
How to Prepare Bible Study Questions

Into Thy Word Ministries www.intothyword.org

This lesson is designed to prepare you to form your own inductive Bible study questions. The kind of questions that stimulate discussion and excite people to learn and grow in the Word and faith. As a leader, your task is to lead your students to the main streams of the passage that flow the precepts, ideas and truths. You cannot force them to drink the truths, but you can show them where they are and how to drink.

People learn best by discovering for themselves. Yet at the same time, they need proper instruction. Stimulating discussion along with good Bible teaching will be the synergistic factor to make disciples for His glory. If all you have is good teaching, then your students may not process the information or understand it in an in-depth way. If all you do is have a discussion, then your students will not receive proper Biblical instruction and may miss out on key insights and opportunities of application.

Thus a good Bible study will have the key components of quality instruction and discussion (of course do not forget fellowship). First, it is best to instruct then have a discussion. If you have a lot of people, break them down into small groups for the discussion with prepared leaders. Then come back as a whole with a time for questions and answers. Then close by stating or restating the application and restate the main points.

If you have the time and resources, give your students a handout with the main points from your outline and the questions. That way they have something tangible to take home and look back to.

Good well thought out questions are essential to a good Bible study. If you just have quick simple questions, then you will have a quick and simple discussion. If you have well thought out questions, you will have a good engaging discussion that will challenge people to take ownership of the text and grow in the faith.

Prelude: Before you can write quality questions.

1. First do the outline. The better job you do in your outline, the better questions you will have. The more effort and time you put in your study, the better results and the better opportunities people will have to learn and explore the Word. Then the greater glory to our Lord and Savior!

The outline or chart that you have made becomes the answers to the questions you are making. Then the flow of the study also follows your outline. So doing the outline cuts down your work and time significantly.

To Begin: After you have done your study, then:

2. Reread your passage and write down questions that come to you. Ask yourself what does God want me to learn, and what does God want my students to learn.

If you do your questions simultaneously when you do your outline, the quality may be lacking. It is always best to do these tasks separately. Outline first, then do your questions. If questions naturally occur to you while doing your study and preparation, then by all means write them down. Just try not to purposely do two things at once.

- a. To do an effective job with your questions, you need to know whom you are teaching; their education, Bible savvy and learning levels. Teaching kids, HS students or adults makes a big difference as does their attention span and commitment level. Thus you will have a simple study for new Christians and an in-depth study for seasoned committed Christians.
- b. You need to make sure your questions are simple and clear. If you have a deep question, state it, then recite it more simply by breaking it down into bite size chunks.

3. Form your opening questions. What do I need to do to get my students to discuss? You may start off with an off topic, 'get to know you' question such as what flavor of ice cream do you like or can you roll your tongue? Something funny or a story or illustration to stimulate openness and discussion. Traditionally these are called 'ice breakers' because they break the ice for the fishing line of discussion.

Do not spend too much time here, the point is to start and stimulate discussion. Some groups, usually older adults, feel this is a waste of time, if so skip it.

4. Observational Questions. What are the facts that I need to know? After the icebreaker question, use your 'surface' questions that cover the facts. This is where you use the observation step III from 'Into Thy Word.' You can also use your Bible chart and/or outline. These questions mostly come from your initial observations. Use the who, what, where, when, how, and why.

a. Go over your outline or Chart from step VII of 'Into Thy Word.' What are the points and facts than can be turned into questions?

b. The six big Q's we must always ask!

1. WHO: Who are the people? Who did it? Who can do it? Who is it talking about?
2. WHAT: What is it saying? What is it talking about? What is happening? What did they do?
3. WHERE: Where are they going? Where did it happen? Where will it take place?
4. WHEN: When did it happen? When will it happen? When can it happen?
5. HOW: How did it happen? How can it happen? How was something done?
6. WHY: Why did he say that? Why did he do that? Why did they go there? This leads into the interpretation.

Ask which one or more of these apply. Additional question insights can be found in the book, 'Into Thy Word.'

Such as, "Who are the players, what are they doing, where are they at, what happened, how did they do that, why did they say that..."

c. Your task is to get your students to observe the passage and dig out what is there, to learn for themselves. To allow them to see the big picture in its context, what is going on.

