

Announcement – Middle School Leaders Announcement – General Council

According to the Center for Biblical Engagement, (Shawn Lazar, Feb 21, 2020), People who read the Bible at least four times a week are:

- 57% Less likely to get drunk
- 92% Less likely to go to jail
- 61% Less likely to use pornography
- 74% less likely to have lost money gambling
- More likely to graduate High School
- Less likely to be depressed
- Less likely to be anxious
- More likely to have friends
- Less likely to divorce
- More likely to give generously of their resources
- More likely to believe that life has meaning
- More likely to be satisfied with their sex life

90% of households own a Bible, but only 20% read the Bible four times a week. But if you look at the data, you would think it would drive everyone to want to read this book.

Most loved, most quoted, most hated, most misunderstood, most printed, most sold, most translated book in history. Also, the most stolen book. And if someone steals your Bible, they need it more than you.

The last two weeks, we focused on the origins, organization, and books of the Bible as well as it's historical reliability and authority. This week, we are going to the basics of studying the greatest book ever written.

Because this book is complicated and difficult. It can be understood by a child in moments and take scholars a lifetime to understand one part. 2000 years old, other languages, other side of the planet... but designed to speak to all people at all times. It is a book that was not written TO you, but it is written FOR you.

But this message is for ordinary teens and adults who want to get one step better at understanding God's word. My assumption is that you are like me – you don't have a fancy Bible School degree and you don't have a professor meeting with you to teach you something cool every day. You just want to get good at mastering the best piece of literature ever written. Are you ready?

HOPE –

First of all, let me tell you that there is hope. I would guess that you could become proficient in this book – like better than 90% of the U.S. in an hour a day in five years. If you are 20, that means by age 25 you

can be proficient and carry that with you for a lifetime. Of course, you'll be addicted by then and realize that the depths of this book are worth a lifetime of study even if you are proficient...

Lets say you are studying a book of the Bible. Randomly, lets say it is MARK... The first thing you need is a good BIBLE. **NIV STUDY BIBLE**. Alex will be talking in two weeks about choosing a translation and a Bible that is right for you. I think it is helpful to own a good Study Bible. For most of us, I highly recommend English. It has three things that are helpful. First, it has **cross references**. These are the little numbers in the middle of the page. You use them to find other passages that are similar. Let's say you are in the old testament and you come across a passage (psalm 22) – and it starts “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” You think... that sounds familiar, but not from here... I wonder – hit the cross reference and BOOM you see one from John – Jesus death on the cross and you realize Jesus was quoting a psalm when he said this. And it makes you read the whole psalm differently because maybe it is about his crucifixion. I'll let you look that up later to see if it makes sense.

The next thing a good Study Bible does is it give you **NOTES** at the bottom of the page. Is something confusing in the Bible (something confusing on every page!), scholars have written notes to help clarify culture, shape language, tell dates, explain geography or anything else that helps you understand the text.

Third, you **have Introductions** to every book. It will tell you who wrote the book, when it was written, the occasion and the historical context. It will give you the outline of the book and some cliff notes on what to look for in that book. Seriously, if I had only one resource to help with my Bible study (and I couldn't say “the internet”), I would choose a good study Bible.

Fourth, and most important, a good Study Bible has **MAPS!** Oh yaaaaas! It not only informs you on geography, but it feeds your addictions all at the same time! Ok, so you have your Bible, you have your notebook and pen and a little bookmark in the maps section... How do you start studying. How do you interpret the Bible well?

Keys to interpretation:

Literary Genre: you need to begin by asking this question. Why type or Genre of literature is this? I was in ministry about 5 years before I understood why this is so important. It is because each genre must be read differently. Now, we do literary genre all the time in our lives, almost unconsciously. We know what stuff means in different contexts, based on Genre.

- *Examples of Genre:* **Shakespearean Sonnet, Newspaper Article, Street Sign, Menu,** (Clip Art)
- *Quiz: Name this Genre: A fire broke out near 124th and Maple at 9am this morning. ---- Chicken and gritz just 14.99. --- The quality of Mercy is not strained, it falls upon the earth as gentle rain – No U Turn*
 - A very indecisive man was heading home after work... he came to a certain spot and couldn't decide – should I go straight or turn, go straight or turn. He was ready to go straight and then he saw it. **NO – U – Turn.** So he did. It must have been a sign.
 - Why is that funny? Because you know the genre and the meaning. No, u turn is funny and so is the double meaning of “it must have been a sign.” Genre matters
- So, in the Bible, do you know how many kinds of Genre there are? Tons! There is History, census, Love poetry, worship songs, parable, satire, prophecy, epistle and apocalyptic literature.

- Now, you have to know that each type of literature has it's own rules. Epistles are like hearing one side of a telephone conversation – you are making a lot of guesses on what is happening on the other side. You would not want to apply some of the love poetry to your student ministry. Apocalyptic literature like revelation is VERY tied to symbol – some of which we understand and some we don't. But you have to understand genre BEFORE you can do great Bible Study.

