

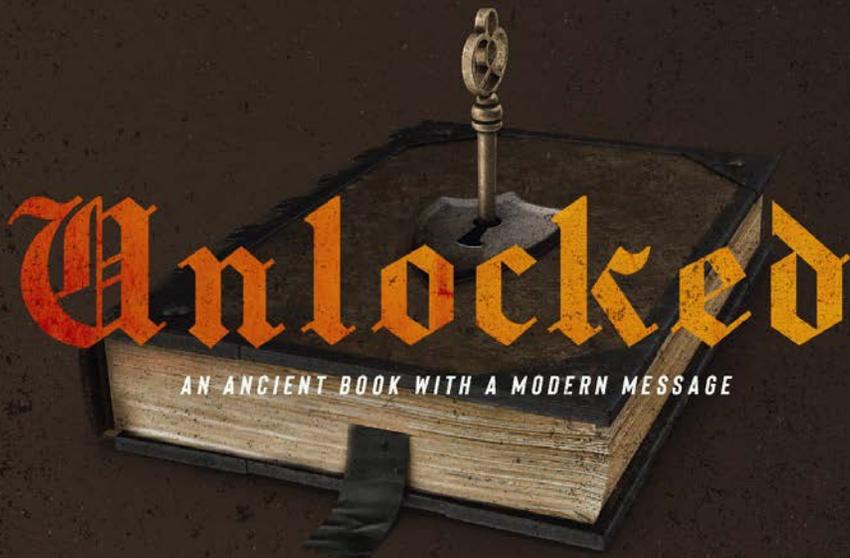
Unlocked



**AN ANCIENT BOOK WITH
A MODERN MESSAGE**



The Bible is the best-selling book of all time but may also be one of the most underestimated books of all time. While it's wildly popular in sales, it's wildly overlooked in its impact. Let's "unlock" the Bible by re-discovering its relevance, its validity, its understandability and much more!



How to interpret the Bible

A common question, is "How do I know if this verse is for me?" This is a great question. Here are some helpful points to answering that question.

STEP 1

Read the verse in context. Read the entire thought of the author where the verse is included. This may include the whole chapter or the entire paragraph.

STEP 2

Situate the context within an historical, cultural, and sociological framework as much as you can. This will require reading more of the book where the verse is found. It will also include outside resources like encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc (Online resources listed in Bible Resources on page 55.).

STEP 3

Ask yourself two questions, "What did the author want the original readers to understand?" and "What did the original readers understand this verse to mean?"

STEP 4

What genre of literature is this passage written? See week Four "How Can I understand the Bible?" for help.

STEP 5

Are there any parts of speech that could help you understand this verse better. Is there a command written? What are the verbs in this passage? What is the direct object? Were metaphors or similes used? Were there any hyperboles used?

After these steps are completed, you have exegetically studied the passage. Exegesis is "an explanation or critical interpretation (especially of the Bible)." (<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/exegesis>). The opposite of exegesis is eisegesis. Eisegesis is adding to the text something that is not there. We need to be clear that exegesis should always lead to application. When application is exegetically revealed from the Scripture, we no longer need to ask, "What does this Scripture mean to you?" This question is well-meaning, but not the right question.

STEP 6

Apply the principle from the exegesis to today.

Let's do a verse together

Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

STEP 1

What is the context of the verse? The context of this verse is Jeremiah 29:1-23. This verse comes from a letter written by Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon. In the letter, God told them they were going to be exiled there for 70 years and they should live "normal" lives.

STEP 2

God made a covenant with the Jewish people that if they obeyed him and worshiped him alone, that he would protect them and give them the land (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). God also said that if they did not obey and did not worship him alone that he would exile them from the land he gave them (Deuteronomy 28:49-52). Babylon came and forced the Jews out of Israel and into Babylon in 598 BCE (Use Google).

STEP 3

Jeremiah wanted them to know that the exile was part of God's plan and a response to their disobedience, but that God had not forsaken them. The people heard this letter and thought that God was still working on their behalf.

STEP 4

This is a written letter from a prophet. It would be categorized as part of a narrative. The letter should be understood as using "plain speech" not filled with metaphors and imaginative language.

STEP 5

God is the subject. He is the one doing. There are active verbs. The exiles are the "you." They are the ones receiving the action.

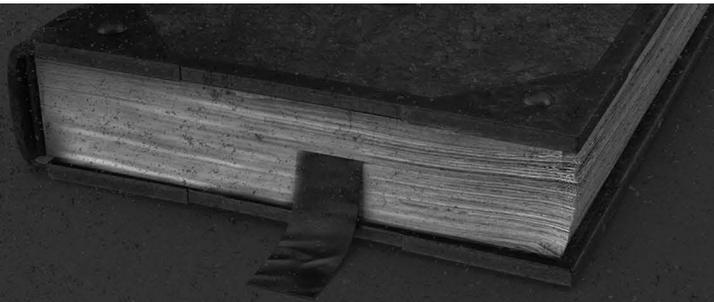
STEP 6

Exegetical application: God is working in your life and has a plan for you. No matter how you've messed it up, you can come to him in repentance. He has a good plan for you today and the future. God can be trusted.

Eisegesis (what Jeremiah 29:11 IS NOT saying): God wants to give you a new house and car. He wants you to have the best material goods available and be better than others financially.

Table of Contents

Week One — How can I trust the Bible?	6
DAY 1 — Inspired.....	7
DAY 2 — Credibility	8
DAY 3 — Transferability	10
DAY 4 — Dependability	12
DAY 5 — Confirmability	13
Week Two — How is Jesus revealed throughout the Bible?	14
DAY 1 — The First Gospel.....	15
DAY 2 — Near-sacrifice of Isaac.....	16
DAY 3 — The Snake in the Wilderness.....	18
DAY 4 — David's Tomb.....	19
DAY 5 — The Suffering Servant.....	20
Week Three — How can I use the Bible in Prayer?	21
DAY 1 — Praying the Psalms	22
DAY 2 — Praying the Psalms	24
DAY 3 — Praying the Prophets.....	26
DAY 4 — Prayers in the New Testament.....	27
DAY 5 — Prayers in the New Testament.....	29
Week Four — How can I understand the Bible?	30
DAY 1 — Poetry	31
DAY 2 — Narrative	33
DAY 3 — Teaching.....	35
DAY 4 — Prophetic.....	36
DAY 5 — Apocalyptic (to reveal).....	38
Week Five — How does the Bible speak to me today?	39
DAY 1 — Raising kids.....	40
DAY 2 — Money.....	41
DAY 3 — Employee and Employer	42
DAY 4 — Feeling depressed (not clinical).....	43
DAY 5 — Anxiety (Philippians 4:8-9).....	44
Week Six — How do I study the Bible?	45
DAY 1 — S.O.A.P.....	46
DAY 2 — S.O.A.P.....	48
DAY 3 — Word Study	50
DAY 4 — Word Study.....	52
DAY 5 — Meditation.....	53
Bible Study Resources	55



Week One

HOW CAN I TRUST THE BIBLE?

