

Once again, welcome to the CORE seminar on discipling, where we're spending 13 weeks looking at how to disciple others in Christ.

We've been thinking about different things that we can encourage the friends that we disciple. We've looked so far at how to encourage holiness and prayer. This week, we're looking at encouraging Bible Study and Meditation.

An important point that Greg and I have been trying to reinforce is that our ultimate **goal in discipling** others is NOT to make clones of "our own spiritual selves", but rather to make obedient and faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. Our role as disciplers is ultimately to further another Christian's relationship with our Lord.

Hopefully, by the end of this class, we'll see how important Bible study is to a Christian's spiritual growth, and how we can encourage our friends that we meet with to get involved in it.

I should say first that we find ourselves in a remarkably Bible-minded place. The sermons that Mark and the other guys prepare on Sundays are almost always straight exposition of the Bible, and on Wednesdays, we have an in-depth Bible study. Members hold fast to the inerrancy of Scripture and love it.

I'm about to spend a bit of time looking at WHY it's important to read and study the Bible, but I almost feel a bit silly doing that to this crowd... BUT, I think that it's good for us to be reminded of how important Scripture is. Not only for ourselves, but more importantly, because so many people who call themselves Christians don't feel the same way about the Bible.

If we're going to effectively disciple people inside and outside of this church, we need to recognize that there's a general problem among Christians with lack of care for God's Word.

For many people in evangelical churches there may be much said about the importance of the Bible, but very little real focus on the Bible, with sermons centered on self-help issues. Christians learn to value Teaching, but not Biblical teaching.

And it's not just me. Here are some statistics from various polls.

- Only 11% of American read the Bible daily
- 18% of "born-again Christians" read the Bible everyday.
- 23% of "born-again Christians" say they never read the Word of God.

Personally, I think that this is horrendous, but what does God think about these statistics? What does God say about His Word? Let's look into this a bit.

Even though this might not be new to us, it's important for us to have a reason to encourage our friends to study the Bible.

***Have people read the passages.***

- I. Deuteronomy 6: 6-9. God's Word should be applied all over our lives!
- II. Psalm 119: 9-16. God's Word makes our ways pure.
- III. Psalm 119: 28. God's Word strengthens us in difficult times.
- IV. Matthew 4: 4. We LIVE by God's Word.
- V. Matthew 7: 24-27. If we hear God's Word and act upon it, we build up a firm foundation.
- VI. 2 Timothy 3: 16. Scripture is very practically useful in the most important aspects of the Christian life.
- VII. Hebrews 4: 12. Through God's Word, we can recognize the sin in our hearts.

From these passages, it's clear that God thinks that His Word is beneficial to us. Can we therefore make any excuses to stay *out* of God's Word?

OK. We've been reminded that God's Word is important for our growth as Christians. We should see that it's important for us as disciples to pass on this sense of importance of the Bible to our friends. Let's think, then, about two ways to encourage a love for God's Word. First, we'll talk about Bible study, and then we'll talk about Scripture memorization.

First, Bible study.

Practically speaking, it's all too easy for us to find other things to do than read the Bible. Don't be surprised if that's true of your friend, too.

To be very practical, we need to encourage our friends to **regularly read the Bible** before we can encourage them to meditate on it. Sometimes people are too intimidated by so much reading. It may be helpful to point out to them that the entire Bible can be read out loud in about 71 hours. We have Bible-on-tape's to prove it! It may take some time, but it's not an insurmountable task!

If it's more that discipline is an issue, you may want to encourage them to use a disciplined reading track. A lot of Bibles have reading plans that they can go through. There's a reading track that takes you through the New Testament and Psalms twice, and the rest of the Old Testament once, in one year. There, you read about 4 chapters a day in different parts of the Bible. With that, you can get different tastes of all of God's story in the same day. D.A. Carson has a book [For the Love of God](#) that has a daily devotional that follows along this track. You might buy that book for your friend and encourage them to start reading.

You should encourage them to find a time during the day and make it regular. We talked about the same sort of thing last week, about prayer. It's too easy to keep pushing it back. Also, it's helpful to read earlier in the day, so you can think about it what you read during the day, rather than falling asleep immediately after reading.

