

How to Read the Bible

For All It's Worth

November 3, 2020

Class 5: Encountering God Through Scripture



Class 5: Journaling & Praying Scripture

Learning Outcomes:

1. An awareness of the need to study for transformation as well as for gaining information
2. A passion to engage the Scripture for life change
3. An energy to try your hand at new practices in order to encounter God in and through the Bible

Introduction

1. A Review
 - Class 1: What is the Bible & How Do I Read It?
 - Class 2: How to Study Well: Basic Tools
 - Class 3: Old Testament Overview
 - Class 4: New Testament Overview
 - Class 5: Encountering God Through Scripture (tonight)
2. What is the main takeaway for you so far?
3. Housekeeping:
 - All online – please tell your friends!
 - Class Feedback survey – please leave on your chair before you go.
 - Bibliography

Encounter: What is it?

1. **Encounter** – Take your learning and application to God in prayer. Talk with God and listen to Him. Close your time in worship and adoration. The goal of this time is to enter into the presence of God, laying your cares before Him, being empowered by His Spirit, and worshiping Him for who He is.
2. **This is taking it from “then” to “now”** – taking the theological principle that was true for them and applying it to your own life.
3. After reading **James 1:22-25**, what happens to us if all we do is study and never bring it to our lives and obey it?

Encounter: How do I do it?

You practice the faith! The historical practices come into play here. This is our discipleship pathway:
Love, Gather, Practice & Go!

1. Try practicing solitude

- Andrew Sullivan notes:

“Modernity slowly weakened spirituality, by design and accident, in favor of commerce; it downplayed silence and mere being in favor of noise and constant action. The reason we live in a culture increasingly without faith is not because science has somehow disproved the unprovable, but because the white noise of secularism has removed the very stillness in which it might endure or be reborn. ... If the churches came to understand that the greatest threat to faith today is not hedonism but distraction, perhaps they might begin to appeal anew to a frazzled digital generation.”

- What role is technology having in your spiritual life?
- How does it help?
- How does it hinder?

2. Try being silent

- John Mark Comer:

“In seasons of busyness we need more time in the quiet place, not less, definitely not less. And if you’re running through your Rolodex of excuses right now – I’m a full-time mom, I have a demanding job that starts early, I’m an extrovert, I have ADHD etc. – stop for a minute. Think about this: Jesus needed time in the quiet place.”

- Read Luke 5:12-15 – what does this say about our need to be silent?
- Silence is the precondition of presence (see Psalm 46:10).
- Before you open your Bible, spend a few minutes in silence (at least 2 minutes).
 - i. As you are silent, think through this:
 - a. What are you feeling?
 - b. Where are you feeling it?
 - c. Why are you feeling it?
 - ii. As you finish your time with Jesus and His word, end in silence praying through “in light of this, what are you asking me to do today?”
 - iii. Use breath prayers

3. Try Praying Scripture

- What is it?
 - i. To allow God to shape my prayer life through the words of scripture. It allows God to direct the content of my prayer.
 - ii. Think of how a child learns to talk:

Eugene Peterson reminds us that “because we learn language so early in our lives we have no memory of the process” and would therefore imagine that it was we who took the initiative to learn how to speak. However, that is not the case. “languages spoken into us; we learn language only as you’re spoken to. We are plunged at birth into the sea of language... and slowly syllable by syllable require the capacity to answer: mama, papa, bottle, blanket, yes, no. Not one of these words was the first word... all speech is answering speech. We were all spoken to before we spoke.” In the year since Peterson wrote, Studies have shown the children’s ability to understand and communicate is profoundly affected by the number of words and the breath of vocabulary to which they are exposed as infants and toddlers. We speak only to the degree we are spoken to.

- What does it look like?
 - i. Meditating on scripture: interacting with God around the revelation its stories bring
 - ii. Placing your name in the place of “you” pronouns
 - iii. Words, phrases and verses that catch your attention become invitations to partner with God in prayer
- Fruit that comes:
 - i. We lay aside our own agendas and open ourselves to the prayers given to us in the Bible
- Places to start:
 - i. The Shepherds Psalm – Psalm 23
 - ii. Use a spiritual breathing exercise
 - iii. The Lords Prayer – Matthew 6:9-13
 - iv. The Great Commission – Matthew 28:18-20
 - v. The Great Commandment – Matthew 22:36-40

4. Try Reflecting on Scripture through Journaling

- What is it?
 - i. “...a way of paying attention to our lives – a way of knitting the vast ball of our experiences into something with shape that attests to the state of our soul.”
- Why do we do it?
 - i. Fredrick Buechner says, “there is no chance thing through which God cannot speak.” – Psalm 105:5; 78:7.
 - ii. Over time, we can see themes emerge. The ongoing nature of a journal catalogs the journey of a soul into God.