Archeology, textual criticism, and even outside readings from the same time period often attest to the Scripture as a reliable source of truth. In quantitative design, the researcher is looking at reliability (Do these instruments really measure the problem correctly?) or validity (Does this all make sense?). In qualitative research, the researcher is concerned with credibility (Does the research describe the situation?), transferability (Does it reflect the situation accurately even when displayed elsewhere?), dependability (Is the material consistent throughout the research?), and confirmability (Is there more than one witness that would agree with the material presented?).

This week we will examine the Bible based on internal qualitative evidence that it says about itself. Remember, God’s Word had 40 authors, took more than 1600 years to compile, and was written on three separate continents.

Even with such a range of authors and a span of 1600 years, we can see credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability within the Bible that tells us it is true as one unified story.

DAY 1 Inspired

KEY

What the Bible says about itself is important. In this passage in 2 Timothy, Paul explains to Timothy the importance of Scripture. Paul is primarily talking about the Old Testament. This passage helps us understand the reason for Scripture and its importance in our lives. Paul states that Scripture is “God-breathed”. “God-breathed” means that each word is energized with the Holy Spirit. Just as Adam was infused with life from the Breath of God (Genesis 2:7), we too are infused with life as we receive God’s Word into our lives.

THE BIBLE

1 Timothy 3:14-17 ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

What are the Scriptures able to do for our faith in Jesus Christ?

How does Paul say Scripture can be used?

What is the result of using the Scripture and infusing it into our lives?

How has Scripture taught you? Rebuked you? Corrected you? Or trained you in right living?

DAY 2 Credibility

KEY

Credibility is defined as describing the situation accurately. Today’s reading is filled with descriptions, both obvious and subtle. When the Bible gives rich descriptions like it does in this story, it is giving the reader of that day evidence that can be discovered to be true. The first-century reader is going to know that the Jews and Samaritans have animosity towards each other. They would recognize that no one ideally goes out to get water in the heat of the day. They may be able to talk to people who knew that woman or the people from that town. That is why the details help us see the Bible’s credibility.

THE BIBLE

John 4:4-30; 39-42 ⁴ Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.[a])

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

¹¹ “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

¹³ Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

¹⁶ He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

¹⁷ “I have no husband,” she replied.

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸ The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

¹⁹ “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

DAY 2 Credibility (continued)

²¹ “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

²⁵ The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

²⁶ Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

²⁷ Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

²⁸ Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹ “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” ³⁰ They came out of the town and made their way toward him....

...³⁹ Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. ⁴¹ And because of his words many more became believers.

⁴² They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

What are specific key details that John gives us?

How do the details make the story more credible?

What do you think happened to her husbands?

How does thinking about these specific details help us in understanding the story?

DAY 3 Transferability

KEY

Transferability is determined when the situation can be reflected accurately even when displayed elsewhere. For example, how couples date in Minnesota is studied and what we learn from the study is similar to couples in California, New York, or France. This is called transferability. Transferability helps determine the quality and legitimacy of the research. We see the same thing in the Scripture. Paul tells his readers in two of his letters, Romans 15:4 and 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, that the Old Testament stories were written to help instruct them hundreds and even thousands of years later. And now, 2000 years from Paul, the stories reflect how the situation of life is today in the 21st Century – that is transferability.

THE BIBLE

Romans 15:4 ⁴For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

1 Corinthians 10:1-13 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. ²They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. ³They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

⁶Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. ⁷Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.” ⁸We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. ⁹We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. ¹⁰And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.

¹¹These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. ¹²So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! ¹³No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

DAY 3 Transferability (continued)

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

What did Paul say was the purpose of the Scripture?

With an understanding of transferability, how is the 21st Century like the days of Moses and the days of Paul?

Idolatry:

Sexual Immorality:

Testing the patience of the Lord:

Grumbling:

How important is it to recognize these dangers in our own lives?

How does Paul give us hope for our walk with the Lord?

DAY 4 Dependability

KEY

Dependability answers the question, “Is the material consistent throughout the research?” Dependability looks at the consistency of the facts, stories, and people. What makes the Bible so remarkable is that it took 1600 years to complete so there is plenty of room for error, tangled stories, and plot holes. In today’s reading, we have one example of dependability. Jeremiah the prophet wrote to the captive Israelites in Babylon and told them that they would be there for seventy years. Then we read of Daniel praying the words of Jeremiah for God to act according to his promise. Finally, we see the fulfillment of God’s promise through Jeremiah and prayers of Daniel in the first chapter of Ezra. The Jews were returning home to Israel. These verses show a remarkable harmony and consistency so much so that we can say that the Bible is qualitatively dependable in presenting the facts.

THE BIBLE

From Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon:

Jeremiah 29:10 ¹⁰ This is what the LORD says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. (605-586 BC)

Daniel 9:1-3 In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes[a Mede by descent], who was made ruler over the Babylonian[b] kingdom— 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. 3 So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. (535 -517 BC)

Ezra 1:1-3 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

² “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. ³ Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them.

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

How does the promise, the prayer, and the fulfillment encourage you as you read the story?

How does the Bible’s dependability help you as a believer?

What are some promises you are praying about today?

DAY 5 Confirmability

KEY

Confirmability in research looks for more than one witness, this is also known as triangulation. Triangulation is where the researcher uses three or more sources of information that tell a unified story. The internal evidence of the Bible shows us confirmability. Here is what we know about Luke: he was a physician; he wrote the most words in the New Testament; he wrote Luke and The Acts of the Apostles. Luke lays out his evidence for reliability. He used other writings, particularly the book of Mark. Mark was written from the eyewitness account of Peter. Matthew was an eyewitness as a disciple of Jesus. There were other writings, oral teachings, and other eyewitnesses that Luke had access to in writing his Gospel. This confirmability shows us that this was not just a fictional story the author made up but a carefully researched document.

THE BIBLE

Luke 1:1-4 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

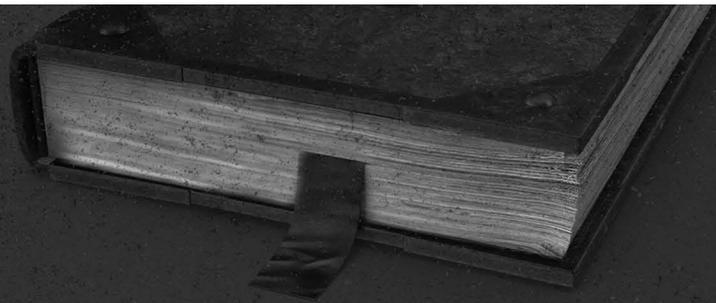
UNLOCK THE BIBLE

How does it make you feel that Luke’s gospel is a carefully researched study?

