

Aim of lesson

To help the young people develop a good habit of Bible reading and to help them do it with a purpose.

Bible background

2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Corinthians 10:11

Preparation required

Familiarise yourself with the passages above and in the Students' Notes so that you can be ready to prompt the discussion. This lesson contains many points and questions to be discussed so you will need to decide which are the most relevant for your group and perhaps deal with these first. There are also many exercises in the Students' Notes so be prepared to select and/or share them amongst the young people.

If the class is not used to discussion they may prefer to write some of their opinions down to start with. Most young people who do not wish to voice their opinions are afraid of looking stupid or 'goody-goody' so you can help by showing you value their opinions and are prepared to admit that you don't always find things easy.

Suggested outline of lesson

What is the point of Bible Reading?

Get each of the young people to look up some of the passages given here. In a group you can share the verses between them.

Ask them what they think and get them to put the answers on the Students' Notes. The passages in this section will remind them what the word of God can do (some they may have come across in Lesson 1). It is a useful exercise to draw lines from the passages to the reasons suggested by the young people.

They should conclude that the main reasons are for us to learn of salvation and for the word of God to change us.

The accumulation of knowledge for its own sake will not bring us salvation so we should always try to see some lesson in what we read. Factual knowledge is useful to increase our interest or to build on in future but it shouldn't be used to 'show off'.

How did the scriptures help Jesus and others?

This section has passages showing how the scriptures helped Jesus, Peter, Stephen and Paul. There are of course many others.

How should we go about Bible reading then?

What about these suggestions?

- Pray before you read, for guidance, understanding and humility. Pray afterwards for help to put the lessons into practice and to thank God.
- Think of the lesson or lessons taught by a chapter or passage, and choose one as a 'motto' for the day

Some passages to read

The Students' Notes have some passages to try this out with. The passages could have the following answers:

- a) We should recognise, as Eve did, that everything comes from God.
We should try to do things God's way, not our own.
God sees all that is going on and wants to help us do right.
- b) We should recognise God's greatness in his miracles (nature, science, etc.).
We should recognise his holiness.
We should recognise his concern for his people.
- c) Jesus prayed constantly therefore so should we.
Jesus can comfort us when we're frightened.
He has power over the elements therefore our lives.
He has endless patience.
- d) We should try to be well spoken of.
We should be ready to tell people when we appreciate them.
We should show hospitality.
We should not gossip maliciously or put ourselves first.

Write a sentence summary

This is especially useful for harder chapters. Using a modern version helps to pick out the passages but the NIV sometimes does the job for you in its headings. The passages may be summarised as follows:

- John the Baptist comes as the Old Testament says he would. Jesus is baptised by him. Jesus starts to preach and chooses his disciples, and heals a man with a mental illness.
- Greetings from Paul to the people in Corinth. Paul says he always thanks God for them. He has heard that there are cliques in the church and this should not be so because Christ is One. The simple message of the cross may seem silly to clever men.
- Paul writes to Philemon asking him to receive back the runaway slave Onesimus.
- God is like a shepherd taking care of me in every situation and I know he always will.

Research

Discuss these ideas:

- Keep a 'log-book' and each day jot down things you have discovered or things you don't understand and share these thoughts with each other each week.
- Mark your Bible. Use a colour system to help you find passages you need when talking to friends. Mark in the margin things that interest you. Is it better to use pencil or pen? Is it useful to record who said things? Is it better to write facts or opinions?
- Ask yourself questions. The last section in the Students' Notes might suggest the following:
 - a) What else do I know about John the Baptist?
 - b) If I read a parallel account will I learn anything else about this story?
 - c) What do I know about the kings that were reigning when Amos prophesied?
 - d) What happened in Thessalonica?
 - e) Do I know where these quotations come from?

Discuss whether the whole group read the same plan: the daily readings, one portion of them, the Bible reading planner or read through one book of the Bible. Set a time aside to ask each other questions. How can the group balance the time for reading and praying with the demands of homework.

Discuss what are the best places and times to read. Morning or afternoon? At a table, in an armchair or in bed? Alone or with others? In families?

Discuss the advantages of learning verses by heart. To be able to call them to mind in times of stress? When talking to a friend?

There are lessons on the use of concordances, and other study aids and the advantages of different Bible versions later in the series.

Relevance to our lives

We always say that we base our lives on the Bible so from the earliest age we should be in the habit of not neglecting it.

We should get used to getting the help we need from God's word.

The young people should be aware of the dangers of reading and not taking anything in.

Prayer

There is plenty of opportunity for prayer in this lesson. The group could pray together about their aims and thank God for his word.