

Five Hard Questions for Bible Discussions

Jim Elliff

Can you start a lively Bible study that would be a great benefit to those who participate? The answer is “yes!”

This is a simple Bible Discussion Guide for any group. Using this approach, your study can be as deep as you wish to make it, and cover as much time as you are able to give.



Most Bible study groups will want to go through a complete book of the Bible, or a well-defined portion of a book, such as “The Sermon on the Mount” or “Favorite Psalms.” You will want to match the difficulty of the book with the experience of the group. The leader will section off the chapters according to its most natural divisions beforehand. Most groups will want to cover a chapter per week. You will repeat the questions below for each section of the chapter. Or, if you wish, you may cover as many sections as workable for the time you have, regardless of the chapter divisions.

Before your Bible Study:

- Each person should read the chapter repeatedly during the week.
- Leader — determine the sections to be discussed beforehand.

In your Bible Study:

- Read the whole chapter two or three times aloud together.
- Next, for each new section, take a quiet moment to read through that section thoughtfully on your own.
- Discuss the sections chosen together by asking the five hard questions below of each section.

The five hard questions for each section you work through:

1. Who is speaking and to whom (an unknown narrator, God, followers of God in general, enemies, Israel, Roman church, Corinthian church, Isaiah, Joel, David, Paul, James, Timothy, Titus, etc.)?

2. What does the author expect his readers to see or do in this section?
3. How does this section relate to the previous sections you have discussed (i.e. explain how it contrasts, compares, explains, illustrates, intensifies, or concludes, etc., what is written before it)?
4. What words, phrases, or ideas, in the section would be helpful to clarify?
5. What phrase in this section best captures the meaning of the section, and why?

A final question at the end of each discussion session: What is the help or challenge we should receive from the portion of the Bible we have discussed?

A concluding question at the end of the entire book study: What would be an appropriate title for this book of the Bible? (Consider options and discuss why one or the other would be best.)

Suggestion: If it seems appropriate for your group, the leader may ask pairs or smaller sub-groups to discuss a particular question first, and then bring the group together to discuss it further. This may allow for more participation and more depth of insight. It is best to have at least three sub-groups per room to prevent listening in to the other group.