

Why Bible?

Week 5 | Getting Personal

■ BOTTOM LINE

The Word is alive and God uses it often to transform us.

■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

Today we ask ourselves specifically "how can God's Word change me?" and practice a Bible study method to help us apply God's truth to our lives so that we are transformed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. You might say that the Bible is our "user's manual to life" because everything we need to know about God and living a life for His Kingdom is found in its pages. Studying the Bible is necessary for spiritual growth, keeps us spiritually strong, and helps us apply its truth to our lives. When we make studying the Bible a central part of our lives, we give God the ability to transform us. Do you have a method to study the Bible? If you do, share with the group. If you don't, no shame! Today we will practice the "SOAP" method.
2. SOAP is a format used to study the scripture in a way that you don't just read it, but you seek to understand what is happening and what the scripture is saying, determine how you will apply the scripture to your life, and seek to hear from God as you read his Word.
 - a. Get your journal or paper and pencil. **Read Psalm 19** and walk through the entire SOAP format on the following page. Since you are doing this as a group plan to spend 10-15 minutes reading together and then journaling individually. Then move on to the Observation, Application and Prayer steps as a group.
 - b. Does this practical method of Bible study resonate with you? Why or why not? Will you use this method again in your personal study?
 - c. The SOAP format is geared toward personal study, however, there is value in doing it with a group. Journaling is a very personal time with the God, but it's great to share what God is teaching you with a small group of friends. Through discussion, you may be able to look deeper into what God is speaking to you, gain new insight and understanding, and encourage others.

"Don't just listen to God's Word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves."

James 1:22

"All scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right."

2 Timothy 3:16-17



TRY THIS

Here are some additional tools to help you dig into scripture and correctly interpret it.

- Study Bibles – provide notes to help you understand more of what is going on in the scripture
- Bible Dictionaries – define the meaning of a word in the original language
- Concordances – help you locate other passages that contain the same word
- Commentaries – illustrate how other men of God have interpreted a specific text
- Bible Translations or Paraphrases – restate the text in different wording

The SOAP Bible Study Method

SOAP is a format used to study the scripture in a way that you don't just read it, but you seek to understand what is happening and what the scripture is saying, determine how you will apply the scripture to your life, and seek to hear from God as you read his Word.

Scripture. Read a passage from the Bible. Journal the verse or verses that stood out to you.

Observation. What do you observe about this scripture? What is God saying through this scripture?

Application. What does God want you to do in your own life after reading this scripture?

Prayer. Write a prayer in your journal asking God to help you live this out in your life starting today.

Scripture: What verse is sticking out to you?

- Pray and ask God to speak to you before you read his Word.
- Why is this verse sticking out to you today?
- Mark this verse: write it in a journal, underline it in your Bible, highlight it, write the date by it, write a short thought, write a person's name by it if you are praying this for them.

Observation: What is God saying in this scripture?

- Who are the people in this passage?
- What is happening in this passage?
- Where is this story taking place?
- When in time is it? (time of day, of the year, in history)

Application: What does God want you to do because of this scripture?

- How does the truth revealed here affect my relationship with God?
- How does this truth affect my relationship with others?
- How does this truth affect me?
- How does this truth affect my relationship with the enemy?
- Is it instruction, encouragement, revelation of a new promise or correction for a particular area of my life?
- What am I going to do about it?

Prayer: Talk to God about what you are hearing from His Word.

- Confess any areas of your life where you have not been living according to his Word and direction for your life.
- Thank Him for revealing new things and speaking to you through this scripture.
- Ask Him to help you live this out in your life, starting today.

Why Bible?

Week 4 | Going Deep and Wide

■ BOTTOM LINE

We have all seen the Bible wrongly interpreted and misused in its application.