Such as, "Why do you think Paul made such a big deal about being an apostle?" What does '*servant*' mean to you? If verse 16 to 17 is a solution, what is the problem? (From Romans 1)

d. Have them restate the passage in their own words or describe scenes and/or events.

e. Get them to see the passage as if it is their story as if they are there living in the time and experiencing what is going on. You can do this by turning out the lights and reading the passage in a paraphrase, asking the students to place themselves there. We do this naturally when we watch a TV show or a movie.

f. Ask contrasting questions. Such as, "what are the differences between the two brothers in the parable of the Prodigal Son?"

g. Make sure your questions go in some logical order. It is best to start with an opening, then surface 'observational' questions, then dig deeper into the why, with 'interpretation', and end with an 'application.'

h. The goal of your questions is for people to engage in discussion. Discussion helps people understand and take ownership of the text.

i. Always have an 'open Bible' study. That is your study requires people to read, dig into, and use the Bible as the primary principal tool.

I'm always dumbfounded when I hear of Bible studies where the Bible is not even opened! It would be like a lawyer studying law and never reading the Constitution. Wait, that is how some do study law. As a lawyer friend told me, "I never have nor have I known anyone who has read the Constitution, we just study about it." And that is how we have "separation of church and state." Because people are not wise enough to know better that it is not in the Constitution! Just think of all the heresies floating around, probably from those no Bible, Bible studies!

5. Interpretive Questions: What is the meaning I need to take to heart? As the leader your task is to get your students to analyze the points, to find the implications from the ideas and truths presented; then to get them to think them through. This is the task of finding the reasons behind the composition and what is going on in the text, the WHY. To lead them to find the truth and take ownership of the truths from the passage. This is a necessity, because you have to make a commitment before you can make an application hold: See steps III (B), IV, and V of 'Into Thy Word'

a. What does the text mean? Again use your outline and the work you did in the interpretive steps.

Such as, "Why would Paul, who was born and raised a Jew and a highly educated Jewish leader, write verse 14? How would you rewrite verse 14 for your school, work, or community?"

b. What are the main truths? You can have students look things up in Bible dictionaries, word studies, and commentaries to find the key ideas presented and then to reason them out. The plot, the arguments, spiritual principles, you ask is to figure it all out.

Do not be afraid if you do not know an answer to a question. There is no shame in not knowing. Even seasoned Bible scholars get stumped. I saw my mentor, Dr. Walter Martin from 'The Bible Answer Man' radio program, get stumped occasionally. So just say you will find out and get back to them. Ask a pastor, look it up in a resource book, or seek it from one of the web based Bible answer sites.

c. What are the reasons? Help them come up with their own opinions, yet make sure they stay true to the text as well.

Such as, “How would you explain verse 16-17 in your own words without using any Christian jargon?”

d. How do I model the character of Christ?

Such as, “What impresses you about Paul’s personality and commitment?”

e. What are the connections to other parts of the Bible? Check out the passages in the margins of the Bible to see other passages with the same truths.

6. Application Questions. What is the action that I’m called to do? Once you discover the main truths, the application questions should flow naturally. These are the questions that you give to your students so they can apply the ideas and truths of Scripture to their lives. You need to think through what are their spiritual needs, where they need to grow, and the developmental level of their faith. If you cannot do that, then have several simple questions prepared for new Christians to deep thoughts to stimulate seasoned Bible students: Use step VI from ‘Into Thy Word’

a. You can form these questions from your outline or chart. Take your main points and ideas and systemically find ways to apply them. Be sincere and creative. **Remember it is God’s Word, not our free choice buffet.**

b. Try to make your application clear and reasonable. Sometimes ‘baby steps’ are needed, as big changes require time and commitment. Be encouraging, thoughtful, and provide some form of accountability.

c. Keep your application short and to the point. Do not try to have too many questions or it can be overwhelming to your students. You do not always have to have the application just at the end, sprinkle them out if you would like, but make sure you repeat them at the end of the study. Quality is better than quantity!

b. What are the changes in behavior, commitment, attitude, relationships, actions, etc. that need to take place? What are you going to do about it?

Such as, “What call or task do you sense Christ is calling you to?”
“How can this passage help you to change your goals?” “ In the laundry list of sins, is there one you need to reconcile, that is to repent from?”

e. You might need to take a personal inventory of yourself of what changes you need to make before you ask others to.

7. Make sure you spend adequate time in prayer! Prayer is the key to God's door!

- a. Be in prayer during your personal study.
- b. Pray before people arrive.
- c. Open with prayer.
- d. Have a prayer time in small groups for personal requests.
- e. Close in prayer.
- f. Be open to pray for people after the study.
- g. Keep your students in prayer during the week.
- h. Have others pray for you and your students.
- i. Be aware not to break confidentiality or fuel gossip!!!**