

Women of the Word: Week Two

Lesson 2 - Slowing Down to See God's Word Clearly

Chapters 3 and 4

Studying Scripture with Purpose and Perspective

I. Review from Last Week

- We talked about the importance of being Bible literate.
- We should read Scripture for ourselves, not only rely on others to tell us what the Bible says.
- The primary purpose of studying Scripture is to know God more fully so that we can love Him more deeply.
- The Bible is God's self-revelation, His "autobiography," showing us who He is.

Key Verse:

Psalm 119:18

"Open my eyes so that I may see wondrous things from your law."

II. Studying Scripture with Purpose

- Studying with purpose means keeping the big story of Scripture in view.
- The Bible is made up of many smaller stories, but together they tell one big story.
- This big story is called the metanarrative.
- From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture tells the story of the reign and rule of God.

The Four Main Parts of the Biblical Story:

1. Creation

- God created the heavens and the earth.
- God created mankind in His image.
- Creation was very good.
- Humanity was made for fellowship with God.

Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Genesis 1:27

“So God created mankind in his own image.”

2. Fall

- Sin entered the world through Adam and Eve’s disobedience.
- Satan deceived Eve.
- Adam and Eve chose sin, and death entered creation.
- Sin broke humanity’s fellowship with God.

Genesis 3:6

“She took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.”

3. Redemption

- Even after sin entered the world, God had a plan.
- God promised that one would come to crush the serpent’s head.
- This points forward to Jesus Christ.
- Jesus is the Redeemer of all who believe.

Genesis 3:15

“He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

4. Restoration

- Through the blood of Jesus, we are restored to right relationship with God.
- God’s plan brings us back into fellowship with Him.
- The story of Scripture moves toward full restoration.

III. Seeing the Big Story Throughout Scripture

- Creation, fall, redemption, and restoration are seen throughout the Bible.
- These themes are not only found in Genesis.
- They appear again and again in the smaller stories of Scripture.

Example: The Book of Ruth

Creation:

- A family is introduced: Naomi, her husband, her sons, and daughters-in-law.

Fall:

- The husbands die.
- Naomi becomes bitter and feels the Lord has dealt harshly with her.

Redemption:

- Ruth goes with Naomi.

- Ruth meets Boaz, who becomes her kinsman redeemer.
- Boaz saves the family line.

Restoration:

- Ruth and Boaz become part of the family line of Jesus.
- Their story points forward to Christ, the true Redeemer.

IV. Studying Scripture with Perspective

- Studying with perspective helps us see Scripture more clearly.
- It is like putting on 3D glasses: the picture becomes clearer and fuller.
- We can understand parts of Scripture without perspective, but studying with perspective gives greater depth and clarity.

Two Important Areas of Perspective:

1. Historical Context

- What was happening at the time the passage was written?
- What events, customs, or circumstances help us understand the passage?

2. Cultural Context

- What was normal in that culture?
- What would the original audience have understood?
- How would they have heard or received the message?

Important Reminder:

- Context does not change God's Word.
- God's Word is timeless and unchanging.
- Context helps us understand God's Word more accurately.

V. Example of Cultural Context: Psalm 56:8

Psalm 56:8

"You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book."

- This verse shows that God cares about our sorrow and pain.
- In ancient Jewish culture, tear jars were real objects.
- Women would collect their tears in jars and pour them out at tombs as an act of devotion, honor, and love.
- Knowing this context deepens our understanding of the verse.
- God does not merely notice our pain; He honors, remembers, and cares deeply for His people.

VI. Five Questions to Ask When Studying Scripture

1. Who wrote it?

- Who is the human author?
- What do we know about his life, circumstances, or role?
- All Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit, but God used human authors with real backgrounds and perspectives.

2. When was it written?

- What was happening during that time?
- How does the time period help us understand the passage?

3. To whom was it written?

- Was it written to Israel, a church, an individual, or another audience?
- What were their circumstances?

4. In what style was it written?

- Is it poetry, history, wisdom literature, law, a letter, or a parable?
- Different genres should be read appropriately.

5. Why was it written?

- What was the author communicating?
- What was the original purpose?
- How does that purpose connect to the larger story of Scripture?

Helpful Reminder:

- We may not always know the answer to every question.
- These questions help us slow down and think carefully.
- Start with Scripture itself before turning to outside resources.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand.

VII. Practice Passage: Mary and Martha

Luke 10:38-42

Summary of the Passage:

- Jesus enters a village.
- Martha welcomes Him into her home.
- Mary sits at Jesus' feet and listens to His teaching.
- Martha is distracted with serving.
- Martha asks Jesus to tell Mary to help her.
- Jesus gently responds that Mary has chosen the good portion.

VIII. Studying the Passage with Purpose

Question:

What does this passage show us about Jesus?

Observations:

- Jesus is present.
- Jesus is kind and compassionate.
- Jesus wants our attention.
- Jesus is a teacher.
- Jesus values listening and discipleship.
- Jesus responds to Martha's anxiety and distraction, not simply her serving.
- Jesus gently redirects Martha instead of harshly correcting her.

IX. Studying the Passage with Perspective

Historical and Cultural Context:

- Martha likely owned or managed the home since she welcomed Jesus in.

- In that culture, women were expected to serve.
- Women were not typically invited to sit with men as disciples.
- Sitting at the feet of a rabbi was the position of a disciple.
- Mary's choice to sit at Jesus' feet would have been culturally unexpected and even scandalous.

How This Changes Our Understanding:

- Martha may have been concerned because Mary was acting outside cultural expectations.
- Martha was doing what she had always been taught to do.
- Jesus' response is especially gentle and gracious.
- Jesus invites Martha to see that listening to Him is more important than cultural expectations or anxious service.

X. Application

- We should not begin by asking, "Am I Mary or Martha?"
- First, we ask what the passage reveals about Jesus.
- Then we consider the context.
- Then we apply the truth of the passage to our lives.

Possible Applications:

- Be more concerned with sitting at Jesus' feet than gaining the approval of others.
- Let Jesus address our anxiety and distraction.
- Value His Word above busyness.
- Allow Scripture to challenge our assumptions.
- Seek to know God more clearly before rushing to personal application.

XI. Key Takeaways

- Purpose reminds us why we study: to know God and understand His Word.
- Perspective reminds us how to study: by paying attention to context, setting, and God's revealed message.
- True Bible study requires us to slow down.
- We should not approach Scripture assuming we already know what it says.
- We come humbly, asking God to teach, correct, and shape us.

XII. Closing Reflection Questions

1. Which comes more naturally to you: looking for personal application or slowing down to understand what a passage actually means?
2. What is one practical change you can make in your Bible study this week to help you know God more clearly, understand His Word more accurately, and love Him more deeply?