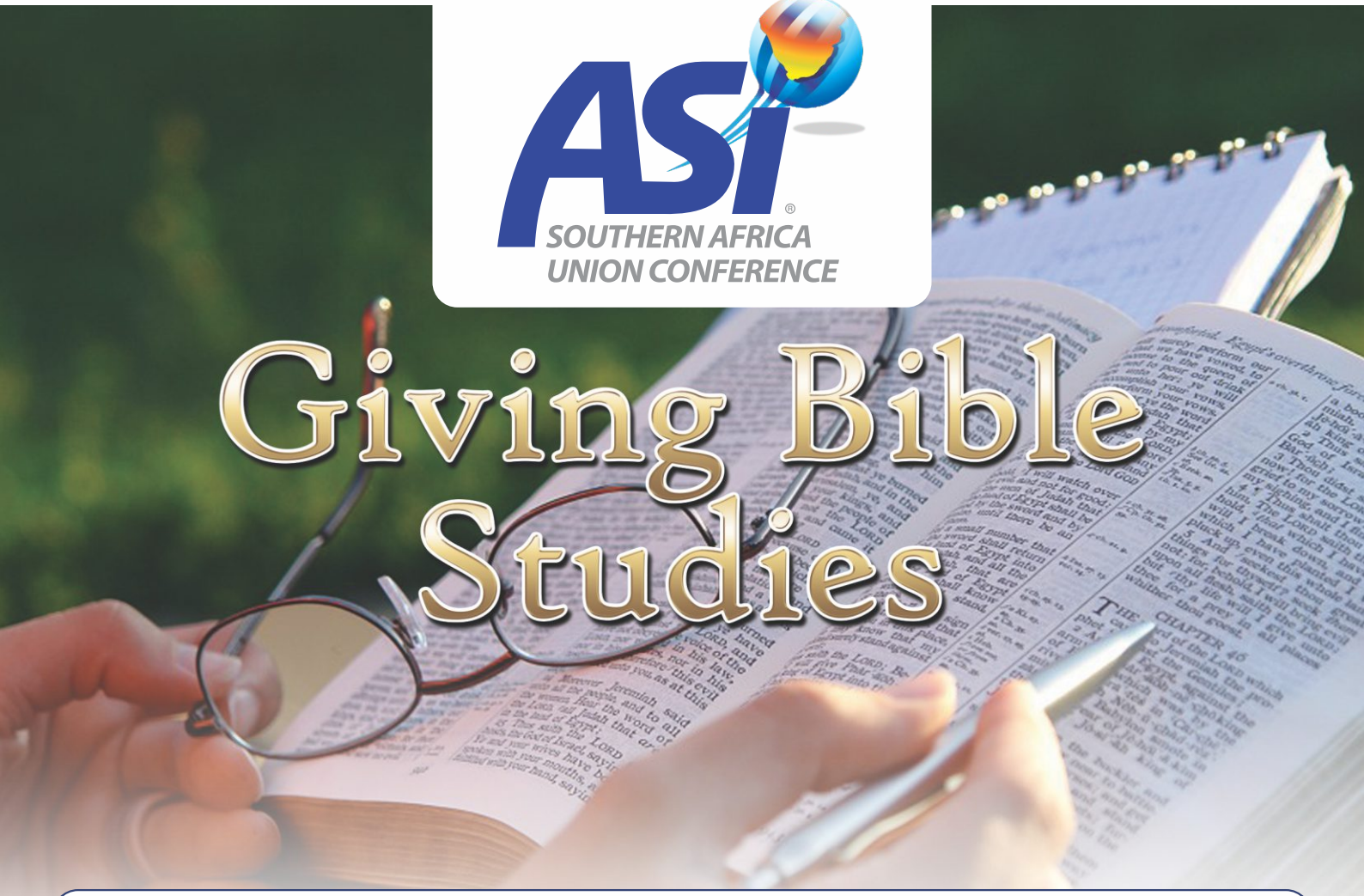
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Giving Bible Studies

