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Tips for Leading a Small Group Though Reading the Bible Supernaturally

Structure

- Open in prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to orchestrate the time together.
- The lessons are 8-9 weekly sequential sessions but can take longer if agreed upon.
- Allow 60-90 minutes for each session. Be like Jesus and be a healthy servant leader.
- Each session might include.
 - Casual reflection of their personal life(s).
 - Inquiry into what they learned and tried to practice from earlier sessions.
 - Keep the wrestling with current issues time respectfully brief. If the issue requires too much time to process as a group to keep conceptual continuity of the lesson, offer to discuss it privately over coffee.
 - Close each session in prayer.

Participates

- The hearts of each attendee will determine the level of their learning experience. It is recommended that you seek those to attend whose level of desire to know God is evident in how...
 - ✓ frequently they perk up when God or the Bible are mentioned, or they seem to talk or inquire about either
 - ✓ sincerely they want to learn what He really says in the Bible
 - ✓ sincerely they desire to hear His voice
 - ✓ sincerely they desire to be changed into His likeness

Facilitation

- The material is intended to provoke thought and communicate deeper biblical concepts. Therefore, be sure to first digest the concepts and questions yourself, then rephrase them into your own words.
- Learners remember and practice far more of what they discover than what they read or hear. Strategic, open-ended questions can best position the student to be open to a revelation of the Spirit.
- Giving assignments helps learners to integrate what they are learning into their daily life. They also increase the sustainability of their study of the Bible.
- Three stages of learning these skills.
 - **Fundamentals for reflecting on Scripture.**
 - ~ Learning guidelines for digging deeper into the Bible, seeing His awe-inspiring attributes, understanding His ways, hearing His whispers, etc.
 - ~ Connecting what the Bible teaches with principles to believe and practice.
 - ~ Casting a vision for each participant regarding...

- The ultimate goal of each believer (Eph. 4:13).
 - To share their discoveries with other spiritually hungry people.
 - Practicing spiritual exercises (disciplines) that stimulate intimacy with God.
- **Regular engagement with God through Scripture.**
- ~ Seek God's presence during their study time to better receive His revelations.
 - ~ Intentional integration of the principles and skills learned into their daily life.
 - ~ Learn to be more alert to hearing and obeying His whispers.
- **Applications of Spirit-enlightened Scripture.**
- ~ Experience more spiritual fruitfulness (reproduction, mentoring, coaching).
 - ~ Motivation to continue learning to glean deeper truths out of the Bible.
 - ~ Practice healthy accountability and help others value and practice it as well.

Essential Concepts to Communicate

- Just because a student scores well on a test does NOT mean they believe what you have taught them. Therefore, discipling a learner requires that you are intentional about shaping the heart and not just the head or behavior.
- To genuinely believe something is to respond when no one is watching, as if what they say they believe is so, not just having the right answer. Such a belief is not just in the mind, but in the very fiber of a person. Jesus repeatedly stressed obedience as evidence of true love and faith in God. Getting into the fiber of a person comes from a Spirit-given personal revelation of God's awe-inspiring attributes. Therefore, encourage enduring faith by, as Paul did, repeatedly stressing God's majestic character and deeds in such a way that their love for Him grows.
- Ezekiel 36:27 refers to an invisible 'relationship attachment' that occurs between an invisible God and a new believer. This attachment results in a new strong desire to be careful to obey God's rules and precepts and is discernable. This also confirms that the Spirit has changed the individual.
- This motivation is stronger than self-discipline or tradition. We may compare it to the 'attachments' of newly hatched ducklings to follow their mother or what a human baby has for its mother.
- This new bonding is so profound it delivers the traumatized or addicted and motivates the right choices. Continued divine encounters will solidify their relationship with God and make them desire to continue their study of the Bible.

For a period of at least 5 weeks, make conscious personal evaluations of those you lead. This will help you keep your focus on serving or adding value to them. Effective feedback can improve communication for leaders and participants.

