

Winter Retreat teaching topics

Spirit of the Disciplines

Bible Intake

What is Bible intake?

So what do I mean by Bible intake? Bible intake describes how the Words of God go from the pages of scripture and to your brain. The two ways we intake God's Word are hearing and reading. So when you learn about God, you either hear someone read the word of God or you read it yourself.

What is your attitude toward Bible intake?

But what is your attitude toward Bible intake. How do you feel about reading the Bible... and hearing the Bible? Specifically, right before you read the Bible, what do you think about? Do you feel excited, productive, reverent, board, indifferent, humble, proud, scared...?

Hopefully your attitude toward the Bible is positive. But when you prepare for Bible intake, how should you approach the Bible?

How should we approach bible intake?

Consider the author

The Bible is not like any other book. It has eternal words and an eternal author, it saves, sanctifies, enlightens, and cleanses, it produces spiritual growth, wisdom, life faith and hope, it keep you from sin and stumbling, it is profitable for teaching and doctrine and was written for our instruction, and it rejoices the heart.

All these things the Bible does and more, but what is amazing to me is WHY the Bible has such precision, perfection, and power. And what is the answer?... The Bibles power is directly related to its divine author God. Therefore, we must have a firm conviction deep in our hearts that the Bible contains the very words of God. Listen to how the church of the Thessalonians received the word of God:

1 Thessalonians 2:13 - ¹³ And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men **but as what it really is, the word of God**, which is at work in you believers. ¹

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (1 Th 2:13). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

In other words, how can we act on a truth in the Bible if we question the validity of that truth? Just as a letter communicates the heart of the author, so the Bible communicates the heart of God. Do you approach the Bible with a deep confidence that it contains the very words of the God of the universe? Do you believe that everything God intended us to know about Him and how we should live is contained in the Bible.

Therefore before we intake the Bible, we must make sure that we begin with the right approach, a confident and a continual awareness that God wrote it and that he is about to speak to you through it.

Listen to God's own testimony about His word as He spoke through the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV)

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

A quick note: When I say that you must approach the Bible with the total confidence that it is the Word of God, I am not saying that every translation is equally valid or accurate, but I am saying that when a translation renders accurately the words of the original manuscripts, it is the Word of God. Thankfully we have many good translations of the Bible today such as the KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV, and NIV to name a few. Some of the less precise bibles such as the message can be helpful, but should be viewed more like a commentary on the Bible because it is more of a paraphrase and not a word for word translation.

We should praise God for His divine preservation of His Word over so many years of writing and the care that faithful men of God took in their handling the Word of God.

Now that we have briefly discussed the attitude of Bible intake and the approach of Bible intake, it is time to look at the process of Bible intake.

Since everyone is working on their journaling skills, here are the five points of this lesson. Here are five “C’s” that describe how to approach the Bible and Intake the Bible... 1) Cleanse 2) Collect 3) Clarify 4) Consider 5) Contain.

- 1) **Cleanse** - This point ties into the attitude and approach of the Bible that we already discussed. We need to have a proper attitude toward Bible intake and a proper “God-centered” approach. So what naturally follows a “God-centered” approach is cleansing. Before we approach God, we cleanse ourselves by laying aside our sins and preparing our hearts to receive the divine God-Breathed words contained in the Bible. It’s not that we

should lay our sins aside only before Bible intake, but we can use the time right before Bible intake as another opportunity in our day to re-examine ourselves to make sure our hearts are right. This laying aside sin prior to bible intake is explained by Peter:

1 Peter 1:25–2:2 (ESV)

25 but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you. ¹So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. ² Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—

James 1:21 –

²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. ²

IMPORTANT: In light of this cleansing approach, we should be challenged to live our lives in such a way that we are constantly thinking of God and confessing our sins to Him so that our communication with God is fluid, natural, and a normal part of our lives.

- 2) **Collect** – We already referred to this point earlier in the lesson, what are the two methods we use to intake the Bible? Reading and Hearing. We have to read or hear God’s words before we can do anything else with it. This really is the first actual step of the intake process.

This step is foundational because if you allow yourself to be defeated in this phase of the intake process there is no hope for you. In other words, how can we clarify, consider, and contain the words of God if we don’t even know **WHAT THEY ARE!**

You must not allow yourself to be defeated in this area. Here are some suggestions that may be helpful in achieving this first step of Bible intake.

a) The Bible

- a. This may seem basic, but you have to have a Bible to begin. You may want to read straight through the Bible beginning with Genesis, or read some in the OT and some in the NT each day, or some from different sections of the bible. For example, every day you could read some in the OT historical books, some in the OT poetical books, and some in the OT prophetic books as well as the historical books and letters in the NT.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Jas 1:21). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

However you structure your reading plan, make sure you have a plan that is capable of getting you through the entire Bible.

b) Online Bible reading plans: You Version is a free Bible resource tool that even syncs with you Iphone or android phone and has many reading plans that you can choose from.

3) **Clarify** – By clarify, I mean study. We are to study the Bible. The goal of Bible study is primarily to gain precision and depth. Paul had this idea in mind when he told his faithful friend Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:15

¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. ¹

Paul told Timothy that he was to “rightly handle” the word of truth so as not to be ashamed. We too must handle God’s word correctly.

Some of you may be saying, “But why must I study God’s word? Is it not enough to read and hear God’s word? Don’t you know that I have a lot going on in my life? I’m busy.

Bible study is crucial because you want to make sure you get you Bible interpretation right.

