**Ministry Idea: Free Bible and Study Materials Giveaway**

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Recently, I was given a couple of Bibles by a friend here in Columbia. “These are just extras I have. I’m sure you can find a good use for them” he said. Personally, I didn’t need them, so I thought I would give them away and the best place to give stuff away is Facebook Marketplace (FBM from here on).

My first ad was for a NASB Study Bible. I took some pictures, wrote up a simple description, and posted the ad. I wasn’t expecting much – boy was I surprised. Within 48 hours I had 12 requests for the Bible. It’s then I realized I had hit on something special. I quickly deleted the ad so I could rethink what I was doing.

Since I’ve regrouped after that first ad, we’ve given away ## free Bibles and/or study packets in the last two months. From my experience I’ve learned there are hungry souls in the world looking for God’s word.

SO, WHAT DO WE GIVE AWAY?

* Nice Bibles. Generally, we give away new or gently used Bibles. Our rule: if it’s not a Bible you would use, then don’t give it away. Sure, paperback Bibles are cheap, but they also communicate cheapness. It’s God word, so give away nice Bibles. A $15 to $40 Bible works well. Amazon and FBM places are great places to find new and gently used Bibles. Currently, individual members are buying me Bibles for me to give away. But so that I have some extra on hand, the elders have told me to buy some as backups when I have multiple requests for a bible.
* A Variety of Study Materials. Each Bible study packet includes a variety of materials to help the recipient jump into God’s word. The congregation is paying for all these materials.
	+ Each packet includes items we print in house:
		- Three different reading plans: *New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs*, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus*, and *The New Testament*.
		- *Forgiveness – Living Out the High Calling of Our Faith*. An 8-part study series.
		- *Forty Days with Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of Mark*. A journaling workbook designed for new converts and people who want to know Jesus.
		- I will also email all these items to anyone outside of the Maury County or Mid-State area.
	+ Other items include a mix of:
		- *The Big Picture of the Bible* by Ken Craig or *Hello, I’m Your Bible* by Jason Hardin.
		- *Plugged In High-Voltage Prayer* by Edwin Crozier or *Beneath the Cross: Essays and Reflections on the Lord’s Supper* by Deward.
		- *Portraits of Discipleship* by Heath Rogers.
		- *Christian Hope: Resurrecting Our Certainty About the Future* by Drew Kizer.
		- *Your Fresh Start* by Cindy Dunagan for when I put together female focused study packs.
		- *The Early Church: First Century Christianity as Revealed in the New Testament* by Ferrel Jenkins.
		- *Grace Does That* by Perry Hall.
		- Or any other workbooks we may have left over from previous classes here at JH.

WHAT DOES THE AD LOOK LIKE?

* I record a one-minute video (the max allowable length) describing the items. I also include pictures of all the items. The description is essentially a transcript of the video with more details about each item being given away.
* Personally, I think the video is key. I want folks to put a face and a voice to the person they’re messaging when asking for a bible and/or study materials.
* Follow this link for my latest ad: <https://www.facebook.com/marketplace/item/913578183642672/>

WHAT’S THE RESPONSE?

* So far this year, I’ve run four ads on FBM with responses ranging from 6 – 14 requests for either the whole packet or certain items per ad. There are several factors that influence the responses:
	+ The nicer the Bible, the more responses. The most requests came from an ad for an ESV Journaling Bible.
	+ Generally, I get 100 to180 click on the ad in a three-day period. Members sharing the ad to their own FB pages increases responses as well.
	+ FBM sponsored ads. You can pay FB $3 for three days to show your ad to more people. I’ve done this once – for the ESV Journaling Bible, I’m sure it led to a more clicks and a few more requests but at the least it led to more visibility for Jackson Heights.
* The responses are quite interesting ranging from folks looking for hope in God’s word to people who are searching for the truth among all the error.
	+ I get several responses such as, “I want to know more about God.” Or “I’m trying to deepen my faith.” Or “I don’t know a whole lot about the Bible and want to learn more.”
	+ One person responded, “I would love the Bible study packet. I just saw this ad and I’m trying to learn what’s true. How does one even know?”
	+ Then one lady, after following up with her said, “A lady we gave a bible study pack to told me today, “Thank you so much for the Bible study packet. I started with the book on prayer. I love it. Wow.” She’s referencing Edwin Crozier’s book, “High Voltage Prayer.” I let her know he would be in town preaching his prayer series next week. She went on to say, “Remember there are people like me who grew up being forbidden to touch a Bible.” This sweet lady is Columbian so I'm assuming she is referencing how it was in the Catholic church there. But her final words said it all... "People travel to other countries (all valid) but we have many believers [here] who are just waking up to the idea of the real Jesus."
	+ It's all too easy to think no one cares about spiritual matters anymore but I'm here to tell you there are folks everywhere who want to read the Bible and know the truth. All we have to do is open our eyes and start the conversation and God will lead you to them.

HOW DO YOU INTERACT WITH PEOPLE WHO MESSAGE YOU FROM THE AD?

* This is the hard part because it requires a level of discernment.
* Before I reply to a request, I look at the person FB profile to determine:
	+ Where they live – The closer they live in Columbia the better but I’m willing to help everyone I can.
	+ Religious affiliations – If they attend church somewhere they probably won’t need the bible. \*Let me get on my soapbox here for a minute. Brethren can be the biggest moochers. I’ve had more than one person reach out the me asking “I would love to have that Bible! Can I have it please?” The answer is always a resounding “NO! Go buy your own.”\*
* The first question I ask is, “What interested you about this free Bible study packet?” From their response I can usually determine what I need to do to help them. Maybe they could use the whole packet, or just parts. I have extra materials so, while I advertise one packet I can make multiples.
* Once we settle on what I’m going to give them, I will usually ask if they want to pick it up, have me bring it to them, or mail it. I like the last two the best because I can get their address. After making contact, we add their address to our bulletin mailing list.
* I end by asking if I pray for them. This may open more avenues for conversations but regardless, YOU HAVE TO PRAY FOR THEM.
* Follow-up. After a week I usually circle back and touch base with each person who received materials asking what they are reading or studying, along with letting them know I am praying for them. I have recorded some prayers and sent them at this time. They’ve already seen my face and heard my voice so it’s natural. A few have told me they really appreciated the recorded prayer.

All in all, this has proven to be a unique way to connect with people wanting to study God’s word. We’re still in the early stages of this project and so far, we’ve made good contracts with some local people. If you want to know more let’s talk.