

Bible Study Methods and Tools

C. Jean Smith

Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church,
Signal Mountain, Tennessee

THE WORD OF GOD is the most precious treasure we possess as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. This truth must be the foundation upon which all aspects of our ministries are built. The degree to which we passionately and actively believe this truth will determine the strength of the foundation. In turn, the strength of the foundation will determine the depth of our commitment to make the study of God's Word a top priority among the women we are called to lead.

Let's look at a few of the gems from His Word that supports this truth. Beginning in the Old Testament and continuing through the New Testament, I have woven together a composite reminder of the value of the God-breathed Word.

We don't live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. We are to take these words in, which by the way taste sweeter than honey. Throughout our lives, we are to continue to store them in our hearts and minds. This is how we learn to revere God and to do what He says. The time we spend in this practice is never wasted for His words are not idle for us – they are our life. They heal and strengthen us because they are right and true. Like silver refined, they are flawless.

The Word of God can be likened to several things...a light shining

in a dark place, a lamp that lights our path; fire and a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces; a sharp sword that divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow and judges the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts; a living, active powerful weapon of the Spirit that gives us victory over the enemy; and the imperishable enduring see through which we have been given new birth.

By His Word, God made the heavens and the earth and by His powerful Word, His Son sustains everything. The Word He sends out from His mouth never fails to do what He desires and always achieves the

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purpose for which it was sent. He is watching over it to be certain that happens. There is nothing in His creation that holds a higher position than His name and His Word. It stands forever as His unfettered truth and can never be bound by any limitations imposed upon it by man.

We are to do our best work to show God that we are women who don't need to be ashamed and who are able to correctly handle the Word of truth. God highly values the one who trembles at His Word.

Those who hear His Word and do what it says are building their lives upon the rock. When the storms of life hit, they will not be destroyed. The Scripture gives understanding even to the simple, but those who reject His Word...what kind of wisdom do they have?

All Scripture is God-breathed. By it we are taught everything we need to know about the Lord our God, and about ourselves. His Word reproves us, corrects us and trains us in the right way to live so that we are fully adequate and fully equipped for every good work.

Heaven and earth will pass away but the Word of God stands firm in the heavens forever and ever.

In the light of all the above truth, are you thoroughly convinced that the Word of God is the most precious treasure you possess?

Are you willing to spend the time it takes to learn how to discover

this treasure for yourself?

And then, will you make it your priority to teach others?

Purpose:

To inspire and equip women to grow in their personal study of God's Word.

To inspire and equip women to lead other women in the study of God's Word.

Topics:

Personal Bible Study for Leaders

The Importance.

The Benefits.

The Inductive Method.

How to Get Started.

The Tools: Observation, Interpretation, Application

Inductive Study of Philippians 2:1-11

Understanding Different Types of Literature

Handling Different Literary Devices Used in Scripture

Preparing to Lead a Bible Study

The Teacher and the Learner

The Lesson

The Gift of Teaching

Principles and Guidelines for Choosing Bible Studies

Evaluating the Group

Evaluating the Study

Suggestion for Study Materials

Personal Bible Study for Leaders

Importance in the Life of a Leader

As a Christian woman who is called by God to lead others, you must make time for personal Bible study. **You cannot hope to lead others where you have not traveled first.** This is never optional and always essential. It is the means by which God produces holiness in you and brings about the transformation of your life. The testimony of God's

activity in your life is very powerful when seen by the women you lead. The truths of God's Word are communicated not only through the pages of Scripture, but in and through your life.

You are "living letters of Christ... known and read by all... written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts." 2 Corinthians 3:2-3

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2

Benefits of Personal Bible Study

At the top of the list is the benefit that comes from knowing God. Knowing His character and attributes as revealed in Scripture causes you to love Him. You learn to trust Him, believing that He will be true to His character and nature as He interacts with us. As He was, He is now and always will be.

The most important thing there is about any of us is what we believe about God. If your overriding perception of God is based on information you have gathered through the years from other people, or society, or experiences, your knowledge of Him will be distorted. On the other hand, if you spend time in His Word with the intention of increasing your knowledge of Him, His image will become clearer and brighter each day. You will develop a faith that honors Him and gives a true assessment of Him to a watching world. To make Him known to others, you and I must know Him first as He truly is.

