

Discipleship-Bible 1

2023

Introduction

The goal of these Discipleship Bible lesson plans is to introduce the participant to a more intense, and hopefully/possibly a more profitable form of Bible study than to which they may be accustomed. Each participant should keep a prayer/study diary: record everything from these Bible studies in that diary, except for assigned papers identified as optional. Participation may be by group, partnership, or distinct individual; as long as each participant does all the work privately. Sharing increases biblical camaraderie or fellowship (koinonia); but, is not absolutely necessary.

Environment

Even though participation may be individual, it is best if done with a background setting of regular active church attendance, in order to have a context for the development of this core exercise. Regular reading in other parts of the Bible is also essential to building such a context for the core study as well; reading four or five chapters a day, about fifteen minute's worth, will complete Bible reading in a year: participants must be committed to such casual Bible reading in addition to this core study. Compared to regular Bible reading; church attendance is optional for developing context: church attendance is definitely not optional; regular Bible reading is even more important and mandatory... failure to comply will result in marginal outcomes.

Prayer is also absolutely most essential. Participants will not get far without the constant companionship and instruction of the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:9-13): if necessary, ask for the Spirit's help with every single word... you cannot ask too much (James 1:5). The only failure possible is failure to ask (Matthew 7:7-8). Draw near to God and He will draw near to you (Jeremiah 29:12-13; James 4:8).

Consider each of the following passages carefully, and write a one to ten-page paper about they mean in your life.

Does your life conform to all of the above? How? Record at least one thing about your life in your diary that requires confession and needs change. How will you change or be changed?

“So, if you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” — Luke 11:13

“Jesus replied to him, Amen, amen, I tell you, unless someone would be begotten from above, they are not able to see the kingdom of God.” — John 3:3

“Jesus replied, Amen, amen, I tell you, unless someone would be begotten out of water and Spirit, they are not able enter into the kingdom of God.” — John 3:5

“Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you: for: everyone who asks, receives; and they who seek, find; and whoever knocks, it will be opened.” — Matthew 7:7-8

“Yet, if any of you lack wisdom, ask God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to them.” — James 1:5

“Yet, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” — Romans 8:9

“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ Let those who hear say, ‘Come!’ Let those who thirst come. Whoever desires, let them take the water of life freely.” — Revelation 22:17

“Pray without ceasing.” — Acts 12:5; Romans 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 2 Timothy 1:3

The Core Exercise

Core study is based on the conviction and life experience that reading any one Bible book through, fifty times or more in fairly rapid sequence builds an intuitive understanding of the core argument, message, and theme(s) of that book.¹ Knowledge of a particular verse is meaningless until it can be understood as part of the original author’s core argument. As with bodily exercise, it is difficult to overdo core exercises: unfortunately, time limits our ability.

Our first core study is of the book of Psalms: which we believe is pivotal in grasping the Law (Torah, Pentateuch); in summarizing all of the Old Testament; and in establishing a prophetic preview of the New Testament.²

It is essential that participants read the entire book of 151 Psalms through every week, for at least fifty weeks. At first, for those accustomed to reading five verses per day or less, this will seem like an intolerable mental and spiritual load: this feeling will dissipate in a week or two, and participants will find themselves hungering for more. Lest we become vain in our imaginations, there are people who read the entire book of Psalms in a day, possibly more often: one purpose of this exercise is to build humility, not pride.

¹ Haddon W. Robinson (1931-2017): classroom direction assignment for sermon development. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haddon_Robinson

² This idea is sourced in Orthodox monastic practices.

Our primary focus is on the Greek Psalter, called the Septuagint, which is one thousand years older than most credible surviving Hebrew manuscript, the Leningrad Codex, or Leningradensis. There are 151 Psalms in LXX; Psalm 118 LXX (119) is 176 verses long, so we will count it as four Psalms (three more); for a net of 154 (virtual) Psalms in all: 154 divided by 7 is twenty-two. So, any system of reading twenty-two Psalms a day will accomplish our objective of reading through the Psalter every week. Perhaps reading fourteen verses in the morning and eight verse in the evening will further distribute the load.

Here is one free source: there are other sources.

<https://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/greek-texts/septuagint/chapter.asp?book=24>

Peripheral Exercises

The function of peripheral exercises is to enhance the core exercise.

One. As long as you are keeping your eye on the LXX, read as wide a variety of versions as you can conveniently manage, say six or seven. Brenton, is a bit archaic: but he may be your only access to a legitimate Psalm 151. The Orthodox Study Bible also has a Psalter; there are other Psalters on the market: but, I cannot direct you to any of these as free sources... I would not burden you financially.

Here is a source of versions based on the Masoretic Text (Hebrew); some are better than others: my favorites are: NKJV, NRSV, ESV, LIB, and NIV... I also read in KJV and RSV. But, all of these lack Psalm

151, so it's back to Brenton for Psalm 151, unless you buy a Psalter, or find one in a library.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalms+1&version=KJV;WLC;LEB>

Two. Write yourself clear. The purpose of writing yourself clear is to empty your brain insofar as that is possible and allow it to reorganize in preparation for a next step: this is a closed book, closed diary, closed note exercise. This is the real function of filling blue books at college finals: so, get a supply of blue books or other cheap paper and write yourself clear as often as necessary, at least once every three months. Throw the results in the trash: the real benefit is what this does for the brain in promoting integration of thought patterns by the practice of regular flushing.³

Three. Write paraphrases during the odd numbered weeks. This will provoke translation skills you will use latter. This also develops chewing, digestion, and cattle-like rumination skills (cud chewing). Don't just read the Bible: eat the Bible. These should be kept in the diary for further reference. Don't paraphrase a particular verse a second time, until you have finished paraphrasing most of the whole Psalter. In the first week, just paraphrase a single verse, until you get used to the idea. Add a verse every odd week, until you are paraphrasing whole Psalms, or at least fourteen verses a day.

Four. Write a commentary during the even numbered weeks. Pick a single Psalm and write out what it means to you. Do not repeat a Psalm

³ Learned in Howard G. Hendricks (1924-2013) seminary classes.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_Hendricks

commentary until you have developed a substantial library of such commentaries.

Five. After many weeks have passed, you may wish to change the order in which you write commentaries and paraphrases. Or you may wish to begin doing both in the same week. Do whatever gives you the greatest challenge.

Six. Optionally, prepare a devotion from Psalms for the congregation, or a study group. Lead them in prayer from your devotion.

Seven. Every week, every day, note in your diary, at least one new thing you learned from Psalms that day. Each week record at least one thing about your life in your diary that requires confession and needs change. How will you change or be changed? Your diary page might look something like this:

Week m, date x/y/20zz, new thing learned, paraphrase, lesson learned about life, confession, expected change.

Week n, date x/y/20zz, new thing learned, commentary, lesson learned about life, confession, expected change.

Continuation

Participants may choose to continue this intensive study of Psalms for any number of additional years, possibly, even as a life-long practice. Others may choose to follow a second lesson plan involving other books of the Bible. However, the basic principles we desire to inculcate here remain the same. There is always a core exercise which is the main target. Peripheral exercises are provided for seasoning, to enhance the flavor of the core exercise, and to keep it interesting.

It's time to get started. You only have 350 days left to finish your course. Then you get a two-week vacation.

Begin.

Be well (Acts 2)

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⁴ If you have been blessed or helped by any of these meditations, please repost, share, or use any of them as you wish. No rights are reserved. They are designed and intended for your free participation. They were freely received, and are freely given. No other permission is required for their use.