

# SUCCESSFUL BIBLE QUIZZES<sup>1</sup>

## I. INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS:

**A. Limit the size of quiz groups.** Keep the teams' small (5-15), that way more people will have a chance to be involved. The number of teams you have will depend on how many young people are in attendance. For instance, if the number is 12-20, then probably two or three teams will be sufficient. If the number is large (e.g. 100-150), then break them into enough teams to create 10-20 people/team. If you don't make the teams fairly small, a few clever individuals will tend to give all of the answers and the rest (the vast majority) will be doing nothing, which means they will eventually be talking among themselves, causing distractions, and not having a good time.

**B. Usually divide the young people into teams for quizzes.** Occasionally you will want to conduct a general Bible quiz in which there are no real winners and losers, or where you only keep track of individual results and give the best quizzers a prize at the end. Usually though it is better to divide the young people into teams, as this will increase interest and will appeal to the competitive nature of people. It will also cause youth to talk and work together, thus developing them socially as well. Be sure and always have each team come up with a name for their team (not one that is questionable or associated with anything worldly). If they can't seem to think of anything, then just give them a name that you think up.

**C. Strive to involve everyone in the quiz.** Some youth know more about the Bible than others or are better at answering quiz questions than others, and thus can tend to dominate quizzes. So develop techniques to keep those "superstars" from dominating your quiz and giving all the answers. One simple way to prevent that is to **limit how many correct answers a person is allowed to give**. For example, you may announce, "*You can only answer four questions correctly, after which you are eliminated from answering further questions.*" (The actual number you allow them to answer correctly will depend on how many questions you have in your quiz, as well as how many young people are participating. **Note: A person should be allowed to give an unlimited number of incorrect answers**). Also, once a good number of individuals have had a chance to participate and give answers, you can always open it back up and allow everyone to become eligible again to answer questions later on in the quiz, if you wish to do so.

To keep everyone involved including those who answer several in rapid succession and thus eliminate themselves from giving further answers, allow individuals who have answered their quota of questions the freedom to counsel, help and advise their teammates. Even though they will obviously be supplying answers to their teammates, it still allows those others to get involved and stand up and give answers. This also encourages more social and personal interaction between members of each team (Remember, we want to use quizzes to develop youth socially, as well as mentally and spiritually).

**D. Get sufficient help.** One person usually cannot do everything necessary to make a Bible quiz run smoothly. It's also a good way to get some of your youth workers and assistants involved in the youth ministry and get them up in front of your young people. Obviously, the larger the number of young people involved in a Bible quiz, the more individuals you are going to need to help you.

**It's probably best to have people stand up when they desire to give an answer during a quiz.** That way the judges can more easily see who is first. If participants just raise their hands or blurt out answers, it becomes much harder (impossible?) for those judging to determine who should answer a question first. **Don't ever give points to anyone that simply blurts out an answer.** After such individuals have shouted out 2-3 correct answers without first standing up (thus giving other teams the correct answers and easy points), they will learn to hold their tongue until they stand up and are called upon. In addition, remind the youth before the beginning of every quiz **that whenever someone stands up to answer, you will immediately stop reading the question and wait for them to respond.** This will cut down on the number of kids popping up before anyone can even hear the entire question and give an answer. Some kids tend to just jump up after hearing a couple words and assume that they will figure

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<sup>1</sup> By Mike Edwards (Originally written: Goroka, Papua New Guinea, October, 1997. Revised & updated, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, April, 2009 & March, 2011). Note: The types of quizzes mentioned under Roman numeral "II" have been taken and compiled from various sources including the "S.O.A.P." game and idea books published by *The WILDS Christian Camp & Conference Center*, Rosman, North Carolina, USA.

out the answer once they hear the rest of the question. So you don't give them the rest of the question. That will quickly stop such behaviour, making it fairer for all who are participating. One more thing: If a person stands up too early and then misses it, you can then read (or reread) the entire question for the other team or teams and give them an opportunity to try to answer it.