Personal time spent in the study of God's Word allows the Word to have access to you as well. As the Lord illuminates His Word, He will be faithful to illuminate those areas of your heart that are often hidden from your own sight. He will do this because He loves you too much to leave you unchanged. What a comfort to rest assured of this truth.

Method of Study

One of the best methods to use for personal Bible study is the inductive method. Briefly, inductive study when applied to the Scriptures is seeing truth for yourself, discerning what it means, and applying it to your life.

This method introduces you to some simple tools with which you can begin to unearth the treasure that lies within your reach, yet often seems inaccessible.

Through inductive study you learn to read with a purpose, looking for specific answers to specific questions. Out of necessity, you have to slow down in order to discover these answers and as you do, hidden treasures begin to emerge. You become engaged in the process of discovery as God speaks directly to you in His Word. This is the truth you will remember far better than that based on someone else's discovery.

Knowing God and having a deep relationship with Jesus Christ requires more than a quick run-through of a chapter a day. Reading what someone else has to say about the Bible won't do it either. You must interact with the Word of God personally. As you make yourself available to Him, He will take His word from the written page and write it on your heart with the indelible ink of His Spirit. You will have a personal encounter with the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Do you think you will soon forget truth He has etched on your heart?

Getting Started

Establish Time and Place.

Decide to make it #1 on your list.

Decide to be diligent and faithful.

Decide to sacrifice, if necessary, to make it happen.

Equip Your Place.

Bible, notebook, pen or pencil.

Equip Your Heart

Come humbly.

Come hungry.

Come needy.

Expect God to Speak

Be ready to hear His voice.

Expect to Respond

Be willing to submit to His voice.

God desires a two-way conversation with you centered on His Word. This give-and-take conversation brings you into intimate relation-

ship with Him without which you and I cannot lead others. Out of that relationship flows our leadership.

Tools of Inductive Bible Study

Observation – What does it say?

Interpretation – What does it mean?

Application – How does it apply to me?

Observation

Initially, observation can take a long time but it is never time spent in vain. The Word of God is meant to be studied and that means it requires hard work, like anything of value. The investment you make by careful observation is the first step toward knowing and loving God more deeply. The rewards that lie ahead make it all worth it.

Observation always begins with a general overview of the text then moves toward the specifics. Starting with the big picture ensures that you will be able to correctly understand and appreciate the details. It may seem unnecessary to do all the preliminary investigation, but it is essential and yields much fruit. When you are involved in the process of discovery, you will remember far longer and are more greatly impacted by the truth.

Below are some general guidelines to assist you as you begin to use more tools of inductive Bible study. They are by no means exhaustive, but I want you to see how effective their use can be.

Start with prayer.

God's Word is living and active. You must always ask Him to give you the understanding and to speak to your heart. Spiritual truth is only spiritually grasped. **Write a prayer that you can use before beginning your time in the Word.**

Read the passage you have decided to study.

There is no substitute for reading and re-reading the portion of Scripture you are going to study. If possible read it several times over in one sitting. If you are studying an entire book of the Bible, read as much as you can without stopping. Taking a good look at the whole helps you see how the vari-

ous parts fit into that whole. In this way you are also establishing context which assures you of more accurate interpretation and correct application.

Record your initial general impressions.

Learning to read Scripture with a purpose is vital to the first step of observation. The purpose of observation is to gather the facts, looking for all the details that we might otherwise miss in a cursory reading. The best tools for this fact-gathering mission are the “**5 W’s and an H**”, the questions that ask **who? what? when? where? why? and how?** By learning to use these specific questions we can interrogate the text, looking for specific answers.

Often when we read the Bible, we want to rush into interpretation and are unwilling to take the time needed to properly observe what is being said. When we do this, we run the risk of basing what we think it means upon our own presuppositions, what we feel, or what other people have said. Doing this leaves us open to distortion of the Scriptures to our own harm.

Interrogate the text using the 5 W’s and an H. (hint: look for the obvious things first. Also look for repeated words and phrases as they reveal what the author thought was most important.