How to Read the Bible Supernaturally

Email: Why the Bible? Request each person to read and reflect on Why the Bible and The Mind's Role in Spiritual Formation. **Assign:** 1) read [if possible] Gen. 1-3; 2) prepare to discuss Why the Bible before the first session.

Beginning with the end in mind offers confidence for the journey. Our goal is to build up the body of Christ “until we all attain... mature manhood, to **the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ** (Ephesians 4:13, ESV)”. **It's our prayer this material will provide the fundamental concepts and tools to position you to hear the Spirit's whispers as you dig deeper to clarify what the Bible really says.**

Begin with prayer. Remain sensitive to and follow the Spirit's whispers.

A backstory supplies the WHY factor for learning and its implementation. I pray the following article will inspire the reader to see that exploring all God has said in the Bible is **worthy of serious exploration** and **inspires a desire to implement its truth** into their life.

Why the Bible?

The Bible presents God as the Creator and King of all creation. It describes Him as an incredibly powerful, self-sustaining, energy source who speaks with such authority that material objects appear out of nothing.

The dominate theme throughout the Bible, especially in Jesus' teachings, is the **kingdom of God**. This kingdom represents a governing authority. It is present wherever what God wants done is done. Violating God's rules can only bring trouble to oneself. His kingdom has existed from before creation and will never end (Ps. 145:13, Dan 7:14). God created all things and continues to hold all that is physical together.

God created a perfect garden, then created man and woman in His own image. This creation was superior to His other creations in that these humans possessed a reflection of many of His own virtues. One such virtue is a creative mind; another is the capacity to rule; another is a free will that allows humans to choose their destiny. God's ultimate purpose was to delegate a slice of His absolute authority to His children to rule with Him over all His creation.

Unfortunately for humanity, Adam and Eve succumbed to the devil's seduction to disregard God's authority and assert their independence. This compelled a totally Just God to put His now fallen creation out of His perfect kingdom. This brief backstory leads us to **the why factor for the Bible**. He empowered it to be written to communicate His authority, truth, mercy, and grace with His prized yet imperfect creation. He desires for them to choose to turn from their independence, receive His mercy and grace, and live again under His authority in His kingdom.

While God's favored creation chose independence from His authority, their choice did not keep His purpose from being fulfilled. It only delayed it. His curse on Eve for her sin included a promise that one of her offspring would crush the devil's head (Gen. 3:15), which Jesus, God the Son, would do millennia later. Those who would hear and choose to surrender to Him, He would use to fulfill His original purpose.

The Bible includes facts, many of which are in the form of metaphors. The Spirit of God inspired them to be written in multiple literary genres to communicate the unseen world and His authority to fallen and depraved humanity. Instead of being angry and vindictive for man's rebellious acts, He displays His unexplainable mercy and grace. He also reveals the life-giving laws and principles of His authority as King and His relentless love seen in His persistent, loving appeal for man to reverse Adam and Eve's bad choices. For those individuals who chose to reverse Adam and Eve's choice to be independent, He will graciously regenerate and empower to live the most abundant life possible on this earth. They would also have the privilege of ruling and reigning with Him for the rest of eternity.

One of **Jesus' parables** compares the stunning value of being a part of the kingdom of Heaven with a treasure a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, He hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field. In another, He said the kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of immense value, he sold everything he owned and bought it! (Matthew 13:44-46, NLT2) You will never regret having sold everything to be best of friends with your Creator.

Prepare to Discuss:

- What type of experience might it take to motivate such a dramatic response as described in the parables?
- What possessions do you have that might rival the treasures and pearls you will find about God's kingdom as you dig deeper in the Bible?

"It's puzzling that so many Christians try to live the Christian life without reading their Bible, except for sporadic perusals of God's Word, seeking a pithy thought for the day. The Word of God is not merely a source of helpful suggestions, preventive warnings, or inspirational thoughts: it is life itself!" Henry Blackaby

Session 1 [Purpose: prepare them to identify the King's (God's) voice and to expect Him to whisper to them.]
Distribute Spirit, Soul, Body model, and related Bible verses & The Mind's Role in Spiritual Formation.