As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we believe in the soon coming of Jesus. God has given our church an enormous amount of knowledge on the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation that speak specifically of our times. With this knowledge also comes responsibility. We are told—

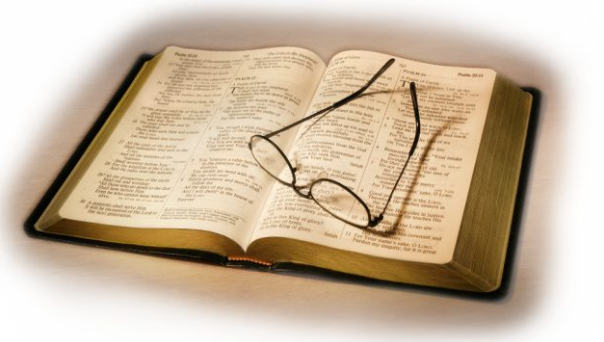
> "In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention." Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 19

Early Adventists took this commission seriously. In those early years, preaching and a wide distribution of literature were the two primary means of spreading the message. However, it was not until 1883, twenty years after the church was officially organized, that the idea of giving personal Bible studies from house to house was introduced. It happened almost by accident.

In May 1883, S. N. Haskell, the founder of the Tract and Missionary Societies, was preaching at a camp meeting in southern California, when suddenly a severe storm arose. The thunder was so loud the people could no longer hear him. At that moment Haskell had an idea. Leaving the platform, he walked out into the middle of the tent and gathered the crowd around him. Rather than resume his preaching, he gave out texts of scripture to be read by different persons as he asked questions. In this way the first question and answer Bible study was created. When Ellen White, who was also at the camp meeting, learned of what Haskell had done, she told him that she had seen in vision hundreds of church members visiting families and giving Bible studies in this very way. She later wrote –

> "The plan of holding Bible-readings was a heaven-born idea. There are many, both men and women, who can engage in this branch of missionary labor. Workers may thus be developed who will become mighty men of God. By this means the word of God has been given to thousands; and the workers are brought into personal contact with people of all nations and tongues." *Gospel Workers, p. 192*

> "To all who are working with Christ I would say, Wherever you can gain access to the people by the fireside, improve your opportunity. Take your Bible, and open before them its great truths … The presentation of Christ in the family, by the fireside, and in small gatherings in private houses, is often more successful in winning souls to Jesus than are sermons delivered in the open air, to the moving throng, or even in halls or churches." *Gospel Workers, p. 193*



Giving Bible studies in the home is a "heaven-born idea" because:

- It develops workers who will become mighty men and women of God.
- It is a work that will not go unrewarded.
- It leads people to an individual search of the Word of God.
- It is one of the most successful ways to win souls to Jesus.

The importance of this work cannot be underestimated.

> "There are families who will never be reached by the truth of God's Word unless His servants enter their homes, and by earnest ministry, sanctified by the endorsement of the Holy Spirit, break down the barriers. As the people see that these workers are messengers of mercy, the ministers of grace, they are ready to listen to the words spoken by them." *Evangelism, p. 435, 436.*

In my experience as a Bible Worker, I have realized that there are many who are not ready to set foot in an Adventist church or attend an evangelistic series, but these same ones will accept an invitation to study the Bible in the non-threatening environment of a home. Here as they open God's Word and discover its beautiful message to their lives, their hearts are softened, their conscience pricked, and their desire to learn more awakened. It is only then that I can invite them to church.



God is calling you to give a Bible study! It is a calling directly from God for He has ordained this most important work.

