

# Preparing new Bible studies

This book contains many Bible studies and it also gives additional Bible passages on some subjects. However, the Bible provides an unending source of learning! If you need to prepare an additional Bible study, here are some useful guidelines. The page opposite provides a useful checklist for doing this and is designed to be easily photocopied.

## **The background**

Try to find out something of the passage's background. It can be helpful to know who wrote it, who it was written to and why it was originally written. A good Bible dictionary and a one-volume Bible commentary would be very valuable in helping to answer this type of question.

## **Read and understand**

Read the passage through carefully, looking for words which people may not understand. This is particularly important if people are studying in a second language. Remember that people may feel embarrassed to say they don't understand. It is better to go over any difficult words.

## **Observe**

Help people to observe what the Bible passage is really saying. Use questions to help people understand the message or the situation.

Questions which can be answered by a simple 'yes' or 'no' are not very useful. Better questions usually begin with What?, Who?, Where?, Why?, How? or When? Look at the main focus of the passage before looking at the detail.

## **Interpret**

Once people understand the basis of the passage, help them understand and interpret the meaning for us today. 'Why did that happen?' or 'Why should we do this?' are the sort of questions to encourage, that will help people make more sense of the passage. The questions should aim to make a bridge between our observations and our interpretation. Good questions could include the following:

- Why was this fact given?
- What do the character's words and actions mean?
- Why do you think the writer said this?
- What did it mean to the people then?

- How does it help us to understand God?
- Can anyone try to simplify the passage in a few sentences?

## **Application**

When people understand what the passage means, we need to look at our own lives and see if we are doing what the Bible teaches. These are the sorts of questions which change our lives and really challenge us. For example:

- What have we learned about God? How should we respond to him?
- Are there any ways in which I need to change?
- Are there any examples for us to follow?

## **Action**

When we look at our own lives, we often find there is a gap between what we are doing and what we have now learnt that we should be doing. Ask some questions to help people think about how to reduce this gap. These might include:

- What can I do now?
- How should I respond?

## **Links with other passages**

When interpreting the Bible, we should allow scripture to interpret scripture. When preparing the passage, look for any other similar passages or other places that illustrate the verses you are studying. A cross-reference Bible and a concordance will aid this.

These guidelines can be used to help prepare a study from any Bible passage. If possible, give the study a title which mentions the things which you want to draw out of the Bible study.

# *Bible study preparation sheet*

## **Passage**

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## **Main aim / theme**

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## **Background**

Who wrote it?

When was it written?

Who was it written to?

Why was it written?

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## **Understanding**

Words

Concepts

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## **Observation**

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## **Interpretation**

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## **Application**

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## **Action**

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## **Links with other Bible passages**

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## **Points for prayer**

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