- ❖ Discuss: What do you really believe about the Bible? Do you approach the book looking for pithy statements, options to consider about how to live a better life? Or commandments or precepts to obey?

Explain: You will get more out of these sessions when you embrace the premise that the Bible is a revelation of the God (King) who inspired it. The more conversant you become with Him, the more you will love, trust, and follow Him. That happens progressively, so relax if that is not where you currently are.

Discuss: (question on their handout)

1. What revelation might motivate such a dramatic response as those identified in the parables?

2. What in your world do you have that might rival the treasures and pearls you will find about God's kingdom as you dig deeper in the Bible? (relationships, wealth, emotions, etc.)

- ✓ What might that suggest about delightful treasures yet to be discovered as we learn to drill down and find God's Kingdom treasures and pearls?

[Personalize] For me, I have found there is absolutely no pleasure in this life that compares to experiencing being in the presence of this King. (Psalm 16:11) Hearing Him whisper His eternal truth is a life-changing experience you also can regularly enjoy.

How to Hear the King's Truth

God designed believers to live in **two worlds, seen/physical and unseen/spiritual**. He has given us an **on-board gift that enables us to live simultaneously in those two worlds, as Jesus did**. There are several ways to describe this. We'll focus on a critical one that is also simpler to understand, yet extremely challenging, having grown up focused on the physical world.

The Bible is a book. However, we should **not** read it like a book. We must read it with tools from **both worlds**. We must **read in the physical world to listen. From the invisible world, we must pray to hear the King's [God's] whispers** about what we read.

Jesus said, "God is **spirit**, and those who worship him must worship him in **spirit** and truth" (John 4:24, ESV), i.e., **invisible**, not **physical**. While He can audibly express Himself, He normally does so inaudibly. The Bible teaches God is a triune spirit (three parts). It is noteworthy to read, "God said, 'Let **us** [plural] make human beings in **our** image, to be like **ourselves**...'" (Genesis 1:26, NLT2). As the Bible teaches **three aspects** of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; He also created humans with **three parts**. Notice, "Then the LORD God 1) **formed the man from the dust of the ground** (physical). He **breathed the breath of life** (spirit world) into the man's nostrils, and the **man became a living being** (soul)" (Genesis 2:7, NLT2). Paul identifies those 3 parts of man as **spirit** (connection with the **spirit** world), **soul**, and **body** (connection with the physical world through the thoughts, emotions and body) (Cf. 1 Thess. 5:23). In that light, human beings have the capacity of living in both a **spirit** and **physical** world.

Jesus told parables from this premise of there being two worlds. He spoke to those focused on God's kingdom (above) and who desired to know more about the King so they could follow Him. Simultaneously, His parables spoke to those content with following the reasoning and ways of this world (earth). He said to His disciples, "You are permitted to understand the secret of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders" (Mark 4:10-11, NLT2). Also Mt. 13:10-17; 1 Cor. 2:14.

[Draw attention to **diagram and scripture verses** handouts. Review verses to provide a scriptural foundation for the diagram.]

*Mark 2:8 (Mk. 8:12, Jn. 13:21)

Romans 8:4

*Hebrews 4:12

John 4:23-24

*1 Corinthians 2:10-14

Genesis 2:7

*John 6:63

James 2:26



Functions of each

1. Communion: worship.
2. Intuition: sensing, knowing beyond the natural mind.
3. Conscience: discerning right and wrong.

1. Volition: the will to choose (i.e., stubbornness).
2. Mind/Intellect.
3. Emotions.

Personality: the **real You**

1. Blood
2. Bone
3. Flesh (different from Paul’s use of...)

The term *flesh* in Paul’s writings occasionally refers to the body; otherwise, it primarily refers to the fallen soul (human capacities, will, mind, and emotions).