"The plan of holding Bible-readings was a heaven-born idea. There are many, both men and women, who can engage in this branch of missionary labor. Workers may thus be developed who will become mighty men of God. By this means the word of God has been given to thousands; and the workers are brought into personal contact with people of all nations and tongues. The Bible is brought into families, and its sacred truths come home to the conscience. Men are entreated to read, examine, and judge for themselves, and they must abide the responsibility of receiving or rejecting the divine enlightenment. God will not permit this precious work for Him to go unrewarded. He will crown with success every humble effort made in His name." *Gospel Workers, p. 191*

Do you desire to become a mighty man or woman of God? Then give Bible readings and you will develop into a mighty worker for God. God rewards this work and it WILL result in the winning of souls to the truth. In this lesson we will discuss some tips for giving effective, engaging, successful Bible studies.

1. Preparation

This preparation comes into two forms: personal preparation and study/research preparation. Prepare your heart by spending time with God asking Him to use you and speak through you. Ask God to reveal anything in your heart that might be separating you from Him – any sin that could prevent Him from blessing your study. Plead with God for the person you will be studying with asking God to go before you and prepare the way. Find promises to claim related to the study.

Next, prepare for your study:

- Select the topic you will be studying.
- Write your own study or review instructor notes written by another author. Be familiar with the main thoughts to bring out after each passage.

- Research anything that is not clear to you so you are comfortable with the material.
- Think of questions that might be asked on that topic and how you might answer them.
- Make copies of text guides (a list of the verses in the study) or other handouts for your students.
- Gather together any visual aids, handouts, lessons, or anything else you might need to take with you to the study.

You can give a Bible study just of texts and a few summary statements, but a study that is memorable and engaging is a study that is enhanced. Think of things you can add to your study to make it practical and relative to their situation. Also freely use any of these items:

- Illustrations
- Stories – personal or other
- Drawings or diagrams
- Occasional short video clips, magazine articles, etc.

Many people are visual learners and any time you can help them to "see" what you are talking about or relate it to the world in which they live the more likely they are to understand what you are saying, remember it, and personally apply it.

2. Confirm the Appointment

If you are just beginning this study, call a day in advance to just confirm the time of the appointment. People tend to forget new things in their schedule unless they have written them down and are good at looking at their calendar. It is still best to call and make sure nothing has changed. This will prevent you from being disappointed by a no-show.

3. Arrive on Time

Don't be late. If you are stuck in traffic or have some other unexpected delay, call ahead and let them know you are coming and your approximate arrival time. This is being courteous.

4. Pre-Study

Upon arrival, greet the person and follow their cues as to whether to take off your shoes, place your jacket somewhere, and where to sit. After everyone is settled, spend a few minutes becoming better acquainted or hearing about their week. You want your socialization to be at the beginning of the visit rather than at the end. Try not to spend more than 10 minutes on this. When you can, say, "Well, are we ready to begin our study? We have an exciting topic to study!"

Pull out your notes and place them inside or beside your Bible so you can easily glance at them during your study. Begin the study with prayer. Maybe take a prayer request. Ask the Holy Spirit to be the teacher and guide in your study.

5. Introduction

Your introduction to the study should include a short preview of the study or some important question that will be answered. This helps to pique interest and show the importance of studying that topic. A story or illustration can be a great way to start off. If you are going to be covering a potentially controversial study such as the Sabbath or State of the Dead, it is best not say in the introduction something that would make them defensive from the start. You want to lead up to important points that might be new.

6. Follow a Method of Presentation

Method #1 – Fill out the lesson together

- Easiest method for giving a Bible study.
- Each of you have a blank copy of the lesson guide and you read through it, answering the questions as you go.
- Good for people who struggle with reading comprehension or get easily distracted.
- Allows you to expound on the questions and answers as you go through it.
- Could seem elementary for more advanced Bible students.

Method #2 – Review the completed lesson

- Student has completed the lesson during the week and your study time is to review the highlights, answer questions, and make an appeal.
- Study can be completed in usually less than 30 minutes.

