

## Small Group Guide Week 1

What do you think it means that the Bible is God's Word and is the final authority to the journey of life?

What challenges are there to living this out in daily life?

Have you personally experienced how the Word of God is key in developing a rich relationship with Him? What struggles have you had?

Which approaches to Bible reading do you relate to?

1. The Chocolate Approach- it will make you feel better
2. The Parachute Approach- flip it open and drop your finger and hope it is relevant.
3. The Sherpa Approach- Listen to sermons and podcast where we trust others to do the hard work
4. The Travel Blog Approach- reading books about the bible rather than reading the Bible
5. The Pinterest Approach- studying themes in scripture. Like peace or heaven or money

What are the weaknesses of these methods?

Which of these struggles do you relate to when reading the Bible?

1. Is it relevant?
2. I don't know how
3. Time Flies
4. Sceptical
5. It feels like work
6. I don't understand it

**Biblical literacy** is the ability to read and correctly understand the Bible. To do this requires using the proper tools of study. Studying the Word properly enables us to become well acquainted with the Bible's overarching story, qualities and content.

On a scale of 1 ( not at all) -5 (very) rate yourself **privately** on how biblically Literate you feel. In what areas would you like to grow?

1. Biblical Literacy is necessary to bring about faith—But these are written that you may believe[b] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31
2. Biblical Literacy is necessary to grow in understanding. Psalm 119 If you have time, read vs 12-15.
3. Biblical Literacy is necessary for righteousness—John 17:17 actually says from the Greek Make them holy through the truth, your word is the truth.
4. Biblical Literacy is necessary for guarding true doctrine—Titus 1:9 Paul describes the qualities of overseers saying **9** He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

5. Biblical Literacy helps us keep God at the center of his book. It helps us see him clearly, knowing him, his ways and his purposes.

Frameworks for reading the Word we need to remember

1. The Bible is about God. God is the main character of the Bible: This poses the question what do I learn of God?

2. Read the Bible as a whole. Hendricks writes in Living by the Book that

“ It is not a collection of parts, **It is an integrated message** in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, that is bad math, but it’s good method. We keep breaking it down and breaking it down until we have nothing but baskets of fragments. What we need today are people who can put the parts back together again into a meaningful and powerful whole.”

This means we ask questions like “How does what is written here connect with other portions of scripture? How does it fit within the story of the Bible?”

3. Biblical Theology When we carefully read, we can see how the authors applied what they understood in their context and culture. As we read the scripture, we learn more about their context.

What does the author reveal about their context? What do the author's assumptions tell us about who he is speaking to and what he believes?

4. Christ is Central, from Genesis to Revelation. Redemption and reconciliation to God through Christ is the key theme in all scripture. The Old Testament and the New Testament need to be read through this lens. Revelations 13:8 says All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast--all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

1 Peter 1 :19-20 Instead, you were bought with the priceless blood of Christ. He is a perfect lamb. He doesn't have any flaws at all. 20 He was chosen before God created the world. But he came into the world for your sake in these last days.

This causes us to ask how do I see redemption or salvation in this passage? What does this passage reveal to me about my need for Christ?

( Redemption means Jesus paid the price of sin for us, the impact of this in the life of a follower is that through him, we are released from bondage to sin and death.)

Which of these frameworks is new or challenging to you?

Pray for one another.

## **Remain in Me** **Week 1 Homework**

## WEEK 1 DAY 1

**Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved,  
a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.  
2 Timothy 2:15**

In Greek, the term for “rightly handling” in the above verse. means cutting straight or right. The metaphor being from a father or a steward (1 Co 4:1) cutting and distributing bread among his children.

(Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown. Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible. Vol. 2. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997. Print.)

When reading the Bible, we want to rightly handle it, cut it straight and correctly.

1. What thoughts do you have as you read 2 Timothy 2:15?
2. What doubts, concerns, fears do you have?
3. What desires, hopes and goals does it inspire?
4. Take some time to pray regarding these reactions. Let your requests be made known to God.

Okay! Please know God is eager to meet with you and open His Word to you. Our first step in growing in Biblical literacy and learning how to remain in God is practicing our reading. I know, it feels like Grade 1. In many ways, it is. Sometimes we forget to mentally prepare to work through the Word. The homework will guide you through step by step but here is an overview.