- ✓ The term *heart* often refers to a combination of spirit and soul, especially the will. The context determines its meaning.

God, being a spirit, most frequently speaks to us through our spirit (intuition). Therefore, if you expect Him to speak just to your body (ears) or soul (mind), you will miss the important things He is saying to you. (Cf. to having three phone lines and you are waiting for the wrong phone to ring.) In a corresponding way, praying with our spirit puts us in direct contact with the invisible world. That is why prayer out of our spirit (vs. our soul) is so powerful and essential to our spiritual journey.

Discuss: **The Mind’s Role in Spiritual Formation.** (What seemed to draw your attention? Questions?)

God intends for you to use your mind for sure. However, when what your mind understands what you read (Bible or other books) or ears hear from a what someone says and suddenly it becomes an ‘ah ha’ moment, you are then hearing the whispers of His Spirit. Such an experience will include a form of a strange conviction/certainty and peace deep within. **At that point, something connected you with the unseen world.**

Discussion:

- ✗ Consider a time when you had to decide which way to go, but something within you made you feel you ought not to do it... or vice versa? The sense of oughtness is most likely the voice of God’s Spirit warning you about something. The same is true when you receive a sense deep within that someone is going to call or something bad is coming soon, so be alert even though your mind tells you everything is normal or safe.

- ✓ Paul pointed out the most common indication of hearing God’s whisper when he wrote, “let the **peace** that comes from Christ rule [serve as umpire] in your hearts...” (Colossians 3:15Aa NLT2). (... not natural peace, but divine peace)

- ✓ You can learn to identify the practical difference between spirit and soul when you experience an internal argument between what you feel or think in contrast to your sense of oughtness.

- ✗ **Hearing with our spirit is hearing the voice of the King of the Kingdom. You can only discern Bible truths with your spirit.** (1 Cor. 2:14, Mt. 13:13-17, Lk. 8:9-10, 24:31-32, Jn. 5:39-40)

Consider: After Jesus arose from the dead, Acts 1:2 (GW) tells us... “Before he was taken to heaven, he gave instructions **through the Holy Spirit** to the apostles, whom he had chosen”. This is illustrated when Jesus talked with two disciples as they walked to Emmaus. The men described this experience by saying, “**didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us**” (Luke 24:32, NLT2)?

✓ It seems Paul refers to this happening in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, (6-16), 1 Cor. 3:3, 6 (God gives increase) Cf. Col. 1:29

✧ An exercise to help you grow in hearing the voice of your spirit.

✓ Several years ago, a popular line was ‘What would Jesus do?’ (printed on jewelry, bumpers, etc.). but that question focuses a person on their logic or imagination of Jesus. Unfortunately, too many of us imagine a Jesus who thinks like we think, but His thoughts and ways are NOT our thoughts or ways.

✓ A safer way to ask it would be, **what is the right thing to do in each situation?** That forces a person to determine who is best to decide what is ‘right’. Is it what friends, parents, pastors, politicians, teachers, etc. say? Or is God wiser and therefore the only one capable of deciding what is right? To determine that, a person must quiet their soul and tune into their spirit to listen for what God’s Spirit is saying deep within is ‘right’. That is like asking yourself, what does your ‘gut’ or intuition/spirit tell you God is saying is ‘right’? Keep in mind, **we have the Bible to confirm if our ‘gut’/intuition is ‘right’**.

✓ This exercise sharpens your skill of hearing God’s whisper on each of the decisions you have to make each day at work/school, finances, etc., etc.

✧ When you carefully examine or discuss Bible passages as we move forward, **expect** to experience something strangely warm welling up in your inner being (spirit/intuition). When it occurs, if it isn’t too personal, it would be healthy for everyone to share it so we can discuss the insight and experience itself.

Keep this verse in mind: Hebrews 11:6 (NIV) “And **without faith it is impossible** to please God, because **anyone who comes to him must believe** [expect] **that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him**”. Bible faith is NOT mental assent. Rather, it is an intuitively sensed assurance. **Your outlook determines your outcome!** To paraphrase, faith or belief in the Bible means having a heart that is ready to act as if God's Word is entirely true. This means **your heart conducts your life as if He genuinely exists and rewards earnest seekers**. You must believe He is waiting to give you of His wisdom.

