

BIBLE STUDY METHODS

VASTERAS METHOD. The method was developed in Sweden by a pastor in a rural congregation. Five steps encourage personal reflection, group discussion and sharing. The marking may vary but the categories should remain constant.

Step 1: Read the passage aloud.

Step 2: Each individual read the passage along and use the following marks in the margins:

i (one candle): This is new for me—a new understanding, new insight, new appreciation.

ii (two candles): I want to remember/memorize this verse/idea.

> (arrow): This strikes me as being especially important.

? (question mark): This is not clear. I need help in understanding what it says.

Step 3: Each person select two or three markings to share with the group.

Step 4: Together. Share markings and discuss learnings, questions, new insights and application to life.

Step 5: Each person concludes the study with a statement: “When I study this passage, I...”

AFRICAN BIBLE STUDY (ALSO “DWELLING IN THE WORD” OR *LECTIO DIVINA*).

This method comes from the Lumko Institute of South Africa. The group needs only one Bible.

Step 1: Passage read by leader. Participants asked to listen as the text is read for the one thing that strikes them as important or significant or unusual.

Step 2: Each person shares what caught their attention on the first reading.

Step 3: Text is read a second time by a different person. A period of silence for meditation.

Step 4: Each person shares what is seen in the text now. This can be a new idea.

Step 5: Text is read a third time by a different person. This time a period of silence for meditation focuses on my relating the text to my own experience and life situation.

Step 6: Each person shares.

Step 7: The text is read a fourth time by another person. Listen for what God is asking you to do—the challenge heard in the Word.

Step 8: Each person shares.

Step 9: The study closes with prayer.

SOUTH AMERICAN BIBLE STUDY. This method is described in Thomas Groome’s book *Religious Education*.

Step 1: Each participant is asked to share something going on in his or her life that is important and difficult. No comment is to be made by other participants.

Step 2: Each person is asked how he or she is responding to the situation.

Step 3: The text for the coming Sunday is read and the participants are asked to think about how the passage may be addressing their situation.

Step 4: Each person is asked to address the question, “In light of our insights into the text, what are some things I can do this week to live out the Gospel?”

Step 5: Each person addresses the question, “Of all the possible things I can do, what should I do?”

MEDIVAL QUESTIONS. In the middle ages, scholars looked for four different meanings:

The literal meaning. What the text actually says. The surface meaning.

The ethical meaning. What the text wants me to do. The moral/ethical issues raised for me.

The symbolic meaning. The allegorical or metaphorical meaning of the text. What the text means at a deeper level.

The spiritual meaning. How the passage deepens our awareness of the presence of God.

PARAPHRASE. A paraphrase seeks to put the passage in everyday terms. It is not necessarily a literary masterpiece but rather a personal expression in the ordinary language and words of the person doing the paraphrasing. A paraphrase may substitute different words for words used which may have lost their meaning because of common use. It is possible to paraphrase a passage without using any of the words which actually appear in the passage. Paraphrasing is designed to provide new insights and ways into applying the passage to everyday life

Step 1: Read the passage (either one person read it for the group or each person reads it alone).

Step 2: Each participant write the passage in paraphrase.

Step 3: Each participant read his/her paraphrase and tell why certain words seemed to better express ideas than other words.

Step 4: Each person responds to each paraphrase with a statement, "If I really believed this, I would..."

Step 5: Summarize ideas uncovered by the study.

Step 6: Close with prayer.

OUTLINE. Developing an outline will engage a group in discussion about key concepts and ideas in a passage as well as how various parts of a story relate to each other. Outlining encourages interpretation and clarification.

Step 1: Every participant should have a copy of the text to be studied.

The leader or another person in the group reads the passage.

Step 2: Each participant will develop an outline of the passage including these parts on a sheet of paper divided into three columns: Verse and words, Themes and Total Message.

Step 3: In the lefthand column, write the verse numbers and a word or phrase that describes the verse. Draw a horizontal line between verse groupings.

Step 4: In column two write a word or phrase that summarizes the points or themes in the section of verses. A theme may relate to several verses.

Step 5: In column three summarize the entire passage in one sentence which expresses the total meaning.

USING WORDS TO EXPRESS THE MEANING OF THE WORD. People use words in different ways. The meanings of a passage can be expressed in many different ways depending on the styles, skills and the likes of different persons. Different approaches can stimulate new thoughts in self and others. Here are some of the word techniques (you may have others to add):

Writing a Song or a Hymn. Use a familiar tune or write your own.

Writing a Poem. There are at least four different types of poems:

Rhyme Endings. The last word in a line rhymes with the last word in the previous line.

Limerick. A limerick is a five-line rhythmic poem in which lines 1, 2 and 5 rhyme and have a similar rhythm and lines 3 and 4 rhyme and have a similar rhythm. Example:

A silly young fellow named Hyde
In a funeral procession was spied;
When asked, "Who is dead?"
He giggled and said,
"I don't know, I just came for the ride."

Haiku. A Japanese poetry form which uses a total of 17 syllables in a three-line pattern with a 5-7-5 meter as follows:

Spiteful, ugly words (5 syllables)
Said without conscious intent (7 syllables)
Ruining my actions (5 syllables)

Cinquain. A five-line poem based on a set pattern of syllables, as follows:

Clear, cool (2 syllables)
Nourishing life (4 syllables)
Deep in each tiny cell (6 syllables)
New growth springs from God's baptismal (8 syllables)
Waters (2 syllables)

Step 1: Read the passage aloud.

Step 2: Each participant reads the passage alone and thinks about the meaning of the passage.

Step 3: The group discusses the meaning of the passage and summarizes it.

Step 4: Each participant selects a technique and develops his/her own set of words.

Step 5: Each person shares the work done.

Step 6: Brainstorm and list on newsprint ways in which the words expressed relate to life.