Bible Study Methods

Institute of Biblical Studies

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Oh how I love your law!
It is my meditation all the day.
Your commandment makes me
wiser than my enemies,
for it is ever with me.
I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your testimonies are my meditation.
I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.
I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
I do not turn aside from your rules,
for you have taught me.
How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through your precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way
Psalm 119:97-104, ESV

One cannot help but be struck with the Psalmist's love for the Scriptures that radiates from these verses. The Psalmist, of course, was not merely in love with the Bible (a kind of "bibliolatry") but he was in love with the God whose Bible he read. For the Psalmist seeking God and pursuing his Word were not two activities to be neatly separated. They were one and the same. Notice the parallelism between "seeking God" (line one) and "hiding the word in his heart" (line three) in an earlier portion of Psalm 119:

With my whole heart I seek you;
let me not wander from your commandments!
I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.
Ps. 119:10-11, ESV

The Psalmist sought God through the Scriptures. The Word of God was not merely information to be amassed but the means through which the Psalmist sought and responded to God. The Psalmist reminds us how vital the Scriptures are to a growing and vibrant relationship with God.

The Scriptures are also vital to the ministry to which God has called us.

In both his letters to Timothy Paul urges this young leader to root his life and ministry in the Scriptures. In I Timothy 4:6-16 Paul outlines almost ten qualities that should characterize Timothy's life as a "good servant of Christ Jesus." The very first quality Paul mentions is being a leader who is "constantly nourished on the words of the faith" (v. 6). The fact that this phrase is in the present tense implies an ongoing activity of seeking nourishment.

Paul reminds Timothy that just as his body needs physical nourishment, so too his soul needs spiritual nourishment. In doing this he is calling Timothy to far more than a daily "quiet time." He is saying to Timothy, "If you want to be an effective leader you got to become a self-feeder." This is no less true for you and I. We too must become self-feeders.

Have you ever been in a conversation with a student who was deeply struggling over some issue and found yourself wishing that you knew the Bible better so you could more effectively help them through it? Have you ever listened to someone give a message from Scripture and thought, "I wish I could communicate the Bible's message more clearly"? Have you ever wished that you were able to better lead others from the Word?

The foundation of growth in each of these areas is becoming a self-feeder. Becoming a self-feeder is one of the most important habits you can cultivate. This course is designed to be the first step toward helping you become a person who feeds themselves from the Scriptures.

Course Description

Using an educationally sound, workshop-style approach, *Bible Study Methods* is designed to introduce you to a *process* for studying the Bible and give you a chance to improve your skills, all under the watchful eye of a skilled mentor. You will be exposed to the classic principles of interpretation, and then you will turn theory into practice by applying the principles as you study the book of Ephesians.

This course will cover the entire process of Bible study, from motivation, to interpretive principles, through skills and tools, all the way to communicating the text to others. After a lecture each day, your trained workshop coach will teach you skills and guide you through the use of tools to help you see and savor the glory of Christ in the Scriptures.

This course represents the first in a sequence of three courses you will complete in studying and communicating the Bible. Following *Bible Study Methods* you will complete *Biblical Interpretation* and *Biblical Communication*. In *Biblical Interpretation* you will learn how to interpret and apply the diverse literary forms in the Bible including narrative, prophesy, poetry, law, and gospel. In *Biblical Communication* you will you will learn how to communicate the Bible's message in a Christ-centered and life-changing way.

Course Objectives

- to be introduced to tools that can help you better understand Scripture and apply it to your life
- to discover why it is important to relate every passage to the redemptive story-line of the Bible
- to experience the gospel as you discover how Scripture exposes your brokenness/rebellion (fallen condition) and points you to find true life in Christ (redemptive solution)
- to learn how to discern the "fallen condition" and "redemptive solution" in a passage of Scripture
- to learn how to point people to Christ through small groups by asking good questions with the launch/explore/apply template
- to be better equipped for ministry by applying interpretive principles to your future reading, study and teaching from epistles
- to become aware of how our cultural perspectives might blinds us to aspects of the gospel
- to prepare you for Biblical Interpretation and Biblical Communication

Course Values

1. **Christ-centered Focus**: The deepest longing of the human heart is to know and enjoy the glory of God. As John Piper notes, "We were made to know and treasure the glory of God above all things; and when we trade that treasure for images, everything is disordered. The sun of God's glory was made to shine at the center of the solar system of our soul. And when it does, all the planets of our life are held in their proper orbit. But when the sun is displaced, everything flies apart. The healing of the soul begins by restoring the glory of God to its flaming, all-attracting place at the center" (*Seeing and Savoring Christ*, p. 21). Our ultimate goal in this course is not that you would master all the skills we present but that you would cultivate a deeper hunger to "see and savor" the glory of Jesus Christ revealed in the Scriptures.

2. **Integrated Learning Environment:** This is not a traditional lecture course. You will learn not merely by "hearing" but also by "doing," not merely by observing but also by experiencing. We are convinced that the best way to learn about studying the Scriptures is not by reading books about how to study the Bible but by studying the Bible under the watchful eye of a coach.

3. **Excellence** - We assume that you are here because you want to be here and we are hopeful that you will catch a love for the Scriptures and a desire to know truth that will motivate you from the inside to please the Lord with your work. Ultimately it is Him that you are serving (Col. 3:23).

