



ANGLICAN CHURCH OF PAPHOS

Lent Course 2025 A Deeper Walk

Week 2 BIBLE STUDY (2 Timothy 3:10-17)

18 March 2025 - Revd Paul A. Carr

Introduction

The purpose of the Spiritual Disciplines is the total transformation of a person. *Nowhere is this purpose more clearly seen than in the Discipline of the study of God's word* (Foster). No one factor is more influential in shaping a person's moral, social, ethical and spiritual behaviour than regular Bible reading. Jesus said that the knowledge of the truth would set us free (John 8:32).

QUESTION What stops you reading/studying the Bible regularly?

1. What Is Study?

Foster: *"Unfortunately, many people think studying a book is a simple task ... (it is) an extremely complex matter."* He goes on to suggest that we read in three ways: "The first reading involves *understanding* the book: what is the author saying? The second reading involves *interpreting* the book: what does the author mean? The third reading involves *evaluating* the book: is the author right or wrong? Most of us tend to do the third reading right away and often never do the first and second readings at all.

2. Why Should We Study The Bible?

Because it is God's Word to us. It answers 'the first order questions of life.' Why was I born? Is there a purpose to life? Is there life after death? In addition to these "big" questions, the Bible gives much practical advice in areas such as: marriage, friendship, parenting etc. (See 21 Benefits of Bible Study). In addition ...

The Bible is a great story: The Bible contains hundreds of unforgettable dramas involving nations, families, and individuals and has its share of: murder, sex scandals, family disputes, violence. The plots, characters, and settings are timeless and what about all those stories about giants and whales and dead men rising from the dead!

The Bible is a wonderful literary achievement: The Bible is considered one of the greatest pieces of literature ever written because of the eloquence and splendour of its language, and contains virtually every type of literary style: drama; historical narrative; even poetry. The quality of writing is unparalleled.

The Bible is a reliable scientific book: Archaeological and scientific evidence support events in the Bible such as: Noah's Ark and the Flood; and the Tower of Babel. It reveals truths that man, at the time, couldn't comprehend, such as a circular world with orbit and a galaxy system long before astronomers could authenticate this. Psalm 19:6: *The Sun it rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other nothing is hidden from its heat.*

The Bible is an authentic history book: The Bible has proved to be totally accurate in its portrayal of historical events. No other book of antiquity has survived to the present day with such integrity. The Bible is God's great story, **History!**

The Bible is a book of prophecy: No other book comes close to predicting the future, and confirming the past, in such detail and with such amazing accuracy as the Bible (Not even Nostradamus!). Isaiah reveals 322 prophecies directly relating to the coming Messiah: prophecies which were written 500 BC. The probability of one man fulfilling all of these prophecies is 1 in 84 to 100.

The Bible is a revered holy book: The Bible is read more than any other book in the world by people looking for spiritual answers to their deepest questions. Mahatma Ghandi said: *'You Christians look after a book containing enough dynamite to blow all civilisation to pieces, turn the world upside down, and bring peace to a battle-torn planet. But you treat it as though it is nothing more than a piece of literature'*.

The Bible is a book of wisdom: We live in a society where institutions and elected leaders are no longer trusted. We live in a society where there is more information than ever before but we have less knowledge and less wisdom. Professor Michael Barber, former head of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (under Tony Blair) summed it up like this: *"We are drowning in information while starving for wisdom."* That's quite an amazing statement isn't it? It seems he's readily admitting that people today are looking for answers in the wrong places and, in the process, have become a foolish society.

Billy Graham: *Millions of people today are searching for a reliable voice of authority. The Word of God is the only real authority we have. His Word sheds light on human nature, world problems and human suffering. But beyond that, it clearly reveals the way to God. The message of the Bible is the message of Jesus Christ who said: "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6).*

The Bible is a precious book: People have died defending the Bible, and not just in the Middle Ages when the Roman church was opposing the likes of John Wycliffe and William Tyndale, and others, who were translating the Bible from Latin into English so that it could be understood by common people rather than Priests (it was open to so much abuse). Many people in modern times have been willing to risk their lives and undergo torture, imprisonment and death as they sought to smuggle Bibles into countries behind the so-called Iron and Bamboo Curtains where communist governments denied the possibility (even the plausibility) of a creator God. The stories of 'Bible smugglers' such as Brother Andrew and Richard Wurmbrand make amazing reading.

Abraham Lincoln: *'I believe the Bible is the most precious gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated to us through this book'*.

The Bible is a manual and a guidebook for life: But it's a rule for life not a life of rules. It is instructive not destructive. Life without rules would be chaotic. Imagine air traffic, motorways, railways, shipping lanes and sporting events without rules, there would be sheer anarchy. The Bible brings order in an unordered world.

The Bible is God's revelation of Himself: The Bible is much more than a book with hard to pronounce names of people and places, it is The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to His people. We must never get into the habit of treating the Bible as just another book. It isn't. It is eternal and life changing. It is always relevant and always speaks to the issues of our time. In fact, when you read the Bible, it's as if God is talking directly to you.