***Ask here for any other thoughts/ideas on disciplines Bible reading.***

Of course, it's **not enough to just read**. The passages that we read earlier speak of how we can grow and learn from God's Word. As disciples, we need to encourage our friends to grow from their reading. One thing that's very good to encourage is to pray through the text for guidelines. Remind your friend that the **Bible was written under the Holy Spirit's inspiration**. Therefore, it's very appropriate to pray that the Holy Spirit would help you to understand the text. We should pass on the understanding that the psalmist of 119 had:

“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law” (v. 18)

We also need to encourage our friends to actually study and meditate on the text. We need to encourage our friends to think through what they've read. Here are some practical methods to encourage your friends to get started on meditation, from a chapter in Don Whitney's book.

- a. Select an appropriate passage. Pick a specific passage from your reading that strikes you. This could be of any length, but probably on the order of a few verses.
- b. Repeat/re-read it several times. Also, read the context surrounding the passage.
- c. Rewrite it into your own words. Writing things down will force you to think more carefully about what the text says.
- d. Pray through the text.
- e. Read less, meditate more.
- f. Look for and pray for applications.

The widely used method of inductive Bible study, where you look at what a passage says, what it means, and how it applies, is an excellent method to introduce your friend to. I handed out a sheet called “Bible Study Methods” which outlines some steps and questions you can ask yourself for this inductive method.

As a discipler, remember that you don't want your friend to get in the habit of misinterpreting Scripture, though.

I just started reading this book, [How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth](#), which is in the church library. You might want to introduce your friend to this book, or go over some of the principles in it with him or her. The book introduces the processes of *exegesis* and *hermeneutics*. In exegesis, you interpret the text in its original context. In hermeneutics, you interpret the text in today's context. What's the Bible's meaning for the “here and now?” The book talks about doing careful exegesis first, and then appropriately going through the hermeneutics for present-day application. The authors then show how to apply this method of interpretation to all the different genres of Scripture.

So, then, as disciples, how do we actually “encourage” these things? I've thrown that word “encourage” around a lot. Encourage regular reading. Encourage meditation. Encourage inductive Bible study. Encourage proper interpretation. So, how do we encourage these things?

***Ask for ideas here...***

Probably the easiest thing to do is to bring them to one of the **Wednesday night Bible studies!** Mark is great about giving the background for passages that we study, to help us understand the original context in which it was written. He'll ask questions about what the text meant originally as well as what the text means for us now. He'll also ask questions about specific applications. I can't say that I'm a faithful attender because of my schedule, but the times that I've gone, it's been a great model for me. Not only that, but the people that are there are a great model of a Bible-minded group. People definitely know their Bible.

You can also **spend your time together going through scripture**. I had the unique opportunity of going through all of Romans over two years with a full-time discipler from my college ministry, and it was remarkably helpful. He had me outlining at different levels of depth, and explained the context, and helped me to think through the applications. This sort of modeling of Bible study is a great thing to pass on to another Christian, so that they can then pass it on to others. One thing to remember here is that you should **be careful** with what you teach the person you're discipling. **Heed the Bible's warning against false teaching**.

Also, as you continue to meet, **challenge them and ask them** if they're regularly reading the Word. Tell them what you've been reading and what you've learned, and ask your friends **what they've learned** in their personal Bible study throughout the week.

Well, now that we've talked about Bible study, let's talk for just a bit **about Scripture memorization**. Challenge your friend to memorize God's Word. Remember that we're trying to encourage our friends to grow in their knowledge and obedience of God. His Word and His Holy Spirit guide us in holiness, so the more we have Scripture on our minds, the more we are helped. The same for our discipling friends!

Think about **Jesus. When Satan is tempting Him** in Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus fends off each of Satan's temptations with Scripture. In the same way, we can use Scripture to help us fend off sin. To be honest, I find it quite pathetic that there's more Pop music lyrics in my head than Scripture. And pop music is certainly not helping me out much in my sanctification process!

So, we ought to challenge ourselves and our friends to memorize Bible verses and think about their application. You might encourage them to memorize verses that they've meditated on during their Bible study. You might challenge them to know the Gospel as outlined in Bible verses.

I once had this down, and hope to refresh my mind. I've **passed out another sheet, called "Memory Verses: The Gospel Message"** that has a list of passages that outline the points of the Gospel. You might go through some or all of these with your friend, and challenge each other in memorization and application.

### ***Ask for ideas on effective memorization***

So, today we've talked about Bible study and Scripture memorization. We need to remember and pass on the fact that the Bible is God's sword for us in defense of the world. We need to encourage our friends to study the Word as we disciple them, and we need to model good Bible study methods and discipline for them.