What was Luke’s goal in writing his gospel?

How does Luke’s gospel differ in style from an eyewitness account?

Since we have such strong internal evidence regarding confirmability, how does it encourage your faith?



Week Two

HOW IS JESUS REVEALED THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE?

When Jesus was on the road to Emmaus, he taught the two disciples how the Old Testament testified about Him. When he was with his Apostles, He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44). While Christ is revealed in the New Testament, He is hidden in the Old Testament. This week we will be discovering Christ in some big and some obscure stories of the Old Testament and how they are fulfilled in the New Testament.

DAY 1 | The First Gospel

KEY

In Genesis 3, we have our first good news or gospel message. It is given to us as a promise, “He (Christ) will crush your (Satan’s) head and you will strike his heel.” This promise from God was the first hope of salvation for sin and death that Adam and Eve brought to humanity through their disobedience. The Jewish people longed for the Savior promised them since the beginning in the Garden of Eden. Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of that promise. Paul’s language in Colossians 3 demonstrates that Jesus (hidden in the good news promise in Genesis 3) is the fulfillment of that promise. Paul says that Jesus “forgave us all our sins,” and “disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” The cross was Satan’s strike against the heel. The cross was also where Jesus crushed the head of Satan. He stripped Satan of his power and authority!

THE BIBLE

Genesis 3:14-15 Old Testament ¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,...¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring[a] and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Colossians 2:13-15 New Testament ¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

How quickly do you think Adam and Eve were expecting this promise to be fulfilled?

How did you feel when you first realized that this was the first promise of salvation?

How often have you looked for Christ in the Old Testament?

DAY 2 Near-sacrifice of Isaac

KEY

In this first story, we see Abraham takes his only son, Isaac, to Mt. Moriah to be sacrificed. Isaac was on the altar and Abraham was getting ready to sacrifice him to God. Suddenly, he was stopped by an angel from Heaven. Instead, a ram was found. The ram was caught in a bush by its horns. God had provided another sacrifice. The ram was unscathed, that is why Moses mentions that the ram was caught by its horns. A pure sacrifice was made available. There on Mt. Moriah, God revealed to Abraham his whole plan from the temple sacrifices to Jesus Christ. Jesus, like Isaac, was an only son. God did not spare his son. As a pure sacrifice, Jesus died on our behalf like the ram did for Isaac. Jesus tells us that Abraham saw this and rejoiced.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 22:1-18 Old Testament *Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.*

² Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

³ Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

⁸ Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

¹² "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

DAY 2 Near-sacrifice of Isaac (continued)

¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram[a] caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place *The LORD Will Provide*. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

¹⁵ The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶ and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸ and through your offspring[b] all nations on earth will be blessed,[c] because you have obeyed me."

John 8:52-58 New Testament ⁵² At this they exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

⁵⁴ Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. ⁵⁵ Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

⁵⁷ "You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!"

⁵⁸ "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

Who did Abraham think the Lord meant in this promise?

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

Why were Abraham and Isaac willing to go through with this sacrifice?

What name did Abraham give to God after this experience?

What are the comparisons you see from the Story of Abraham and the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus?

DAY 3 The Snake in the Wilderness

KEY

The Israelites were grumbling. God sent snakes to bite those complaining that God had not taken care of them. When they asked Moses for help, God gave Moses very strange directions to help them. When you read this story, it just seems so weird; however, it makes sense considering Jesus' teaching in John 3. Jesus compares what is going to happen to him to the snake lifted up in the wilderness. He compares the Israelites being saved by looking at the snake on the pole to people believing in him to have eternal life.

THE BIBLE

Numbers 21:4-9 ⁴ They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; ⁵ they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!"

⁶ Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. ⁷ The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

⁸ The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." ⁹ So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

John 3:14-16 ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

What did the Israelites have to do to be healed?

What is the comparison between the snake and Jesus? How was Jesus "lifted up"?

What is necessary for salvation today?

In the Greek, the word "whoever" in verse 16 is singular. What does this mean for us?

DAY 4 David's Tomb

KEY

David is writing in the Psalms under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. When you read this psalm, it sounds like David has a promise from God that he will not die. Was David writing that about himself? Was he using poetic language? What we realize later is that David was writing this to tell us about the resurrection of Jesus. David probably did not know this when he was writing this under the supervision of the Holy Spirit. It is hidden. Peter reveals it when he preaches in Acts 2.

THE BIBLE

Psalms 16:9-11 Old Testament ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure,

¹⁰ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful[b] one see decay.

¹¹ You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Acts 2:29-35 New Testament ²⁹ "Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand ³⁵ until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." "[f]

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

How were these hidden messages helpful for the new believers as the church began?

What are you noticing about the hidden messages in the Old Testament that are revealed in the New Testament?

How do these revelations help your faith?

DAY 5 The Suffering Servant

KEY

Isaiah 53 was known as the Gospel of the Old Testament. In Acts 8, we find a convert to Judaism. He is important enough to have the scroll of Isaiah. Philip understood that Christ was hidden in the Old Testament, but the Eunuch did not. When he asked Peter, “Who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?”, this is a great question. We need to understand that question as we read the Old Testament.

THE BIBLE

Isaiah 53:7b-8 Old Testament *he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living;*

Acts 8:26-34 New Testament ²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” ²⁷ So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship,²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

³⁰ Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

³¹ “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

³² This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ³³ In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.”

³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?”