- Instructor pulls out key points from the lesson and finds out if the student understood them.
- Allows more freedom of discussion of the points in the lesson because there is not the hurry of completing the lesson.
- Potentially the person may come to the study with objections or major questions if the topic of the lesson was controversial (such as the Sabbath, Death, etc.).

Method #3 –Topic studied only using the Bible and the help of the instructor's notes

- Instructor introduces the topic and takes the student on a study of the Scriptures without the use of a printed lesson.
- Instructor may use handwritten or type-written notes or a chain referenced, marked Bible to aid him/her in the presentation.
- Provides the most flexibility by allowing the instructor to add or change verses, bring out specific points, and tailor the study to the student's needs.
- The instructor tends to better learn and understand the topic using this method as the study is given in his or her own words.
- Appeals can be personal and tailored to the individual rather than being ambiguous and generic as sometimes they are in printed lessons.
- Works well for any group size. Participants only need to have a Bible.
- Printed lessons or handouts can be distributed at the end of the study for additional study or as a homework assignment to review what has just been studied.

7. Flow of the Study

During the study, help your student find the Bible text. Give directions for finding certain books, especially if they are unfamiliar with the order. Wait until everyone is ready before reading. Ask if the student would feel comfortable reading. You may wish to take turns reading. Summarise the verse after it is read. Point out key words and explain unfamiliar words or phrases. Frequently ask, "Does that make sense?" If you get a puzzled expression, explain again.

8. Engage Your Student

During the study you can engage your student by asking questions:

- Have you ever been in a desperate situation like Daniel and needed to call upon God?
- What do you think this text means?
- Have you experienced this in your life?
- What do you see happening in the world that shows this text to be true?
- Why do you think God said that?

Then listen to their answer. As far as possible affirm their answers. If they don't see what you are hoping they have gained from the text, make a possible suggestion:

- Do you think it is possible that ….?
- What I get out of this text is ….

Other ways to engage your student would be to –

- Allow the student to ask questions of you.
- Invite the student to read some of the Scriptures.
- Help the student to visualise or imagine what is being described in the text.
- Have the student share a brief story or experience that relates to what you are studying.

Some individuals can get carried away in sharing their stories and experiences. Listen for a while and if it looks like things are getting long, say something like, "That is an interesting experience you had and it really illustrates what we were just talking about. Let's look and see what this other Bible text has to say on that." And get them back into the study!

9. Summarise

Throughout the study summarise what has been learned so far. If your notes are divided into sections, it would be well to make a summary statement at the end of each section and then transition to the next section. This allows them to not forget what has been studied thus far and to see how it connects with what they will be studying next.

At the end of the study, summarise the key points of the study. This will help connect any dots still unconnected. Ask questions to determine if Bible study was clear:

- "Can you see from our study of the signs of Jesus' coming that His coming is very soon?"
- "Do you see that while God's justice must destroy sinners who cling to sin, His love will not allow them to burn in hell fire forever?"
- "Is it clear to you that the Bible method for baptism is immersion?"

10. Make An Appeal

NEVER end a Bible study without making an appeal. This is simply asking them to make some commitment based on the study. It can be very short and simple. Try to make the appeal practical. Here is an example of a poor and good appeal:

Poor appeal – "Are you thankful Jesus is coming again? Let's pray then."

Good appeal – "Mary, do you want to be ready when Jesus comes again? Are you willing to make a commitment to spend more time in prayer and Bible study every week so you can deepen your relationship with God?"

Here are other examples of good appeals –



- "Judy, is it your desire to spend time each day studying the Bible?"
- "Tom, in this great controversy between Christ and Satan, is it your desire to be on the winning side with Jesus?"
- "Steve, we've learned today the importance of the seventh-day Sabbath. Would you like to experience this special day with Jesus by coming to church with me this Saturday?"

Incorporate their decision into your closing prayer. It is often nice to include yourself in that decision if it is something you want to make a recommitment to as well. If the student has made a major decision that evening and you think they are comfortable with you, you may want to ask them to have the closing prayer and tell God of their decision. This can be a very powerful moment!