The Bible contains a variety of reading experiences - and more. But this is not why the Bible is read by millions of people every day. There's a very important reason why the Bible is unlike any other book ever written and why millions of people gain so much from reading it: God has spoken. J.C.Ryle: *The one who reads a newspaper knows what is happening in the world. The one who reads the Bible knows why!*

QUESTION Have you ever read something in the Bible that has challenged an aspect of your life, beliefs or behaviour?

The Bible is the bestselling book in the world ... ever! An article in *The Times* was sub headed: 'Forget the Modern British novelists and TV tie-ins; the Bible is the biggest selling book every year'. The writer remarked: *As usual the top seller by several miles was the Bible. If collective sales of the Bible were reflected in bestseller lists, it would be a rare week when anything else would achieve a look in. It is wonderful, weird, or just plain baffling in this increasingly godless age - when the range of books available grows wider with each passing year - that this one book should go on selling hand over fist, month in, month out ...*

It's estimated that nearly 60 million Bibles are sold, worldwide and that nearly 1,250,000 Bibles and Testaments are sold in the UK each year. That's at least 2 in every British household and an average of 6.8 Bibles in every American household! Since the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in NY, sales of the Bible have increased, internationally, by 60%. Amazing.

The Anatomy of the Bible! The Bible is one book, one story with one plot! Even though it is made up of 66 books in total, involved 40 different authors and was written over a period of 1500 yrs.

In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul writes: *All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching rebuking correction, and for training in righteousness.* For: **Teaching** (to live a life that works); **Rebuking** (to become less selfish); **Correction** (to live the right way); **Training** (to live out our calling). Why? Vs17: *So that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

I like the way Eugene Peterson puts it in *The Message*: *Every part of scripture is God breathed and useful one way or another – showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.*

3. How To Study

Find a version you will enjoy reading: There are many different versions available – one to suit every taste. I've a few different ones here (explain strengths and weakness ...)

Plan ahead: Set time aside to read and get into a regular pattern. How much time do we give to it? Find a reading plan. It's said that 15 minutes a day will take you through the bible in one year. Five minutes a day take you through the Bible in less than three years. Start small and build up.

Place: Go to somewhere quiet here there are no distractions.

Read prayerfully: The Bible isn't simply an interesting book to read, it's a book to become involved with. It deals with issues that vitally concern your life, character, spiritual development and, in many ways, destiny. Reading the Bible prayerfully is a safeguard against pride - it also shows that we are willing to submit to God's moral direction. (Psalm 119:33-40; Matthew 7:7-8). Find at least one word, phrase, or verse to meditate on each time you read.

Ask God to speak to you as you read the passage. What does it say? What does it mean? What is obscure in one part of the Bible may be made clear in another. To interpret the Bible by the Bible means that we must not set one passage of the Bible against another passage. Aim for a full and balanced appreciation of all that the Bible teaches on any given topic. To rely on individual verses or on favourite selected passages – as valuable though these are - will not lead us to spiritual maturity.

Lectio Divina is a prayerful method of engaging with Scripture and consists of four steps:

Reading Read a short passage from the Bible carefully (Romans 12:2).

Meditation Focus on a word or phrase from the passage.

Prayer Allow the meditation to lead you to a conversation with God.

Contemplation Spend a few moments resting in the presence of God.

Method: The Bible is not a book of abstract philosophy - it is a book about life and people in real situations. Find at least one word, phrase, or verse to meditate on each time you read. Write down observations about the text, record questions, look up cross references, use a concordance and a notebook. Take sermon notes after listening to a sermon (or during!). As we open our lives to the Bible's message, we can expect God to guide us (1 Samuel 3:10; Revelation 1:3). There will be passages that puzzle us, so use Bible reading notes to help you understand or join a Home/Bible study group. Foster writes about the importance of 'live discussion' when studying the Bible.

All of these suggestions sound like a prescription don't they? A prescription for understanding God's word. Perhaps I should add: ***Take a minimum of twice daily!***

Put it into practice: It can sometimes be very painful, challenging and uncomfortable wrestling with God's word? We can be surprised, even shocked by some of the events, teachings and warnings within its pages. God's word 'cuts to the heart' because it's counterculture. Hebrews 4:12: *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to divide soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.* Jesus said that it is not enough merely to hear his words. It is only when we hear and obey that our lives are like a house built on rock - safe and secure (James 1:22-25; Matthew 7:24-27). And, even though it can be painful at times, one of the great benefits of applying God's word is that we start to see the world differently. And, as we feed spiritually on God's word and apply its truths to our lives, our characters are transformed.

I've posted an interesting article on my website revPACman.com entitled '*5 Reasons You Should Embrace Digital Bible Study*' and it's well worth a read.

Conclusion

I want to suggest that the way Christians treat their Bible is an indication of the depth of their faith. I'm always encouraged to see a Bible well-worn because it shows that it's being read. According to a survey by the Bible Society, something like 68% of regular churchgoers never read the Bible from one Sunday to the next. That stuns me. Because, if it's true, then it's little wonder that the Christian church is in the state of decline it is in this country. And it's little wonder that many Christians have little depth to their faith? One of the consequences of the popularity of Dan Brown's 'Da Vinci Code' is that it highlighted just how little Christians knew/know about their own faith, their history and the teachings of the Bible! Don't let your lack of knowledge of God's word be the weakest link in your Christian life.

List three things which you could put into practice in the coming week as a result of this session:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



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