

Bible Study Ground Rules

(Adapted from the Swedish Bible Study Method)

Begin by praying, asking God to speak through his word. Then read a short Bible passage aloud (10-15 verses is ideal). Instruct each person to go back over the passage on their own while being on the lookout for three things: (Symbol Chart will be inserted here)

They should use each of the three symbols at least once and write down any notes they want to make next to their symbol. Allow people time to savour the text and explore it at their own speed. This usually takes about 10 minutes in silence.

Afterwards, get each reader to share one of their 'light bulbs' with the group. Each person should have a turn to share without being interrupted. Then, spend some time discussing these; it's always interesting to discover what has impacted different members.

Then, in the second round, ask them to share one of their questions raised by the passage. Often it is best to invite the person who raises the question to propose an approach to answering it, and generally encourage that person towards further investigation. Alternatively, any member of the group can respond to the question, provided the answer appears in the passage under consideration or in a previous section of the book that your group has already covered.

In the third round, ask each person in your group to share one of their convictions or applications as it applies to their own life. Then, to conclude, pray: invite people to lead in prayer as they please; no-one should feel pressured to pray. Invite a suitable person to close the time of prayer; this avoids embarrassment for newcomers, makes it clear when the prayer time is finished, and prevents prolonged, uncomfortable silences.

If your group contains fewer than five people, ask them to share two or three 'light bulbs', questions and applications each. You can then discuss these things according to the time available.

After the meeting, you may wish to address the questions again. However, in the meeting itself, it is important to seek to avoid arguing, falling into the trap of 'sharing ignorances' and imposing an answer by appealing to human authority.

The philosophy behind this style of Bible reading is to promote good observation of the text, group participation and Holy Spirit-guided discovery. Each person has the opportunity to discover for themselves what God says. In principle, no-one answers the questions unless they are about something simple, like the meaning of a word. The idea is that the questions motivate investigation on the part of the person who raised them. It is also important to avoid anyone 'grabbing the microphone' and jumping on the poor new person present; instead, it is impressive to witness the capacity that even non-Christians have to understand the Bible when God speaks to them!

Bible Study Symbols

(adapted from the Swedish Bible Study Method)



A light bulb: Something that “shines” from the passage: whatever impacts most, speaks to the heart, draws attention or is a new revelation



A question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the text, or a question the reader would like to ask the writer of the passage or the Lord



An arrow: A personal application or conviction for the reader’s life