

A Special Report from Glenn Brooke,  
Author of the Premiere Guide to Bible teaching,  
[Teach the Bible to Change Lives](#)

# How Great Bible Teachers Create Powerful Hooks to Start Lessons Off Right – Every Time

## About the Author

Glenn Brooke has been teaching the Bible for more than twenty years and is the author of [Teach the Bible to Change Lives](#) and [52 Model Questions](#). Glenn is the husband of one wife (and he married 'up', way up!) and the father of two children. He is learning how to exercise his gifts every day as he walks with Christ and ministers in His name. Glenn's family calls the Johnston Evangelical Free Church (Johnston, Iowa) home. Glenn's statement of faith agrees with the twelve points of doctrine from the Evangelical Free Church of America (<http://www.efca.org>). Contact him at [info@teachtochangelives.com](mailto:info@teachtochangelives.com) if you have questions.

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## Why You Should Care about Creating Great “Hooks” for Your Bible Lessons

If you observe great teachers and preachers, you’ll see how quickly they grab your attention and interest. It seems effortless on their part. You find yourself listening harder because something piqued your interest or to catch the answer to the question you have about what’s coming. Great teachers and preachers use powerful introductions that take advantage of your natural interests and impulses to get you excited to learn more.

**The #1 one thing** several hundred Great Bible Teachers I surveyed in September 2005 wanted to know more about was **how to create powerful introductions for their lessons**. That’s what this special report is all about.

I call powerful introductions “hooks” because, when you do them right, that’s what they accomplish. They hook your class or group so they are interested, engaged, and expectant. A powerful hook is part of the structure of lessons that God uses to change lives.

I’ll go over the purpose of the hook, some examples, and your best steps toward creating powerful hooks.. This is a skill that you can develop, and we all keep working at. Remember, Great Bible Teaching is a craft, not a formula.

Teach to change lives,

Glenn Brooke

Do you have a great example hook that you’d like to share with others? Let me know at [info@teachtochangelives.com](mailto:info@teachtochangelives.com)

## Three Purposes of a Hook

1. **Get their attention and interest.** Most of your students are coming to the lesson time with their brains focused elsewhere. A good hook will “align” their mind to the lesson.
2. **Generate expectations.** People don’t actively learn unless there is anticipation, expectation, curiosity, or some drive to fill in a gap of knowledge.
3. **Set up the key elements of the lesson to be relevant to an individual.** I might be interested in something that applies to someone else, but I will be intensely interested in things I perceive will affect me.

Not every hook fulfills all three purposes, but a powerful hook will usually line up with at least two of these three.

## Some Example Hooks

Let’s look at a few examples, so you can understand what I’m talking about.

1. You can use a question. This headline I read recently could be an excellent hook: "If you knew you were going to die one year from today, what would you do differently today?" That's an attention grabber. And you immediately start thinking! (Note that this particular hook is not going to be effective with just any lesson. If your central points about doing things NOW, it might be. More about this idea later.)

2. I like to use a personal story. For an Ephesians 1 lesson, I wanted my class to key in on the meaning of the word "lavish." (1:8 in the NIV translation) So I told the story about my grandfather giving me one gift after another one year near Christmas, and I couldn't believe I was getting so much. Then I said, "That was just a tiny fraction of what God gives us in Jesus Christ. Let's learn about this in Ephesians 1." Later in the lesson I held up a little drinking glass, told the group that I'm like the glass. I pulled out a big 5 gallon bucket and mimed pouring the whole thing into the small glass -- that was my illustration for how much the Lord lavishes on us -- much, much more than we can ever hold.

3. Sometimes the hook can be a hint about a personal insight you want to share. Like this: "Today we're going to look at Daniel 5. I've read this chapter many times over the years, and this week as I was getting this lesson ready, the Lord let me see something brand new. I'm still excited and know you'll be excited when you see this, too." Bang! Your class is already wondering about what you learned, and will be listening for you to share it -- intently!

4. Let's look at another example from my Ephesians teaching. I knew that most of the people in my class thought of Ephesus as this long-ago-far-away-hardly-real kind of place. I did some research on the city and realized there are lots of parallels to Des Moines (where we live). So I used that in a hook for one class. "Did you realize there are at least 5 parallels between Des Moines and Ephesus?" And I walked through them rapidly. "So Paul is writing this letter to people just like you and me. They needed to know this information to be better disciples, and so do we."

5. Occasionally I use humor. Once when teaching through some material in Leviticus I started the class by saying "Ok, here's my unconditional guarantee: if you don't learn at least three new things in this class, I'll give you your triple your money back, no questions asked!" That got a good laugh from this group, because of course I wasn't charging them for a Sunday School class. But I was not surprised when people came to me for weeks afterward telling me they had counted the new things they learned in that class. You see, the humorous hook triggered their attention in a different way.

6. You can craft a hook based on a serious piece of information. For example, "A recent Barna survey showed that 81% of American adults who don't attend church or synagogue regularly think the phrase 'God helps those who help themselves' is in the Bible. 80% of adults who identified themselves as Christians believed the same thing. Today we're going to see what Psalm 107 says about whom God helps."

## Why Great Hooks Work

Great hooks don't manipulate people, but they do take advantage of our God-inspired human nature.

All human beings are wired to be responsive:

- We are naturally curious and like new information
- We like stories, especially personal stories
- We want to identify with others
- We have insecurities and fears
- We like to laugh

Great hooks engage people precisely because they tap into our humanity.