Here are examples of closing prayers that incorporate the decision made –

- "Jesus, we thank you for your Word. And this evening Judy and I have decided that we want to be spend time in your Word each day getting to know you. Help us to find the time each day to do that."
- "Jesus, we have seen in our study that there has been a controversy between Christ and Satan since the very beginning. Tom and I choose to be on your side in this battle. Give us the wisdom to daily choose your ways."
- "Jesus, we thank you that you gave us the gift of the weekly Sabbath because you desire to build a relationship with us. Bless Steve as he seeks to deepen his relationship with you by beginning to keep your holy Sabbath day."

11. The After Study

After the study you want to leave soon, so as to not take away from what the Holy Spirit has just accomplished in that study. Give them any handouts related to that topic or a supplemental lesson for them to study on their own during the week. Here are some lessons sets you can use:

- *Prophecy Seminar* lessons by Seminars Unlimited
- *Search for Certainty* lessons by Mark Finley
- *Prophecies of Hope* lessons by Gary Gibbs

Match the lesson with the topic studied that day. This will allow the student to have something to study until you meet again, keeping them in God's Word. You can review it briefly the next week.

Discuss when you are meeting again and set up your next appointment. Wish them a great week and leave!! After you leave, pray and thank God for how He blessed the study and pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to work and bring conviction to their heart.

Dealing with Distractions

Remember that the devil is not happy that you are giving Bible studies. If he cannot stop you, he will seek to send some kind of distraction to impact your study. This is why you must be diligent in praying before you go to the study and silently while you are in the study. Here are some common distractions and how you might overcome them.

- **Television –** Before you begin the study, kindly ask, "Would it be okay if we muted the TV?" In most cases, they will apologize and turn it off.
- **Children –** Find out if you can study at a time when the children are either at school or napping. If this is not an option, see about bringing a friend that can play with the children while you study with mom or dad. If the children are old enough to understand, ask if they would like to join you. I have many times studied the book of Daniel with mothers and their children telling the stories in ways the children could visualize them and then pulling out age-appropriate lessons for both mom and child.
- **Pets –** If a dog or cat is causing a major distraction, you may want to kindly ask if the pet can be placed in another room. Remember to show sensitivity here as many people value their pets as much as they would their kids.
- **Visitors –** If a neighbour or friend stops in during your study, pause for a moment to allow your friend to handle the situation. If it appears that the person wants to stay and listen, welcome them and do a very short recap to let them know what you are studying. If the topic is a heavy one (like the mark of the beast or the true church), ask God how you should proceed. You may choose to wait to make a strong appeal till your next study so as not to make them uncomfortable in front of their friend. In cases where the house becomes too full of commotion and your friend cannot concentrate, ask if they would like to resume the study at a later time.
- **Food –** It is quite common to be offered something to drink. You can reply, "A glass of water would be fine." It is best to avoid accepting food. This could distract from the study, make them feel obligated to always provide you with food when you come, and it could prematurely bring up dietary issues like unclean foods.

Answering Questions

Questions are important in a Bible study because they show the student is engaged and mentally processing the topic. If someone asks a difficult question, try one of these approaches:

1. **Affirm them.** *"That's a very good question."*
2. **Defer to a later time.** *"We are going to have a whole study on this subject a little later. If you don't mind, can we discuss it more thoroughly at that time?"*
3. **Bounce the question back to the student.** *"That's a good question. But I am curious why you ask it. What do you think about it?"*
4. **Show them how to find the answer for themselves.** *"Would you like me to show you how you can find the answer using a Bible and concordance?"*
5. **Admit you don't know.** *"That's a good question. But to tell you the truth I've not thought about that one before. Give me a little time to research what the Bible has to say. Ok? You don't want my opinion anyway, do you?"*
6. **Don't agree or disagree.** *"That's an interesting point," or "I've not thought of it that way before."*
7. **Recognise that some questions don't have answers.** *"I think this is one of those questions where people have their opinions but the Bible doesn't clearly address it. We may have to wait for heaven for the answer."*
8. **Don't assume people believe an objection that was voiced to them.** Sometimes people will raise objections they'd heard from others, e.g. *"Someone told me that only Adventists are going to be saved?"* Listen and ask, *"How did you respond to that comment?"* or *"What do you think about that?"*

