideas, facts, and questions so you will have them when you need them.
3. Begin organizing your ideas; stop often to review your work. Keep in mind the climate within the group—attitudes, feelings, eagerness to participate and learn.
4. Consider possible alternative group procedures. Be prepared for the unexpected.
5. Think through several ways to bring the discussion to a close, having reached your goal.

Establishing a Climate for Learning

The teacher's readiness and preparation quickly establishes a climate in which the group can proceed and its members learn and grow. The anxiety and fear of an unprepared teacher are contagious, but so are the positive vibrations coming from a teacher prepared to move into a learning enterprise.

An attitude of shared ownership is also basic. Group members need to perceive themselves as part of the learning experience. Persons establish ownership by working on goals, sharing concerns, and accepting major responsibility for learning.

Here are several ways the teacher can foster a positive climate for learning and growth.

1. *Readiness*: A teacher who is always fully prepared can promote, in turn, the group's readiness to learn.
2. *Exploration*: When the teacher encourages group members to freely explore new ideas, persons will know they are in a group whose primary function is learning.
3. *Exposure*: A teacher who is open, hon-

est, and willing to reveal himself or herself to the group, will encourage students to discuss their feelings and opinions.

4. *Confidentiality*: A teacher can create a climate for learning when he or she respects the confidentiality of group members and encourages the group members to respect one another's confidentiality.
5. *Acceptance*: When a teacher shows a high degree of acceptance, students can likewise accept one another honestly.

Keeping the Discussion Going

Most discussion group settings will require the teacher's response in some way. At times his or her decision will be the appropriate one; at other times the teacher will misunderstand the situation. During an evaluation period, or after the session, the teacher may get some valuable feedback from group members. Ask for such feedback!

You, as the teacher, are responsible for establishing discussion boundaries. For example, most groups have a limited and designated block of time together and need some guidelines for getting into the subject.

Establishing boundaries means giving the group three things: a central focus, a specific assignment, and a time limit. Each of these will vary in degree, and the teacher is responsible for keeping them in balance to meet the needs of the group.

To establish *central focus*, be simple and direct about the major theme. *Specific assignments* may be, for example, listing questions or ideas on a chalkboard or a large sheet of paper. *Time limit* means something like, "For ten minutes let's discuss this question."

Assume that your group will follow instructions. You will instill self-confidence in group members when you assume that they can discuss the assignment. Some class members may hesitate, but simply wait for them. Most of them will move on.

Persons appreciate, and have the right to expect, some form of guidance from the teacher. The teacher, in turn, has spent time studying and planning. Creative guidance is far removed from rigid control.

Establishing boundaries, or offering guidelines, is different from controlling. Controlling is a negative experience when members do not feel free to express their opinions. Control denies freedom and ownership. Establishing boundaries also means encouraging the shy person and discouraging the excessive talker.

The idea of establishing boundaries for a group may look good on paper. But in the middle of a discussion or at some slack period when one person jumps off the track, what does the teacher do? How does a teacher determine whether the discussion has gotten out of bounds? And when does a teacher permit the discussion to change direction or get out of bounds?

When a person or persons attempt to change the subject or direction of the discussion, think about these questions:

1. Is the newly introduced subject or comment related to the present subject?
What is the relationship between the two subjects?
2. Do we have enough time to pursue and integrate this new material?
3. Is this newly introduced subject coming up later in this or another lesson?
4. Why is the person introducing this subject or making this comment now?
 - Is the person tired or bored?
 - Is the person making a bid for power and influence?
 - Does the person have a sincere interest or personal need to get into this topic?
 - What nonverbal response does the group seem to be giving?
 - How do I perceive the group responding to the person?
 - Can I refer the person to reading material or private conversation rather than taking up group time?

Dealing With Conflict

What if conflict or strong disagreement arises in your group? What do you do? Think about the effective and ineffective ways you have dealt with conflict in the past.

Group conflict may come from one of several sources. One common source of conflict involves personality clashes. Any group is certain to contain at least two persons whose personalities clash. If you break your class into smaller groups for discussion, be sure these persons are in separate groups.

Another common source of group conflict is subject matter. The Bible can be a very controversial subject. Remember the difference between discussion or disagreement, and conflict. As a teacher you will have to decide when to encourage discussion and when to discourage conflict that is destructive to the group process.

Group conflict may also come from a general atmosphere conducive to expression of ideas and opinions. Try to discourage persons in your group from being judgmental toward others and their ideas. Keep reminding class members that each person is entitled to his or her own opinions and that no one opinion is more valid than another.

Closing the Discussion

Most discussions are intended to be incomplete. Rarely is a discussion designed to end with a nice, neat answer. Perhaps the greatest gift a teacher can give is allowing group members to leave in a stage of incompleteness and continued search. Often the stirring of the mind and spirit is an indication that some real work is going on.

As teacher, do not be afraid of a disturbing or incomplete closing. Trust your group. They are adults. They may not be nearly as disturbed as you are. As a teacher, you may feel that the class members will not come back. However, if you have prepared for and led a fruitful discussion, you will make a positive impact on the class members. They will be back.

Often the close of a discussion calls for a summary or conclusion. Here are some ways you might do this:

1. Let each person, or several persons, offer at least one or two meaningful ideas that have come from the discussion. Ask the persons to do this in a sentence or two; avoid letting them make speeches.
2. List some points, observations, or conclusions on paper or the chalkboard.
3. As teacher, you can make a summary statement.

Leave a discussion as open-ended as possible. Trying to wrap up everything in a conclusion is frustrating. *Close but do not conclude*. Also, time spent concluding is of less value than group discussion time. You might ask each person to sit quietly for sixty seconds and think of one or two new thoughts.

¹ Adapted from *How to Lead a Discussion*, by Travis Woodward. A Skill Training Package, copyright © 1975 by Graded Press.