

Connection Groups Summer Elective – How to Study the Bible

SCRIPTURE IS TRUSTWORTHY AND OUR AUTHORITY

In the last few weeks, we have been looking at the importance of OBSERVING THE TEXT and have learned that God has wisely revealed himself and wisdom in Scripture through diverse authors, situations, and types of writing, which led us to ask: **What is the author's point?** We also learned that God has wisely revealed himself and his wisdom in Scripture through one plan to reconcile us to himself under Christ, which led us to ask: **How does it fit in the Bible?** In our time together today, we will learn that as God's Word, Scripture is trustworthy and our authority for faith, godliness, and teaching. So, we will learn to ask **QUESTION 3: How should it affect us now?**

This is the question we need to ponder for it involves the **APPLICATION** of the Scriptures to our lives. Too much of our Bible study begins and ends in the wrong place. It often begins with **INTERPRETATION**, and it also ends there. But last week it was mentioned that we don't start with the question, What does this mean? But rather, What does this say?, or What is the authors point? Furthermore, we don't end the process by asking, What does this mean? But rather, How does this work? Not does it work – but how?

Understanding text, then, is simply a means to a larger end – practicing biblical truth in day-to-day life. **OBSERVATION**, or Observing the Text, plus **INTERPRETATION** without **APPLICATION** equals no life change or transformation. The Bible was not written to satisfy your curiosity; it was written to transform your life.

READ Psalm 1

Scripture is trustworthy and our authority. So, we must study it, preach it and teach it in a way that honors how God inspired it.

- We do not pluck verses out of an author's context. We do not preach our own points regardless of the passage. **We do not add to it or subtract from it.**
- We honor God by showing God's people what God's Word says—in the passage, within its book, within the Bible's testimony to God's grace in Christ. We "expose" God's message. We "stay on the line" of God's Word:

PICTURE: A straight LINE (God's Word)

- ADD to (upward line) – **Can anyone think of an example?** – Often leads to Legalism
- SUBTRACT from (downward line) - **Can anyone think of an example?** - Often leads to Liberalism

REFLECT: *Would you agree that God's Word is trustworthy and serves as a believer's authority? Is that conviction proven in how you study, preach, and teach Scripture?*

REFLECT: *How do we know that Scripture is trustworthy?* (Seth first four classes)

Scripture's trustworthiness hangs on the trustworthiness of its source—God.

Scripture is not only trustworthy. It is also our authority for faith, godliness, and teaching.

Throughout history God and his people have affirmed that his Word has authority that will not pass away.

GOD AND HIS PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS AFFIRMED HIS WORD'S AUTHORITY

ENGAGE: As we read the following passages, notice the words and phrases that relate to Scripture's authority.

READ Leviticus 18:4 and Deuteronomy 4:1–2.

The Law Affirms the Authority of God's Word to His Covenant People

Treating God's Word as the authority, neither adding to it or taking away from it, is like "staying on a line."

- We do not go above the line in our studying, preaching or teaching, adding to God's Word our own beloved but extra doctrines and obligations.
- Nor do we go below the line in our studying, preaching or teaching, neglecting or omitting things Scripture says.

READ Deuteronomy 6:4–9.

God’s Word is the authority for families and with a focus on whole-person “love” for God.

READ Deuteronomy 31:9–13.

God’s Word is the authority for the whole community of God’s people, including old and young (any age), male and female (both genders), and Israelites and sojourner (any ethnicity).

READ Psalm 19:7–11

The Writings Affirm the Authority (and Beauty) of God’s Word

READ Isaiah 55:10–11

The Prophets Affirm the Authority (and Power) of God’s Word

READ Matthew 5:17–19.

Jesus and the NT authors affirm the authority of the OT when they use phrases like “it is written” and “this is to fulfill” in reference to OT passages. This happens throughout the NT.

READ 1 Thessalonians 2:13 and 2 Peter 3:15–16

The Writers of the New Testament Affirm the Authority of the New Testament

- Paul refers to the gospel, which is now contained in the NT, as “the word of God” (compare 1 Cor. 14:37).
- Peter, by writing of “the other Scriptures” in comparison with Paul’s letters, seems to be treating Paul’s letters as authoritative as the OT!

GOD’S AUTHORITATIVE WORD HAS ETERNAL SIGNIFICANCE

We have seen that God’s people have always affirmed the authority of his Word. This is fitting because God’s Word has eternal significance. Its authority will never pass away.

