

Nettleham Methodist Church Cell Outlines

Week beginning: 7th & 14th May 2006

Theme: Studying the Word of God

Welcome/ Ice-breaker suggestions: Do you have a favourite verse/book in the Bible? If so what is it and why? Compare Bibles! What version do you use & why?

Word/ Teaching Slot

Key Scriptures – Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15 & 3:16-17; Romans 10:17 & Psalm 138:2

Over the next 2 weeks as far as the cell material is concerned, we're looking together at 'Studying the Word of God.' Here are **Seven Basic Steps to Help Find Your Way into Scripture**. For some of you this might be like teaching your grandmother to suck eggs – if so great, but there might be people in your cell you struggle to really engage with the Word of God, so for their sakes please work through these, because it will really help even the most mature of us!

(i) Observe

We need to read the Scriptures with some care, looking and listening to what the Scriptures are actually saying. It helps to read more slowly than we think we should, and to read the passage more than once. Then it helps if we take the time to think about what we are actually reading and to ask ourselves whether we have really grasped what it is all about.

(ii) Interpret

Do you know what it means when you read it? There may be reasons why you do not understand and these will be clear if we take the time to ask a few questions. Sometimes the reasons are straightforward, e.g. there may be words or ideas that we don't know or understand. Maybe there is a spiritual truth that you do not grasp because you have never experienced its meaning. Truth experienced is truth understood. Or it may be some technical reason with regard to background or custom for which a Bible commentary may come in handy.

(iii) Summarise

It is useful to summarise the main points we learn from a passage, or to underline what we see are the main sections or headings. It is sometimes helpful to put into your own words what you think the Scripture is saying. Have a pen, pad and marker ready when you do your Bible study.

(iv) Evaluate

Ask a few questions:

- what type of literature are you reading? e.g. a letter to someone, teaching, prophecy, poetry.
- what kind of teaching is this? e.g. is it universal truth that applies to all people in all places and times, or is it related only to the time in which it was written?
- remember that usually the simple and obvious meaning is the intended one (1 Corinthians 14:33).

(v) Apply

Whenever we read Scripture we should ask ourselves how this might apply to our own lives. Then the Word of God will become effective in us and we will benefit from the fruit of it in our own lives (James 1:22).

(vi) Compare

The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself, therefore, compare one part of Scripture with another. A concordance or cross-reference Bible is useful so that we can follow an idea or thought through the Scriptures. This will enhance our understanding and control our interpretation of Scripture.

(vii) Meditate

Think upon the things you have read and give time for God to speak to you personally through them. This will improve your relationship with God and you will get to know Him better.

Recommended Tools for the job

1. More than one translation so that different inflections of the truth can be seen. For example, a New International Version (NIV) for general use; a Living Bible paraphrase to give fluent popular understanding of the Word; and a Good News Version (GNB) or New King James Version (NKJV), to enable clear understanding of difficult passages and to provide better insight into the meaning of the text.
2. Bible Handbooks, e.g. Lion Manuals, which are good, especially for people with no formal training as these provide an introduction into areas of background, history, interpretation etc.
3. A Bible Concordance, e.g. Young's Analytical Concordance or Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.
4. A cross-reference Bible.

However, before you rush out and buy loads of Bibles and study aids - time given and an open heart to understand the Word of God are still the main ingredients of successful study of the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit is on standby to be our teacher and to guide us into all truth if we come with the right attitude to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 2:10-12).

*** If time permits go to the question & discussion points, but please leave plenty of time (30 minutes or so) to do the Worship Suggestion – as this is really important!**

ALL OUR STUDIES MUST DRAW US CLOSER TO JESUS. HE IS THE REASON AND KEY TO THE UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION OF THE BIBLE TO OUR LIVES.

(See John 5:30-40 & Hebrews 12:2)

Worship Suggestion: Spend 10 minutes in silence together thinking prayerfully on the following words of Jesus, which are for you personally. Turn them around in you mind. Consider Jesus standing in front of you looking into your eyes and saying,
"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." (John 7:37-38)

Witness

I invite you to share some of your thoughts, feelings and insights after the 10 minutes are up with your cell members and beyond - if you dare!

***Questions & Discussion Points** (If you take the following questions seriously you won't have time to do all these, so be selective.)

1. Do you have a hunger to study the Word of God or are you a 'skimmer' and 'dabbler' of the Bible? (Discuss & be honest)
2. Discuss practical ways of making time to study God's Word over the next week and be accountable to one another; i.e. Make an appointment with yourself in your diary - and stick to it!
3. What do you think is the 'right attitude' to the Scriptures? (Ps.119:9-20)
4. How might we encourage Bible-lethargic or 'time-poor' Christians to seriously feed on God's word?