

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

LESSON 3: STUDYING THE WORD OF GOD – PART 2

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module entitled Christian Disciplines. This series of lessons introduces the disciplines of a Christian life, including prayer, Bible study, as well as fixing our mind on eternal things. This is exciting content that should energize and renew the spiritual life of mature Christians and propel newer Christians into deeper faith. The material is practical in nature, yet focused on the many spiritual rewards of a life devoted to God.

The Student's Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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LESSON 3: STUDYING THE WORD OF GOD – PART 2

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

This lesson will continue our study of the Inductive Bible Study Method by introducing you to the interpretation and application stages of Bible Study.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

This lesson continues to look at the inductive Bible study method. In this lesson you will practise the interpretation and application steps.

It will be important in this lesson to always support your ideas of interpretation and application with the Bible itself. Our own minds can be deceptive and we may make the leap to believe the Bible is telling us something that it is not, unless we are careful. Prayer is an important part of your study of the Bible. It is through prayer that we can ask God for understanding, which He will provide us with through the Holy Spirit. Once we have seen truths in the Bible, we should diligently look for ways to put these things into practice. Are you ready to change how you read your Bible?

GETTING STARTED

1. What passages of the Bible are you most interested in studying? What book have you always wanted to look into more?

2. Why does the Bible require interpretation? What factors contribute to the Bible not always being straight forward and easy to understand without a little work? What do the words “interpretation” and “application” mean?



STUDY

- ❖ **LEARNING TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE:** After we have looked at a passage of Scripture to observe what the key details are, we are ready to interpret it. People who interpret something from one language to another function as an interpreter. This job requires a great understanding of both languages, but translation word for word may not be the most effective means of communication. An interpreter must understand the meaning of the words and give those to the intended audience. Interpretation of the Bible requires us to find out the meaning.
 - **Interpretation requires asking questions:**
 - Why is this passage here?
 - What does the author mean by it?
 - How does it relate to what came before it?
 - **Identify key words:** This may require the use of a dictionary to help you define words that are unfamiliar. Key words are those which are important to the passage. Sometimes you will want to examine a specific word, especially when it may have several meanings. Ask yourself how it has been used in other areas in this book, how it is used in the Bible, what would make sense given the context.
 - **Use other Scripture to help you interpret the passage:**
 - What does the immediate context (the verses around it) suggest?
 - What does the broader context suggest (book, type of book)?
 - What do cross-references suggest (related verses found in your Bible)?
 - **Make notes.** List any principles that you derive from the passage.
 - **Check available Bible study tools:** *There are many study tools online. You could provide your students with some websites, or refer them to church libraries or other tools at their disposal.*
 - **Write a brief summary statement that concisely captures the author's intent and message.**
- ❖ **WHAT INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION LOOK LIKE:** In the previous lesson we examined a story from the Bible in Luke 19:1-10. Let us look at what the observation, interpretation and application for a few verses of that passage would look like (a full chart is included at the end of this lesson for you to view).
- ❖ **PRACTICE WITH INTERPRETATION:** In order to really understand the Interpretation stage of Bible Study, one needs to just do it! Since the Bible is God's message to us, there is a correct interpretation of every verse, though there may be many applications. It is important to be diligent to understand the passage, or incorrect believe may result.



- As an example of this, consider the bible verse Philippians 4:13 which says “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” While this is a lovely verse to memorize, one could interpret this to mean that we are capable of every supernatural action imaginable! All things is certainly more than we could list, isn’t it? But a closer look at the context of the verse shows that this paragraph is talking about enduring trials, and contentment in every situation. The secret to contentment in every situation (vs. 12) is not directly stated in that verse, but is found in the broader chapter. This chapter in Philippians is about choosing joy and trust in God instead of fear and worry. A correct interpretation of Philippians 4:13 would be that *through Christ we are able to have joy and peace even in the midst of trials.*
- Let’s practice one together. Read Romans 12:1-2 and answer the questions below:

What do the terms conform, transform and mercy mean?	
What does Paul mean by “patterns of this world” and “renew your mind”? (see 1 John 2:15-16, Colossians 2:1-4 and Ephesians 4:22-24 for reference)	
What are the principles you can derive from the passage?	
What is a brief summary statement of <u>Romans 12:1-2</u>?	

Some of the principles that can be derived from this passage are that we should be completely focused on God, and act in ways that are pleasing to Him. We should not get distracted by this world but fix our minds on what God is doing in the world. One possible summary statement is that living a holy life is an act of worship to God. Turning away from the world towards God will help us see Him more clearly and understand His will for our lives. In examining a passage like this more carefully we can come to an interpretation that will bring clarity to a passage and arrive at an understanding.