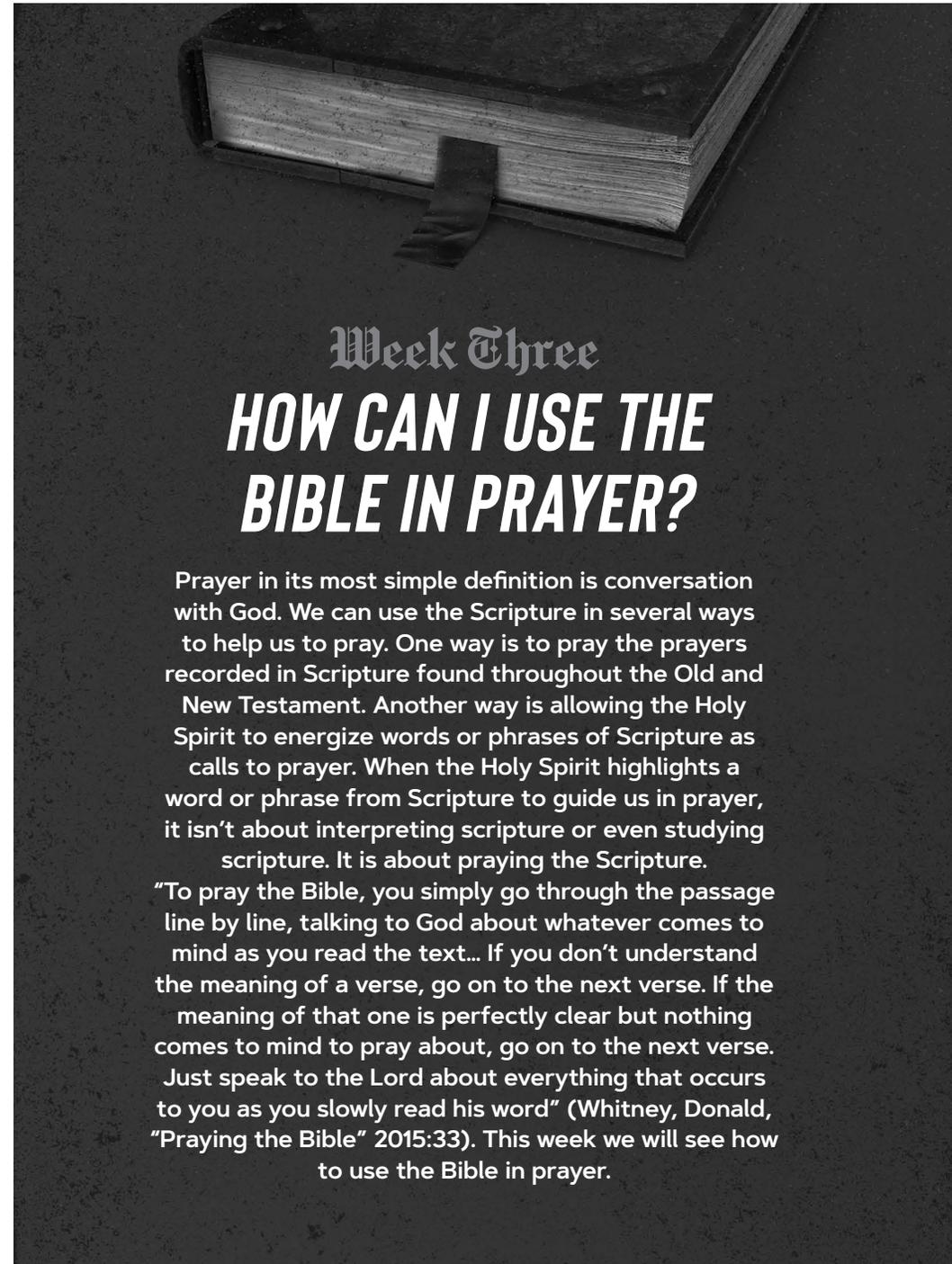
³⁵ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

Who was the Isaiah passage talking about? How do you know?

What are some other good questions to ask when reading the Old Testament?

Go back and read in Isaiah 53. What prophecies are fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus?



Week Three

HOW CAN I USE THE BIBLE IN PRAYER?

Prayer in its most simple definition is conversation with God. We can use the Scripture in several ways to help us to pray. One way is to pray the prayers recorded in Scripture found throughout the Old and New Testament. Another way is allowing the Holy Spirit to energize words or phrases of Scripture as calls to prayer. When the Holy Spirit highlights a word or phrase from Scripture to guide us in prayer, it isn't about interpreting scripture or even studying scripture. It is about praying the Scripture. “To pray the Bible, you simply go through the passage line by line, talking to God about whatever comes to mind as you read the text... If you don't understand the meaning of a verse, go on to the next verse. If the meaning of that one is perfectly clear but nothing comes to mind to pray about, go on to the next verse. Just speak to the Lord about everything that occurs to you as you slowly read his word” (Whitney, Donald, “Praying the Bible” 2015:33). This week we will see how to use the Bible in prayer.

DAY 1 Praying the Psalms

KEY

God gave the Psalms as a prayerbook written by him for us to give back to him! The Psalms are filled with worship, praise, prayers, and cries of the heart. Today's psalm is one of the most famous psalms. This psalm talks about the care and direction of the Lord as a shepherd. Today, let's pray this psalm, and then we will walk through the prayer process.

THE BIBLE

Psalm 23:1-6 ¹ *The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.*

² *He makes me lie down in green pastures,*

he leads me beside quiet waters,

³ *he refreshes my soul.*

He guides me along the right paths

for his name's sake.

⁴ *Even though I walk*

through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

⁵ *You prepare a table before me*

in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

⁶ *Surely your goodness and love will follow me*

all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD

forever.

DAY 1 Praying the Psalms (continued)

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in prayer. Read Psalm 23 out loud.

Read the first verse, "The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing." When you read this verse, what came to your mind? Maybe it was about guidance, "my shepherd." Maybe it was about supplying a need of a family member, "I lack nothing." Now write out a short prayer regarding this. Here is an example: "Lord, you are my shepherd. You guide and lead me. Guide my nephew today as he is looking for direction about which job he should take." Here is another example: "In you, I lack nothing! Father, I ask that you supply my friend Tony's need today for a new car."

Now, read the second verse, "He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters." What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to pray about? Write it out. If there is nothing, skip to verse three. Do the same thing for each verse.

Verse Three

Verse Four

Verse Five

Verse Six

How is this different from how you have prayed before?

How did you feel writing out your prayers before you prayed them?

What benefit is it to write out your prayers?

DAY 2 Praying the Psalms

KEY

Psalm 42, according to the Jewish Sages, is the psalm of the exiles who were far away from the blessings of the Lord (Rabbi Yosef B. Marcus, “Tehillim: Book of Psalms” 2016). Because of their actions, they were taken into exile. This psalm is their cry. Even though we are not in exile, we can relate with the feelings of the psalmist. Let’s use this psalm for the Holy Spirit to lead us into prayer.

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in prayer. Read Psalm 42 out loud.

Read the first verse, “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.” Did anyone or anything come to mind to pray about? Maybe your own longing to be with the Lord. Or maybe a friend who has drifted from the Lord came to your mind. Write out that prayer. For example: “Lord, as the deer pants for water, I pray for my friend, Lisa, that her soul would long for you in the same way.”

THE BIBLE

Psalm 42 *For the director of music. A maskil of the Sons of Korah.*

¹ *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.*

² *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?*

³ *My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”*

⁴ *These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One[d] with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng.*

⁵ *Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.*

⁶ *My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.*

⁷ *Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me.*

⁸ *By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life.*

⁹ *I say to God my Rock, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?”*

¹⁰ *My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, “Where is your God?”*

¹¹ *Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.*

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

DAY 2 Praying the Psalms (continued)

Now read each verse individually. As the Holy Spirit speaks to you write it down and pray it. If there is nothing, skip the verse and go to the next one.