✧ The more you stretch yourself to identify the practical difference between the voice of your soul from that of your spirit, the more you will find the King randomly whispering to you throughout a normal day.

Next week, we will explore an overview of the Kingdom of God, including God's cultural values practiced in it. **Distribute Who is Well-off?** (**Assign** them to reflectively (1) read Matthew 5-7, at least twice, in two or three different translations. Then (2) circle words in chapter 5:1-12 that seem to capture your attention.)

Session 2 (Engage by having them read the scriptures as you go.) [Purpose: Clarify the stark contrast between the culture of the world and that of God's unseen kingdom. Note: This is not so much in finding fault with our culture since that is neither proactive nor productive.]

- ❖ Embracing the Kingdom culture will help you see the stark difference between the culture of the kingdom of God and our world's culture.

Imagine you are a USA citizen (ambassador) living in **Somalia**. You live in two worlds, but your actual home dominates your thoughts/interests while living among the nationals (in their poverty and naivety.). Therefore, you must live by their laws too. **As with all allegories, the details only illustrate the truth.** That's an illustration of living in the **invisible** Kingdom of God while living in our **physical** world. (2 Cor. 5:20) Paul wrote, "**So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal!**" (2 Corinthians 4:18, NIV).

Question: **Which is our real world?** Which existed first and will outlast the other? How might this affect your thinking process? [Is it like moving your goalposts?]

Show the trailer of CS Lewis' children's series **only** to contrast two worlds. Setting: During WWII, a dad sent **4 siblings to a country safe house**. In the movie *Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe*, Lewis allegorically compares our physical world and the kingdom of God (Narnia).

First, **note the cultural shift when they entered the wardrobe** [European closet].

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWKj41HZBzM> Make note of these nuance statements in the inserted printed words.

Discuss:

1. How might you describe living in two drastically different cultures?

Perspective: Our problem is not just a difference between East/West, language, or young and old. **Scholars in Jesus' day did not understand passages about the Messiah or the kingdom.** (John 5:37-39, Matt 10:13-17, 22:29). But **neither did Jesus' disciples** until the Spirit revealed it to them. (Cf. Lk. 24:44-47, John 20:9) **A person must spiritually discern the Bible truths.**

2. What might we learn from how quickly the children adapted to that drastic difference? Is discussing these differences enough for us to do?
3. [Wrestle with this!] **What can we do to prepare ourselves to adapt quicker?** (Ideas?) We must **expect** to hear the Spirit's whispers and **pause** long enough to hear them. **God's truth is spiritually discerned.** (1 Cor 2:14)

We tend to view the kingdom of heaven as fantasy, but which existed 1st and will be forever? The Bible is more **logical** than man's hypothesis of earth's origin, more **consistent** than science that must change with each new discovery, and far more **socially healthy** than the dysfunctional life called progressive. God gave us a mind to use, but it has limits to its capacity. (What was the Big Bang energy source?)

4. **Remember: Jesus lived in both kingdoms at the same time** (cf. He talked with and obeyed His Father yet lived as a human. He came to make this possible for us and to show us how to do the same. That is what the Bible is all about.) **In what ways might practicing this truth change a person's thought-life and lifestyle?**

- ✓ A different perspective provides hope for dealing with the worst of life's problems.
- ✓ Hopefully, these sessions will enable you to discern the more life-changing and peace-giving kingdom truths found in the King's words.

- ✓ It is in our best interest to process every aspect of our lives from the invisible spiritual perspective, because that is our real world. This world is only temporary. “For to set the mind on the flesh (seen) is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit (unseen) is life and peace (Romans 8:6, ESV)”.

Jesus said, “Seek first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33). So, let us reflect a bit on this kingdom as we learn to dig deeper into the Bible.

