

Lesson Plan & Study Guide



Spiritual Disciplines: Bible Study Part One

Walking with Jesus

iFOLLOW

The iFollow Discipleship Series

Version 1.0 - 11/17/10



About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

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The Spiritual Discipline of Bible Study Part One

This presentation is designed for people who have decided to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Learning Objectives

1. Become equipped with the spiritual discipline and method of Inductive Bible Study.
2. Skill development of observation and interpretation for in depth Bible study.
3. Utilize personal interactive practice that encourages the formational process inherent in the use of each skill.
4. Experience for oneself the joy of discovering and understanding deeper insights into God's truth.
5. Grow in the spiritual discipline of Scripture study with life changing potential.

Content Outline

Part One: Observation

Part Two: Interpretation

Teaching notes:

The Inductive Bible Study method is by its nature, skill building and skill developing. Therefore, it necessitates much interaction, practice and experience. Supplying enough time to grasp, practice and experience each skill is imperative. It is suggested that each skill be allowed about a 90-minute session. You may want to divide each skill into one session, rather than one three-hour session for learning the skills of observation and interpretation.

As a facilitator, it is recommended that you interact and become a small group member thereby sharing the journey of learning, and interacting with the process of Inductive Bible Study.

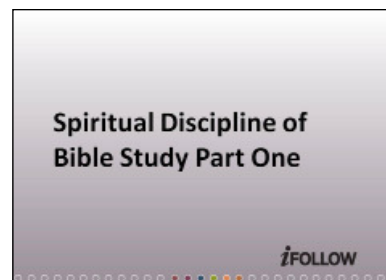
Please make available to the learners, all of the Handouts along with pencils, either tables or writing tablets should also be at hand. Please mention that sharing within the

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small group should be done in three to five minutes per group member, so that everyone has a turn to share. Confidentiality is encouraged within in the group process.

Enjoy the energy that study of the text, writing, sharing both individually, and with the larger and small groups will bring to the spiritual discipline of Bible study!

Background Material for the Presenter

Bible study; what do these two words bring to mind? Do you relate them perhaps to a time when you were eager to learn as much as you could about God, or the Bible's content? Perhaps, there is a sense of guilt that comes because you haven't spent more time reading the Bible. Or, perhaps, there is recognition of how far you have come from your earliest reading of this Divine Record. Nonetheless, God's Word is a continually accessible spiritual resource and still remains the primary means of learning about and experiencing God.

So how can we return to that eagerness? How can we study out of joy, not guilt? How can we allow God's word to have a bigger impact on our lives? Perhaps the first place to start is to improve our study skills.

Malcolm Knowles, a renowned professor of adult education observed that adults learn 20% of what they hear, 40% of what they hear and see, and 80% of what they do or discover for themselves. They also learn best when new learning is related to their life experience and has some immediate usefulness to them. In this lesson I'm going to do less talking and you're going to experience a little more.

A closer look at our current cultural context reveals that our present-day technological social environment, popular thought, practices, attitudes and views have influenced our approach to learning and how we implement newly discovered information.

Furthermore, in the spiritual realm and its link to lifestyle, the well noted research of George Barna points out that statistics tell us that in our information centered world there is no longer a marked difference between many believing church members and non-believers in, way of life practices, choices, habits, and attitudes.

How then do we study the Bible in a manner that will connect its study with our life experience? How can we meet our goals and outcomes for spiritual growth and Christian development?

A starting point is to note the contrasts between the informational and formational approaches to learning. Informational learning style approaches learning and reading in order to gather as much information as possible; moving quickly through the material in order to grasp it, master it and bring it under our control. This methodology makes our

reading analytical, critical and judgmental. Unfortunately we use this same approach to Bible study and wonder why we are dissatisfied.

Contrary to the informational approach, the formational approach encourages us to study the Bible slowly enough to reach the deeper levels of meaning—giving enough room for meditation that actively helps us listen to God’s Word. The formational approach allows the Holy Spirit to speak into our soul and heart and allows the Word to master us. Therefore, our posture becomes one in where we become servants of the Word, rather than masters of the text.

