

The *Bible & Life* Bible Teaching Newsletter

BIBLICAL DOCTRINE & NEW TESTAMENT ASSEMBLY LIFE

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Evangelistic Home Bible Study

By David Dunlap

The local church should be eager to invest in methods of evangelism that produce results. Without a doubt, outreach home Bible studies have been one of the greatest tools of evangelism in recent times. Many are convinced that home Bible studies are where the “real action” is for committed Christians interested in reaching souls for Christ. Thousands have been brought to faith in Christ in the comfort of a home by an individual with a burden, a Bible, and sound Bible study materials. Some have found it effective to use Bible study guides for their home studies. Evangelical ministries such as the Navigators, Moody Publishers, and Gospel Folio Press have produced excellent study materials. Others have found that a home Bible study program is very effective which combines the use of a DVDs with a study guide. Entire churches have been raised up through the home Bible study outreach method alone. Because of its effectiveness, it is imperative that every church seek to establish a home Bible study ministry within their local assembly.

Who Can I Invite to the Home Bible Study?

Every New Testament church should have a number Bible studies outside the doors of the church building. These churches and Bible study leaders should seek to have Bible studies in homes and Bible studies in locations such as restaurants, at the workplace, and at coffee shops. How do we start? At the very beginning a colorful flyer should be designed to promote these home Bible studies. For example: “Explore God’s Word! You are invited to participate in a twelve (or 7 or 5) home Bible studies on the Gospel of John. Come enjoy an evening of friends, food, and discussion study of God’s Word!” This invitation can be given to neighbors, work friends, relatives, and some who attend your local church.

Social media can be used to invite the unsaved to a home Bible study. Newcomers to the local church can be invited to the home Bible study. It is important to invite another spiritually mature couple to help with the discussion of the passage. Attendees to a home study can also be contacted by setting up a fair booth tent where invitations can be distributed, newspaper advertisements can be placed, and encouraging other believers to invite a friends.

“From the early days of the church, house evangelism has been one of the most effective means of reaching men and women for Christ. I warmly recommend this approach to evangelism.”

**Steven Olford
(1918-2004)
Encounter Ministries**

“Out of the original study, over a ten year period, over 25 Bible study groups were formed. There were study groups at work, there were couples studies, women’s studies, and men’s studies. The outreach grew to where, at one time 400 people were in a study group.”

Bob Jacks
Author of *“Every House a Lighthouse”*

Do not expect a large number of those you invite to attend the study. A good number for a home Bible study is 6-7 people attendees. Simple refreshments can be served such as coffee and finger foods to stimulate fellowship after the study.

Where Do I Start?

Many have discovered that one of the key secrets to a successful home Bible study has been to focus on a verse-by-verse study of a Bible passage. There is a simplicity and a fruitfulness to focusing on what God has said in His Word, by studying one specific book of the Bible at a time. This has proven to be one of the most effective means to laying an in-depth foundation that will last a lifetime, and which will ultimately cover “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Many have found this simple method the best approach.

After serious prayer, and having selected a target book for study, the leader then collects a few selected commentaries on that particular book. Commentaries are not expensive, and they will quickly take their place among your most treasured investments. A one volume commentary of the Bible should be purchased and have on hand. One of the best one-volume commentaries is *The Believer’s Bible Commentary* by William MacDonald.¹ After the study of the passage, the leader makes notes in the margin of his Bible or on a small index card placed in chapter to be studied before the study.

What About the Pace of the Study?

Another issue is the tempo or pace of the study. Many have found that for most books of the Bible, a chapter each week is usually about the right pace. This allows some real in-depth exploration without getting bogged down in too many details or tangents. There are, of course, portions of Scripture especially in the epistles that merit a more measured and penetrating pace, but remember you can lose your group’s attention if you don’t keep it moving. In the study of the New Testament epistles the study leader should break down his chapter to fifteen verse per week because of the depth of these chapters.