WHO? (the characters)

Who wrote it? Who are the recipients? Who is involved in the main action? Who is indirectly involved in the action? Who are the others mentioned?

WHAT? (the key truths or events)

What are the main events? What are the main ideas? What are the main teachings? What does the author talk about most? What is the purpose in saying it? What is the tone of the passage: joy, sorrow, victory, defeat? What are the figures of speech? What are the repeated words?

WHEN? (the time factors)

When was it written? When did it happen? Past, present or future? Duration of the action? At what historical point in the life of Israel or the church?

WHERE? (the geography and the location)

Where was it done? Where was it said? Where did it happen? Where will it happen? Where was the author when he wrote it? What places, buildings, cities, nations, or landmarks are mentioned.

WHY?

Why was it written? Why did the author mention this? Why was so much attention given to this subject? Or so little? Why were they to do this or that?

HOW?

How did it happen? How is it to be done? How will it happen? How is it illustrated?

Example Text

“Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine as stars in the universe.” Philippians 2:14-15

What is being talked about?

How is it to be done?

Why is it to be done this way?

Who are the doers being addressed?

What are the children of God like?

Where are they to live like this?

What are they compared with?

- From this quick observation, can you write down what you think it means?
- Does it have any meaning for you in your life right now? If so, is there something you think the Lord may want you to do as a result?

Interpretation

How do I discover the purpose of the passage?

Determine the reader’s needs.

(This is the reason that prompted the writing.)

Determine the writer's message.

(This is the writer's response to the needs.)

Always check the context.

What does the text surrounding the passage say that adds to your understanding? (This keeps you from taking something out of context.)

Check cross-references, concordances or other translations.

What do they add to your understanding or help clarify?

Consult reliable commentaries.

What do they add to your understanding or clarify?

Write down your conclusions concerning the passage.

Guidelines for Applying Scripture to Your Life

Know yourself. The better you know your own strengths and weaknesses, the more you will be able to recognize those Scriptures that apply to your life.

Make a list of your strengths and weaknesses in your journal. Keep it with your Bible.

Relate the passage to life. Look for areas in your life where the Scriptures seem to apply the most.

Examine your relationships by asking these questions.

With God

- A truth to rest in
- A command to obey
- A prayer to express
- A challenge to heed
- A promise to enjoy

With yourself

- A thought or word to examine
- An action to take
- An example to follow
- An error to avoid
- An attitude to change or guard against
- A priority to change
- A goal to strive for
- A personal value or standard to uphold

A sin to forsake
A piece of spiritual armor to wear
A temptation to resist
A sin to avoid and confess

With others

A witness to share
An encouragement to extend
A service to do
A forgiveness to ask
A fellowship to nurture
An exhortation to give
A burden to bear
A kindness to express
A hospitality to extend
An attitude to change or guard against
A sin to renounce

Meditate on the passage. As you reflect on His Word, He will bring the strength and wisdom needed to be obedient to His Word.

Practice what you have learned. This takes discipline. Be willing to do what it takes to put what you have learned into practice. Often we don't need to hear anything more from His Word; we just need to be obedient to what we have heard.

(Practice Sheet)

Inductive Bible Study

Philippians 2:1-11

¹ Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage;

⁷ rather, He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Understanding Different Types of Literature

Recognizing and respecting the figures of speech used in the Bible will help you handle the text properly as you interpret the Word of God.

What is a figure of speech?

Word, phrase or expression in a figurative sense rather than literal sense.

There are several types of figurative language used in the Bible as well as a variety of styles.

The following are brief definitions:

Simile is a comparison of two different things or ideas. Uses connecting words like as, such as, as...so.

Metaphor is a comparison between two things that are different, but not a stated comparison. The words like, as and such as are not used.

Exaggeration is also called hyperbole; it is used for effect or emphasis. Hyperboles are found in all languages, but more frequently used among Semite peoples.

Metonymy is a figure of association, when the name of one object or concept is used for another to which it is related.

Synecdoche is another figure of association where the whole can refer to part or part to the whole. It can also be a singular for a plural or a plural for a singular.

Personification is used when an object is given characteristics or attributes that belong to people.

Irony is a statement that says the opposite of what is meant. Used for emphasis or effect.