The spiritual discipline and method of Inductive Bible Study is a formational process that incorporates a systematic method of Bible study, supplying skills that facilitate learning and experiencing the joy of discovering for oneself deeper insights into God’s truth. The inductive Bible study skills of observation, interpretation, personalization and application encourage and cultivate the posture of listening, reflection and response to God’s Word. Inductive Bible study creates an ideal greenhouse environment for learning, spiritual growth and development that is related to real life experience.

When we take on the skills that the inductive Bible study method furnishes, we are empowered with immediate usefulness for both personal and a teaching setting. As a result, inductive Bible study equips us with skills and tools for in depth Bible study resulting in life changing potential.

Now, together let’s delve into the foundational skill of observation with the reading of “The Student, the Fish and Agassiz.”

General Group Activity

(Allow 20-25 minutes to read the story, followed by the discussion questions)

Handout 1: The Student, the Fish, and Agassiz

Discussion Questions:

(Allow about 10 minutes)

What principles did you find in this story that might apply to Bible study?

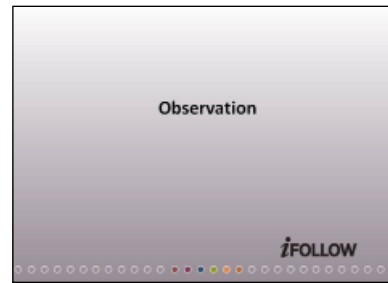
(Please note these responses if they are not mentioned.)

- The key importance of first-hand observation
- The role of careful, intense, concentrated focus
- There is no substitute for one’s own first hand process, experience and joy of discovery!

Good work! Now let's learn more as we practice the skill of observation.

Distribute Handout 2: Observation.

“The first skill to develop is to train your mind to see when you read a passage—to observe carefully the words, to be on the alert for the details.” (Oletta Wald, *The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*, p. 15) This is absolutely essential in order to avoid inaccurate, careless observations that can lead to “faulty interpretations and shallow applications.” (Ibid.)



Your handout defines the skill of observation as, the art of being mentally aware of what you see; acquiring the habit of exactness.

“The purpose of observation is to saturate yourself thoroughly with the content of the passage. Like a sponge, absorb everything before you. Learn to be exact and accurate in your observation.” (Ibid.) Remember the story of the fish: look, look, look. Use your eyes, and pencil, train yourself to be exact and accurate in your observations.

Learning to observe as in the fish story, takes time and practice and a focused concentration. However, as you practice, you will find that observing the details will become second nature to you.

Your handout gives a list of specific things to observe. We are not going to read through them as if they are just suggestions, rather we will actually do them, practicing one observation skill at a time.

Your “fish” is going to be the Gospel of Mark, chapter one.

Group Instructions:

You will divide into small groups of three people and look at your “fish” together using Handout 4 as a guide, and begin to note your observations on the sheet provided: Handout 3. You will ONLY write down your observations in the section provided for Observation.

Distribute: Handout 4 and Handout 5 (Mark, Chapter 1)

(Allow about 45 minutes)

Go over the first three instructions with the small group, then join a group for the small group time.

1. Once you have settled in with your group, please pray together, asking that the Spirit of God will make your heart and mind ready for what He wants to teach.
2. Now read Mark, chapter 1, as if you had never seen it before. Aim to observe facts. What is the author saying? Read in a relaxed attitude; do not try to find striking things.

DO NOT INTERPRET OR DRAW SPIRITUAL LESSONS AT THIS POINT!

3. Using Handout 4, answer the observation questions, to discover what you observed. Write down your observations on Handout 3.

Regroup all of the small groups into a general group once more.

General Debriefing: What were two surprising or new observations made in your small group.

(Allow about 10 minutes)

This will affirm the good work done in the small groups and also give venue for new insights gathered from collective wisdom.

Closing Prayer

Background Material for Presenters

Part Two: Interpretation

This session will introduce us to the second skill of inductive Bible study: Interpretation.