## Avoiding Common Mistakes with Hooks

**1. Don't try to get the whole lesson summarized in the hook.** You can pique interest in your key ideas, but don't give them all away. People don't leave movies early because their curiosity sustains them – it's frankly hard to leave until the plot has completely unfolded and your curiosity is satisfied. You want to create some tension at the start (like movies do), and leave it unresolved for a while.

**2. Make personal introductions short: "Danger, Danger, Will Robinson!"** Long personal introductions are rarely helpful and never good hooks for a lesson. When I observe people talking about themselves for more than 2 sentences at the start of a talk I can see in my mind's eye the Lost in Space robot waving his arms around while saying, "Danger, Danger, Will Robinson!"

Here is my recommendation. Say as little as you can about yourself up front, and then provide more biographical information later in the lesson, or at some break point that works. Make the up-front introduction blend right into your hook.

Your approach can sound like this: "Good morning, glad to see everyone back for our third lesson. I see a few new faces, welcome! I'm Glenn Brooke, one of

the regular teachers here.” Move right into your planned hook. And then later on you can add another personal bit of background, when it fits with the lesson.

If the group is fairly small, try to meet new people ahead of the actual lesson time. If you’re pressed for time, offer to meet more with them after the lesson.

This approach keeps the Bible and the lesson material central, not you. Humility is a good thing.

**3. Use humor the right way.** Humor is one of the most powerful things you can work into a hook. In fact, there are hundreds of articles and books about how speakers should incorporate humor into their presentations. But Bible teachers come under a higher standard (see James 3:1), so be sure you use humor well.

- Make humor relevant to the lesson, or an illustration
- Do not target people in the class unless you have their permission in advance
- Humor should not dishonor our spouses, our children, and especially not the Lord.

I use the “mother, sister, wife, daughter, and mother-in-law” test. If all these ladies would be comfortable with my effort at humor, it is probably ok.

**4. Tailor hooks to the specific lesson.** Hooks are not independent of the rest of the lesson; they’re the first part of the lesson. I can get people’s attention by telling a funny joke (“Did you hear the one about the taxi driver in Italy?”), but if your class or group can’t connect it to the lesson, you won’t be teaching to change lives.

**5. Memorize your hook, and practice saying it.** This is critical. Stumbling at the start of the lesson makes you even more nervous, and distracts your class. Practice your hook – the volume, the pacing, what words you will emphasize, even think about how you’ll make eye contact with the people.

## The Process to Create Hooks

I wish I could tell you, “Just follow these four steps and you’ll have a brilliant hook in five minute, every time.” It simply doesn’t work that way. But there are three steps I’ll recommend:

**The number one thing to do is to pray and ask God’s help.** You’re seeking the very best hook for this group of people at this specific time – and the Lord knows this information.

I believe that God delights to answer these prayers, but I don’t have a uniform experience of how He answers them. (Your mileage will vary, too 😊)  
Sometimes the hook comes to mind all in one piece. Sometimes it comes as a personal experience shortly before the class. You’ll read something or see it while you are driving around. If you’re wrestling with the Word and thinking through lesson material, then you are very likely to be “attuned” to see the related thing that becomes a great hook.

A useful way to stay up on news in any area of interest is to set up Google Alerts. Check out my special report on this free service at <http://www.teachtochangelives.com/reports.htm>

**The number two thing to do is to review your hook idea against the three purposes and see if it meets at least two of the three.** It is hard to coach people on how to come up with hooks in the first place, but even beginners can rapidly evaluate them and identify why a hook is weak. Great Bible Teachers get better at hooks because they’re willing to review them, edit them, and try again.

**The number three thing to do is try out your hook with someone** before you get to class time. See what they think – does it pique their interest? If they’re yawning or staring blankly back at you, you might need a different hook. Or an adjustment.

While you are practicing developing your own hooks, you can learn a tremendous amount by watch others. Now that you know what what makes for great hooks, you can see people doing them (well, or badly) in all kinds of places – TV news, radio, preachers, newspaper and magazine stories. Be

conscious of hooks, and make notes about what works well on you. If you were hooked, it would probably hook a lot of people.

The good news is that all of us can get better with practice.

So that's all for this special report on great hooks. Pray for insight and wisdom so that you can tailor a hook to your class at this specific time. Learn from others. Keep practicing. All this is going to help you be much more effective at teaching the Bible to change lives!

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**Any teacher can use these real-world tested questions to turbo-charge Bible study ministry - no matter how much or little previous teaching experience you have!**

## 52 Model Questions Proven to Help People Get the Most from Your Bible Teaching

Great Bible Teachers ask great questions from the Word, about the Word, and for the glory of Jesus. I've surveyed thousands of Bible teachers and everyone agrees that great questions are at the heart of interactive Bible study. But it's not easy to ask great questions, consistently, that will help people to learn!

**Bible teachers like you need a toolset that is re-usable, portable, can go-anywhere on the planet, and support teaching to any group about any passage of Scripture.**

You can adapt these 52 model questions to every Bible study situation:

- All ages from elementary through adults
- Groups sizes from 1-on-1 to 1-on-500
- Seekers, new believers right up through spiritual mature believers
- Any format of Bible teaching, even if it's not on Sunday morning
- Any Christian denomination
- Any size church
- Any country in the world

With 52 Model Bible Questions and your Bible, **you can confidently teach lesson after lesson, year after year, and see the power of great questions create changed lives.** You don't need a seminary degree to use them well. You won't need to buy a new study guide every time you want to move to a different book of the Bible or topic.

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