

Leading a Seeker Bible Study: Frequently Asked Questions

By Becky Pippert

I remember the first time I heard of running a Bible study that was geared for seekers and skeptics. I was a university student studying in Spain, and attended a Christian international student conference in a castle nestled in the Austrian Alps.

I went to a seminar on evangelism and the speakers, Ada Lum and Ruth Siemens, began by asking: “How do we arouse the interest of our skeptic friends in Jesus?” Most unbelievers are not ready to receive Christ after hearing the gospel only once, nor are they usually ready to come with us to church. Yet even those who are turned off by the church are still curious about the person of Jesus.

So what do you do after you’ve prayed and asked God to guide you to people he is seeking? First, you have some spiritual conversations, in which you listen to their questions and develop a friendly relationship. *But then what do you do?* Ada and Ruth said that the next step is inviting our friends to take a look at Jesus. Jesus is so different from what skeptics assume he will be like. He is so radical, beautiful, unpredictable and irresistible. The greatest shortcut in evangelism, they said, is allowing our friends to see the real Jesus!

Although I still had questions, I was hooked. It made sense to me—and I have been doing Seeker Bible Studies ever since! In our global evangelism ministry I have seen Seeker Studies started on all six continents with extraordinary fruit.

Perhaps you have some of the same questions that I had back then:

Will they come?

I was surprised to discover that people were interested when they realized the group was a “safe place,” where they could come with their questions and wouldn’t be made to feel embarrassed by their lack of Bible knowledge. For many it also helped if they realized that other seekers were coming as well. But we can also offer a one-to-one study if that would be more comfortable for the seeker. If it is a small group of unbelievers, then remember not to flood the group with Christians! *Uncovering the Life of Jesus* is a study I’ve written that is geared for seekers and skeptics. Not everyone I’ve invited to a Seeker Bible Study has accepted, but I’ve learned that “no” doesn’t mean “never.”

But they don’t accept the Bible is God’s word, nor do they believe it’s true!

We aren’t asking them to! We aren’t asking them to believe anything—rather, we are inviting them to look at the primary source material of the Christian faith and come to their own conclusions about who Jesus is. The aim, we tell them, is to be informed enough to make an intelligent decision.

How do you invite someone to come?

I often say after I’ve had a spiritual discussion with someone: “Your questions are so good. But may I ask you something? Have you ever actually read the Bible as an adult? How can you make an intelligent decision about Christianity if you’ve never looked at what Jesus says? I think it’d be fascinating to look at one story about Jesus so you can see what you

think. Think of it like a book club, only the book is the Bible. If you like it, then we can look at other stories too." Depending on the seeker, I may invite other seekers to come too—or do a one-to-one study.

How do I prepare?

If you're using a pre-prepared study guide, such as *Uncovering the Life of Jesus*, remember always to read and re-read the passage first, carefully and prayerfully, without looking at the study guide. Write down any questions you have, or questions you think seekers might have, about the passage. Then look at the questions in the Study Guide. Also, be sure to write some secondary questions to use after my questions. Be ready with alternative ways of asking questions in case your seeker friends seem stuck or puzzled.

Your primary job as you lead a Seeker Bible Study is to draw out the answers from the participants, not teach the passage to them. The aim is an inductive study, meaning it's an approach of self-discovery. We want seekers to grapple with the text. In a Seeker Study we won't be able to dot every "i" and cross every "t" in terms of theological clarity. Coming to faith is a process, and our prayer is that, through the power of God's word and his Spirit, seekers will be drawn to the beauty, power and truth of who Jesus is. And one day, we trust, some will put their trust in Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Besides leading a lively Bible study, and praying for group members privately, is there anything else I should do?

First, I don't begin my Seeker Studies with prayer because I've told group members to think of it as a book club. However, toward the end of the series I suggest we have a party after the study and for everyone to bring food. Then, before we eat, I pray a simple prayer of thanksgiving, and thank God for each person in the group.

It is very important that you and your co-leader (if you have one) meet with each person in your group alone (for coffee or lunch, etc) sometime during the six-week study—preferably toward the final weeks of the study. Try to make it a private, quiet place of meeting if possible. If you have four seekers in your group, then you could meet with two and your co-leader with the other two (but alone, not together). As the conversation develops, ask the person something along these lines: "What do you think of the study so far? How does Jesus strike you? What questions do you have?"

Test the waters and see if they might be close to giving their life to Christ. If you sense an openness, you could ask: "Is there anything that would keep you from becoming a Christian right now?" Then be prepared to lead them to Christ if they are ready!