- A. **Read Prayerfully:** Pray before, during, and after reading.
- B. **Read Patiently:** Allow time to read, don't try to rush through.
- C. **Read Repeatedly:** Read the scripture passage numerous times. This is His first step to showing you important parts of the passage.
- D. **Read thoughtfully:** Pay attention, dig into the context, ask questions, explore what it meant back then.
- E. **Read Imaginatively:** Look at different versions. Rewrite it in your own words. Listen to it out loud. Imagine the scene in your mind meditatively (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch) .
- F. **Read Meditatively:** Think on it. Write it out and look back at it a few times throughout the day. Mull over it and roll it around in your mind. “First rate Bible reading does not call for snap shots but instead for timed exposures,” (Hendricks and Hendricks, Living by the Book, p. 113).

- G. **Read Purposefully**: Look for grammatical structure, such as verbs (action words), subject and object ( subject does the acting, the object is acted upon). What descriptive words are used? Are there connectives (and, but, therefore)? How is the thought or idea developed?

(Hendricks and Hendricks Living by the Book 1991)

You have done this, you already know how. Maybe you haven't done some of it since you were in school but you have done it. Maybe you haven't ever been encouraged to use these skills when reading the Bible. Or maybe you have and you just haven't used them in a while.

If you feel overwhelmed, that is okay! It is going to be so rewarding. We will get more out of it than what we put in because God is a generous Father. Take a deep breath and take it one step at a time.

5. Take some time to ask God to clear your mind and slowly read through the passage John 15. **It is found at the end of the Homework.**

6. Note any phrases or ideas stood out to you. Be careful not to interpret or apply, just take note of what stood out. Observe. Only observe.

7. Was there a particular verse that stood out? Write it down on an index card and carry it around with you today. Pull it out often and try meditating on it through the day.

## **WEEK 1 DAY 2**

### **Memory Verse**

John 15:5 ESV

5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

If this version does not flow well for memorizing, please use a version that works better for you. The New International or New King James version are very good alternatives.

Different versions exist for valid reasons and there are two schools of thought we will discuss when it comes to the different translations: literal and readable.

Some Bibles are translated more literally in order to be closer to the words of original text. The New American Standard Version and the English Standard Version fall in this category. The main goal was accuracy, and it was believed that the translation needed to be as literal as possible, or word-for-word. This form of translation is called formal equivalent.

However, while accuracy is a noble value, it is not always possible. Idioms in one language do not always transfer over into another. My parents used to converse with their parents in German. Something would be said and they would laugh uproariously but when my sister and I would ask what was so funny, they would often say, "Well, it doesn't translate well to English." You can imagine our disappointment! It may work intellectually, but it fails emotionally.

Since accurate wording is sometimes harder to work with and understand, another school of thought developed. The main goal was readability, which intended to make the texts accessible to readers in ways that they would be able to understand. The New International Version and New Living Translation fall into this category. The downside of this form of translation is that the shorter sentences sometimes interrupt thought flow, and some of the original context gets lost along the way.

The NET (New English Translation) is kind of the best of both worlds. It is true to the original text while still being relatively easy to understand. So, if you are struggling with the text, look through a few different versions and that may help you in your comprehension. Biblegateway.com, or the YouVersion App are great tools for this.

I hope you are as excited as me to be back today! To become workers who handle God's word accurately means that we become excellent observers of the text itself.

**The goal is to let the Word say what it is saying.** That is, to let the scripture speak its message.

In order to let the text say what is meant to, we start by making observations. During this first step, we refrain from trying to interpret and apply. We read repeatedly and observe. **Just observe.**

1. Take a moment to think about what things are on your mind. Take a moment to pray about these things and leave them in the capable arms of Jesus.
2. Prayerfully and slowly read through John 15 again (found at the end of Week 4 Homework.) Ask God to open your eyes to see what is there.

3. Create a key:

For example

Vine- underlined in black shown in example.

Abide- circled in green

Love- circled in red

Branch- underlined in brown

example:

**15** "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. **2** Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. **3** Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. **4** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. **5** I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. **6** If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. **7** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. **9** As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. **10** If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. **11** These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Read slowly through the text located after Day 5 of Week 1 and follow your key. Print out or look at the document Bible Study Tools : Specific things to observe for help noting what to observe. Use this tool to help you in question 4,5 & 6

4. What commands appear in John 15?
5. What cause and effect relationships do you see? (reasons, results) If you do \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ will happen.
6. What contrasts, comparisons or illustrations does the author use in John 15?