I have seen some quizmasters simply take turns rotating the questions among the various teams with the other teams not allowed to try to answer (i.e. there is no competition regarding who gets to try to answer the question). In that scenario, when a team doesn't know the answer, or gets it wrong, the questions simply passes on down the line to the next team that is due up. While there is nothing wrong per se with that technique, I do not favour doing it that way. One reason is because you lose the competition aspect and enthusiasm it generates. Also, if one team is weak and gets most of their questions wrong (with the opportunity passing on to the next team in line), the team following them will get more chances to answer additional questions and gain more points than the other teams, which isn't fair. As much as is possible you want to insure absolute fairness (equity) in your quizzing. Consequently, I prefer every individual being equally able to try to answer a question.

**If a person from one team has tried to answer a question and has gotten it wrong, do *NOT* allow anyone else from his/her team to try to answer it until *ALL* of the other teams have had an opportunity to try and answer it.** Once again this will discourage people from popping up without having any idea what the answer is. By also deducting points for wrong answers, you will diminish this practice. Note: There is nothing wrong with an entire team discussing a question before someone stands up to give an answer. However, once a team member has stood to his feet, no one should be allowed to give any additional help or supply answers to him/her. If they do, that team should automatically lose the value of the points assigned to that question. We want to encourage social interaction, but once a person stands up, they should be on their own!

**Regarding Personnel**, you will typically need:

**1. Judge(s).** If there are more than two teams, you should have as many judges as there are teams (e.g. 4 teams require 4 judges). The reasons for this is, if the first person to stand up gives the wrong answer, you need to have a 2<sup>nd</sup> judge who has been assigned to determine who stands up 2<sup>nd</sup>, another to note who stood up third, etc. You then go down the line until someone answers the question correctly.

**2. Scorekeeper.** The quizzier can perform this task, but it slows things down and can also lead to scoring mistakes. It is much easier if someone else is the scorekeeper. Be sure the scorekeeper **CLEARLY** understands the scoring procedures (e.g. how much each question is worth, whether wrong answers count against them, etc). Sometimes scorekeepers don't understand the scoring method being used and consequently the wrong team ends up being declared the winner. Your young people keep track of things like that and will protest if it's not done right. You can keep score on almost anything (blackboard, whiteboard, transparency on an overhead projector, notepad, etc). But if it's kept on a note pad or piece of paper, stop periodically during the quiz and have the scorekeeper read the updated scores, in order to keep interest and enthusiasm up.

**3. Quizmaster.** This is the person who asks the questions. Make sure this person can read well, and that he/she reads them out clearly and loudly so that all can hear. There is nothing more frustrating than not being able to hear the questions.

**E. Regarding scoring.** Give enough points per question to make it exciting. 1 or 2 points per question is *not* exciting. On standard quizzes I would suggest you give 5 or 10 points for every correct answer. The scores get higher and that will generally build more enthusiasm. Another suggestion is that you deduct the same number of points (or half that number) for a wrong answer. The benefit of doing that is that even if a team is way ahead halfway through a quiz, you can encourage the other teams to keep trying, since if the leading team gets several answers wrong their score will go down at the same time others are going up, narrowing the gap between the teams twice as fast!

**F. Use a variety of quizzes and quiz techniques.** As with other aspects of youth work (and ministry in general), try to have variety in what you do i.e. don't always do Bible quizzes the same way. If you do, the youth will eventually get bored. There are many ways to conduct Bible quizzes (see II below).

**G. Have meaningful, substantial questions in your Bible quizzes.** There is nothing wrong with asking questions that deal strictly with Bible facts. You will inevitably ask questions that deal with facts. It's impossible not to do so. But I would encourage you to avoid asking trivial questions such as "*What was the name of Isaiah's son?*", "*How many times did a king in the OT pound arrows on the ground?*" or "*Who fell through the lattice in II Kings 1?*" We're not interested in playing a Christianized version of "*Trivial Pursuit.*" And we're not trying to simply see how many facts our young people know. We're trying to strengthen our youth spiritually. That means we should help them to go beyond reciting facts and demonstrating knowledge-which often produces pride (I Cor. 8:1). Instead, our questions should force the young people to reason and think biblically, thus developing wisdom and not just knowledge. Wisdom & knowledge is not the same thing! Seek to cause your youth to apply biblical principles by the questions you ask. That doesn't mean you can't have a lighthearted "fun type" Bible quiz occasionally. But don't let that become a steady diet.