- Reasons to do it:
 - i. Record Life's Journey – we freeze time in a journal
 - ii. Tangible account of God's blessings – practice gratitude – Psalm 106:21
 - iii. Reminds us of our sanctification - 1 Tim 4:15
 - iv. Help maintain other disciplines
 - v. Aid in prayer and meditation – slow down to think and pray
 - vi. Promote self-awareness – Romans 12:3
- Three reasons to not do it (or stop):
 - i. Legalism – when we think God loves us more because of our maturity
 - ii. Self-righteousness – when we think we are better than those who don't
 - iii. Superstition – when we think there is power in the act itself
- How to do it:
 - i. There is no right or wrong way
 - ii. Be persistent
 - iii. You'll feel the duty before the romance

5. Try using The Daily Office

- The point of the daily office is not to just start our day with Jesus, but to be in union with Him throughout.
- This is an ancient spiritual practice, modified and implemented by different traditions. Anglicanism is the one I have interacted the most with.
 - i. See the Common Book of Prayer
- What is it?
 - i. Daily “Office”
 - a. Office comes from the Latin word *opus* or “work”
 - b. For the early church, the office, or work (pre-arranged time throughout the day to mediate, pray and/or read scripture) was the first work to be done
 - ii. This is not just an ancient practice, but a Biblical one
 - a. David - Psalm 119:164
 - b. Daniel – Daniel 6:10
 - iii. What does this look like?
 - a. D.L. Moody illustration – light the fire early in the morning and stoke it throughout the day to keep warm
 - b. Set alarms throughout your day: noon and 7pm to re-think about your time at the start of your day

Putting it into practice:

1 Peter 1:1-9

Salutation

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, **2** who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

The Christian's Hope and Salvation

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, **5** who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. **7** These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. **8** Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, **9** for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Reference: <https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=1+Peter+1:1-9&ver=niv>

Use the TIME acronym here and highlight the Ministry & Encounter portions

Text

- Read the Bible and pay attention to anything that stands out
- Words and phrases – ask questions and pay attention

Immerse

- Study the highlighted verse or phrase, by using various Bible tools/software, so you can understand it more deeply.
- Interrogate it: What makes sense? What is confusing?
- Genre: what kind of writing is this?
- Context: what was the setting?
- Sum it up: in one sentence describe what you believe the text is saying?

Ministry	Encounter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask God how He wants to apply this to your life. • Is there an example to follow (or not)? Any commands to obey? Error to avoid? Sin to forsake? • Promise to claim? New thought about God? What is the appropriate response to God at work? • How do I help someone else understand this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your learning and application to God in prayer. • Journal, pray and listen. • Enter into His presence. What does He want to say to you?

Conclusion:

1. Bibliography (see handout)
2. Course Feedback Form

Breath Prayer

Scazzero, Peter (2018) “Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, Day by Day”
Appendix B: Breath Prayer, p 177

Breath prayer is an ancient Christian practice dating back to at least the early centuries of the church. The famous “Jesus Prayer” is an example of a breath prayer. Developed from the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in Luke 18:9-14, it is drawn from the tax collector’s desperate plea for mercy: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Each phrase of the prayer is prayed under the breath on an inhale or exhale. I have found breath prayer to be an especially helpful practice when I feel distracted as I come to be silent and still before the Lord.

Breath prayer is similar to silent prayer in that it can be done at any time, for we are always breathing! In Scripture, breath is a metaphor for the Spirit of God. It is through breath that God gives life (Genesis 2:7), and it is through breath that Jesus gives the Holy Spirit (John 20:22).

The following are a few guidelines to help you practice breath prayer:

- Sit upright in a silent place. Draw your attention to your breathing.
- Breathe from your diaphragm, allowing your abdomen rise and fall easily. Don’t force your breath or breathe too quickly.
- Whenever your thoughts wander, bring your attention back to your breath. As you inhale, ask God to fill you with the Spirit of Life. As you exhale, release anything that is not of Him.
- When your time of silence is over, pause to thank God for time with Him.