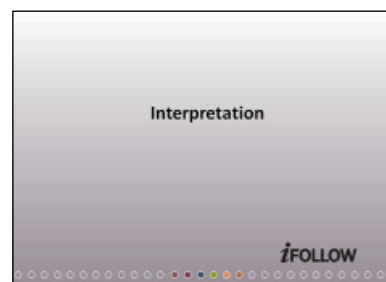
Purpose of Interpretation

To interpret means to explain or tell the meaning of something. When interpreting a Scripture passage, aim to determine what the author meant by the words used, keeping in mind the original audience. Try to put yourself in the writer's place and recapture the thoughts, attitudes, and emotions.

The primary purpose of interpretation is to discover what the author meant, to discover the purpose and the message. This is not easy, because the writer is not around anymore. But try to be objective in your interpretations. Don't think about what the passage means to you (this is application), but what it seemed to mean to the author. Even so, interpretations will vary a great deal. You can read a dozen commentaries on a biblical passage and have as many different explanations.

The Bridge Between Observation and Interpretation

The bridge between observation and interpretation is to ask yourself questions for understanding, questions concerning the meaning of words and statements. You probably use this bridge more often than you realize. Usually when you read something, you may read the words in a passage, observe what the words say, and ask questions about words and statement you do not understand. In learning to become a Bible discoverer, you need to



do these things deliberately. As you read a passage, always ask questions about meanings.

Why Ask Questions?

Some of the reasons for asking questions are: to stimulate thinking; to force yourself to think seriously about the meaning of words and statements; and to begin to identify those words, phrases, and statements that need interpretation. Asking yourself questions often will lead to more observations, prepare you for application and serve as the foundation for questions you might use in leading a discussion.

Learning to ask questions about meanings of words is a skill just like learning how to observe. Always remember that you are asking yourself the questions for your own understanding. That is why these are called questions for understanding, interpretive questions, or I wonder questions.

(From: *The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*, newly revised. By Oletta Wald: 40-41. Used by permission.)

Distribute Handout 6

Read together through “Principles of Interpretation.”

(About 10 minutes)

Let’s learn and practice together, stepping from observation to interpretation!

Distribute Handout 7

Instructions:

You will use again Handout 5 the Mark 1 text. Also, Handout 3, on which you will now begin to write in the Interpretation section.

You will break up into your small groups-

Small Group Assignment:

In your small group, read together, out loud, Handout 7: “Interpretation What Does it Mean?”

Each individual group member will choose three out of the 10 observations you made from Mark 1. Using Handout 7, “Interpretation-What Does it Mean?” you will write one possible interpretation for each observation, using Handout 7 as your guide.

Example: you might use the tool of Identification for one of your observations; therefore you will look at the setting of your observation and answer the question, “What must it have been like?” You will also describe how it might have felt, tasted, been heard, been seen, live it!

Time: 25 minutes for working on individual interpretations, and 10 minutes for sharing within their small group their own interpretations.

Group Activity: Bring the small group back into a general group. (15 minutes)

Debrief: What Interpretation tool did you use for the first time, in Bible study? What was the outcome?

How important is the accuracy of your observations for interpretation?

What was the most insightful interpretation shared by one of your small group members?

Group Invitation for next session on Personalization and Application



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Additional Resources

Wald, Oletta. (2002). *The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress.

Wald, Oletta. (2002). *The New Joy of Teaching Discovery Bible Study*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress.

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Handout 1

The Student, the Fish, and Agassiz by the Student [Samuel H. Scudder]

It was more than fifteen years ago that I entered the laboratory of Professor Agassiz, and told him I had enrolled my name in the scientific school as a student of natural history. He asked me a few questions about my object in coming, my antecedents generally, the mode in which I afterwards proposed to use the knowledge I might acquire, and finally, whether I wished to study any special branch. To the latter I replied that while I wished to be well grounded in all departments of zoology, I purposed to devote myself specially to insects.

“When do you wish to begin?” he asked.

“Now,” I replied.

This seemed to please him, and with an energetic “Very well,” he reached from a shelf a huge jar of specimens in yellow alcohol.

“Take this fish,” he said, “and look at it; we call it a Haemulon; by and by I will ask what you have seen.”

With that he left me, but in a moment returned with explicit instructions as to the care of the object entrusted to me.

“No man is fit to be a naturalist,” said he, “who does not know how to take care of specimens.”