This is why the question **Do you take the Bible LITERALLY?** is not a simple YES-NO answer. Some Christians use it as a point of pride to look down on lesser Christians. Well, I take the Bible Literally! Do you?

- If anyone ever asks you that just use your Southern Accent and say “I take the literal parts literal”
- Another pop quiz – answer out loud with “literal or figurative”
 - What is this scripture – “The rivers clap their hands in praise to the LORD”
 - David went to war against the Philistines
 - If your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away
 - Jesus appeared to his disciples over a period of forty days
 - Greet one another with a HOLY Kiss – Literal! But also culturally specific... so no kissing strangers
- Now, there are some parts that Christians disagree on... and scholars disagree on... and people in the same church disagree on... and that is part of the fun of being Christian. But
- OK, so you've got your Bible... you've got your genre... what is your method? LOTS of methods help, but if I had just one method to teach everyone to use for the rest of their life, this is it.

The inductive method

Observation, Interpretation Application

We teach this about once a year – It will eliminate about 87% of Bible problems (I just made that stat up). But, if you do these simple steps, it actually – seriously – can save a TON of bad Bible interpretation. It involves three key questions asked in order. And we have a team ready to help us memorize these questions. So stand up and welcome the middle schoolers!

Middle School Moment Middle School Moment

Mark:

In an effort to get the inductive method strong in your brains, we are going to have Middle School Students lead us in the inductive cheer. So here come three of my friends and we are going to divide the room into three sections. I want each section to follow the person in front of you.

Student 1-

OK, our question is “What does it say?” Lets say that all together “WHAT DOES IT SAY?”

Student 2-

Our section gets the question “What did it mean?” Everybody say that with me! “WHAT DID IT MEAN?”

Student 3 –

Our section gets to say “How does it apply?” – Are you ready? “HOW DOES IT APPLY?”

Student 2 –

“Now lets put it all together. Just follow your student, in order! Ready?

Student 1 - WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Student 2 – WHAT DID IT MEAN?

Student 3 – HOW DOES IT APPLY?

Student 1 – C’mon, Louder! - WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Student 2 – WHAT DID IT MEAN?

Student 3 – HOW DOES IT APPLY?

Student 1 - WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Student 2 – WHAT DID IT MEAN?

Student 3 – HOW DOES IT APPLY?

Now every section has to follow the person in front of them (switch sections)

Student 1 - WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Student 2 – WHAT DID IT MEAN?

Student 3 – HOW DOES IT APPLY?

(Switch Sections)

Student 1 - WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Student 2 – WHAT DID IT MEAN?

Student 3 – HOW DOES IT APPLY?

Big applause!

Alright, so section 1 – What does it say? (this slide has three clicks, this is 1)

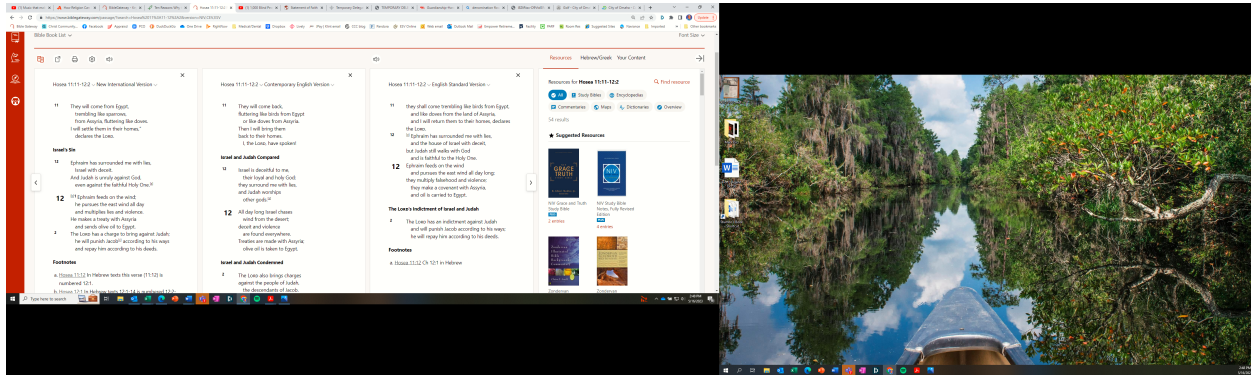
In the first section, I want you to take on two personas. The newspaper reporter and the English teacher.