- ✕ **Matthew 5:1 (Note: to whom was Jesus speaking?)** The passage reads, (v 1) ...his disciples came to him...”. This is **the 1st time the Greek term translated disciple is used** in the New Testament. John 6:66 refers to disciples that were not believers or the twelve. **Can we be certain only the 12 came to hear Jesus? NO.**
 - ✓ He was telling the marginalized crowd, those in poverty, rejection, abuse, etc.; that they too can enter the kingdom of God.
- ✕ **The grammar of the Beatitudes is quite clear. It’s not a list of what you need to do. It puts the weight not on the condition but on the kingdom. You’re blessed because you can live in the available kingdom by surrendering your kingdom to His rule.**
 - ✓ **Read Matthew 5:1-12 imagining yourself, socially marginalized, in the crowd.**
 - ✓ **In this context, which of lifes’ problems can think of that being in the kingdom of God can’t enable a person to manage?** Blessed are the bankrupt, divorcee, bankers?
 - ✓ **They’re not teaching how to be blessed nor instructions to do anything.** Jesus mentioned cases to offer proof that in Him, God’s kingdom rule is greater than all hopeless cases. **The blessing is having peace and joy in the midst of pain/trials.**
- ✕ **Actually, when you submit your kingdom into God’s kingdom, the world is a perfectly safe place to be. (Rm. 8:28) [“His purpose” = being caught up in what He is doing.]**
- ✕ The Beatitudes could **also** offer a peephole into some of God’s core values and ways. His Spirit flips the script of your painful situations to make them opportunities to grow in His grace. God took the pain of losing Connie into discoveries of who He is. He gradually transforms the thinking of an apprentice of Jesus, much like how He develops the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) in a believer's life.
- ✕ The remaining sermons (Ch. 5-7) shows how the kingdom values work in real life.

Matthew 5:1-12 (ESV) [Similar to Luke 6:20-26]

1 [Note Context] Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. This is **the 1st time the Greek term translated disciple is used** in the New Testament. John 6:66 refers to disciples that were not believers or the twelve. **Can we be certain only the 12 came to hear Jesus?**

2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

3 “**Blessed** are the poor in spirit [note key word - one is not rewarded **because** they **feel** spiritually impoverished/incompetent but despite feeling so] for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

4 “**Blessed** are those who mourn [acknowledge their sin and spiritual poverty], for they shall be comforted.”

5 “**Blessed** are the meek [humble/modest vs proud, well-trained horse], for they shall inherit the earth.”

6 “**Blessed** are those who hunger and thirst [strong desire/deep longing] for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

7 “**Blessed** are the merciful [compassion, pity, sympathetic], for they shall receive mercy.”

8 “**Blessed** are the pure in heart [minds, motives, and principles are pure], for they shall see God.”

9 “**Blessed** are the peacemakers [active efforts to calm contention, and strife and bring about peace and salvation], for they shall be called sons of God.”

10 “**Blessed** are those who are persecuted [driven out, chased away] for righteousness’ sake [key phrase cf. Mt.5:20], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

11 “**Blessed** are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account [key phrase].”

12 “**Rejoice** and be glad, [because of vs despite of] for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

The English translation of “blessed” refers to the highest type of well-being possible for humans. The word is often contrasted with “to curse or esteem lightly” (cf. Deut. 30:1, 19). Righteousness (v 10) means routinely acting in the character and power of Jesus because of His empowerment. Cf. Is 66.2.

1. So, what would you like to add to the list of Blesseds. Aging? Widows or Widowers?
2. Would they be Blessed just because they prayed the sinner’s prayer at some point?