Verse Two:

Verse Three:

Verse Four:

Verse Five:

Verse Six:

Verse Seven:

Verse Eight:

Verse Nine:

Verse 10:

Verse 11:

Why is it difficult to be honest in prayer?

How was this prayer so honest?

What benefits do we have by being open about our feelings to the Lord?

DAY 3 Praying the Prophets

KEY

Praying the Psalms is simple and it prepares us to pray any part of the scripture. Today, we will pray a verse from Isaiah. Remember, we are not trying to interpret the verse nor are we trying to make up something that is not there. For example, we are not seeing this verse as a promise that we are going to each have our own garden. What we are doing is listening as the Holy Spirit prompts us with the Scripture to pray for people, situations, and problems.

THE BIBLE

Isaiah 51:3 ³ *The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.*

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Read the verse out loud.

Write out words or phrases that popped out at you. After the list is written, write out prayers as the Holy Spirit leads you. Below is the beginning of a list.

- Comfort: "Lord, comfort Jill at the loss of her grandmother."
- Compassion: "Jesus, help me to be compassionate to those around me."
- Ruins: "May you take my pain and turn it into blessings."
- Deserts like Eden: "Lord, you know that my sales leads have been slow, I pray that you make my desert of sales into a garden of Eden. Make my work fruitful."

Please continue with the rest of the verse.

What are some of the things you prayed about?

What surprised you that the Holy Spirit brought to your mind?

DAY 4 Prayers in the New Testament

KEY

This prayer of Jesus is the most famous prayer in the Bible. Peter Greig, author of numerous books on prayer, notes that the only thing the disciples asked Jesus to teach them was how to pray. "One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray...'" (Luke 11:1). When Jesus taught them to pray, he taught them this prayer that is known as The Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer can be broken into sections as a guide to prayer.

THE BIBLE

Matthew 6:9-13 ⁹ *"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,*

¹⁰ *your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

¹¹ *Give us today our daily bread.*

¹² *And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

¹³ *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

Write out and pray each different section as a guide as you listen to the Holy Spirit.

WORSHIP: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." Begin your prayer with acknowledging the Lord and worshipping him.

KINGDOM: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Bring areas of concern to the Lord. Ask the Lord to bring heaven on earth in situations around the world. For example: where there is division, peace; where there is sin, holiness; where there is sickness, health.

PROVISION: "Give us today our daily bread." Ask the Lord to meet your physical needs.

DAY 4 Prayers in the New Testament (continued)

RELATIONSHIP: “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Take an inventory of your day, of your habits, or your relationships. Ask the Lord for forgiveness in the areas he reveals. Spend time forgiving those who have hurt you.

COMMITMENT: “And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.” Renew your commitment to the Lord. This is a good time to put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:13-18).

WORSHIP: “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.” End your time with the Lord with worship and praise.

How did it make you feel to use a structure to your prayer time using the Lord’s Prayer?

How does having a structure help us pray?

What are other prayer structures you have used that have been helpful?

DAY 5 Prayers in the New Testament

KEY

The Bible has many prayers recorded in it. We can see from the letters of Paul many different prayers: a prayer of thanks (Romans 1:8-10); a prayer for salvation (Romans 10:1); a prayer for unity (Romans 15:5-6); a prayer for spiritual enlightenment (Ephesians 1:15-23); a prayer for strength in the Lord (Ephesians 3:14-21); a prayer for spiritual growth (Colossians 1:13-14). Today, we will look at Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians in Ephesians 3:14-21. One of the easiest ways to pray this prayer is to change the nouns and pronouns with those you know personally.

THE BIBLE

Ephesians 3:14-21 ¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

Here is the prayer of Paul personalized. ¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen (First Name/Family) with power through his Spirit in (his/her/their) inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in (his/her/their) hearts through faith. And I pray that (First name/Family), being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that (First Name/Family) may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

How did it feel to pray this specific prayer for your loved one?

What was different about this prayer than the prayers we sometimes pray for those we love?

How could you incorporate this kind of praying the scripture in your personal time with the Lord?



Week Four

HOW CAN I UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

To fully understand the Scripture, to know what God wants to say to us, we need to know how to read the Bible. The Bible is a unique book written within the styles of the times. The Bible contains poems, narratives, didactic (teaching), prophetic writings, and even apocalyptic (revelation) literature that reads like a fantasy novel. Each of these genres demands the reader to understand what is written differently. The Bible, like any written work, contains parts of speech such as verbs, nouns, prepositions, and conjunctions. The Bible also contains metaphors, similes, and even hyperbole! This week, we will be diving into each genre form to see what God is trying to show us.

DAY 1 Poetry

KEY

One third of the Bible is written poetically. Bible poetry is written differently than Western poetry you may be accustomed to reading. Biblical poetry does not have rhyme or meter. However, biblical poetry does have certain qualities. Sometimes it is alliterated (each line starts with the same letter) or sometimes the author uses the Hebrew alphabet as an acrostic (the first line begins with A, the second with B, the third with C). The most famous of these two examples is Psalm 119. Psalm 119 uses an acrostic of the Hebrew alphabet and each verse (eight verses per letter) begins with the letter of that section. Another thing to look for in Hebrew poetry are couplets. A couplet states something plainly and then follows it with a metaphor of the same meaning. Metaphors are images used to convey a message. For example, fire is hot and when something is performed well, a trendy phrase to say is, “that’s lit.” It is a metaphor for something that is hot or on “fire”. Parallelism is also found in Hebrew poetry. Parallelism is when the poem uses two lines to compare or contrast a single idea. God uses poems because it is “verbal art”. It gives imagination and places the reader in the moment with emotion and vibrant description and imagination. We can also look for a chiasmus, “Chiasmus is a figure of speech in which the grammar of one phrase is inverted in the following phrase, such that two key concepts from the original phrase reappear in the second phrase in inverted order. The sentence ‘She has all my love; my heart belongs to her,’ is an example of chiasmus. When we look for the different poetic devices, we can see more of what the author is trying to show us.

(<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/art-biblical-poetry>)

(<https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/chiasmus>)

THE BIBLE

Psalm 119:9-16

⁹ How can a young person stay on the path of purity?

By living according to your word.

¹⁰ I seek you with all my heart;

do not let me stray from your commands.

¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart

that I might not sin against you.

¹² Praise be to you, LORD;

teach me your decrees.

¹³ With my lips I recount

all the laws that come from your mouth.

DAY 1 Poetry (continued)

¹⁴ I rejoice in following your statutes

as one rejoices in great riches.

