

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides

January 8th

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. If you could spend the afternoon with any Bible character, excluding Jesus, who would it be? Why?

Bible Study Questions

1. Pastor Michael talked about the Bible being God's timeless truth **for** you, but not a letter **to** you. How does it impact your understanding of the Bible knowing that?
2. The goal of good Bible study is to discover what the original author intended for his audience to understand. What do you think of that approach? Does it intimidate you or excite you? What is challenging about that approach?
3. One of the most important parts of Bible study is to look at context. Why is this so important?
4. Context exercise: (answers at the end of the exercise)
 - Read Luke 21:1-4. Just based off reading those verses with no context, what do you think is the point of this story?
 - Now, look at the context. Read Luke 20:45-47 and 21:5-6. What are these verses about? How do they relate to Luke 21:1-4?
 - In light of the context, how does that change the meaning of Luke 21:1-4? What point is Luke making by including this story?
 - From what you know about Jesus' culture, how might this story be offensive to Luke's readers?
 - Answer (*we often read Luke 21:1-4 to be about the generosity of giving all we have. The context tells us that Jesus is observing a system that had become so corrupt that instead of helping the poor, it was taking advantage of poor widows*).
 - Application: How would you apply this passage? If Jesus is talking about religious systems that have forgotten the mission and instead take advantage of people, then what are examples of that happening today? Are there examples in our own church of which Jesus would have the same disapproval? How do we protect ourselves from that?

5. Content Exercise 2

- Read Matthew 9:20-22: Again, just based off those verses without context, what is the point of the story?
- Look at the context. Read Matthew 9:18-26. This is an example of a story sandwiched by another story. What is the story around it?
- Cultural reminder: A synagogue ruler would be expected to get priority treatment from Jesus. A woman who was bleeding would be labeled as "unclean" and would be an outcast. For an unclean person to interrupt a "priority" mission would have been offensive.
- How does the surrounding story impact the way that we view Jesus' healing of this woman? Why do you believe that Matthew is choosing to tell this story?
- Considering the context, what does this story teach you about the heart of Jesus? In what kind of situation would this story be an encouragement to someone today?

January 8th: Getting the Most out of the Bible
Never read just one verse

Bible (True or False)

- **Inerrant as originally given: True with respect to the intentions of the author.** What the authors meant to be factual is factual, but some genres such as poetry uses poetic imagery not meant to be taken literally.
- **Inspired by the Holy Spirit: True.** Both 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21 talk about the Bible being inspired by the Holy Spirit. We need to remember that he worked through humans and their emotions and styles are reflected in their writings.
- **The Bible is God's love letter to us: False. It is God's timeless truth for us, but not too us.** It was written to a specific culture in a specific time.
- **The Bible is accessible to us all: True.** God has made the most important things apparent. We study well to dig deeper into God's truth.
- **We have been given the Holy Spirit to help us understand His Word: True:** The Holy Spirit can guide us even when we read the Bible wrong. However, we give him more room to work when we study God's Word well.

The goal of effective Bible study is to discover what the author intended for his original audience.

Good Bible readers pay attention to the literary context

- **Never read just one verse:** Just reading one verse limits our understanding of a passage and we can easily take it mean something that it was not intended to say.
- **Context of the paragraph**
 - **Look at how the verse connects to what comes before and after:** Look at the context and try to determine why the author has placed the verse where it is.
- **Context of the book:**
 - **Learn what you can about the book's background. Who wrote it? Who is the recipient? Why was it written?:** This information can often be found in study Bibles or by internet research.
 - **Read the book in one sitting. Look for themes, clues about the purpose, and flow of logic.** This works when reading an epistle or a short Old Testament book.
- **Context of the full story of the Bible**

- **Six acts of the Bible: Creation, the fall, story of Israel, Ministry of Jesus, the church, and Christ's return.** Look to see where the passage fits within that story.
- **Remember that Old Testament quotes often refer to a larger context:** When encountering a Old Testament quote in the New Testament, look up the reference and read the context around that Old Testament verse. The context will help bring meaning to the point that the New Testament author is trying to make.

Conclusion

Following his resurrection, Jesus has a conversation with two friends in which he points out how the Old Testament all points to him. When studying, look for how Jesus shows up. You may be surprised.