❖ **LEARNING TO APPLY THE BIBLE:** In the application stage we take the principles we have written down, the summary of the teaching, and apply them to our lives. We will answer the following questions:

- **How does this truth apply to my life?**
- **What specific changes would I like to make in my life because of this truth?**
- **What plan do I have for carrying out those changes?**

❖ **PRACTICING APPLICATION:** Each time we are looking for an application from a passage of scripture we should approach the passage with prayer and consider carefully how it will affect our lives to do what the Bible asks of us.

- Look at the passage Romans 12:1-2 again. What application can we make in our own lives from the principles we derived in the interpretation stage?

- Some ideas of applications for this passage might be:
 - I must consider my thoughts to see if they are pleasing to the Lord.
 - I must look at my actions to see if they are in accordance to God's Will.
 - I must be careful of what I speak because there is life and death in our tongue.
 - Our plans should be based upon the Word of God and according to His Will.

IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Following the process of Observation, Inductive Bible Study involves Interpretation and Application.
- ❖ Interpretation of the Bible requires us to find out the meaning.
- ❖ Interpretation may require us to examine key words, read other Scripture that is related, make notes, refer to study tools and summarize the message.
- ❖ When we make an application for a passage, we look at how it calls us to change our lives.
- ❖ As we practice interpretation and application we can begin to have a correct understanding of the Word of God and not be in error. This will please God and enrich our lives.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What roles do prayer and the Holy Spirit play in our study of the Bible?

2. Why is interpretation and application necessary in Bible study? Why is it not enough to just observe what the text says?

**INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY FOR LUKE 19:1-10**

BIBLE VERSES	OBSERVATION	INTERPRETATION	APPLICATION
1. Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through.	Jesus was travelling to Jerusalem (v.28). He did not intend to stay long.	Jesus was going to the cross but He had time to stop for one man who needed Him.	I should not be so absorbed with my ministry that I do not stop to share God's love with someone.
2. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich.	He was a chief tax collector in the system. He had accumulated wealth.	Tax collectors collected taxes from their fellow citizens for the Roman Empire.	People saw tax collectors as working for the enemy.
3. He was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature.	Zacchaeus knew Jesus was there. There was a crowd. He was short, shorter than the people in the crowd.	For whatever reason, this rich man wanted to find Jesus	Do not believe the lie that rich people do not want/need Jesus.
4. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.	He really wanted to see Jesus. He calculated ahead.	Zacchaeus felt drawn to Jesus. The person of Jesus is attractive.	Sometimes we have to separate from the crowd to have an encounter with God.
5. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today. "	He knew Zacchaeus. He invited Himself to his house. He gave Zacchaeus an order. Jesus did not defer to the social/political position Zacchaeus' wealth afforded him.	Jesus does not reject people because of how society views them. He sought a man people considered unworthy of His attention.	We should always consider how Christ would look at someone, not simply at how society looks at them.
6. So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully.	Zacchaeus opened his home to Jesus. He responded to Him as his superior. He was glad to have Jesus in his home.	Jesus didn't just speak with this man, but He ate with him. He wanted to build a relationship with Zacchaeus.	People are more interested in a relationship than being preached at.
7. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."	Jesus did this in front of everyone. He was not ashamed of Zacchaeus. The people called Zacchaeus a sinner. Their attitude was different from Jesus' attitude.	They did not think He should go to Zacchaeus' house. They did not consider themselves sinners; they considered themselves better than Zacchaeus. Jesus goes to help sinners.	Do I feel holier than others, or do I realize that I am just as much a sinner as anyone else?
8. And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."	He stood up. He called Jesus Lord. He called attention to the decision he was making. Half of what he owned must have been a lot of money. Repentance involves a change in attitude and action. True repentance involves restitution.	Standing is a sign of respect. He admitted that if he had indeed cheated people, he would repay those people four times. Why did he do it? He wanted to compensate for the wrong he had done. See Luke 3:8 : "Bear fruits in keeping with repentance."	If I really repent I should see change in my life.



9. And Jesus said to him,	Jesus is talking to Zacchaeus by name. He says "this man" not "you".	Jesus is declaring him forgiven before all those present	
"Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.	Zacchaeus was saved that day. When did salvation come? The same day that Jesus came. Zacchaeus was not the literal son of Abraham.	Jesus brings salvation. He was the son of Abraham through faith (see Galatians 3:9)	When I talk to people about their salvation, I need to talk about Jesus.
10. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."	Son of Man is Jesus. This is a title, His position, and role.	"For" signifies the conclusion of this account.	Jesus came for the lost.