¹⁵ I meditate on your precepts

and consider your ways.

¹⁶ I delight in your decrees;

I will not neglect your word.

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

Do you see any parallelisms or chiasmus? If so, what do you see?

Does David use any metaphors? What are they?

When you begin to see the different poetic uses of language, how does it help you in studying God's Word?

What benefit does the writer and the reader have in using poetry?

What did you see for the first time because you studied this passage as a poem?

DAY 2 Narrative

KEY

Narratives make up 40 percent of the Bible. It is important to understand how to read a narrative to maximize its effectiveness. A narrative tells a story. This story, like other stories read in fiction or non-fiction, have similar things to look for: plot, setting, and characters. Plot is the conflict and the resolution that the people in the story face. There are many kinds of conflict: person versus person, person versus nature, person versus God, person versus themselves. In a story, the conflict rises to a climax before it unfolds with a resolution. Setting is the place or places where the story is happening. Setting may include the weather, a geographical location, a specific epoch, or a physical location such as a house, barn, or palace. The setting gives insight into the story. Characters are the people in the story. You have heroes, villains, and other characters that interact in the story. When you study a character, you try to determine everything you can about them: Are they wealthy? Are they religious? Are they kind? Are they married? The more you know about the person, the more insight you will have into the story. Narratives are used by the biblical writers to convey a message about how people live, the decisions they make, and the consequences of their decisions. The biblical narrative is from God's perspective. The Bible is HIS story, not just history.

(<https://bibleproject.com/explore/category/how-to-read-biblical-narrative/>)

THE BIBLE

1 Kings 22:1-14 *Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath. ² He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and followed completely the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.*

³ *In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent the secretary, Shaphan son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the temple of the LORD. He said: ⁴ "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest and have him get ready the money that has been brought into the temple of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have collected from the people. ⁵ Have them entrust it to the men appointed to supervise the work on the temple. And have these men pay the workers who repair the temple of the LORD— ⁶ the carpenters, the builders and the masons. Also have them purchase timber and dressed stone to repair the temple. ⁷ But they need not account for the money entrusted to them, because they are honest in their dealings."*

⁸ *Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the LORD." He gave it to Shaphan, who read it. ⁹ Then Shaphan the secretary went to the king and reported to him: "Your officials have paid out the money that was in the temple of the LORD and have entrusted it to the workers and supervisors at the temple." ¹⁰ Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.*

¹¹ *When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. ¹² He gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Akbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary and*

DAY 2 Narrative (continued)

Asaiah the king's attendant: ¹³ "Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD's anger that burns against us because those who have gone before us have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us."

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

What is the plot?

What is the setting?

Who are the characters?

By analyzing the story, how did it impact you differently?

What new insights did you gain?

What was the author trying to communicate in this narrative?

DAY 3 Teaching

KEY

There are two main areas of direct teaching in the New Testament, the teachings of Jesus and the letters from the Apostles. The teachings of Jesus are found in the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There are 21 letters in the New Testament. These letters are called Epistles. Epistles are letters written to churches and people from the Apostles. Paul wrote the most letters, then John, Peter, James, and Jude. Each epistle follows the customary format of letters from that time. There is a greeting from the letter writer, to whom the letter is written, the body of the letter, and a farewell. These letters are filled with direct teachings from the Apostles. The letter may be encouraging the church (Ephesians 1), giving direction (1 Timothy 3:1-12), warning them (2 Corinthians 13:1-10), or asking for support (Romans 15:23-25). When we read the teachings, we are looking to see what is being taught and how we can live that teaching out in our own lives. Today, we will be looking at Ephesians 4:20-32.

THE BIBLE

Ephesians 4:20-32 ²⁰ That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

List the main proscriptions Paul mentions?

How does Paul tell us to live?

What reasons does Paul give for living or acting certain ways?

DAY 4 Prophetic

KEY

When people think of the prophets, they often think of telling the future like a psychic or fortune teller. However, prophets in the Bible were different. Prophets in the Old Testament were men and women who had an intimate experience with God and who spoke a timely word from God to the people. It was not foretelling (predicting the future) as much as it was forth telling (this is what God says today). Prophets had three basic themes to their message: what was going wrong, how to change (repent), and what were the consequences if there was no change. The prophets exposed the truth about how the people were living: idolatrous, unfaithful, and unjust. The prophets explained how to change. They urged the people to turn away from sin and turn to God. They told them the consequences of their sin plainly and with imaginative language or metaphors, similar to the poetic literature. The prophets showed God giving out justice for sin and providing hope for those who have repented. The majority of what the prophets said were for the ears of the hearers. The prophet's words were specifically for the people at the time. However, the concepts are timeless for us. The prophets spoke in real time and for the future as well. Today, we will look at the prophet Micah.

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/the-prophets/>

THE BIBLE

Micah 6:1-16 Listen to what the LORD says: "Stand up, plead my case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say.

² "Hear, you mountains, the LORD's accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth.

For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel.

³ "My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me.

⁴ I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.

⁵ My people, remember what Balak king of Moab plotted and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."

⁶ With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,

with calves a year old?

⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,

the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

⁸ He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

DAY 4 Prophetic (continued)

⁹ Listen! The LORD is calling to the city— and to fear your name is wisdom— "Heed the rod and the One who appointed it.

¹⁰ Am I still to forget your ill-gotten treasures, you wicked house, and the short ephah,[c] which is accursed?

¹¹ Shall I acquit someone with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights?

¹² Your rich people are violent; your inhabitants are liars and their tongues speak deceitfully.

¹³ Therefore, I have begun to destroy you, to ruin you because of your sins.

¹⁴ You will eat but not be satisfied; your stomach will still be empty. You will store up but save nothing, because what you save I will give to the sword.

¹⁵ You will plant but not harvest; you will press olives but not use the oil, you will crush grapes but not drink the wine.

¹⁶ You have observed the statutes of Omri and all the practices of Ahab's house; you have followed their traditions. Therefore I will give you over to ruin and your people to derision; you will bear the scorn of the nations."

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

What was the Lord's accusation against the people?

What was the call to repentance?

Were you surprised that the call of repentance was not more sacrifices? Explain.

What would happen if they did not repent?

Looking at Micah 7:18-20, what hope did Micah give if the people changed their ways?

Prophecy can be fulfilled once and sometimes again in the future. How does understanding that help you in understanding the prophetic literature better?