READ Isaiah 40:6–9

A voice says, “Cry out.” And I said, “What shall I cry?” “All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. 7 The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.” 9 You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, “Here is your God!” (Isa. 40:6–9)

ENGAGE: In this passage above (Isaiah 40:6–8), circle each time Isaiah uses “grass,” “flower,” “flesh,” and “people.” Underline “word of our God.”

DISCUSS: *How are grass, flowers, flesh, and people similar? How is God’s Word different?*

READ 1 Peter 1:23–25.

Peter cites this Isaiah passage and he points out that “the word of our God” is “the good news that was preached to you.” Isaiah’s “good news” is seen in the next two verses:

10 See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. 11 He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.” (Isa. 40:10–11)

God’s coming in power, justice, and tenderness is Peter’s “good news” that the Father sent his Son to ransom us by his blood and exert his imperishable resurrection power in us.

SCRIPTURE IS OUR AUTHORITY FOR FAITH, GODLINESS, AND TEACHING

The lasting authority of Scripture means that it was useful in the past and continues to be useful today. Paul wrote about his Scripture—the OT—in this way:

READ 2 Timothy 3:15–17.

15 *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 may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* (2 Tim. 3:15–17)

ENGAGE: Circle words that Paul uses to describe the OT.

ENGAGE: Underline what the OT can do.

SO, WE ASK, **HOW SHOULD IT AFFECT US NOW?**

- In Deuteronomy 8:3 Moses says, “man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”
- God’s Word is our life, it is trustworthy and our lasting authority. We cannot stop with understanding Scripture, regardless of how deeply and accurately we understand it.
- God’s Word must affect us and our communities today—now.

QUESTIONS 1 AND 2 are about understanding God’s Word.

QUESTION 3 is about communicating and applying it.

REVIEW: The third interpretive question builds on the first two but pushes into our lives now: **QUESTION 3: How should it affect us now?** (That is, **How should the meaning of the passage [within this book] and its illumination of God’s plan affect me and my listeners now?**)

Nine questions to ask with regard to Applying the Scriptures to our lives:

One to One – *Could it change **Your** life and the life of the **Church**?*

When Russell’s pastor asked him if he’d like to read the Bible with him, little did Russell know that it would change his life...

Russell has known Jesus all his life. He grew up having been taught the gospel by his parents, and remembers car conversations about the sermon and Bible during the trip home from church each Sunday. The

Bible was an integral part of church and home life. Yet in spite of all this, the idea of regularly meeting one to one with someone to read God's Word was a totally foreign concept to Russell.

Russell, with a little hesitation, figured that reading the Bible couldn't do him any harm. Also, his pastor promised that breakfast would be involved, so Russell said yes.

In the ensuing months, Russell and his pastor met early in the morning for breakfast. Russell worked 8am to 6pm in the office of a consulting firm half an hour away, so early meant early. They would meet for a simple breakfast and their time would consist of sharing how their lives were going, praying and reading the Bible.

Russell comments: "I loved tackling a small part of the Bible each week – in particular, thinking hard about how to apply it – how to live in the light of what God was saying. We just sat together – two men before the Scriptures, challenged to live out the Bible in our lives and we prayed that we wouldn't be like men who look in the mirror and walk away, forgetting what they look like (James 1:22-25)."

The time spent with his pastor has shaped Russell's ministry ever since. He has been involved in many other roles at church, but regardless of his other roles, he has made it his goal to meet with one or two other men for one-to-one Bible reading each year.

Now, stop for a moment and imagine how your life might change if you were involved in a one-to-one Bible reading relationship? Four important ingredients to our growing in holiness (sanctification) are: the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, prayer and relationships. Now, imagine if the majority of the people in our church were involved in a one-to-one relationship where they were studying, reflecting upon and applying the Scriptures to their lives and praying together. Do you think it would lead to greater growth in corporate holiness (sanctification)?

I have an idea: What if we were to stop imagining and began considering whom we will begin meeting with this next year? We could find someone to pair up with and read Ephesians together, simply following along with Pastor Tom each week. We can hear the message each week, get together one-to-one to read and discuss the passage, understand how we can apply it, and then pray for one another and for those around us who need Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Let me know what you think of my idea and if you need any help in getting started.

Pastor Matt

(Story of Russell was adapted from an article in [the Briefing](#) entitled: *Jars of Clay: Learning to read the Bible one to one* by Paul Grimmond)

Questions you might ask:

1. What stood out to you the most in your reading?
2. Was there anything difficult or hard to understand in your reading?
3. What did you learn about God in your reading?
4. Did you learn anything about yourself in your reading?
5. What do you need to do or apply from your reading?
6. What verse or phrase do you want to take with you from your reading?

