

Syllabus and Course Description

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 have got to become a self-feeder." This is no less true for you and me. 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. 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 learn how to communicate the Bible's message in a Christ-centered and life-changing way.

Course Objectives

1. Gain a transferable and repeatable approach to studying epistles which you can adapt to your own needs and preferences
2. Have a deeper understanding and experience of the Messiah through your study of his Word
3. Better understand the overarching story of the Bible in order to place epistles in their redemptive context
4. Identify the fallen condition and redemptive solution of a given passage
5. Expand your application of Scripture through various ethical and cultural frameworks
6. Write better questions that help people discover the meaning of a passage and respond to God

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 actually 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 He 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.

Two other notes:

Learning Issues: If you have a learning issue that affects your participation in the class, please talk with me (Byron). We will work to help you as you engage with the learning tasks in the course.

Remote Learning Environment: Cru is committed to development. We want you to gain as much as possible from this course. As a result, we’re going to ask that for the two hours each day during which your coaching group meets, you would work to maintain as undistracted a learning environment as possible. That will include adequate equipment (reliable computer and internet service), a sufficiently quiet place to attend class, and a commitment to resist the temptation to multitask during class. Your coach will go over some more specific norms for the class shortly before it begins.

Required Texts

Roberts, Mark D. *Ephesians*. Story of God Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan: 2016.
Roberts, Vaughan. *God’s Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity: 2002. (Minor updating done in 2012)

Course Requirements:

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

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.

Worksheets, textual exercises and small group studies: You will be expected to complete several worksheets and studies 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, evaluation, and feedback.

Abbreviations

ABC: *Africa Bible Commentary*

ABI: Author's Big Idea

ACCS: *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*

BSM: Bible Study Methods

ECA: Explore-Connect-Apply. The model we are using in this class for Bible study. Can also refer to a summary presentation of statements generated by using the model.

FC (or FCF): Fallen Condition (or Fallen Condition Focus)

FNV: First Nations Version of the Bible.

GBP: *God's Big Picture*, by Vaughan Roberts

ICT: Introduction to Christian Theology

IVPBBC: *Inter-Varsity Press Bible Background Commentary*

KoG: Kingdom of God

NDBT: *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*

NIVZSB: *New International Version Zondervan Study Bible*

NT: New Testament

RH: Redemptive History

RS: Redemptive Solution

SABC: *South Asia Bible Commentary*

SL: Structural Layout

SoGBC: *Story of God Bible Commentary*, by Mark Roberts

SV: Subject-Verb

TBI: Theological Big Idea

TBP: The Bible Project

TRA: Theological Reflection Assignment

UWA: Universal Wrestling Association

Class Schedule

Topic	Date	Assignments Due the Next Day
Pre-course Work		Read through the whole book of Ephesians once in the ESV, then read 2:11-22 three more times. Write a small group study on Eph 2:11-22, taking only 30-45 mins to write. AFTER completing the above... Read "Hearing the Music of the Gospel" Read <i>SoGBC</i> , 1-16 (Intro to Ephesians)
Day 1 Overview, Explore: Context	Mon, Jan 11	Read Ephesians (FNV) aloud with at least one other person Read Grammar Refresher Read <i>GBP</i> , 13-24 (Introduction) Read Silva, "How to Read a Letter" Context Worksheet
Day 2 Explore: Structure and Observations	Tues, Jan 12	Observation Worksheet Read <i>SoGBC</i> , 75-76 ("Listen to the Story") Read Bobo, <i>A Layperson's Guide to Biblical Interpretation</i> , 19-29 TBP: Ephesians video SV 1:15-23
Day 3 Explore: Interpretation and ABI	Wed, Jan 13	Interpretation Worksheet Read <i>SoGBC</i> , 76-85 ("Explain the Story") Read 2 coach-assigned commentaries *Read "Understanding Scripture's FCF" *Read "Bridging the Gap" Read <i>GBP</i> , Proclaimed Kingdom (ch. 7)

Day 4 Connect	Thurs, Jan 14	TBI Worksheet *Read “Theology of the NT” Read “Forgiveness and Reconciliation (<i>NDBT</i>) TBP: Temple video SV 3:1-13
Day 5 Apply: Response	Friday, Jan 15	Response Worksheet Read <i>SoGBC</i> , 85-92 (“Live the Story”) SV 4:1-6
Day 6 Apply: Expanding Categories, part 1	Tues, Jan 19	ECA exercise 4:1-6 (Explore questions) Read Cleveland, “Right Christian, Wrong Christian” (ch 1 of <i>Disunity in Christ</i>) Read Ellis, “Biblical Righteousness is a Four-Paned Window” *Read “Learning to Ask Good Questions”
Day 7 Apply: Expanding Categories, part 2	Wed, Jan 20	ECA exercise 4:1-6 (C-A questions) Read McCaulley, <i>Reading While Black</i> , ch. 3 *Read “Questions that Target the Heart” SV 5:15-21 Theological Reflection Assignment
Day 8 Existing Studies	Thurs, Jan 21	ECA exercise 5:15-21 SV 6:10-20 Small Group Questions Evaluation
Day 9 Digging Deeper	Fri, Jan 22	ECA 2:11-22 with Small Group Questions Read Loritts, <i>Insider Outsider</i> , 95-99 Submit Reading Report Complete Personal Evaluation
Day 10: Sending	Mon, Jan 25	Complete course evaluation

* All reading assignments not in textbooks are available to be downloaded on the IBS website. Those with asterisks are also printed at the end of this section of your notebook.