I was to keep the fish before me in a tin tray, and occasionally moisten the surface with alcohol from the jar, always taking care to replace the stopper tightly. Those were not the days of ground glass stoppers, and elegantly shaped exhibition jars; all the old students will recall the huge, neckless glass bottles with their leaky, wax-besmeared corks, half-eaten by insects and begrimed with cellar dust. Entomology was a cleaner science than ichthyology, but the example of the professor who had unhesitatingly plunged to the bottom of the jar to produce the fish was infectious; and though this alcohol had “a very ancient and fish-like smell,” I really dared not show any aversion within these sacred precincts, and treated the alcohol as though it were pure water. Still I was conscious of a passing feeling of disappointment, for gazing at a fish did not commend itself to an ardent entomologist. My friends at home, too, were annoyed, when they discovered that no amount of eau de cologne would drown the perfume which haunted me like a shadow.

In ten minutes I had seen all that could be seen in that fish, and started in search of the professor, who had, however, left the museum; and when I returned, after lingering over some of the odd animals stored in the upper apartment, my specimen was dry all over.

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I dashed the fluid over the fish as if to resuscitate it from a fainting-fit, and looked with anxiety for a return of a normal, sloppy appearance. This little excitement over, nothing was to be done but return to a steadfast gaze at my mute companion. Half an hour passed, an hour, another hour; the fish began to look loathsome. I turned it over and around; looked it in the face—ghastly; from behind, beneath, above, sideways, at a three-quarters view—just as ghastly. I was in despair; at an early hour, I concluded that lunch was necessary; so with infinite relief, the fish was carefully replaced in the jar, and for an hour I was free.

On my return, I learned that Professor Agassiz had been at the museum, but had gone and would not return for several hours. My fellow students were too busy to be disturbed by continued conversation. Slowly I drew forth that hideous fish, and with a feeling of desperation again looked at it. I might not use a magnifying glass; instruments of all kinds were interdicted. My two hands, my two eyes, and the fish; it seemed a most limited field. I pushed my fingers down its throat to see how sharp its teeth were. I began to count the scales in the different rows until I was convinced that that was nonsense. At last a happy thought struck me—I would draw the fish; and now with surprise I began to discover new features in the creature. Just then the professor returned.

“That is right,” said he, “a pencil is one of the best eyes. I am glad to notice, too, that you keep your specimen wet and your bottle corked.”

With these encouraging words he added --

“Well, what is it like?”

He listened attentively to my brief rehearsal of the structure of parts whose names were still unknown to me; the fringed gill-arches and movable operculum; the pores of the head, fleshy lips, and lidless eyes; the lateral line, the spinous fin, and forked tail; the compressed and arched body. When I had finished, he waited as if expecting more, and then, with an air of disappointment:

“You have not looked very carefully; why,” he continued, more earnestly, “you haven’t seen one of the most conspicuous features of the animal, which is as plainly before your eyes as the fish itself. Look again; look again!” And he left me to my misery.

I was piqued; I was mortified. Still more of that wretched fish? But now I set myself to the task with a will, and discovered one new thing after another, until I saw how just the professor’s criticism had been. The afternoon passed quickly, and when, towards its close, the professor inquired,

“Do you see it yet?”

“No,” I replied. “I am certain I do not, but I see how little I saw before.”

“That is next best,” said he earnestly, “but I won’t hear you now; put away your fish and

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go home; perhaps you will be ready with a better answer in the morning. I will examine you before you look at the fish.”

This was disconcerting; not only must I think of my fish all night, studying, without the object before me, what this unknown but most visible feature might be, but also, without reviewing my new discoveries, I must give an exact account of them the next day. I had a bad memory; so I walked home by Charles River in a distracted state, with my two perplexities.

The cordial greeting from the professor the next morning was reassuring; here was a man who seemed to be quite as anxious as I that I should see for myself what he saw.

“Do you perhaps mean,” I asked, “that the fish has symmetrical sides with paired organs?”

His thoroughly pleased, “Of course, of course!” repaid the wakeful hours of the previous night. After he had discoursed most happily and enthusiastically—as he always did—upon the importance of this point, I ventured to ask what I should do next.