- ✓ What do you imagine goes through God’s mind when he sees Christians settle for just experiencing the salvation event? Does He have a Heavenly car wash arranged where He runs us through to get rid of all our self-centered sins?
 - ✓ If God is king and He resides within, would He bring peace and joy in spite of our daily struggles? Would He flip the script on our giants and turn them into steppingstones of grace that would provide food to nurture us into thinking, working and feeling joyful as Jesus?
3. Close your eyes and think back to Narnia. Try to imagine entering a door into an environment where the cultural values and authority were totally different.
- ~ What do you like about that environment?
 - ~ Are you in charge of that environment, or is someone else?
 - ~ What might make you uncomfortable living in that environment?
 - ~ Is there anything in that culture that makes you aware that you must reorient about how you think and behave?
 - ~ Just so you know, the Kingdom of God is not a place/land but a cultural condition wherever every person or thing lives in submission to His sovereign authority. Similar to Narnia, everyone, except the rebellious, gladly submits to God’s benevolent dictatorship.

4. Now let us discuss any words or concepts that caught your attention or resonated deep within you as we did our assignment. What you marked could be ‘game changing’/defining in nature for you or others.

Hopefully, our discussion of God’s kingdom has supplied a better idea of how reflection on scripture requires a different way of thinking—as different as Narnia was for the children. As you dig deeper into the Bible, it is as though you enter through a threshold into the way of thinking in His kingdom.

Remember to apply what we’ve already discussed. This indispensable truth Jesus continued to teach is critical for you to understand if you hope to get your mind around the rest of what is in the Bible. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 2:14 (NIV) “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned”. Understanding what the Bible says comes along with the spiritual experiences Jesus referred to as being born again.

Distribute for next week.

Have them read John 3:1-12 AND examine closely [Typical Internal Stages](#) for Entering the Kingdom of God, [The Bible](#).

Session 3 [Purpose: Integrate greater personal reality into the unseen life of the kingdom. Then give a bird’s-eye view of the whole Bible.]

◇ **How someone enters the Kingdom of God/becomes a Christian** [See Typical Internal Stages for Entering the Kingdom of God, The Bible handouts.]

✓ **Based on Gen 3:6, 23-24, what does it take to be put outside His kingdom?** **Disbelief of Spirit, decision of the soul** to reject, **action of the body**. Explain [see note]

Suzerain/Vassal Covenant—With God, the Covenant is based on a loving relationship.

✓ How might that be a clue how one re-enters the kingdom? [**We must reverse Adam and Eve’s decision to disobey**. Rom. 10:9-10 teaches to believe God with our **spirit**, decide to submit with **soul** and verbalize with **body** submission to God’s authority.]

✗ **Review The Role of the Mind...** as a gatekeeper. [Satan is the father of lies and will attempt to plant deceit to lead a person to doubt God’s truth. As with Eve, he leveraged her own desire to want the fruit and to be like God. **Hackers & scammers use similar techniques (fear, lust for power, etc. today!)**

✓ **What is the most critical factor for entering His kingdom?** (Read Isaiah 1:13-15 & Revelation 2:1-5 - **heart worship**) Note: **He told the believers at Ephesus, “you have abandoned the love you had at first.”** (Revelation 2:4, ESV). Classic temptation!

~ **It is all about one’s heart; not just knowledge, words, or behavior. He insists on unadulterated love with ALL we are and possess; and expressing that love by loving, obeying and serving Jesus as Jesus loved, obeyed and served His Father.**

[How would you describe that to a person you know who is outside the kingdom?]

This chart explains the normal stages a person experiences when entering God’s kingdom. **Note the progressive change of heart.** These transitions often **happen subtly and in rapid spurts** — so fast sometimes it is hard to distinguish each transition. It begins with an artful subconscious drawing and progresses with increased intensity as a person responds to that inner compelling of the Holy Spirit—**impassioned enough to sell it all.**

PHASE	CURIOUS	EXPLORER	SEEKER	PURSUER
Response	Indifference - Antagonism	Confusion - Naivety	Indecision - Love of darkness	Independence - Inward focus
Bible Examples	Nicodemus–John 3 Woman at the well–John 4	Ethiopian eunuch–Acts 8 Woman at the well–John 4	Philippian jailer–Acts 16 Woman at the well–John 4	Early church–Acts 2:40-42 Samaritan awakening–Acts 8