Look up the following verses and identify which figure of speech is used.

Isaiah 55:12

Mark 1:5

Psalms 119:20

Jeremiah 25:29

I Corinthians 4:8

John 15:5

Psalms 42:1

Revelation 1:14b

Ephesians 6:17

Different Literary Devices Used in Scripture

Parables – Types – Symbols

What is a parable?

A **parable** is a story that teaches a moral lesson or truth.

It is designed to make one central point.

Amplifies or affirms doctrine rather than establishing it.

Jesus frequently used **parables** in His teaching.

To reveal truth to believers.

To hide truth from those who had rejected it and/or hardened their hearts against it.

For example see: Matthew 13:10-17; Mark 4:10-12

Steps to use for interpreting parables:

- **Determine the occasion.**

Why was it told? What prompted it?

- **Look for the explanation.**

Don't impose any meaning beyond what is clearly stated or applied by Jesus to those who heard the parable.

- **Identify the central idea.**

Every parable has one central idea.

- **Identify the relevant details and the irrelevant details.**

A relevant detail is one that reinforces the central idea.

All details in a parable do not relate to the central idea.

- **Interpret in the context of the culture in which they were written rather than today's culture.**

A Bible dictionary or book on customs of Bible times will often help shed light on traditions that are foreign to use today.

- **Never make parables the primary or only source for establishing doctrine.**

Remember parables amplify or affirm doctrine rather than establish it.

Parables are more obscure than clear doctrinal passages.

Look up the following parables and use the above steps of interpretation.

Luke 18:9-14

Why was it told?

Is there an explanation given?

What is the main emphasis or central idea, the reason for the parable?

What details are relevant to the central idea? Are any not?

Mathew 25: 1-13

What information from outside the Bible would be helpful in interpreting this parable?

What is an allegory?

- An allegory is a story that describes one thing by using the image of another.
- Guidelines for interpreting an allegory.
- List the features
- Note any interpretation given within the context.
- Don't interpret an allegory in a way that contradicts the clear

teaching of the Word of God.

- Don't try to identify all the features of an allegory.

Look up the following allegories.

Galatians 4: 21-31

List the features found in verses 22-23.

Note the interpretation found in verses 24-31.

John 15: 1-8

Can you identify all the features? (Note for example the "they" in verse 6)

Does Jesus say who "they" are?

What is a type?

A prophetic symbol designated by God.

Comes from the Greek tupos meaning a mark formed by a blow and leaving an image on the object that was struck.

A **type** prefigures something or someone to come.

That which it prefigures it called an **antitype**.

An example is found in **Romans 5: 14**

"Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's offense, who is a type of Him who was to come."

Adam is a **type** of Jesus who is the **antitype**.

What is a symbol?

A **symbol** is a picture or an object that stands for or represents another thing.

An example is found in **Revelation 1:20**. The seven candlesticks mentioned here represent the seven churches described in Revelation 2 and 3.

Preparing to Lead a Bible Study

Regardless of the format used, there are some basic ingredients to consider as you prepare to lead your Bible study. These ingredients are all necessary to transmit knowledge to students. When you read this list, you will prob-

ably think it is so obvious that it need not be said. However, paying attention to each aspect will pay off in the end.

A Teacher

A Learner

A Lesson

What is a teacher?

A teacher is one who knows what is being taught. As a teacher, you must be thoroughly familiar with the material you are teaching. This takes hours of preparation. There's no way around it, no shortcut you can take. If you are the teacher, you have to give yourself adequate time to become thoroughly acquainted with the material. It makes all the difference!

When you get up to teach you have a body of truth to present, the Word of God. Now you may not be actually 'getting up' when you teach. Rather than standing at a podium to present a lecture, you might be gathered around a table leading a discussion group, or curled up on a comfy sofa in your living room next to a friend with whom you have a one-on-one mentoring relationship. Whatever the setting, please don't fall into the trap of thinking a less formal teaching situation requires less preparation. It requires at least as much to be fully prepared for questions and comments when they arise as it does to prepare a thirty minute lecture. In each and every teaching moment, you as the teacher simply need to know what you're talking about. The more you know your material the greater freedom you will have in communicating the Word of God.

What is a learner?

