

LIVING



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Week Three: Study the Text

THE MISSIONARY TASK

Component Three: Discipleship

INTRODUCTION

Our study thus far has informed us of the importance of corporate worship and the doctrine of Scripture. The Christian faith is text-based, and we are to be people of the Book. However, to live the Christian life is to live a transformed life (Rom. 12:2). As it has been said, information plus application equals transformation. While reading the Bible is commendable, studying the text is necessary for spiritual growth. Perhaps nothing is more operative for spiritual transformation and building of confidence in the faith than personal Bible study.

BIBLICAL MATERIAL

The Bible is clear that it is a book to be studied (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15; Matt. 4:4; Ps. 119: 11; Neh. 8:1-8) and that those who do so will live lives blessed by God as they are transformed by their study (cf. Ps. 1:2; Ps. 19:7-11; John. 14:15). There is no mystical ritual to follow to gain a right interpretation of a text, nor does the Bible prescribe a set methodology for our study. However, as Christians have studied the Bible over time, a simple pattern has emerged that many have found to be helpful to guide their thoughts.

READ

Slowly, simply, and carefully read the passage. Read aloud if it helps!

PRAY

Bible study is a spiritual exercise. Before we do any physical exercise, we stretch. Before we study the Bible, we must pray. When we do, we ask the divine Author of Scripture to help us understand what he has written (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:21).

OBSERVE

Ask of the text, “What does this passage say?” Consider the context and genre of the passage. (Think: who, what, when, where, why, and how.)

INTERPRET

Ask of the text, “What does this passage mean?” You may ask, “What was the author’s purpose in writing this?” and “What did it mean to its original audience?” Remember, the main things are the plain things, and the plain things are the main things.

APPLY

The Bible was written long ago but is to be actively applied to our lives today (Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Bible study is not just about getting through the Bible, but having the Bible get through us. Ask of the text—and yourself— “What does this passage mean to me?” and “How can it be applied to my life?”

MISSIONARY TASK RELEVANCY

When we study the Bible, we study information such as literature, geography, cultures, and perhaps even languages; however, Bible study is not a merely intellectual exercise. For the Christian, Bible study is a sustaining and nourishing act for the soul to encourage personal faith and propel our own discipleship.

Nevertheless, the transformation that leads to application does not end there. As we study and are transformed by the text, we discover that we become disciples of Jesus who actively seek to make other disciples of Jesus (Matt. 4:19; Matt. 28:19-20).



LIFE APPLICATION

1. What do you find intimidating about studying the Bible? How might you gain confidence to overcome these concerns?
2. Read Psalm 19:7-11. What benefits do you find in studying the Bible?
3. Consider people (either in Scripture or those you know personally) whose lives have been helped by studying the Scriptures or hindered by not doing so. Do their lives give you any encouragement? Example to follow? Lesson to learn?
4. Compose a list of general observation questions. Compose a list of general application prompts. These will be helpful when you approach a text for study.
5. How does your personal study of the Bible lead you to the discipleship of others? What steps could you take to gear your personal Bible study toward the eventual discipleship of others?