■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

When it is common to handle the Word of God incorrectly or inaccurately, we will seek to understand and interpret Scripture passages correctly and accurately and apply them to our lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever received a message from someone and misinterpreted what the person was trying to communicate? Share what happened.
2. Hermeneutics is the science of Biblical interpretation. The goal is to get the authors original intent to the original audience. It is critical that we let the text speak to us, not that we speak for the text. What happens when we read into the text the things we want it to say?
3. Context leads to clarity.
 - a. Read Matthew 18:20. Does this mean that when you are alone God is not with you?
 - b. Now Read Matthew 18:15-20. Paul is actually addressing conflicts in the church – conflicts that can be difficult to resolve, but a third party can help get to the truth and hopefully a resolution and forgiveness. What strikes you with this dramatically different interpretation and application?
 - c. Can you think of other scripture that you questioned “does God really mean that” when you read it out of context? Share with the group.
4. Exegesis means to lead out or draw out of a text what it is saying. If you approach the study of scripture with this posture, you see that it speaks to all mankind in every culture and every age. Who do you know that studies scripture with this posture? Share who comes to mind and their impact on you.
5. The tools for studying the Bible correctly can be summarized as the **7 P's of Bible Study**:
 - a. **Priority** – the most important aspect of getting into God's Word is to read it regularly. What can you do to make this a top priority?
 - b. **Pen** – the serious Bible student writes down what God shows him/her. What method do you prefer (paper, journal, notes on your phone, etc)?
 - c. **Preparation** – we need time to get our hearts ready and right to study God's Word. Perhaps prayer for strength or forgiveness is needed. What do you need to find a sense of awe toward God and His Word?
 - d. **Passage** – keep your study systematic, not haphazard. Perhaps you pick a Bible reading plan through the YouVersion app on your phone. Do you have a study or method to recommend to others?
 - e. **Pick Apart** – work hard to study God's Word by picking it apart with these three segments: Observation (what does it say?), Interpretation (what does it mean?), Application (what does it mean for me?). Could this framework lead to higher engagement and commitment in your study?
 - f. **Ponder** – spend some time mediating on the truths of the passage. Ask these questions: What does this text say about God? What does this text say about me? Is God speaking to me through this text? Is there something I need to do or change?
 - g. **Practice** – apply the text to your life. Read James 1:22 and discuss. What is James saying?

“It's not how many times you have gone through the Word that matters, but how many times the Word has gone through you.”

-Charles Spurgeon



TRY THIS

Do you own a study Bible? A study Bible provides information designed to help the reader gain a better understanding of and context for the text. They are loaded with insights and commentary to help you dig deeper. They also include maps, graphs, concordances and charts that shed light on biblical times. Some feature people profiles and glossaries to give additional information. Pray about whether a study Bible would make your time with God's Word even richer.

Why Bible?

Week 3 | Bible in 27

BOTTOM LINE

God's story of redemption The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. Everything in the Old Testament points to the revelation of Jesus in the New Testament. mankind is captured in the journals of the Old Testament.

GOAL OF THE GROUP

We will walk through the entire New Testament. It is comprised of 27 books written by 9 authors over 100 years. The first 4 books introduce Jesus and announce the good news. The book of Acts shows us that through the Holy Spirit, God empowers Jesus followers to spread the life and love of Jesus out into the world. The next 21 books are letters written to new churches. The final book is a letter of challenge and comfort written to seven churches about the end times.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is there a book you loved so much you read it more than once? Share the book and why you read it multiple times.
2. The New Testament begins with the people waiting with expectations of what God will do. They know His prophecies concerning a suffering servant who will one day save the world from their sins. The New Testament can be broken down into 7 images. Read through these and reflect on last week when we discussed the Bible as a love letter from God. What is God saying to you through this next part of His story? Where do you see yourself in His story?
 - a. **Jesus** – The gospels (the first four books) are personal accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus. They are filled with insight into Jesus as God's solution to the sin problem of man.
 - b. **Cross** – Jesus confronts the dark evil that lures us into selfishness, violence and death. He overcomes evil by dying on the cross. Here He lives out what He taught: non-violence, forgiveness and self-giving love are the most powerful things in the universe.
 - c. **Empty Tomb** – Jesus predicted His own death and resurrection. He conquers death and claims the ultimate victory over sin and death. His resurrection reveals that we will be resurrected too.
 - d. **Holy Spirit** – After Jesus ascends to the Father, He sends the Holy Spirit which now allows humans to be filled with the supernatural power of God.
 - e. **Church** – God's plan to reach the world with the good news of Jesus is a community of Christ followers who love one another and love their neighbors.
 - f. **You've Got Mail** – Paul sends letters to the churches he started. These letters teach that we can leave our slavery and be liberated to a new life. We can leave our old person behind and live as a new creation in Christ.
 - g. **Heaven** – What God started in Eden will be completed in a new heaven and new earth. It won't be like back in Eden, but better than Eden.
3. In what ways can reading the Bible benefit you? What would motivate you to read it regularly?
4. Has reading the Bible ever helped you realize something about your life? Describe the experience. What could have happened if you had stayed on a different course?

