

## How We Grow: Practicing the Spiritual Disciplines

### Week 7 - Study

April 28, 2024

#### I. Sharing Time

- A. How was your experience practicing the discipline of silence and solitude this week? As you practiced throughout the week, did you notice or experience anything surprising, challenging, comforting, confusing, helpful, or encouraging? Invite your class to share with the people beside them, and then open it up for sharing with the class at large.

#### II. Teaching Time (*Teaching Video provided*)

- A. Teaching Narrative: The Scriptures are such a gift to us. We believe that they are God's divine revelation and that they teach us about our God, our origin, and our calling. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16, "Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, and training us to live God's way." (That's from Peterson's *The Message*). As we said a few weeks ago, the Scriptures are a primary avenue for us to come to know our God (not simply know about Him), and this week's spiritual discipline, Study, is a helpful practice for us as we seek to be transformed through the Word and Spirit. Pursuit of God's Word was a central practice in the life of Jesus. Adele Calhoun writes, "Jesus exemplified the love of God's Word in every area of his life. He used Scripture to answer those who tested him, resist temptation, find guidance, encourage his heart, comfort others, explain his actions, and ultimately face his own death."<sup>1</sup> Jesus' study of Scripture overflowed into every aspect of his life.

In an interchange leading up to Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, a lawyer approaches Jesus and asks him about what he ought to do in order to inherit eternal life. Jesus responds to him with two questions: "What does the law say?" And then he emphasizes, "How do you read it?" With this question, Jesus highlights the importance of how we interpret Scripture. Bible study is about more than simply reading. Through study, we are pursuing deeper, richer understanding of the Scriptures and the God behind the Scriptures. But sometimes finding an approach to study and interpretation can feel overwhelming.

One of my favorite classes in grad school was a biblical interpretation class with Dr. John Mark Hicks at Lipscomb. In the class, we would take a number of different

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<sup>1</sup>Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 185.

challenging passages and interpret them together within the context of our classroom community. It was awesome! Dr. Hicks was diagramming Scripture on a white board like my English teachers would diagram sentences in high school. His Bible study model was really helpful for me, so I adapted it for our students a couple years ago. I think it might be helpful to you, too!

The model consists of these 7 questions:

1. What is the passage's historical context? *This question is all about diving into the world behind the text. The stories in Scripture are real, historical events, and so studying the historical background of a text can lead to deeper understanding and insight.*
2. What is the passage's place in its book? *With this question, we try and understand the overall structure of the book and the author's intent behind his book. What role does the passage you are studying play in the overarching purpose of the book?*
3. Do you see connection to the rest of Scripture? Old Testament? New Testament? *When studying Scripture, it's important to remember that a passage should not be studied in isolation. What role does this passage play in the overarching biblical narrative? Is the passage repeated elsewhere? Does it reference another passage? Does the passage remind you of a different Scripture? Are there any biblical themes we find emphasized in this passage?*
4. Are there any terms we need to define? *It might be helpful here to look toward the original language in order to gain greater insight of the words the author has chosen.*
5. With all that in mind, what does this passage teach us about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? *At the heart of our study of Scripture is understanding the heart of our triune God of love. What does this passage teach us about His character, identity, or nature?*
6. What does this passage teach us about "the world" and sin? *Much of Scripture helps us to gain insight into ways we are separated from God. It shines light in darkness. How does this passage do that?*
7. How does this passage teach us to love God? Love others? *Our study of Scripture ought to always be tied to practice. How does this Scripture call us to live? How does it move us to participate in the mission of God?*

You know the best part about that class wasn't simply watching Dr. Hicks do his thing (even though that was awesome). It was studying within the context of our class. Getting to hear other's perspectives was so powerful. Scripture was meant to be read in community. Each of us is shaped by our own history, by our mentors, and by our churches, and through the working of the Spirit in that class, each of those perspectives added depth to our communal interpretation. And the Spirit does the same right here at Mayfair.

- B. Here's an initial question to discuss as a class: Is there a Bible study model that has been helpful for you in the past? Share about it.

### III. Discussion Time

- A. Outside the Bible, what book, teacher, lecture, etc. have had the most profound impact on your spiritual life?
- B. What is your favorite time of the day? When do you feel most energetic, alive and able to concentrate?
- C. In your own words, describe what "study" means to you, and also, what it does not mean?
- D. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were instructed to write the laws on gates and doorposts and bind them to their wrists so that "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads." (Deuteronomy 11:18). The purpose of this instruction was to direct their minds repeatedly and regularly towards God, and his instructions on human relationships. Today, we no longer take part in that practice. But how can we discipline ourselves to regularly and repeatedly study God's words to make it easier for his laws to be written in our hearts? What motivates you?
- E. We live hectic, busy lives, and we are often pulled in many different directions. How can we positively encourage one another in the discipline of study?
- F. What, in your mind, are the differences between hearing, reading, and studying God's Word?
- G. What are some methods of bible study that have worked for you? Share tips with each other in your group so you can possibly discover new ideas for growing in your discipline of study.
- H. What are some bible study resources you have used that have transformed your spiritual walk? Share with the group.
- I. As a group, spend some time in prayer, asking God to direct and bless your personal and collective study, so that you can know our Lord better and respond to him more fully. Ask God to help each member to prioritize his or her life, so we can make adequate time to seek God through study.

IV. Invitation for the Week: This week, we want to encourage you to take some time to practice the discipline of study—once individually and once in the context of one of your communities. Utilize the model we shared or a model that was shared in your class discussion. Here are some resources that have been gathered by some of our staff and shepherds:

- A. Blue Letter Bible

- B. YouVersion
- C. Bible Project
- D. ESV Study Bible
- E. E-Sword
- F. Enduring Word
- G. NET Bible
- H. Bible Gateway
- I. He Reads Truth
- J. She Reads Truth
- K. Interlinear Bible found at [Scripture4all.org](http://Scripture4all.org)
- L. Well Watered Women
- M. Daily Grace Co.
- N. Right Now Media
- O. Sermon Central
- P. Executable Outlines
- Q. Bible Recap (Podcast and Bible Plan on YouVersion)
- R. Blog by Richard Beck, Experimental Theology
- S. Podcasts from the Redeemer Church from Tim Keller
- T. Chat GPT
- U. Logos Database (subscription required)