**H. Resources for quiz material.** There are many Bible quiz books available from various Christian publishers. Some should be available from a local Christian bookstore. If not, they can be ordered online from places like the USA. However many of those kinds of books contain the sort of trivial questions I have just advised against. So, in most cases I think you should write your own Bible quiz questions, often as an enjoyable way of reviewing biblical topics and material that you have covered with your young people. That way you can write thought-provoking questions that get beyond bare facts, and which force your young people to think, and think biblically.

## **II. DIFFERENT TYPES OF BIBLE QUIZZES.**

**A. Quizzes based on material that you have taught your youth.** As mentioned above, these questions will have to be thought up and written by you, since only you know what you have taught your young people. Obviously, doing that will take time. But it will be well worth it.

**B. "Fun-Type" quizzes taken from Bible quiz books, quiz cards, etc.** These kinds of questions will be more "*canned*" and less beneficial spiritually, since they deal mostly with mere facts. But they are fun to do once in a while for a bit of variety.

**C. "Sword Drills."** This can be done with teams, or as a group of individuals. Every person needs to have a Bible in order to participate. The format is well known: Everyone holds their unopened Bible over their head with one hand, and then the quizmaster reads the reference that they must look up. He then has them repeat the reference out loud in unison. Then after a pause and a check to make sure everyone's Bible is still closed, he says, "*Charge!*" (Note: everyone's fingers should be kept outside their Bible. Don't allow anyone an unfair advantage by having their fingers inside it, having their Bible already cracked open, or lowering it before you say "charge"). The first person to find the verse must start reading the verse at the very moment they stand up (i.e. do not let them stand up then still take several more seconds to finish finding the verse. If they stand, they must begin reading immediately, otherwise they lose the points). The first person to stand and read each verse gets points for himself or his team. Sometimes it's enjoyable to not even keep score but just do a sword drill for the fun of it. If you wish, you can add a variation on a sword drill by asking a quiz question after each verse, each question based on the respective verse they have looked up. If they find the verse but don't get the answer to the question right, they would get half the points. If they do both correctly, they would get full points.

**D. Bible Scavenger Hunts.** These are usually done outdoors, but they can be designed to be played indoors as well, though it can be more difficult to find enough objects indoors to make it work well. With Bible scavenger hunts you need to make sure you have enough copies of EXACTLY the same Bible (same edition, same translation, etc) so that there is one for each team. You type up a "*code list*" that each team must decipher. They are then to race off and find each respective item. (Hint: Type the same code on each team's list but mix up the order on each list for each team. That way they won't just watch or listen to another team and go after whatever the other team is going after). The first team to find all the objects and come to the judges with all of the items on the list, wins the scavenger hunt. To add more of a spiritual benefit to this type of quiz, you could give a devotional based on some of the objects that they brought back (i.e. object lessons). Or you could design a quiz based on those objects.

**How to write the code:** The code consists of a series of numbers with hyphenations between each number. Example: **1-5-27-14-7**. The 1<sup>st</sup> number indicates whether it is OT or NT; the 2<sup>nd</sup> number stands for the number of

the respective book in the order of books as found in the Old or New Testament; the 3<sup>rd</sup> number indicates which chapter to look up; the 4<sup>th</sup> number indicates the verse to look up in that chapter; and the 5<sup>th</sup> number is which word in that particular verse. To illustrate, the code listed above means the team must find the object mentioned in: Deuteronomy 27:14, the 7<sup>th</sup> word in that verse. You will need to get a good concordance, in order to prepare the list. Go through it to find words such as rock, pillow, grass, pearl, ball, earring, hair, branch, water, oil, coin, dog, etc. etc. There is an amazing range of possible objects you can come up with.