"The Bible, God's inerrant Word, is forever true whether or not anyone reads or believes it; but it becomes of value to you when you get hold of it for yourself. Never leave a passage of Scripture until it has said something to you."

-Robert A. Cook

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*The gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) reveal the **person** of Jesus, the **power** of Jesus, and the **preaching** of Jesus. The entire Old Testament story is connected to its conclusion in the person of Jesus. How well do you know Jesus? Have you read the gospels to discover who He truly is? Is this the year that get to know Him rather than just know about Him?*

To know God, you've got to understand the Bible.

To understand the Bible, you've got to learn about Jesus.

To learn about Jesus, you've got to read the Gospels.

Why Bible?

Week 2 | Bible in 39

■ BOTTOM LINE

God's story of redemption for mankind is captured in the journals of the Old Testament.

■ GOAL OF THE GROUP

We will walk through all 39 books of the Old Testament with an overview of God's story of redemption of mankind. This journey starts with the creation and fall of man in the book of Genesis and concludes with 400 years of silence after the book of Malachi and the wait for the promised Messiah in the New Testament.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you are a reader, describe the last book you really enjoyed. What was it about the book that pulled you in and kept you engaged?
2. The Old Testament is not written chronologically, but rather it flows like a story. It is comprised of 39 books written by 28 authors over 2,000 years. Are you surprised that the Old Testament could be a flowing story given these details? Why or why not?
3. The story of the Old Testament can be broken down into 10 images. Read through each one and share what comes to mind. Whether or not you've studied the Old Testament in the past consider that the New Testament has its foundation in the Old Testament, yet most evangelical churches teach from the New Testament. It is very important to understand the Old Testament.
 - a. **Apple** – The beginning starts with the creation and fall of man. God made us, gave us a choice, we failed, and His journey to redeem all of us begins.
 - b. **Father Abraham Had Many Sons** – God uses these men to father an amazing group even though they are sinners. God uses us as well when we say yes to Him.
 - c. **Broken Chains** – God uses Moses to lead Israel to freedom. He gives Moses the 10 Commandments. Today we might think God's laws are restrictive, yet if we live by these laws we find life.
 - d. **Real Estate Contract** – God brings Israel to the Promised Land, but they wander for 40 years because they do not obey God's instruction. Partial obedience is still disobedience.
 - e. **Kings** – God gives his people a king to fulfill their repeated request, but earthly kings can be tempted and make bad decisions. God never leads us into temptation. How we handle and negotiate temptation will determine the course of our life and legacy.
 - f. **Crown Split** – Mass disobedience to God's commandments leads to division within the country of Israel. When we seek a king other than God, we live divided lives.
 - g. **Eviction** – The prophets were the mouthpiece of God. Persia captures God's people but allows some back to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls. God is our master builder and healer no matter the circumstances.
 - h. **U Turn** – The people return to Jerusalem for a time of rebuilding and renovating. When we are not living for God, we are living under a curse.
 - i. **God's Phone Is On Silent** – God is silent for 400 years. This silence is the time between the Old Testament prophets and the arrival of Jesus in the New Testament. However, God is never "silent", He is always active, involved and working to accomplish His will in our world.
4. The Bible is like a love letter from God. Read through the words on the following page. God reveals His character in every book of the Old Testament. What is God saying to you through this His story?

"Reading the Bible generates life. It produces change. It heals hurts. It builds character. It transforms circumstances. It imparts joy. It overcomes adversity. It defeats temptation. It infuses hope. It releases power. It cleanses the mind."

-Rick Warren



TRY THIS

The Bible Project (thebibleproject.com) is where visual storytelling meets the Bible. Watch two videos that explore the origins, context, and purpose of the Bible: Episode 1 "What Is the Bible?"

(thebibleproject.com/explore/how-to-read-the-bible/) introduces you to a condensed history of how the Bible came into existence, and the different forms of the Bible in the Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christian traditions. Episode 2 "How To Read the Bible"

(thebibleproject.com/explore/how-to-read-the-bible/) summarizes the overall story of the Bible as a series of crossroad decisions.

God in the Old Testament

Wherever you look in the Old Testament you see God.