After careful and repeated rereading of the chapter for the coming week, the Bible study leader simply gleans insights from each of several commentaries, underlining and annotating as he or she goes. It’s not difficult to stay a chapter or so ahead of your group. As the day of the study approaches, the leader prayerfully collects his notes. It’s not difficult or burdensome to gather enough insights to a passage to contribute a valid understanding of the chapter to be discussed. Along the way, some specific topics or issues will emerge, lending themselves to more specific investigation. This is where some easily available supplemental resources such as a Bible encyclopedia, *Vine’s Dictionary of New Testament Words*, and Bible dictionary can be handy.

What Is the Best Book of the Bible to Start a Home Study?

One of the most frequent questions that is asked is, “Which book should I start with?” There are many sound answers. Which book interests you the most? One sound suggestion is the Gospel of John. It has been said that it is “shallow enough for a child to wade in, and deep enough for an elephant to bathe in!” No matter how diverse your group—from the novice to the sophisticate—all will benefit from going through this book again. It deals with all of the basics. I've taught it many times—and each time results in new discoveries! Other suggestions include the book of beginnings—the Book of Genesis, the Book of Ruth, or the Book of Acts. You can really start anywhere. Let the Holy Spirit lead you. He always knows best, if you're listening. And here's another incentive: there's no way to better learn a specific book than to teach it.

Many gifted Bible study leaders² suggest starting with the study on Book of Revelation or a series on prophecy! This book evokes great interest in many and may increase attendance. Revelation is the only book in the Bible that declares a special blessing on the reader and hearer! No other book singles itself out in that respect. One of the reasons it is always such a special blessing is that a proper review will include supporting passages from virtually every other book of the Bible. (The 404 verses of Revelation have over 800 allusions from the Old Testament!) It puts God's entire plan of redemption into focus from Genesis to Revelation.

Christianity Explored Home Bible Study Program

Some Bible study leaders find a Bible study program very helpful. One of the best home Bible study programs is *Christianity Explored*³ written and produced by Rico Tice from England. Rico Tice is an excellent and engaging Bible teacher who has a world-wide teaching ministry. The Bible study guide on the Gospel of Mark is one of the best available. The material is written with the goal to present the gospel with clarity and depth. The material has been used by Markham Bible Chapel in Markham, Ontario and at Land O' Lakes Bible Chapel in Tampa, Florida, along with many other assemblies and evangelical churches with great success. The program uses a simple meal for all the attendees, then a study of 35-45 minutes, which concludes with viewing of the *Christianity Explored* DVD and discussion and prayer. If someone is worried about their ability to teach a home Bible study, this material can be a great resource to them.

The Role of Prayer

Prayer is, of course, your most formidable weapon in seeing success in your home Bible study. You need to be in prayer continually as you prepare for the study. You must always open the study in prayer and close in prayer. Seek to raise up a prayer team committed to continuing to hold up the study in prayer. Pray, pray, and pray that those you have invited, God will lead to attend the study. Then pray for the salvation of the unsaved who attend Bible study

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It is a warfare, after all. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher and He will teach you in ways that can neither be manipulated nor regulated. His diversity and style will be evident in each study. As you get involved in teaching a home Bible study may the Lord Jesus Christ reveal and teach His Word to you in ways that you could never have imagined. May you take to heart the words of the apostle Paul: "Let the Word of God dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another..." (Colossians 3:16).

Conclusion

For too long our philosophy of evangelism has been askew from the New Testament pattern. The commandment of Matthew 28:19-20 doesn't tell us to tell the world "come hear." The New Testament pattern was "go tell." Motivation is the key. You must promote and encourage the home Bible study consistently and effectively if you are to have home Bible study success. If a local church has more than one home study remember to train your teachers. Remember to promote the ministry. Encourage more studies to be raised up. Help study leaders find other future Bible study leaders who can lead a study. Pray. Believe. The only way that home Bible study can fail is if you don't do it. Go forth and teach!

Endnotes

1. *The Believer's Bible Commentary* can be purchased at www.gospelfolio.com
2. Harold Mackay, John Martin, J. Vernon McGee, and others
3. *Christianity Explored* is published by The Good Book company, England. This material is available for purchase at www.christianityexplored.com. The Good Book Company has distribution centers in the United Kingdom, North America, Australia, and New Zealand