One who attends to the lesson with interest; not just a sitter, but one who wants to hear what you have to say. As a teacher, how can you help the learner hear what you are teaching? You will need to get her attention. This is one of the most vital keys in teaching. Without her attention it's very difficult to teach.

How can you get her attention?

The attention of the learner must be gotten from the very start so they will listen. To do so, you must know them. For instance as a woman you already know first hand the basic things that are true of women. So when

you are teaching women you gain their attention by using something that relates particularly to them. Sometimes the group you are teaching will have a common denominator, such as young mothers, widows, working women, single moms or moms of teens. Then your attention-grabbing statement can be even more specific. This may seem mundane, but it is the difference between ordinary and extraordinary teaching.

Jesus did this when Nicodemus the Pharisee came to Him. Jesus knew what a Pharisee was like. What did Jesus talk to him about? He began to talk to Nicodemus about the kingdom of God...about things Nicodemus as a teacher of Israel should have understood. In a like manner, Jesus talked to the Samaritan woman, who came to draw water from the well, about living water. He knew she needed it. He knew her.

What are some ways Jesus caught the attention of people?

Sometimes by a shocking statement. Something that made them sit up and take notice. For example in Matthew 5:3 when Jesus began to teach saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit”, this got their attention because it was shocking to them. They believed the opposite was true. He had their attention from the beginning.

Sometimes with a question. You might open the lesson by asking a question that relates to what you are going to teach. For example if you are teaching about prayer, you might start by asking, “Have you ever felt your prayers were just hitting the ceiling and bouncing right back?” Or “Do you have a hard time praying when you know that what you’re going through is because of something you’ve done wrong?” Questions like these can draw your listeners in quickly because it’s something they can relate to.

Sometimes Jesus simply called for attention. Jesus often cried out saying! You could begin your lesson by saying something like, “What I’m going to talk to you about this morning is extremely important. Especially for you who are mothers of teenagers. So I want you to pay very close attention. It could be a matter of life and death.”

Sometimes with a story or parable. Jesus often used parables to illustrate what He was going to teach. If you know a story that relates to your lesson, it could make a great introduction by getting their attention and arousing their interest.

Sometimes with Scripture. As in Luke 4:16. This works best if your

audience is captive. Make sure it immediately applies to their lives so they will listen.

How do I prepare to teach God's message to God's people?

As a teacher of the Word of God, always use the Word of God no matter what you are going to talk about.

Ask God to give you the specific Scripture for the people. When you have His message, you can speak with authority and confidence. Even when you are teaching through a book of the Bible and are completely prepared, keep praying for His message. Ask Him to give you that specific theme or emphasis for the lesson. Nothing compares with the freshness of the Holy Spirit's quickening of the Word of God.

Do a thorough study of the passage or book of the Bible you are teaching. Remember that you are held accountable for what you teach.

Study inductively. Allow plenty of time to observe carefully so you can interpret accurately. No matter what you are teaching, you need to be seeking God as you study until He tells you how it applies to life. You need to be able to motivate hearers to action.

Outline your lesson. Write down in as few words as possible what you are going to teach them. That is the theme of your lesson and becomes your governing purpose. If it doesn't relate to the theme, you're not going to use it. Ask yourself, "What is the main truth I want them to know, to understand and to remember?"

Be vulnerable. Remember...what God has taken you through, He wants to use in someone else's life.

Don't forget delivery. It's important.

You are unique! In every way. Because you are, God is going to bring a unique delivery through you.

- All teaching should be filtered through the unique person you are.
- Don't copy others if it is not natural to you.
- Delivery Skills can be learned but should become part of you, not you part of them.
- Appearance. You are a representative of God. Your dress should portray who you represent. (Man looks on the outward appearance.)
- Catch their attention from the beginning.

- Pray, pray, pray all the way through your message.
- Speak so you can be heard. Speak appropriately.
- Read the Scripture with feeling, inflection.
- Use illustrations. They let the light in.
- Use equipment and/or teaching tools only if it's going to enhance your message. Otherwise you'll get preoccupied with it.
- You can draw stick figures to illustrate, you don't have to be an artist.
- Combining words and visual tools enhances the message.
- Tell them what they are going to learn, how this lesson is going to help them.
- Learn to read expressively, practice by reading to others.
- Use appropriate vocabulary. Big words don't impress. If you use a term, explain it. Make sure everyone can understand your terms.
- Don't lower God's standard. Call women to righteous living.
- When you give the conclusion, take the theme you started with, and tie it in at the conclusion.