“Oh, look at your fish!” he said, and left me again to my own devices. In a little more than an hour he returned and heard my new catalogue.

“That is good, that is good!” he repeated, “but that is not all; go on.” And so for three long days, he placed that fish before my eyes, forbidding me to look at anything else, or to use any artificial aid. “Look, look, look,” was his repeated injunction.

This was the best entomological lesson I ever had—a lesson whose influence was extended to the details of every subsequent study; a legacy the professor has left to me, as he left it to many others, of inestimable value, which we could not buy, with which we cannot part.

A year afterwards, some of us were amusing ourselves with chalking outlandish beasts upon the blackboard. We drew prancing star-fishes; frogs in mortal combat; hydro-headed worms; stately craw-fishes, standing on their tails, bearing aloft umbrellas; and grotesque fishes, with gaping mouths and staring eyes. The professor came in shortly after, and was as much amused as any at our experiments. He looked at the fishes.

“Haemulons, every one of them,” he said; “Mr. _____ drew them.”

True; and to this day, if I attempt a fish, I can draw nothing but Haemulons.

The fourth day a second fish of the same group was placed beside the first, and I was bidden to point out the resemblances and differences between the two; another and another followed, until the entire family lay before me, and a whole legion of jars covered the table and surrounding shelves; the odor had become a pleasant perfume; and even now, the sight of an old six-inch worm-eaten cork brings fragrant memories!

The whole group of Haemulons was thus brought into review; and whether engaged

upon the dissection of the internal organs, preparation and examination of the bony framework, or the description of the various parts, Agassiz's training in the method of observing facts in their orderly arrangement, was ever accompanied by the urgent exhortation not to be content with them.

"Facts are stupid things," he would say, "until brought into connection with some general law."

At the end of eight months, it was almost with reluctance that I left these friends and turned to insects; but what I gained by this outside experience has been of greater value than years of later investigation in my favorite groups.

- *American Poems* (3rd ed.; Boston: Houghton, Osgood & Co., 1879): pp. 450-54.

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Handout 2

Observation: The art of being mentally aware of what you see; acquiring the habit of exactness.

Questions: Who? What? When? Where? How? Why?

Specific things to observe:

Sequence: Resources that give unity, relating segments to persons, places, time, events, ideas.

Viewpoint:

Key Word/Concept:

Comparison: Comparisons and contrasts point out similarities and differences.

Contrast:

Repetition: Be alert for repetition of words, ideas, or statements. This will often give you a clue as to the author's purpose in a passage.

Cause and Effect:

Means to an end:

Progression:

Omission:

Emphasis:

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Handout 3

Observation

Interpretation

Personalization

Application

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Handout 4

Small Group Instructions

1. Once you have settled in with your group, please pray together, asking that the Spirit of God will make your heart and mind ready for what He wants to teach.
2. Now read Mark, chapter 1, as if you had never seen it before. Aim to observe facts. What is the author saying? Read in a relaxed attitude; do not try to find striking things. DO NOT INTERPRET OR DRAW SPIRITUAL LESSONS AT THIS POINT!
3. Using Handout 4, answer the observation questions, to discover what you observed. Write down your observations on Handout 3.

Observation

1. Who were the people in this chapter?
2. What was said about them? What happened?
3. Where did it happen? (country, house, geographical location, etc.)
4. When did it happen? (reference to time and passage of time)
5. How was it recorded? (author's style)
6. Return to Mark 1 and give a name to each paragraph. Short titles of three words, less are best. Titles need not summarize the paragraph; they are for the purpose of recalling the paragraphs to your mind. Avoid using a title that applies to more than one paragraph; each paragraph must be distinguished from all others. After all paragraphs are named, use the titles to think through the chapter. Be able to do this without notes. Rote memory of the titles is of little value; the titles must serve as clues to what is there and in what order it is there.
7. Look at the paragraphs again. How are they related to each other? Why did the author put each in? Why is it where it is? How is it related to the whole chapter?
8. Write out 10 good observations.

Handout 5

Mark 1 (NIV)

1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 It is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” **3** “a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’

4 And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **5** The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. **6** John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. **7** And this was his message: “After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. **8** I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **10** As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. **11** And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, **13** and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. **15** “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. **17** “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” **18** At once they left their nets and followed him.