   ****A note on academic integrity and plagiarism:** *Plagiarism is similar to stealing another's ideas or thoughts and, therefore, unacceptable for Cru staff. Please refrain from copying or paraphrasing bible studies you read or find online. The penalty for plagiarism will be determined by IBS and may include automatic failure for the course. Ask your coach if you have questions concerning plagiarism.*

4. **Collegiality** - This is not a competition. We encourage you to help each other, and our desire is to help you. NOTE: *Collegiality does not mean that you may work together with other students on your worksheets in such a way that two people turn in identical work.*

5. **Development** - We realize that everyone comes into class with a wide variety of experiences regarding formal training in Bible Study. Some of you may have graduated from a Bible college where you covered a number of these skills. Others may have had no previous experience in formal Bible study. Wherever you happen to be as you enter this class, our heart is that you would take a "next step" in your development.

Required Texts

Ultimate Road Trip. Orlando: Cru Press, 2008, updated.
Piper, John. *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2001
Roberts, Vaughan. *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Story-line of the Bible*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity: 2002. (Minor updating done in 2012)
Snodgrass, Klyne. *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

Recommended Texts

Arnold, Clinton. *Ephesians,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.
Bruce, F. F. *Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.
Hoehner, Harold W. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Baker, 2003.
Lincoln, Andrew. *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 42. Dallas: Word, 1990.
O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
Thielman, Frank. *Ephesians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.

Course Requirements

1. **Thoughtful Reading**: You are expected to read the assigned texts/articles carefully and thoughtfully.

2. **Vital Participation**: Discussion is a vital part of the learning process for this class. You will be expected to contribute ideas and opinions based on your reading and comprehension of the course material.

3. **Textual Worksheets**: You will be expected to complete eight worksheets that will enable you to practice the core skills we will present in the class. These will be turned in to your coach for review and evaluation.

4. **Bible Study Project**: Your final assignment in the course will be to develop a small group Bible study, based on the passage you have studied, which you can use in your ministry setting. All the worksheets will contribute towards this project.

Class Schedule

Topic	Date	Assignments Due the Following Day
Christ-Centered Bible Study	Thur., June 15	Worksheet: #1 (Book Summary) "Hearing the Music of the Gospel"
Context	Friday, June 16	Worksheet: #2 (Context) *NIV Application Commentary* (NIVAC), 17-31. *Seeing and Savoring*, C1
Analyzing Structure* (no lecture)	Monday, June 19	Worksheet: #3 (Structural Layout) *Seeing and Savoring*, C3
Observing Details	Tues., June 20	Worksheet: #4 (Observation) *Seeing and Savoring*, C6 Articles: "Asking Good Q's" and "Practicing Q's"
Interpretive Skills	Wed.., June 21	Worksheet: #5 (Interpretation) NIVAC, 123-139; *Additional Commentary*,* *The Ultimate Road Trip*, 99-111 (chapter 8) *Seeing and Savoring*, C7
Creating a Textual Outline* (no lecture)	Thur., June 22	Worksheet: #6: (Textual Outline) *Seeing and Savoring*, C9 *God's Big Picture,* Introduction
Finding Our Place in God's Story	Friday, June 23	Worksheet: #7: (Theological Analysis) *God's Big Picture,* C7 NIVAC, 139-147. *The Ultimate Road Trip*, 36, 52-57 *Seeing and Savoring*, C12 Article: "Bridging the Gap between the World"
Christ-centered Application	Monday, June 26	Worksheet: #8: (Application) NIVAC, 147-156. Article: "Understanding Scripture's Fallen-Cond…" Article: "Asking Christ-Centered Questions…"
Leading Christ-centered Small Groups	Tue., June 27	Bible Study Project *Seeing and Savoring*, C13
Gospel, Leadership and Cru Culture	Wed., June 28	*Turn in Bible Study Project*

Course Grade

Your course grade will be based on the following:

8 Textual Worksheets	80% (80 points)
Bible Study Project	20% (20 points)
	100%

To determine your course grade complete the following:

1. Total the points from your 8 worksheets: _____ (80 points possible)
2. Write in the score from your project: _____ (20 points possible)
3. Add #1 and #2 together _____
4. Determine your grade

Grading Scale:

94-100	A
92-93	A-
90-91	B+
84-89	B
82-83	B-
80-81	C+
74-79	C
72-73	C-
65-71	D
0-65	F

Coaches

Bible Study Methods is not a class for passive learning. As in any "methods" class, the desired outcomes will not be accomplished by just taking an exam that demonstrates a knowledge of the theory of Bible study. We will talk about theory. We will teach sound exegesis and hermeneutics. But many of the skills and principles can only be learned by working in the text, trying out the different tools, and deliberately applying the principles taught. The coaching workshops are essential to the learning that takes place in this class. As you learn the principles of Bible Study, you will be able to work your way through the process under the helpful and watchful eye of a mentor. Your mentor will give you constructive feedback and be available to answer your questions. You will get personal attention that would be impossible in a lecture style format. This class is being taught by a team of qualified people rather than by one individual. The coaches have been chosen because of their knowledge of the Scriptures, their love for Christ, and their ability in a particular aspect of Bible study. They come from various ministries and responsibilities, but each of them shares a desire to blend academic integrity with passionate ministry.

Select Bibliography

Introduction

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Kostenberber, Andreas and Richard Patterson. *Invitation to Bliblcal Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2011).

Authorship - Ephesians

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Historical Context

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Hawthorne, Gerald, et. al., eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993).

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Genre

Ryken, Leland. *How to Read the Bible as Literature.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative.* Basic Books: Harper Collins, 1981

Fee, Gordon and Douglass Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981, 1993), 45-77.

Goldsworthy, Graeme, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

The Importance of Structure

Arnold, Jeffrey. *Discovering the Bible for Yourself* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 71-80.
Osborne, Grant. *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 57-81.

Interpretation

Baker, David. "Interpreting Texts in the Context of the Whole Bible" *Themelios 5.2* (1980) pp. 21-25
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Biblical Communication

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