Remember –

You can teach because the Master Teacher is in you and with you and He has given you His authority.
Give them what God gives you.

What Makes An Effective Teacher?

The gift of teaching.
The development of that gift.

Look up the following Scriptures.

I Cor. 12: 4-7, 11, 27-31

Rom. 12:6-8

Eph. 4:11-13

- Teaching is a spiritual gift from God. Not all are given the same gift, but all the gifts come from the same Lord.
- There are varieties of ministries but all come from the same Lord. The Lord Jesus gives the ministry.
- There are varieties of effects (in the Greek it means something simi-

lar to “energies”) but the same God. God is the one who produces the effects. His Spirit does this using what you are teaching. He energizes the words in the teaching.

- No one can boast about her teaching, it all comes from God.
- Why does God give the gifts, ministries and effects? For the common good of the church of Jesus Christ.
- He placed you in the Body according to the gift He gave you so you can do the work of the Body.
- Your gift of teaching is for the saints. The end of teaching is never knowledge, but that which is useful for training, equipping and effecting life change/transformation.
- If you are a teacher, devote yourself to teaching. Equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

How do you know if you have the gift of teaching?

- You will be drawn to it.
- You will be given an opportunity to use it. God will give you the ministry. He will open up the way.
- You will be effective because God will give the effect. Lives will be changed.

Principles for Choosing Bible Studies

Guidelines for choosing Bible studies for women

Evaluating Your Group

The group’s makeup – ages, working or non-working, levels of spiritual maturity, etc.

Purpose of group – Is it group fellowship and encouragement with Bible study as springboard for discussion? Is it in-depth Bible study with up to an hour’s homework per week?

Existing group – consider what might lend variety and balance to the previous study – or something previously studied that would suggest digging deeper .

Expressed need of group – this could be a topic that frequently surfaces in discussions; i.e. Several women in the group commonly express that anxiety and worry are difficult for them to conquer. A

leader might choose a study on Philippians to address the acute need of her group.

Evaluating Study Materials

- Is it Biblically based?
- Is it a study of the Bible rather than a study of an author's opinion?
- Does it support and align with the Essentials of the EPC?
- Is the depth of the material well-suited to the maturity level of the group?
- Can the study be done in the allotted amount of time?
- If there is homework, are the questions clear and concise?
- Are they challenging or require simple responses?
- Does the homework required fit the group's level of commitment and available time?
- Do they lead the students into inductive Bible study requiring observation, interpretation and application?
- Is the publisher known for solid Biblical doctrine?

Consider Types of Studies

- Lecture — followed by small group discussion (no homework)
- Video teaching — followed by small group discussion (no homework)
- Print only – homework done and discussed in small group (no homework)
- Print only – homework during the week - small group discussion (homework)
- Combination print – video – homework – small group discussion. (homework)

Recommendations

Overview Bible Study

A wonderful type of Bible study to include in your curriculum plans is what is known as an overview study. This is a “big-picture” study of Scripture that takes you from cover to cover, though not in great detail. By studying the whole of God's Word from beginning to end you gain an understanding that helps when looking at the various parts.

Many of us may have learned stories from the Bible and studied portions of Scripture without having had the benefit of learning how they fit into the whole counsel of God's Word. What a world opens to us when we know how the parts relate to the whole! We come to understand that the God of the Old Testament is the same God who speaks to us from the New Testament. His character, His attributes and His ways have never changed and never will. We see more clearly than ever God's plan as it has unfolded over the centuries. As a result, we grow in our trust that He will be faithful to His plan in the future.

There are a number of overview studies. Below is just one you might want to check out.