19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. **20** Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

21 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. **22** The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. **23** Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, **24** “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

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25 "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" **26** The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." **28** News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. **30** Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. **31** So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. **33** The whole town gathered at the door, **34** and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. **36** Simon and his companions went to look for him, **37** and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" **38** Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." **39** So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

40 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." **41** Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" **42** Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. **43** Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: **44** "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." **45** Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

(Scripture taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.)

Handout 6

Principles of Interpretation

1. Seek the Spirit's guidance before interpreting any passage, knowing that truths must be spiritually discerned under His guidance.
2. Always interpret a passage in light of the context.
 - Check what precedes and follows a passage.
 - Check your interpretation in relation to the rest of the book.
 - Check your interpretation in relation to the Bible as a whole.
3. Interpret as passage literally unless the context suggests otherwise.
4. Let the Bible interpret itself-look for the whole counsel of God.
 - Don't isolate only the part that suits you, leaving out the rest.
 - Don't say more than the Bible says.
5. Always interpret a passage in terms of the author's purpose and in light of how his readers would have understood it to mean.
6. Interpret words in light of the meaning in the times of the author. Check the use by the author elsewhere in the book, the use in relation to the immediate context and the use at the time of writing. Words have different meanings in different contexts. Check the cultural setting. The Bible is also trans-cultural.
7. Interpret a passage in terms of its historical context:
 - To whom written
 - The background of the writer
 - Occasion that prompted it
 - Main characters
 - Time setting
8. Authoritative commands are for all. "Love one another." (John 13:34-35) Limited commands are for immediate circumstances only. "Go, make an ark of cypress wood." (Genesis 6:14)
 - The context and nature of the command indicate whether it is to be universally applied.
9. Biblical examples (narrative passages) are authoritative when they are supported by a command.
 - Biblical examples can verify what God is leading you to do. They can enrich

application. But they must not be universally applied to everybody unless they are backed up by a command.

10. Study of geography and topography mentioned in a passage may help in interpretation of the passage.
11. Watch for figures of speech that should not be interpreted literally. This includes inanimate objects used to describe living beings, “door, light” “mountains hearing” be alert to words and phrases out of character with that which is being described. “Fox-Herod”, “Dogs-circumcised”. Figures of speech include metaphors, similes, (like, as), anthropomorphisms, imagery, metonymy (using one word to represent another such as “circumcision-Jews”), hyperbole, irony, personification, etc.
12. Parables are usually intended to TEACH ONE major truth. Do not allegorize the details to “make it fit.”
13. Interpret personal experience in light of Scripture and not Scripture in light of personal experience. Events are to be interpreted on the basis of what God says to be true: not, this is true because this happened. (Because Jesus is the Son of God, He rose from the dead, not He rose from the dead, and therefore He is the Son of God.) Allow Scripture to shape your experience rather than interpreting Scripture from your experience.
14. The main purpose of Scripture is to change our lives, not just increase our knowledge. We are to be different as a result of observing the lives of others. Accurate application is based on correct interpretation.

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Handout 7

Interpretation—What Does It Mean?

1. **Interpretation:** Look for the meaning this has in its setting.

The Meaning in its Setting

Interpretation Tools

Ask Questions For Understanding:

A. Why?

1. Why is this said?
2. Why is it said here?
3. Is there an added meaning because of who said it?
4. Or whom it is said to?

To Guide Your Questions, You May Use:

B. Definition

1. Is a word or idea defined in the text?
2. Word definition, literal or figurative

C. Substitution

1. Another word-paraphrase
2. What is the underlying tone? (Use of words, emotions)

D. Indication:

1. What does this show about character?
2. Reasons why a person responded so?

E. Identification:

1. What must it have been like?
2. Feel it, taste it, hear it, see it, live it!

F. Implication:

1. What does this happening, message, action imply?

G. Generalization:

1. What principle can I find?

2. Is this consistent with the whole counsel of God?

Three Dangers:

Misinterpretation: Wrong Meaning

Sub-interpretation: Less than full meaning

Super-interpretation: Attributing more significance than is implicit

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