DAY 5 Apocalyptic (to reveal)**KEY**

The word “apocalyptic” means to reveal something. Apocalyptic literature in the Bible is where God pulls back the curtain to reveal his perspective—a revelation from God. Many revelations from God are found in visions, dreams, and supernatural encounters. Isaiah had a vision of God’s throne room (Isaiah 6:1-8), Ezekiel had a vision of an army of skeletons who come to life (Ezekiel 37:1-10), and there is much more in the scripture. Reading apocalyptic literature is similar to reading poetry, it is filled with metaphors and symbolism. The largest work of apocalyptic literature in the Bible is the Book of Revelation. It is the revelation of Jesus! Let’s look at the book of Revelation.

(<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/apocalyptic-literature/>)

THE BIBLE

Revelation 5:1-8 *Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” ³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”*

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people.

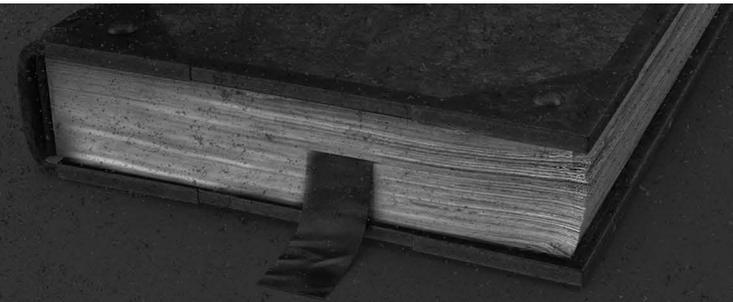
UNLOCK THE BIBLE

What did you think apocalyptic meant before today?

What are the symbols or metaphors that you see in this section of Revelation? List them and what they represent.

How is reading Apocalyptic literature “literally” not helpful in understanding it?

What is it like for you to see behind the curtain? How does this knowledge affect you?

**Week Five****HOW DOES THE BIBLE
SPEAK TO ME TODAY?**

Even though the Bible was written and compiled thousands of years ago, it still speaks to us today. The Bible is relevant to us for our spiritual development as well as how we should live our daily lives. There is a move within the church to detach the Old Testament from the New Testament, but we believe that both are important to understanding God and ourselves. Paul said that “everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scripture we might have hope” (Romans 15:4). This week, we will look at what God says about some things we experience right now in the 21st Century.

DAY 1 Raising Kids

KEY

One of the toughest assignments is raising children. I have heard it said, “children do not come with an owner’s manual.” However—the scripture gives us practical tools in how to raise our children in the Lord. Today, we will look at several verses that help us raise our children.

THE BIBLE

Proverbs 22:6 *Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.*

Ephesians 6:4 *And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

Mark 10:13-16 *People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.*

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

What are five things you can learn from these verses?

How do you start off a child in the right direction?

What are some ways that you have incorporated the Lord into your home?

How important is it to bring your child to Jesus? What does that look like in the 21st Century?

DAY 2 Money

KEY

Money is one of the most talked about topics in the Bible. God cares about our finances and wealth and what we do with it. In 2012, Forbes Magazine asked, “Is the Bible the Ultimate Financial Guide?” What can the Bible teach us about money? Today, we will look at four passages about money, wealth, and possessions.

THE BIBLE

Romans 13:7-8 *Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.*

Matthew 6:19-21 *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

1 Timothy 6:6-10 *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*

(<https://www.forbes.com/sites/sherylnancenash/2012/05/24/is-the-bible-the-ultimate-financial-guide/?sh=62a949426493>)

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

How should we approach debt?

How is money a way to evaluate your own heart?

Why is the “love of money a root of all kinds of evil”?

How do you know God wants to bless you abundantly?

DAY 3 Employee and Employer

KEY

The concept of employee and employer is a modern concept. In the Bible, there were slaves and owners. Slavery was the ownership of another human; however, it was different from American slavery. Roman slaves were often highly educated. Roman slavery was also not rooted in a racial system. When we read passages about slaves and masters, we can find a comparison between worker and boss. Let's look at one passage today from Colossians.

THE BIBLE

Colossians 3:22-4:1 *Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism. Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.*

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

How should we view the daily grind of work?

Who are we really working for?

How does understanding that we are working for the Lord change our perspective and habits?

How should we lead others in our organization?

DAY 4 Feeling Depressed

KEY

Have you ever felt depressed—everything seemed dark and muted, there was no motivation or energy? Feeling down is a common feeling for many people. The scripture talks about having feelings of depression (this is not a conversation about clinical depression). It may be discouragement. It may be a failed dream. It may be a broken heart. Many things can lead us to feel like we just want to quit. How do we handle life when we feel down? The Bible has answers, let's look together at 1 Kings 19.

THE BIBLE

1 Kings 19:3-9 *Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there,⁴ while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."⁵ Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.*

All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat."⁶ He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

⁷The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you."⁸ So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.⁹ There he went into a cave and spent the night.

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

How do we know Elijah was depressed?

What three things do you see that Elijah needed in his depression?

What do you do when you are feeling down?

How could you use these scriptures to encourage someone who is feeling down?

DAY 5 Anxiety

KEY

Worry is dwelling on the fear of the unknown. Concern has its place in keeping us safe—it helps us be more cautious. Concern can also help us be prepared by thinking of different unknowns. When the Bible forbids us from worrying, it is not talking about common-sense concern; it is talking about dwelling on a problem and living in fear. How do we break the habit of worry? Paul tells us in Philippians 4.

THE BIBLE

Philippians 4:4-9 ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

In verse six, how does Paul tell us to handle every situation?

Paul reminds us to bring everything to God with thanksgiving. One of the ways to break the habit of dwelling on fear or the problem is to be thankful. Take five minutes and write out everything you are thankful for.

Paul encourages us to think a certain way (Philippians 4:8). How do our thoughts influence our peace?



Week Six
**HOW DO I STUDY
 THE BIBLE?**

Just reading God’s Word is a spiritual discipline. What makes God’s Word come alive is when we study it. Studying God’s Word takes us from an “at-first-glance” understanding to a great deeper understanding. Studying God’s Word is important because it helps us to have the courage to do the right next step in our relationship with the Lord, with ourselves, and with others. This week we look at three specific study methods and how to apply them: S.O.A.P., Word Study, and Biblical Meditation.

DAY 1 S.O.A.P.

KEY

S.O.A.P. is a tool used to study the Scripture, it will work with any passage. S.O.A.P. is an acronym.

- **S - The “S” is for Scripture.** The first step is to pick a section of a scripture, usually more than one verse because it’s good to have enough for context.
- **O - The “O” is for Observations.** Observations answer the questions of Who? What? When? Where? Why? Once those questions have been studied and/or answered, then you go to the letter “A”.
- **A - The “A” is the Application.** It answers the following questions: What is the passage saying to me? How can I apply the truth principles to my life? What are actionable steps I can take to act on this scripture?
- **P - The last letter “P” stands for prayer.** Take a moment to pray the scripture back to God. It may be a prayer of repentance, help, or praise. The Prayer is a response to the application of God’s Word.