So how many interpretations are there? One! There is only one correct interpretation to a passage, but there are many applications. But before you apply the Bible, you need to make sure that you study it to get the right interpretation. Some of you may feel like I felt a one time in my life when it comes to Bible study. You may feel intimidated and think that some parts are confusing and hard to understand. Do you often times feel intimidated when you read the Bible and inadequate to interpret it?

Well for those of you who are simple minded Christians like me I have good news for you!

Psalm 19:6 says that God’s Word makes the simple wise...

Psalm 19:8 says that the God’s word enlightens the eyes...

Jesus said in John 17:17 that we are sanctified by the word of God...

All through the gospels Jesus said to the religious leaders, “Have you not read?”...

Some feel the book of the Revelation is full of confusing symbols and gaining a clear interpretation is not possible. However it starts off with a blessing to those who read,

hear, and keep what is written in it and ends with a blessing with a blessing for those who keep the words written in it. Revelations own testimony is that it is knowable. In fact, you can't hear and keep words you can't understand. In other words, if God gave us the book of Revelation to be cloudy and confusing at best in its clarity, then how are we to hear and keep the words written in it if we do not even understand them?

Now, if the Bible enlightens eyes, makes wise the simple, sanctifies us, is expected to be understood and rightly interpreted, and is a blessing to those who read, hear, and keep it, do you think God expects us to be able to come to a proper interpretation? Of course He does.

Listen to what the apostle Peter said about the Apostle Paul's writings in **2 Peter 3:15-17**.

¹⁵ And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. ¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.

Notice what Peter says that Paul's writings are "hard to understand". It is interesting that Peter **does not** say that Paul's writings are impossible to understand, but hard to understand. Furthermore, it is interesting that Peter actually expects the readers NOT to be carried away by the error of those lawless people who twist the scripture. If the readers of Peter's second epistle were expected NOT to be carried away, that must mean that they could know the meaning of the scripture so as NOT to be carried away.

What is the conclusion then??? That God expects us to understand his Word, even in the challenging parts.

Here are some very basic tips to study the Bible:

- 1) Don't read yourself, circumstances, world views or other such things into the Bible. Instead, read carefully to understand a given passage as it would be understood by the original recipients, and then consider the passage you are studying in light of its paragraph, the book, and the Bible as a whole. Once we have found the original meaning of the text, then we can apply the principle to ourselves.

There are three general mistakes that we will make and all are wrong:

- 1) Mis-interpret (A = B)
- 2) Super-interpret the Bible (A = A, B)
- 3) Sub-interpret (A, B, C = A)

or

Rightly interpret (A = A)

Don't ignore the context of the passage

Don't neglect the details of the text

Don't read one text into another

Don't read your theology into the text

Don't interpret the text in light of your experience

Don't read your circumstances into the text

Don't read yourself into the text

So what does all this mean? Basically you must search the Bible to find out ONLY what God is saying and not any more or any less. So do your best, be patient, be prayerful, don't rush an interpretation, and allow sufficient time for personal growth in your walk with Jesus and your Bible Study skills.

- 4) **Consider** – A very important and neglected part of Bible intake is to consider the Word of God. Considering the Bible is the same as meditating on the Bible. Bible meditation is different than reading, hearing, and studying the Bible. Bible meditation is taking the rightly interpreted principle from the Bible, also known as a truth, thinking carefully on it, and reflectively on it, so that it speaks to our hearts. Said another way, we want the truths of God to be imprinted on our hearts so that we automatically think and act according to that truth.

Listen to Joshua 1:8

⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall **meditate** on it **day** and **night**, so that you may be **careful to do according to all that is**

written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Psalm 119:15

¹⁵ I will **meditate** on your precepts
and fix my eyes on your ways.

Psalm 1:1-2

Blessed is the man

who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
²but his **delight** is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he **meditates** day and night.

- 5) **Contain** – Containing the Bible is memorizing the Bible. We memorize the Bible so that we do not forget the Bible. What is the difference between meditating on the bible and memorizing it? Memorizing the Bible does not necessarily mean that we are applying it to our hearts, but it does mean that we are working to retain it. For example, I can memorize a paragraph without giving it much consideration, but I cannot meditate on a paragraph without giving it consideration. Meditation demands thoughtfulness, but memorization does not. In other words, it is possible to memorize a passage without meditating on it. Memorization takes work, but it does not have to be un-enjoyable work, nor does it have to be mindless work. For example, if I memorize a passage of scripture, I can then recall that passage so that I may meditate on it regularly throughout the day. We can then allow the word of God to be brought to memory throughout our day to meditate, witness, defend the faith, and encouraging other believers.

Deuteronomy 11:18 –

¹⁸ “You shall therefore **lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul**, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

Psalm 119:11 - ¹¹

I have **stored up your word in my heart**,
that I might not sin against you.

Some may say, “I want to study God’s word, but I’m not that smart.” There are scholars that can’t even agree on the Word of God and they have master’s degrees and doctorate degrees. Some of these guys know Greek and Hebrew and I can barely read the back of a

cereal box; I'm a simple minded Christian. Wouldn't it be better for me to go to the experts, like pastors, and just skip this Bible study stuff and see what they say? Has not Jesus given them to equip the Church?

Yes! He has. Jesus has given pastors for the equipping of the Church Eph 4:11-12. I praise God for pastors and they have a very significant role in teaching the body of Christ. But if you are a Christian, you are commanded to let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. And if you're a Christian, God has given you the Holy Spirit to help you

I think I would be safe in saying:

Yes and No. In not asking you to pick one or the other

If you want to know the God of the Universe, you can because He had given His Word, not to be unclear or confusing, or mysterious, but rather that we might know Him. (Psalm? You have exalted your word above your name) (Joshua 1:8, Jer. 9:23-24)