

STUDY

ICE BREAKER

Question: What was your favorite subject in school? Why?

Question: What subject was the hardest for you? Why?

CENTERING FOCUS

Have one person open and close after 5-minute time of prayer and silence. Allow time and space for others to pray if they feel led. If it remains silent the whole 5 minutes, that is okay.

LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Last week's challenge was to thank someone who has had a great spiritual influence in your life, and thank God for beginning them into your life.

Question: Did you think of someone? If so, did you tell them you were thankful for them? Share your experience in thanking God for this person in your life.

THOUGHT PROVOKING QUESTION

Question: The Bible is central to Christianity, yet the Bible can be very intimidating. What makes the Bible intimidating? What are some fears or hesitations you have around studying the Bible?

Question: What has been your experience with the Bible? Are you new to reading and learning about the Bible? Were you taught the Bible as a child? Was the Bible viewed more as rules/checklists?

ENGAGING WITH SCRIPTURE

1. The first step in studying the Bible is knowing why we should study our Bibles.

Question: Why do you think it might be good or important to study the Bible?

Genesis 1:27 (ESV)

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Question: Who were we created to imitate or look like?

When Jesus comes on the scene, he brings with him a very similar message,

Matthew 4:19 (ESV)

“And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Question: As followers of Christ, who are we supposed to imitate or look like?

Question: How do we know what Christ did, how he interacted with certain people, or felt about certain issues?

“We must make a study of our God: what he loves, what he hates, how he speaks and acts. We cannot imitate a God whose features and habits we have never learned. We must make a study of him if we want to become like him. We must seek his face.” — Jen Wilkin

2. The second step in studying the Bible is understanding **how** we approach the Bible.

Ephesians 1:13-14 (ESV)

“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

Question: According to this passage, when you believed in Jesus, what did you receive?

John 16:13 (ESV)

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...”

Question: What is one of the many roles the Spirit has in our life?

Question: Based on John 16:13, what role does the Spirit play in our approach to studying the Bible?

We must recognize our need for and dependence on the Spirit of God to lead us into His truth.

“The Spirit is not given to make Bible study needless, but to make it effective.” - J. I. Packer

3. The third step in studying the Bible is to start and practice studying the Bible.

Opening up the Bible can be very intimidating, so here are **three** tools to guide you as you practice studying the Bible.

OBSERVATION:

Question: What does it mean to observe something? What are some things you look for or notice when you observe something? (Think about Sherlock Holmes or an investigator at a crime scene.)

Observing the Bible is a very important first step in the practice of study. We often want to skip right to the meaning, but we would miss so much if we didn't stop to observe the passage in a fresh way.

Observation asks the question: *What does it say? OR What do I see?*

Observation IS:

- Noting words, phrases, grammar, repetition, names, places, quotes, speakers
- Asking questions

Observation IS NOT:

- Looking up words, names, places, etc.
- Answering the posed questions

Let's practice!

Philippians 4:13

"I can do all things him who strengthens me."

As a group list 10-15 observations from this verse. (I will give you an example to start.)

- *Who is "I"?*
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-
-
-
-
-
-
-
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INTERPRETATION

Question: What does it mean to interpret something?

Question: What information do you need to interpret something correctly?

Question: Have you ever interpreted a situation incorrectly, and learned you were wrong? Please share the repercussions that with the group.

Interpretation answers the question: *What does this mean?*

Philippians 4:13

"I can do all things him who strengthens me."

Question: If all you had was this verse, and no other knowledge, how might you interpret it?

Like a good detective, we need more information to come to an accurate interpretation. In order to come to that accurate inspiration we need to understand the context, or in other words, we must enter into the world we are observing.

Context

- Where in the Bible is this passage I am studying? (new or old testament, book in bible, chapter, etc.)
- What genre is this passage I am studying? (letter, poetry, narrative)
- Answer the 5 Ws (who, what, when, where, and why)

Interpretation answers:

1. What does it mean for them (in the original context)?
2. THEN, What does it mean universally (for all people, in all places, at all time)?

Philippians 1:1-2 (ESV)

"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Question: As a group, write down as much context as you can come up with. Start with who is the author? And, who is this person writing to? (If you cannot answer some questions, that is okay!)

Now that you discovered some context, read **Philippians 4:10-16 (ESV)**:

“10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. 11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me. 14 Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. 15 And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. 16 Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.”

Question: What would you say the theme of this passage is?

Question: Now that you have the context surrounding Philippians 4:13, would you interpret the meaning of that verse differently? If so, how would you interpret it? (You are answering the question: What does this mean?). Write down a collective interpretation you've come to as a group.

APPLICATION

Question: When do you think it means to apply scripture to your life?

If we read, observe, study, and interpret the Bible and are no different than we were when we started, then we have missed the whole point.

“Don't fall into the trap of studying the Bible without doing what it says.” --Francis Chan

Question: How have you seen this play out in your life? Where do you struggle to do what the Bible says?

Application asks the question: *How does change me? OR How do I put this into practice?*

Key questions to ask when practicing application:

- What does this teach me about God?
- What does this teach me about myself?
- How am I to change after reading and understanding the truth found in this passage?

“The Word of God I think of as a straight edge, which shows up our own crookedness. We can’t really tell how crooked our thinking is until we line it up with the straight edge of Scripture.”

-Elisabeth Elliot

Read **Philippians 4:13**, again, and with the interpretation in mind, practice application by answering these questions below:

Question: What does this teach me about God?

Question: What does this teach me about myself?

Question: How am I going to change after reading and understanding the truth we have found in Philippians 4:13?

NEW CHALLENGE

Over the next month, our challenge is going to be to practice studying the Bible at home. For the first challenge, we are going to practice observing Acts 1:8.

Grab a notebook, computer, or phone that you can dedicate to Bible study. Read Acts 1:8 several times, and get familiar with the passage. Then, make a list of 20 observations.

Refer back to the lead sheet as a guide to help you find observations.