### **WEEK 1 DAY 3**

To read accurately and carefully, we read repeatedly. Scripture is complex, you can read a portion 30 times or more and the next time you read it something new stands out. It is so beautiful and amazing that way.

Proper reading of scripture in order to learn how to study and interpret it are a different tool set than devotional reading. It is a patient, methodical, detailed discipling. I hope you will stick with it because when God opens the word up to us, it is incredibly rewarding.

1. Ask God to open your heart and mind as you Read John 15 slowly again.
  - a. List the words and phrases that repeat.
  - b. Write down beside each word how many times you see it appear.
  - c. From this, what do you gather are the main themes in John 15?
  - d. From this repetition, what do we understand to be the speaker's purposes?
2. What part of John 15 uses allegory and imagery? What imagery is he using?
3. Allegory is a description of one thing under the image of another. They use comparison to teach us spiritual truths. What is the allegory describing?
4. Reading John 15: 1-8, record only what the passage clearly states. Write down each thing that appears in the allegory. What does each image represent in the passage? For example,

The True Vine

Jesus is the true Vine

The Vinedresser

\_\_\_\_\_ is the Vinedresser

Branches

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Continue to identify what each image represents. If you are unsure, make a best guess from what the passage says. Consider reaching out to your small group for help. Make sure to stick to the text and observe. Try not to jump to interpretation.

6. How does the imagery used help the speaker make his point (John 15:1-8)?
7. What does the text say about “abiding” in verses 1-8?
8. Those who abide, bear fruit. Spend some time talking with God about abiding and bearing fruit. Ask him to give you wisdom on what this means, both in the context of the passage, and in your own life.

## **WEEK 1 DAY 4**

Whenever we read through scripture, we do some things automatically. It may seem tedious to do the work of writing these things down, but it builds good patterns in us and sharpens our skills. It makes us good students of the Word.

1. Who is speaking in John 15:1-8?
2. Who is He speaking to?

3. Where is this conversation happening? (John 13, first few verses, John 14:30-31, John 18:1)

Jesus is teaching his disciples on the way to Gethsemane, after the Last Supper. This is among the final topics of what Jesus chooses to talk about with his disciples the last time they are together before his death on the cross. He imparts these teachings in their last moments together before everything they believed and expected is challenged,

4. What is the emotion/ tone of John 15?
5. Is there a command?
6. Go back and look at the word abide and every time it appears in John 15.
7. Write down everything the text says about abiding John 15:1-8.
8. What is Jesus talking about in John 15:1-8?
9. Verse 6 is challenging.
  - a. What does the person in verse 6 not do?
  - b. What happens to them?
10. Read verse 8. What is the contrast between verse 6 and verse 8?
  - a. What does this verse say disciples do? How does verse 16 relate to this?

## **WEEK 1 DAY 5**

Sometimes, to get the full picture of what is happening, we need to go back and look at what the surrounding text tells us.

1. Who is with Jesus when he shares this allegory? Go back and look at John 13:5

When we read 'the disciples' it means Jesus's followers. In situations where the author means more than the 12 or less than the 12 it is usually specified. So when we read "the disciples", it is usually the 12 Jesus chose ( Luke 6; 12-16, Mark 3:13-19)

- a. Who is absent in John 15? Read John 13:26-30?

- b. Where has he gone?
  - c. Read John 13: 10-11, 26-27 and compare to John 15:3.
  - d. Who appeared clean but wasn't? Who appeared like a branch but wasn't?
2. Read John 15:9-11.
- a. Is there a command?
  - b. What are we to abide in?
  - c. How do we abide in his love?  
What relationship exists between love and obedience?
  - d. What is the result of remaining In Jesus' love and obeying His commands in the life of a disciple (vs 11)?
3. How has the idea of Abiding developed in verses 1-11?

Spend some time thanking Jesus that He is the one who bears fruit in your life. Consider asking Him in what ways He is inviting you to abide in His love through obedience.

**Memory Verse**

John 15:5 NIV

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