GENESIS	He is our CREATOR
EXODUS	He is our DELIVERER
LEVITICUS	He is our HIGH PRIEST
NUMBERS	He is our PRESENCE
DEUTERONOMY	He is our PROMISE KEEPER
JOSHUA	He is our CONQUERER
JUDGES	He is our WAY
RUTH	He is our REDEEMER
1 and 2 SAMUEL	He is our PROPHET
1 and 2 KINGS	He is our KING
1 and 2 CHRONICLES	He is still our REIGNING KING
EZRA	He is our LAW GIVER
NEHEMIAH	He is our BUILDER
ESTHER	He is our SAVIOR
JOB	He is our HEALER
PSALMS	He is our WORSHIP
PROVERBS	He is our WISDOM
ECCLESIASTES	He is our LIFE
SONG OF SONGS	He is our LOVER OF OUR SOUL
ISAIAH	He is our PRINCE OF PEACE
JEREMIAH	He is our LIVING WATER
LAMENTATIONS	He is our COMFORTER
EZEKIEL	He is our ONLY HOPE
DANIEL	He is the MAN IN THE FIRE WITH US
HOSEA	He is our FAITHFUL SPOUSE
JOEL	He is our DREAM GIVER
AMOS	He is our DEFENDER
OBADIAH	He is our PROTECTOR
JONAH	He is our UNIFIER
MICAH	He is our MESSIAH
NAHUM	He is our WAY THROUGH
HABAKKUK	He is our EVANGELIST
ZEPHANIAH	He is our TRUE GOD
HAGGAI	He is our RENEWER
ZECHARIAH	He is our RESTORER
MALACHI	He is our FATHER

Why Bible?

Week 1 | Change Is Coming

BOTTOM LINE

God desires to change us and He often does that through His Word.

GOAL OF THE GROUP

The true purpose of reading and studying the Bible is for life change. The question is not how many times you have gone through the Bible, but how many times the Bible has gone through you. God desires to transform our lives and He does that through the Living Word (Jesus) and the Written Word (Scripture).

SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21, and Hebrews 4:12

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Share:** Who do you know that is a complete skeptic? Share who comes to mind and their impact on you.
- David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group, outlines the most significant trends from a six year study done from 2011-2016. First and foremost, "increased skepticism." People have questions about the origins, relevance and authority of Scripture, and the steady rise of skepticism is creating an unfriendly cultural atmosphere. In a society that respects science and rationalism, it is increasingly difficult to accept that an eclectic assortment of ancient stories, poems, sermons, prophecies, and letters written over the course of 3,000 years is the sacred "Word of God".
 - In 2011 10% of Americans qualified as skeptics of the Bible. In 2016, that number had more than doubled. Does this surprise you? Why or why not?
 - Many Americans think the Bible is actually harmful and that people who live by its principles are religious extremists. What barriers does this posture create for those that believe the Bible is truth?
- Kensington was founded on the strong belief that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. We believe "The Bible (both Old and New Testaments) is the Word of God, written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write down exactly what God wanted to communicate to us." **Read 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20-21 and Discuss:**
 - Paul uses the words "God breathed" to state that the words of our Bible originated with God Himself. They were written down by authors, but in a supernatural action, these words are from the very mouth of God. Does hearing that the words of Scripture are the words of God give you confidence or fuel skepticism? Why?
 - Compare 2 Timothy 3:16 to 2 Peter 1:21. What role does the Holy Spirit play in both the original writing of Scripture and our study of it today?
- Skeptics say that the Bible isn't reliable compared to the original documents. However, there are several methods used to test the reliability of the ancient literature. The amazing thing about the Bible is that it is one unfolding story line, even though it was written by several authors. **Read Hebrews 4:12 and Discuss:**
 - The Bible is God's pursuit of mankind. God wants us to use His Word to change us. The purpose of God's Word is the transformation of our hearts and ultimately our lives. How is God currently pursuing you?
 - If God uses His Word to preserve our faith and equip us for action, then it is essential for each one of us. Why, then, would we ever neglect reading Scripture?

The Bible is not a dead, archaic book that does not relate to modern life.

The Bible is alive with truths to transform your life.

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TRY THIS

The Bible contains the overall story of God and His pursuit of mankind. There is a flow from beginning to end. The Bible reveals the plan of God to restore and redeem us back to His original creation intent for us. From God's creation intent for us, to our rebellion, to His redemption and forgiveness through Jesus, to our future glorious eternity, the Bible unveils the mystery of our purpose. What did God reveal to you through this group discussion? Pray about the confusion and doubts you may feel. Write down in your journal what you hear God respond.