**E. “Bible Speed Quizzes.”** This combines some physical exercise along with general Bible knowledge, instant memorization of parts of Scripture verses, and the applying of biblical principles, truths and reasoning ability. The instructions are detailed, so they will be photocopied and given to you as a supplement to these notes. This type of quiz easily lends itself to reviewing a subject or segment of material, after you have finished teaching it to your youth. It takes time to set up, as well as write out the questions, organize the materials, etc. But the time will be well worth it, as the youth will enjoy it once they get the hang of it. Write up solid, practical questions that will force your young people to listen, memorize Scripture, and learn to think and reason.

**F. “Jeopardy Style” Bible quizzes.** The format for this type of quiz comes from a popular American television game show/quiz programme of long ago. Once again you will need to write your own questions. Only in this quiz, if you play it like the game show was played, you write not the questions. Instead, you write the answers! In giving the answers then, the youth are actually asked to give the answer in the form of a question! For example: **“He traveled with Paul on his first missionary journey.”** Answer: **“Who was Barnabas?”** (Note: You can, of course, do this quiz the regular way, i.e. read questions and have the young people give the answers). You begin by listing 5-6 different categories of questions on a blackboard, whiteboard, piece of plywood, overhead transparency, etc. For instance: *New Testament; Bible Spelling; Cults; Old Testament; Women in the Bible; Thinking Biblically.* You then need to write 5 answers (or questions) per category, each answer or question, of increasingly greater difficulty and which will be worth higher & higher point values (e.g. 10 pts; 20 pts; 30 pts; 40 pts & 50 pts for round one; 60 pts; 70 pts; 80 pts; 90 pts & 100 pts for round two). As mentioned, you will need a blackboard, whiteboard, 4 x 8 sheet of plywood, or an overhead projector [with the game board diagrammed on a transparency]. Divide the blackboard/whiteboard/sheet of plywood into six vertical columns. Across the top write (or hang signs) with the names of the six categories. Below each category write or hang numbers that go progressively from smallest to largest (i.e. 10, 20, 30, 40 & 50) below each category. Keep the answers in separate piles on a table or directly underneath each category, so you can quickly find whatever question they ask for. Begin the quiz by having one person pick the first category and amount. Read the answer and as soon as someone thinks they know the answer and stands they are called upon. If they are correct, they get that many points for their team, and also get to pick the next category and amount. They can pick any one remaining anywhere on the board whether big or small, from any category. They do NOT have to answer it. Whoever tries to answer it, if they give the wrong answer, they lose that number of points which are subtracted from their team’s total, and the second person who stood up (from another team!) is then allowed to hear the answer and then try and supply the question. If they get it right they earn that many points for their team and get to pick the next category and amount.

**Example:** If the category was OT for 20 pts, you might read an answer like this: **“He was king after David died.”** A person must then stand up and say, **“Who was Solomon?”** With that correct answer he earns 20 pts for his team, and he gets to pick the next category and amount.

One nice thing about this quiz is that the scores go up and down constantly. So even if a team isn’t doing very well, they can usually still hit a few high point value ones and be right back in the thick of things. Also, there are at least 25-30 questions/round, so it will allow many people to participate, especially if you limit individuals to 3-4 correct answers each. (Note: You will need to have your scorekeeper [or another individual] keep track of how many correct answers each young person has answered, so they can let you know when a person has reached their limit).

If time allows you can have a second round, in which you double the point values (20-40-60-80-100). The possible categories you can create for this kind of Bible quiz are basically unlimited. Often you can create categories based on what you’ve been studying and teaching your young people during the past 2-3 months. Some typical categories include: *OT, NT, Bible Doctrine; Men of the Bible; Women of the Bible; Thinking Biblically;*

*Bible Prophecy; Bible Places; Bible Spelling; Cults & Religions; Apologetics; etc, etc.* (Note: Please see the photocopy supplement for this type of quiz, in order to see what it looks like and how to set it up).

**III. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS.** Bible quizzes are popular with young people world-wide. Have fun with them but strive to make them spiritually profitable as well. Quizzes that review truths and principles that you have taught your youth will help them to remember and apply those truths to their own lives. Good Bible quizzes take time, thought and effort. But the effort is worth it. They can be used by God as another way of discipling your young people and implanting biblical truths deeper into their lives. They will also help give balance to your youth programme and ministry.