WRITING AND LEADING A BIBLE STUDY

After you have done your COMA bible study, you understand the passage. Your task now is to communicate that understanding to others – not by telling them in a sermon, but by writing study questions that will guide people through the text and to that same understanding.

Route Planner for Bible Studies:

STEP 1: WRITE YOUR SUMMARY SENTENCES

There are two goals in every good Bible study:

- **A teaching goal** (what is the one big idea that the Bible passage teaches which you want the group to understand?):
- **An application goal** (what do you want people to do or think as a result?):

"Keep a close watch on your life and doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:16)**.** People are in different places in a Bible study. We want to aim for them to grow in both their head knowledge as well as their heart and hands response to the truth.

KNOWLEDGE (Theme)
High

	Good Bible Study

Low **High**
APPLICATION (Aim)

- **Low knowledge – low application:** this is someone who is probably a newer Christian. They need milk before meat, so don't cause them to choke in the study. Explain things for them to understand and grow.
- **Low knowledge – high application**: this is someone who is hungry to learn more about the Bible and quick to put it into practice. However, sometimes they also can be indifferent to studying things more in depth and prefer more activity to love and serve

God. They need to be challenged to learn more about who God is as He has revealed Himself so they don't love and serve a God of their own imagining.

- **High knowledge – low application**: this is a dangerous place to be because you know all the right answers but there will be a disconnect with your life. They can easily look mature but they need to be challenged to live out what they already know to be true.
- **High knowledge – high application:** Christian maturity is about high knowledge/information of biblical true and high response/application to that truth in our lives. Transformation does not occur by information (head knowledge) alone, rather it requires Holy Spirit filled and guided application of that truth into every aspect of our lives. This is Paul's prayer in Colossians 1:9-10.

STEP 2: HOW TO WRITE STUDY QUESTIONS?

By means of asking good questions, you want people to grasp the teaching goal for themselves and respond to the teaching goal with the application goal.

(a) The 'Launch' question – *help us to get into the main idea of the passage and get our interest levels warmed up for what we'll be studying*

(b) Observation questions: 'What…? Who…? When…? Where…?' questions – *familiarise us with the content of a passage*

Variations on questions: Summarise the passage… Paraphrase a familiar passage … Compare two similar passages … Identify Contrasts … Categorise ideas/themes … List … Interview like a journalist the characters in the passage… Mapping out the plot … Filling in a table … Role-play … Logic, Flow, Cause/Effect Diagrams to see development of ideas… Swedish Method (Question Mark, Light Bulb, Arrow)

(b) Meaning questions: 'Why…?' questions – *help us to understand the meaning/significance of a passage*

(c) Correlation questions: Using other passages to bring clarity on this passage

(d) Summary questions (i.e. helping them sum up the central truth in their own words).

(e) Application questions: 'So what…? How…?' questions – *help us to apply the passage to our thinking and behaviour.*

Tim Chester gives some tips about writing questions:

Good questions…

- Are clear
- Make people look at the passage
- Open up discussion (open vs closed questions)
- Move people towards your teaching goal
- Require some thought without being too difficult

Bad questions…

- Are too easy or dull
- Give the answer in the question

- Ask two questions in one
- Encourage speculation away from the Bible
- Are too complicated

STEP 3: HOW TO LEAD THE STUDY?

Colin Marshall in his book "Growth Groups: A Training Course In How To Lead Small Groups" gives these helpful tips.

- **Be prepared!**

- **As you lead be encouraging, motivating and keep pushing towards the final (application) goal**

- **Know Your People (and their diverse personalities, opinions and experiences)**
  - Chattering Charlie
  - Dominating Deborah
  - Silent Sam
  - Negative Norman
  - I-rene
  - Prickly Pete
  - Tangential Tom
  - Answering Andrew

- **Welcome pauses**

- **Value every contribution (but not equally)**
  - **Handling wrong or inadequate answers**
    - Ignore the error for the moment, hoping clarity will come later
    - Ask the group to respond, hoping others will clear things up
    - Ask a further question

  - **Handling the right answer: Asking further open questions to guide or probe**
    - Extending: What can you add to that?
    - Clarifying: What do you mean by that?
    - Justifying: What reason can you give for that?
    - Re-directing: What do others think about that?
    - Reflecting: What I think you're saying is… is that right?

- **Encourage the group to ask questions**

- **Keep interacting and bringing back to the text of the Bible**

- **Don't answer your own questions**

- **Don't preach on your hobby-horses**