

# LIFE with Jesus in Community

## Bible Study

### BIBLE STUDY

Matthew tells the story of Jesus' baptism. Immediately after John the Baptist raises Jesus from the water, Jesus follows the Holy Spirit into the desert where He wanders alone and without food for forty days and nights.

What is the longest time you have gone without eating? What did you feel? Drawing on that experience, try to imagine the urgency of Jesus' agony; if He doesn't eat soon, He will die from starvation.

Matthew puts it simply: "He was hungry." Matthew 4:2

Seeing Jesus' weakness, the devil strikes—turn these stones into bread, he hisses, and prove you are the Son of God. You can end this unnecessary suffering right now.

Jesus will miraculously provide food for others another day, but He refuses to meet His own needs this way. "It is written," He responds, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4

With the words of Deuteronomy on His parched lips, Jesus, suppressing His anguish, tells the devil that He needs the Words of His Father more than He needs bread.

Jesus would rather die than violate or lose contact with God's Word.

So if we want to follow Jesus, we *must* do as He did and draw life from the Word of God before any other source. Jesus wants us to know that to be human means that even as our bodies crave food, our souls *require* God's Words to live.

Why is this so? Just as God spoke the universe into being, His words today create life—spiritual life—within us. The Word of God is alive (Hebrews 4:12) and is empowered by the Holy Spirit to draw us into life with God. We cannot have life with God without it.

Have we been starving our souls?

### THE PRACTICE: BIBLE STUDY

We can take the word of God into our lives in many ways. In this Practice, we will focus on reading the Bible together with a group. Please see the Practices on Lectio Divina and Memorization for additional methods.

Reading the Bible together with others can be both challenging and rewarding. Here are some steps to try as you and your small group practice digging into God's Word together.

## PREPARING

- Make sure that at least one of you brings a study Bible. The NIV and ESV study Bibles are very good.
- Choose a small portion of scripture—a paragraph or two at most. It’s a good idea for your group to choose a book to study, reading a small portion each time you gather.
- Before you begin a book, discover together the answers to these questions:
  - Who wrote the book? To whom? When? Where? Why?
  - What kind of literature is this book? (See The Bible Project for more insight here)
- Each of you should have access to a notebook or journal and a pen.
- Pray together before you begin, asking the Lord to guide your study.

## READING

- Someone read your portion of Scripture aloud. Someone else read it one more time.
- Set a timer for at least 10 minutes and study the passage individually and quietly.

## STUDYING

- **STEP ONE: EXPLORE – What *did* God say?**

Take a breath. Set aside your first impressions or concerns about the passage.

Give yourself space to be curious—to explore both the big picture and the details of the passage. Try to get a sense of how the original audience would have understood this passage.

Take time to notice things—as you might if you were taking a leisurely walk in a park. Look around the passage. What do you see? Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How make good exploring questions.

Consider the genre of the writing: is it a letter, a poem, a narrative? How does the genre influence your understanding of the message? Are there allusions in the passage to other Scriptural passages or images? What is the significance of these allusions?

If you are uncertain about parts of the passage, write your questions in your journal or look for clarification in the study notes in your Bible.

Do you notice repeating or contrasting words or phrases?

What is the passage communicating about God? About people?

What stands out to you or touches you?

- **STEP TWO: CONNECT—What *is* God saying?**

This is where you bridge the gap between the original audience and yourself.

Consider what is different between the time when the passage was written and now. If it's an OT passage, consider how Jesus fulfills the meaning of the passage. Consider things that remain the same today as when the passage was written.

What timeless truth is found in this passage?

What is God still saying through these words about Himself? About you?

- **STEP THREE: RESPOND—How is God inviting me to *respond* to what He is saying?**<sup>1</sup>

Is there a truth to embrace about the Lord? About me?

Is there an attitude to embrace or avoid?

Is there a command to obey?

Is there a sin to confess?

Is there a promise or encouragement to receive?

Is there a way to pray?

Is there some way I need to change my life in response to this passage?

#### SHARING

- Talk as a group about what God *was* saying, what God *is* saying, and how He might be inviting you to *respond* to His word.
- If questions arise, is there a place to look for answers?
- Pray for one another about the things this study has stirred.

#### INTERESTING QUOTES

“The purpose of the Spiritual Disciples (Practices) is the total transformation of the person. They aim at replacing old destructive habits of thought with new life-giving habits. Nowhere is this purpose more clearly seen than in the Discipline of study.” Richard Foster

“In the Bible God gives us revelations of himself which lead us to worship; promises of salvation which stimulate our faith; and commandments expressing his will which demand our obedience.” John Stott

“The Bible is divine revelation. God’s own word to us. It reveals who God is, who we are, and why we are here.” Adele Calhoun

“The Bible is the cradle wherein Christ is laid.” Martin Luther

“Jesus exemplified the love of God’s Word in every area of his life. He used Scripture to answer those who tested him, comfort others, explain his actions and ultimately face his own death.” Adele Calhoun

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<sup>1</sup> These steps—Explore, Connect, and Respond are adapted from material you can find at <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/bible-studies/a-quick-lesson-on-how-to-study-the-bible.html>

## HELPFUL SCRIPTURES

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4

“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.” John 8:31

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

"But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night." Psalm 1:2

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. . . I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” Psalm 119:9, 11

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

## RESOURCES

The Dwell Audio Bible App features readers with captivating voices reading many different versions of the Bible. It is wonderful for listening while you walk, do chores, or ride in the car: <https://dwellapp.io/>

The Bible Project features a library of marvelous study materials—videos and podcasts—to help you understand, reflect upon, and wisely read every part of the Bible. You can use the short, creative videos with your family or small group or by yourself: bibleproject.com [Learn the Bible for Free Online | BibleProject™](https://bibleproject.com)