Let’s look at a passage from the gospel of Luke and walk through this model.

THE BIBLE

Luke 5:17-26 ¹⁷ One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. ¹⁸ Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. ¹⁹ When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

²⁰ When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

²¹ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

²² Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? ²⁴ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” ²⁵ Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. ²⁶ Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

DAY 1 S.O.A.P. (continued)

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

Observation. Write down what you see happening by answering these questions.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

Application. Write down what God is teaching you in this passage.

What is the passage saying to you?

How can you apply these truth principles to your life?

What are actionable steps you can do to act on this scripture?

Prayer: Write out a prayer based on the application of this passage to your life.

DAY 2 S.O.A.P.

KEY

S.O.A.P. is a tool used to study the Scripture, it will work with any passage. S.O.A.P. is an acronym.

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- **P - The last letter “P” stands for prayer.** Take a moment to pray the scripture back to God. It may be a prayer of repentance, help, or praise. The Prayer is a response to the application of God’s Word.

Let’s look at a passage from the book of Hebrews, this will be the “S”.

THE BIBLE

Hebrews 6:13-20 ¹³ When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.” [d] ¹⁵ And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

¹⁶ People swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. ¹⁷ Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. ¹⁸ God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. ¹⁹ We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, ²⁰ where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

DAY 2 S.O.A.P. (continued)

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

Observation. Write down what you see happening by answering these questions.

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

Application. Write down what God is teaching you in this passage.

What is the passage saying to you?

How can you apply these truth principles to your life?

What are actionable steps you can do to act on this scripture?

Prayer: Write out a prayer based on the application of this passage to your life.

DAY 3 Word Study

KEY

Another way to study the Scripture is a word study. A word study is helpful to study one topic. For example, the topic of our language or conversation. The first step would be to write down words that relate to the topic. For our example, I will write down “lips, mouth, words, tongue.” The second step would be to look up these words in a concordance or an online Bible App such as www.biblegateway.com or www.blueletterbible.com. Write out these verses and read through them. The third step would be to make categories based on the verses by grouping similar verses together that are saying similar things. The last step would be to find the major theme or themes. This is a fantastic way to look at the biblical theology of a topic. Use this study method especially when you, or a friend, needs a breakthrough in a certain area.

THE BIBLE

Here is a small sample from the words I looked up on www.biblegateway.com.

STEP ONE: Choose the words that fit your topic: Lips, Tongue, Mouth, Words

STEP TWO: Find the verses that relate to your words (this is just a sampling).

Proverbs 14:3 A fool’s mouth lashes out with pride, but the lips of the wise protect them.

Proverbs 14:7 Stay away from a fool, for you will not find knowledge on their lips.

Proverbs 15:7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge, but the hearts of fools are not upright.

Proverbs 16:10 The lips of a king speak as an oracle, and his mouth does not betray justice.

Proverbs 16:13 Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value the one who speaks what is right.

Proverbs 16:23 The hearts of the wise make their mouths prudent, and their lips promote instruction.

Proverbs 16:27 A scoundrel plots evil, and on their lips it is like a scorching fire.

Proverbs 17:4 A wicked person listens to deceitful lips; a liar pays attention to a destructive tongue.

Proverbs 17:7 Eloquent lips are unsuited to a godless fool— how much worse lying lips to a ruler!

Proverbs 18:6 The lips of fools bring them strife, and their mouths invite a beating.

Proverbs 10:19 Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.

Proverbs 10:20 The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value.

Proverbs 10:31 From the mouth of the righteous comes the fruit of wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be silenced.

Proverbs 11:12 Whoever derides their neighbor has no sense, but the one who has understanding holds their tongue.

DAY 3 Word Study (continued)

James 3:2-6 ² We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.³ When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.⁴ Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.⁵ Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

⁷ All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind,⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

STEP THREE: Make Categories.

Good Speech: Wise Lips, Honest Lips (Proverbs 14:13, 15:7, Proverbs 16:13)

Honest Speech is desirable (Proverbs 16:13, 10:20, 10:31)

Wicked Speech: Pride (Proverbs 14:13), Lying (Proverbs 17:7), Perverse (Proverbs 10:31)

It is good to not always say what you’re thinking (Proverbs 10:19, 11:12)

The Tongue is hard to tame (James 3:2-8)

STEP FOUR: Look for a major theme or lesson.

The tongue is small but mighty, It has the power to bring good or evil. I should use it to bring good.

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

Work through the Bible Study above. Add to what you see.

How was the method helpful?

What are the drawbacks for using this method?

What new insights did you get from using this method?

DAY 4 Word Study

KEY

Yesterday, we walked through a word study together. Today, you can pick your own word or topic to study. Here is a description of how to start. The first step would be to write down words that relate to the topic. The second step would be to look up these words in a concordance or an online Bible App such as www.biblegateway.com or www.blueletterbible.com. Write out these verses and read through them. The third step would be to make categories based on the verses by grouping similar verses together that are saying similar things. The last step would be to find the major theme or themes. This is a fantastic way to look at the biblical theology of a topic. Use this study method especially you, or a friend, needs a breakthrough in a certain area.

SELECT YOUR WORD OR TOPIC:

STEP ONE: Choose the words that fit your topic.

STEP TWO: Find the verses that relate to your words. Write them out.

STEP THREE: Make Categories.

STEP FOUR: Look for a major theme or lesson. Write out the major themes.

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

What word or topic did you choose?

What did you discover?

How was this rewarding?

DAY 5 Meditation

KEY

The Lord told Joshua, “Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Joshua 1:8). King David said in Psalm 1 that the person who meditates on God’s word “is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers” (Psalm 1:3). The word meditate in the Hebrew means to “mutter out loud in a low voice or tone, to murmur.” How is meditation a form of studying the Scripture? Meditation is repeating over and over again the Scripture. When someone murmurs or repeats something, it is memorized and is moved from head to heart. The Hebrew word for meditate also includes the idea of thinking and imagining. Let’s meditate together on this verse from Galatians 2:20.

(<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/Lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?strongs=H1897&t=KJV>)

THE BIBLE

Galatians 2:20 ²⁰ *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

UNLOCK THE BIBLE

Steps in Meditating. Read the passage five times in a row. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you spiritual imagination regarding this verse.

Pick out a phrase from the passage to turn into a prayer. For example, “Christ lives in me, therefore I live by faith in all that I do. I am a person of faith because of Jesus!” For the next day or two, murmur this prayer whenever you think about it. Some people may say this prayer every hour.

How did it feel to read it so many times?

How did reading it repeatedly help you grasp it at a deeper level?

What phrase did you write down to meditate on?

How did meditating on that phrase help you throughout your day?



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