

HOW TO TEACH THE SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES EFFECTIVELY

The Search the Scriptures (STS) is an essential part of the service as it forms the backbone of Bible knowledge. It is a period when believers can be practically taught key tenets of the faith in an interactive environment. The session can be judged successful when members retain what they learnt and reflect it in their lifestyle. Hence the teacher must be skilful and diligent to pass the message across clearly, attractively and convincingly. How can this be done?

PATTERN AND PARTICIPATION John 5:39

The STS is meant to impart practical Bible knowledge in an interactive, participative way. Hence the teacher should involve the audience maximally. The style is essentially different from preaching.

- **The structure: *The total timing for the STS is 25 minutes. Respect the timing:***
 - Spend the first 5 minutes to recite the memory verse, read the text and make connection to the previous study. Where the text is very long, then it could be read in parts as the study progresses.
 - Then spend 5 minutes to summarise the study. The summary should bring out the key thoughts.
 - Then spend 10 minutes for discussion by asking questions in a way to involve as many people as possible, passing short comments where necessary. Then conclude.
 - The remaining 5 minutes is for prayer.
- **The scriptures: *Emphasis is on transmission of scripture knowledge:***
 - People should search the scriptures. Ask the audience to read specific Bible verses apart from the text.
 - Limit your involvement to facilitation, guidance and short comments.
 - Involve many people, not only a selected few.
- **The supplication: *Internalisation of the subject matter requires guided prayer on the subject:***
 - Let people pray on the subject for about 5 minutes.
 - Guide them by supplying key prayer points based on the lessons learnt.
 - Give time for prayer. Pray along after giving the point. Do not make it a time of (more) preaching!

PERSONAL PREPARATION Proverbs 24:27

Adequate preparation of the leader is essential for effective teaching. Prayer is integral to effective ministrations. It will help the teacher to gain scriptural insight, connect with the audience and reach their hearts with the word beyond mere mental comprehension. Do not bring the booklet to the pulpit. Part of your preparation is to make a concise note where the key points are written. In the handwritten example shown, the following points are illustrated:

- **The title and text:** These should be clearly mentioned so people can relate to it.
- **The memory verse:** Let the people rehearse it, not read it. The teacher should be an example in this!
- **The summary:** This captures the essence of the lesson; hence it should be short and comprehensive.
- **The key points and questions:** To improve the flow, take the lesson as it is written. That means the questions should be asked as the study progresses, not waiting till the end. This will help people retain the subject better.
- **Conclusion:** This is the climax of the study. Hammer the main points here in a way to lead people to a prayer of commitment.

STUDY 464: The visions of Cornelius and Peter - Acts 10:1-22

MV: "And he said, It is a right thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will ^{also} give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." - Isaiah 49:6

Human rigidity and tradition restricted the Gospel to the Jews, home and abroad, but God had a plan to reach the whole world - Jews and Gentiles. In our study, He orchestrated the conversion of Cornelius and his household and this was driven by two key visions: one to Cornelius as a representative of the Gentiles, and another to Peter as representative of the Jews (but more importantly as God's messenger and holder of the salvation message). God's vision to Peter demanded a radical departure to the prevailing Gospel field of the Early Church. It is important for us to apply this study to our own long practice of limiting the Gospel to one audience. We must allow God to change our "Not so, Lord" especially in subtle areas.

Q1: Why were the visions significant? [It marked the beginning of evangelism beyond Jews]

Character and conviction of Cornelius Acts 10:1,2; John 9:31
Cornelius held authority but he feared God. He would submit to God likewise.

Q2: How does Cornelius' character challenge contemporary Christians?
[He lived in the light he had received. He had Godly reverence on his household. He was devoted and prayerful. Yet he needed the Gospel!]

The conclusion and vision of Cornelius Acts 10:3-6
Cornelius was a sincere seeker who needed direction on how to serve God acceptably.

Q3: What can the contemporary believer deduce from the vision of Cornelius?
[1. Prayer in personal confusion (Ps. 8) 2. God is not willing that any sincere seeker should perish. 3. Angels are God's messengers to men. They are not Gospel preachers. 4. There is no acceptable alternative to salvation through Christ (Acts 4:12).]

Q4: What can the believer learn from the complacency of Cornelius?
[1. He was prompt (Psalm 119:60; Gal. 1:15,16). 2. He deployed his best human resources to his obedience. 3. He neither added nor diminished from God's command or word (Deut 4:2). 4. Christians should be faithful and dependable in employment or service.]

Consequence of Peter's vision (Acts 10:9-22; 11:1-12)
Peter had an understandable struggle with the directive God was giving him in the vision. It was contrary to establishment. Nevertheless, he submitted to the will of God. A believer must be willing to let go once God's will is clear!

Q5: What was the outcome of Peter's vision?

[It opened the way to reach the Gentiles, removing the resistance of the Hebrew Christians and leaders who saw God's hand in it. Gentiles could now be welcomed into God's household as He is truly Father to all. The field expanded.]

The major requirement of repentance toward God and faith toward Christ cannot be compromised: the sinner must fulfil these to be saved. Beyond these necessary things, the mission-minded Church should remove every barrier to outreach and prayerfully heed the Spirit's leading especially in reaching to people of other cultures. Like Peter, we must understand that God is no respecter of persons.