Newspaper reporter – Who, what, where, when, why (Click 2)

English teacher – repeated words, themes, conjunction junction – and but and or, connecting words –

What’s the therefore there for? Main characters. (all six of these are click 3)

This is about 75% of your Bible study time. Just being a good observer. It is amazing how that one observation can change everything about how you understand a passage. This is also a good time to bring out multiple translations. My favorite online tool these days is Bible Gateway. Partly because you can throw up translations side by side and compare. Partly because you can get a full library of materials – commentaries, study Bibles, Misc resources and most important... MAPS! All for \$4 per month. And when you study, compare translations. The places to dig deeper are the places they disagree. (Hosea 11:11 Example)



Alright, once you have answered “what does it say”? you are swimming downstream... Your next question is to ask **“What did it mean?”** (New slide – 5 clicks) to the original audience. This is the Interpretation phase. This is the most difficult phase and the place you are most likely to use a study Bible or Bible Gateway commentaries. In order to discover how to interpret, you need to look at some key things:

- **What is the literary context?** (click 2)
 - Hobby Lobby Theology – if you find it in the decoration aisle of hobby lobby, it is probably out of context – “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.” It wasn’t talking about weightlifting or dealing with difficult children. It is about living with a lot or a little money... Take the scripture in context to understand and apply it well.
 - The most abused scripture is “I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper and not harm, to bless and not curse...” Well, the context of Jeremiah 29 was in exile in Babylon – and while God did have good plans for them... it would be 70 years!
- **What is the historical context?** (click 3)
 - Bring me my cloak and my scrolls – Paul was in jail and needed his cloak and scrolls.
 - Woman should not have braided hair or gold jewelry- similar to Artemis worship.
- **What was the Author’s intent** (click 4)
 - Eye for an eye – the Bible says it, so I am going to live it! But the author (Moses) intended this to be used in the context of a courtroom. After a trial, what is the right punishment? Well, the same as the crime – not more, or you accelerate the cycle of revenge. But it does not simply give us the right to exact revenge.
- **Let Scripture interpret scripture...** (click 5)
 - Acts, Baptism, and the Holy Spirit

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:38

Does Baptism result in the gift of the Holy Spirit. Sure looks like it! So some teach that Baptism is necessary for Holy Spirit Filling.

- But you have to look at context Context – Bunch of people speaking in tongues – crowds are saying “that’s cool!”
- Other verses – Acts 10 – Holy Spirit First, Baptism Second
 - The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. 46 For they heard them speaking in tongues[b] and praising God. Then Peter said, 47 “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” Acts 10:45-7
- All kinds of examples of baptism without the Holy Spirit etc.
- So, after considering the whole of scripture and the specific context, you can answer – no Baptism is an act of obedience to Jesus. Baptism, forgiveness and receiving the Holy Spirit are all a result of trusting Jesus, not a result of each other. But this is why we don’t just tear things out of context, we look at the whole.

How does it apply? – 5%

By the time you get to this point, you it is easy – you know what it said to the original audience... what it means... now you get to apply it to your life.

I remember reading about Baptism in the book of Acts and noticing... there is never a Baby that gets baptized. It is always a believer. And I was baptized as a baby, not as a believer. So I decided to get baptized. Maybe you need to be baptized too... and baptism on the green is coming up. Boom... application made easy.

Now application is not always something you DO... You could ask:

- Is there a truth to consider?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is the character of God made more clear?
- Is there something to do?
- Is God prompting me on some issue in my life.

All of this – 20-30 minutes a day. Now the truth is, that interpretation part can take 5 minutes to 5 years... but for the ordinary person, I’d encourage you to simply devote 20-30 minutes per day to personal Bible Study. But read your Bible every day. Ask what does it say, what does it mean and what does it mean to me?

Hunter: This is Hunter Croft. He started coming to CCC in January after a serious wake up call. I am going to tell his story and – just so you know up front – it is not on video in his voice, but was approved by him for me to tell it.

Hunter had been on an admitted path of self destruction. He was an alcoholic, he was regularly using drugs. He was just getting by on the work front and was in trouble with the law on multiple accounts. But he really didn't care. He was just headed down a dark path until he was eventually going to die... maybe next year and maybe in 50 years – but really just throwing caution to the wind until that point.

In January, he was drinking with a buddy and they decided to move to drugs. Hunter thought he was taking one kind of drug, but his "Friend" gave him Fentanyl. Hunter started slipping away and nearly died. His friends could tell, so they gave him Narcon to pull him out – then a second time – then a third. After standing literally on the brink of Death, Hunter felt the hand of God pull him from death back to life. It was his wake up call.

Once, about ten years ago, his step mom took him to CCC. It was the only church he knew, so he came back. He sat through a few messages and at one point I invited anybody who trusted Jesus to raise their hand. Hunter did. And he had the fortunate experience of being in the exact same row as Kelle Ashton. So, after the service, Kelle came over and heard his story. She prayed with him and invited him to come with us to a fundraiser that night – not cuz we thought he had money, but just to be with us. Then to our community group in our home the next night.

Since then, Hunter has come faithfully to our community group. He has joined a renewal group to deal with his addictions, he is working through his legal issues, and he has joined our facility staff to put his mechanical skills to use on our team. Hunter is still rough around the edges, but he is a child of God – being transformed daily by our Father! And today, he wants to come to obey Jesus in baptism.

So Hunter, I have two questions for you. First – do you believe in Jesus as the one and only hope for your forgiveness through his death on the cross? YES. And second, is it your desire to follow Jesus and obey him all the days of your life?