*Session 20*

*The Bible and the Mission of God*

1. **Be Devoted to Personal Study**
2. **The Danger of Academic Study of the Bible**

Don’t let the Bible be an object to study but an opportunity to encounter God

Exegesis is not our goal but only the means to reach our goal.

Make your study of the Bible a spiritual exercise

Challenges to regular Bible study and sermon preparation:

1. Keep yourself fresh spiritually with a dynamic, active, and up-to-date relationship with God. This relationship can be nurtured through the means of grace: prayer, devotional reading of the Bible, and fellowship and worship with other believers.
2. Do not let your well run dry but keep replenished by allowing God to speak to you through the Bible, our living well.
3. Regular reading of the Bible will help it be the major guide for your life and provide the primary resource for the Holy Spirit to guide you into Christlikeness.
4. Journaling through the Bible is an excellent discipline that engages your mind and heart and gives direction for action.
5. **The Joy of the Journey**

Psalm 19:7-10, “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.” Psalm 119 adds, “I find my delight in your commandments, because I love them. I revere your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes.” (vv. 47-48) “Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all day long.” (v. 97). “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (v. 103). “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (v. 105). “Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.” (v. 111), and “I love your law” (v. 113), “I love your decrees” (v. 119) “How I love your precepts” (v. 159) and “My soul keeps your decrees; I love them exceedingly” (v. 167). The words of 2 Timothy 3:14-15 are inspiring, “Continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

1. Transformational Reading

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| **Informational Reading** | **Formational Reading** |
| Cover as much as possible – speed | No speed concerns - soak |
| Linear | Depth |
| Seek mastery of the text | Allow the text to master you |
| The text is the object to be studied | We are the objects to be changed. |
| Analytical, Critical, Judgmental | Humble, Willing, Loving |
| Characterized by a problem-solving mentality | Characterized by openness to mystery |

1. *Lectio Divina*

“divine reading”

Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-547)

Monastice movement of the 6th to 12th centuries

* + *Silencio* (silence): Quiet yourself from the many distractions of your life. Finding a quiet place will help with this. Some people will rise early in the morning before other family members awake.
  + *Lectio* (reading): Read the Bible slowly and reflectively so that its words sink in. Do not choose a long passage, although any length will work.
  + *Meditatio* (meditation): reflect on the passage. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak words to you through the Bible.
  + *Oratio* (speaking): This is our response. We put our thinking aside and allow our hearts to speak to God.
  + *Contemplatio* (deep thinking): Finally, we rest in the Word of God. We let go not only of our own ideas, plans and meditations, but also of our holy words and thoughts. We listen at the deepest level of our being to God who speaks within us with a still small voice. As we listen, we are gradually transformed from within. Obviously, this transformation will have a profound effect on the way we actually live. The way we live is the test of the authenticity of our prayer. This will lead to application.

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

1. **The Bible and the Community of Faith**
2. Individual Interpretation versus Group Interpretation

Recognize the individual responsibility and the group responsibility

We grow spiritually best when we can grow with others

1. Community as a Test of Our Interpretation
2. Wisdom from Christians of the past One. Christian Classics Ethereal Library (http://www.ccel.org).
3. The primary determining test for our interpretation is the community of faith.

Smaller community (a local church)

Global (denominations or the entire Christian church)

The test of time and looking at Tradition

Be aware: People interpret the Bible according to their context in time and culture

The church is the living application of what the written Word says.

Because there are many voices of interpretation in the church, we must learn to listen to one another carefully and humbly.

1. **The Bible and God’s Mission**

Obedience is the sign of genuine faith.

The Bible tells us God’s mission for his people.

The Holy Spirit will use the Bible as our guide for the mission.

Mission flows out of who we are.

1 Peter 2:9-10: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

What does God want me to do based on what I have experienced in my encounter with the Bible?

**Big Ideas**

1. We need to study the Bible not just for information but transformation.
2. Obedience in faith is the key to transformation.
3. *Lectio Divina* is an ancient method used to encounter God through the Bible.
4. We must test our interpretation within the community of faith, past and present.
5. Knowing the Bible and obeying its instructions will help us fulfill God’s mission for us.