

Understanding Scripture – What's Helpful?

Small Groups – How do we learn, and what works? Date _____ Week _____

by Rev Richard Braun

Icebreaker

What books or other materials do you regularly read? What genre is your favorite? If you have not had a recent opportunity to read a book, mention a favorite movie you've seen. Why did you like it?

Opening Prayer

Lord of all life, creator, and redeemer, thank you for allowing us to come before you again. Your presence humbles us. We come before you now with a spirit of anticipation. We ask that you empower your Spirit to teach and show us your wisdom. Amen

Open It

1. What draws you typically to reading? How do you find time to read?
2. Do you often attend training sessions? If so, what type, or sort, do you like, and which ones do you find unhelpful?
3. Have you been in a Bible study recently? Did you learn anything from it? Did you find it helpful, or was it tedious and redundant?
4. What is the best method of learning for you? Classes, self-taught, experience, reading, doing, etc. Why?

1 Corinthians 2:4-16 – the Living Bible - Paul explains his reliance on the Holy Spirit in teaching or learning in the following text. NRSV

And my preaching was very plain, not with a lot of oratory and human wisdom, but the Holy Spirit's power was in my words, proving to those who heard them that the message was from God. [5] I did this because I wanted your faith to stand firmly upon God, not on man's great ideas.

[6] Yet when I am among mature Christians, I do speak with words of great wisdom, but not the kind that comes from here on earth, and not the kind that appeals to the great men of this world, who are doomed to fall. [7] Our words are wise because they are from God, telling of God's wise plan to bring us into the glories of heaven. This plan was hidden in former times, though it was made for our benefit before the world began. [8] But the great men of the world have not understood it; if they had, they never would have crucified the Lord of Glory.

[9] That is what is meant by the Scriptures, which say that no mere man has ever seen, heard, or even imagined what wonderful things God has ready for those who love the Lord. [10] But we know about these things because God has sent his Spirit to tell us, and his Spirit searches out and shows us all of God's deepest secrets. [11] No one can really know what anyone else is thinking or what he is really like except that person himself. And no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. [12] And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world's Spirit) to tell us about the wonderful free gifts of grace and blessing that God has given us. [13] In telling you about these gifts, we have even used the very words given to us by the Holy Spirit, not words that we as men might choose. So we use the Holy Spirit's words to explain the Holy Spirit's facts. [14] But the man who isn't a Christian can't understand and can't accept these thoughts from God, which the Holy Spirit teaches us. They sound foolish to him because only those who have the Holy Spirit within them can understand what the Holy Spirit means. Others just can't take it in. [15] But the spiritual man has insight into everything, and that bothers and baffles the man of the world, who can't understand him at all. [16] How could he? For certainly he has never been one to know the Lord's thoughts, or to discuss them with him, or to move the hands of God by prayer. But, strange as it seems, we Christians do have within us a portion of the very thoughts and mind of Christ.

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Read **1 Corinthians 2:4-16 Living Bible**, also from the NIV Bible, and note the differences.

Explore It

1. Do you feel you have an adequate understanding of all scripture? Why or Why not?
2. What is one question about the Bible that has been troubling you because the answer given is not crystal clear in your mind? Think deeply here; most of us will have at least one.
3. How does the Holy Spirit amplify reading and understanding of the Bible? Give references if possible.
4. I've heard it said that questioning God's Word is evil. Do you think so? Why/Why not?

Get It

1. What makes a sermon powerful to you? Why? After answering this question, reread verses 4&5. Does this support or contradict what most people said in the earlier answers?
2. How do you know when someone speaks God's wisdom or if their words are from God? v7
3. What are "*all of God's deepest secrets*," and how does the Spirit reveal them to us? v10
4. What does it mean when we say we "*can't understand and can't accept these thoughts from God*"? What does this mean to you, or as it applies to your current walk of faith?
5. How do you understand God's plan for us and all humankind? What scripture supports your thinking?

Apply It

1. We may learn best by studying God's Word in ways that work best for us. Based on scripture, we should be seeking help from the Holy Spirit as we study scripture. Try to get into the habit of always praying before entering your study time this next week. Read the following sections of scripture after asking the Holy Spirit to direct your learning. Matt 1:18-21, Matt 12:30-32, Luke 10:20-24, John 14:23-27, Acts 1:2-8, Acts 2:31-38, Acts 4:23-31, Acts 8:14-21, Acts 15:25-29, Rom 14:13-16, 2 Cor 6:3-10
2. Learn something new. Challenge yourself in a new area of life, maybe a new game. If you are part of a family, try to set up an experience where the whole family learns something new. Make this learning fun, and remember what you've learned from scripture.
3. Take notes during a future sermon. Next, examine the scripture used as a basis for making the points in the sermon. Now go back and read the context around the scripture used. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in your study and think deeply about what God reveals.

Closing Prayer -

Oh Lord, thank you for giving us your Holy Spirit. Thank you in advance for having the Holy Spirit bring to remembrance what your Son taught while he was here on earth. Thank you also for using your Spirit to convict us of sin and reveal wisdom as we study your Word. Amen