The Stranger on the Road to Emmaus by John R. Cross

The Stranger on the Road to Emmaus Workbook by John R. Cross

Information available at www.goodseed.com

The Attributes of God

A study based on the attributes of God is always appropriate for any group, but especially for those new to the study of the Word. We can be certain that apart from the truth of God's Word, all that most of us would have to go on would be what we have gleaned from some fairly unreliable sources. It is absolutely crucial to our spiritual formation to have a solid Scriptural foundation of the attributes and character of the God whom we love and serve.

Below is a listing of the attributes with 2 or 3 Scripture verses where they are found. This makes a very good inductive study as is and one which you could expand if you wish.

The Attributes of God

- Omniscient.....Job 37:16, Psalm 139:1-6
- Omnipresent.....Proverbs 15:3, Jeremiah 23:23-24
- Omnipotent.....Genesis 18:14, Job 42:2, Jeremiah 32:27
- Eternal.....Deuteronomy 32:40, Isaiah 57:15
- ImmutablePsalm 102:25-27, Malachi 3:6
- IncomprehensibleJob 11:7, Romans 11:33
- Self-existentExodus 3:14, John 5:26
- Self-sufficient.....Psalm 50:7-12, Acts 17:24-25

Infinite.....I Kings 8:27, Psalm 145:3
 TranscendentIsaiah 43:10, 55:8-9
 SovereignDaniel 4:35
 HolyJob 34:10, Isaiah 47:4, 57:15
 Righteous.....Deuteronomy 32:4, Psalm 119:142
 JustNumbers 14:18, 23:19, Psalm 89:14
 Merciful.....Psalm 62:12, 89:14, 116:5, Romans 9:14-16
 Longsuffering.....II Peter 3:9
 WiseIsaiah 40:28, Daniel 2:20
 LovingJeremiah 31:3, Romans 5:8
 GoodII Chronicles 5:13, Psalm 106:1
 WrathfulExodus 34:6, Romans 1:18
 TruthfulPsalm 31:5, Titus 1:2
 FaithfulDeuteronomy 7:9, II Timothy 2:13
 JealousExodus 20:5, 34:14

Tips & Tools for Digging Deeper

My goal in studying the Word of God is to know the God of the Word;
 I want to have a life-changing encounter with God Himself!
 With this goal in mind, I can go beyond merely filling in blanks or
 getting right answers no matter what study plan I use.

Questions like these can help me accomplish my goal.

(Record answers in a separate journal)

- What do the Biblical passages from my homework tell me about God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?
- What do they tell me about God's ways with people?
- What do I see about who I am and what I am like?
- What truth does God want me to believe that could change my heart and help me love and trust Him more?

**I don't just want to gather information
 fact-by-fact,
 rather I deeply long to come
 face-to-face
 with the living God of the Scriptures.**

Get To Know The Writer

Jean Smith is currently an elder at Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church where she is the Director of Adult Ministries, including Women in Ministry. Since the very beginning of her new life in Christ some 30+ years ago, God has given her a passion for His Word. Through the systematic study of the Scriptures, He has truly changed her life. Nothing thrills her more than to be involved with others as the Lord opens the eyes of their understanding to the treasure of His Word.

Jean grew up on a farm in Iowa. She became a registered nurse. She has lived in California, Washington, Alabama, Georgia and currently, Signal Mountain, Tennessee, with her husband Leon who is a retired architect. She is the mother of four children, one of whom is with the Lord. Two of her grandchildren live in Fresno, CA, and one in Maryville, TN.

For Further Reading and Study:

Books on Inductive Bible Study

How to Study Your Bible by Kay Arthur

Discover the Bible for Yourself by Kay Arthur

How to Read the Bible for all it's Worth

by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart

Unlocking the Scriptures by Hans Finzel

Independent Bible Study by Irving L. Jenson

Understanding and Applying the Bible by Robertson J. McQuilkin

You Can Lead a Bible Discussion Group! by Dr. Terry Powell

Bible Concordances

The NIV Exhaustive Concordance

by Edward Goodrick and John R. Kohlenberger III

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. by James Strong

New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible

Robert Thomas, ed.

Recommended Inductive Bible Studies

40- Minute Bible Studies

“Lord” Series

New Inductive Study Series

In & Out

Precept Upon Precept: Precept Ministries International, P. O. box
1822818, Chattanooga, TN 37422

Email: info@precept.org ; www.precept.org