Answering Difficult Bible Passages

In giving Bible studies, your goal is show the student what Scripture teaches on that particular topic – not your personal opinion or that of your church. You do this by teaching them how to compare Scripture with Scripture and build verse upon verse (Isaiah 28:10). The beauty of our doctrines is that they are not built on just a couple of texts. There are often hundreds of Bible passages that teach the same truth. However, there are usually a couple verses that seem to contradict the majority of the Scriptures. Often these few texts are used to teach an opposite viewpoint. What should you do if a Bible study contact asks you about one of these passages? How should you respond? How can you explain what the passage is really saying?

1. **Observe the tone of the question to determine the sincerity of the questioner.** A sincere question is when a student asks because they've heard this text used to defend another position and they want to know how to reconcile the difficult text with the rest of scripture. A simple Bible answer will probably satisfy them. An insincere question is when the student doesn't want to reconcile the passages. They want to defend the other position and are only asking to see how you can answer what they believe to be their "proof" of the other side. If you detect the latter spirit, silently pray for the right attitude and words. Refuse to take the same spirit of confrontation!

2. **Remind the student that Scripture does not contradict itself.** "All Scriptures is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16) which means that because it all comes from the same source it cannot be in contradiction. God would not say one thing in one place and contradict Himself in another.
3. **Silently pray for the Holy Spirit to enlighten your mind.** Ask God for wisdom to know how to explain the passage in a way they can understand.
4. **Read the verse or passage with them in its context.** Often the apparent difficulty is solved by reading the verse in its context.
5. **If you are not sure of the answer, promise to get back with them on it the following week.** During the week you can study the passage in more detail by –
   a. **Looking up key words in the concordance to find their original meaning.** Sometimes the apparent contradiction is in the meaning of a word or phrase. Reading the passage in other translations might also reveal a better understanding of the meaning of a certain word or phrase.
   b. **Comparing the Scripture with other similar texts.** The book *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* might be helpful with this (you can access it via the web at www.studylight.org/com/tsk/).
   c. **Reading as much as you can about that Scripture.** Look in commentaries, Joe Crew's book, *Answers to Difficult Bible Texts*, Louis Torres' book, *Bothersome and Disturbing Bible Passages*, the Biblical Research Institute's archive of Bible Questions Answered, http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/questions2.htm and other sources.
   d. **Reading Ellen White's explanation of the passage in the Spirit of Prophecy.**
6. **When you meet again with the student, use the Bible to answer the question.** Explain the meaning of the words & show comparative texts, but try to avoid reading quotations from other authors. Show them that the answer can be found in the Bible directly.
7. **Present your answer in a humble way.** Never argue!

Gaining Decisions

1. Stir conviction by sharing the Bible.
2. Respond to evidences of conviction (anger, avoidance, joy, fear, etc.) quickly.
3. Heighten desire by sharing the beauty and attractions of Christ, the rewards of following Him, and the consequences of rejecting truth.
4. Minimise obstacles to following the truth by speaking of faith and confidence in Christ.
5. Appeal for decisions!



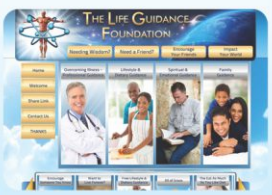
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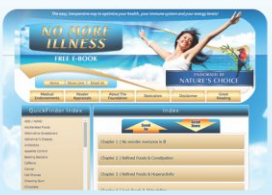
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