	-12	-11	-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	*	+1	+2	+3	+4
Mini-Decisions Some of the specific mini decisions that could be made in each phase. Some may blur together or vacillate, repeating themselves before taking new steps.	Little or no belief in any spiritual reality	Curious of spiritual reality–not necessarily God	Questions about current religious concept of God	Has a positive attitude toward Bible	Accepts Jesus is also God	Understands you cannot earn your way into Heaven	Asks God for guidance	Understands meaning and implications of the gospel	Has a positive attitude toward gospel	Conviction of personal sin and for forgiveness and empowerment to change.	An inner compelling to give it all to God for Him to forgive and reorient.	Decides to act on their inner compelling to humbly surrender their life to God	Receives a deep desire to know God in a more intimate way.	A deep inner compelling to know and serve God more out of love for Him.	Assimilation into a caring community and learning to carry spiritual responsibilities.	Growing and maturing into Christlikeness who gave his life. Draws personal worth from God.	Intuitively compelled to give it all be a responsible be a spiritual parent and grandparent

Try to imagine what all happens when a person responds to His tugging to surrender her/his kingdom to God? **If you were to summarize the transition (regeneration) process, what would you see to be the most noteworthy change in a person’s life?** [**deep desire for God**]

Ez 36:25-27:

- ✓ Sprinkle clean water (cleans filthiness, idols)
- ✓ Receive a new heart (exchange for stony heart)
- ✓ Receive a new spirit
- ✓ Receive His spirit

- ✓ Cause you to...
- ✓ walk in my statutes,
- ✓ keep His judgments/be careful to obey His rules
- ✓ Change of authority in daily decisions
- ✓ Well-off (Blessed)

- ✓ When a person is regenerated, **the Spirit plants into the believer an attachment bond** *(See note) **of love for God and His family**. This is **similar to having a traumatic experience** (i.e. Saul's Damascus' road) in that it changes the trajectory of how a person thinks. It is similar to the attachment of a baby to its mother. **It is much stronger than self-discipline!** There is **a form of having a mutual mind or the ability to know what someone sharing that bond is thinking/feeling**. Included in this is a deep desire to become like Jesus, a disciple/apprentice of Jesus.
- ✓ The Holy Spirit reveals a truth in Scripture or whispers to our spirit. **This attachment bond also makes us a part of God's family of those who also have been regenerated**. We experience this when we meet a fellow believer in another nation or wherever.
- ✓ What is **the goal in** seeking progressive transitions? **Spiritual maturity**, "image of his Son (Rm. 8:29)", the **full "stature of Christ"** (Ephesians 4:13). **[To what extent is this progress observable?]**
- ✓ How might the insight you have gained about entering His kingdom tell you about God's ways? How might it be relevant and/or helpful to someone you know?

Now, let us take a brief closer look at the structure of the book that describes God's Kingdom culture.

◇ **Bible Genre** [[See The Bible handout](#)]

Suppose you found a very old letter. How would you go about understanding what the author might be saying in the letter? If you wrote a personal letter to your girlfriend, spouse or best friend, if a stranger read that letter, **how might a stranger in a different culture and time go about getting a reasonably accurate understanding of what you intended to write to your fiancé or spouse?** [discuss, include the spirit whispers] **Since the Bible describes God's Kingdom, regardless of the genre, you're still looking for what this tells me about God.**

- God's Old Testament message in the...
 - ✓ Pentateuch [first 5 books - Jews call the Torah] Within that there were 3 Types of Laws.
 - ~ Can you think of any laws that segregated the Jews and Gentiles that Christ's death later abolished, making them equal? [Eph. 2:13-15]
 - ✗ Moral Laws: People commanded to practice. Absolutes: 10 Commandments.
 - ✗ Ritual/Ceremonial Laws: how to restore a relationship with God? Christ's death fulfilled blood sacrifices laws: Relative. [circumcision- Col. 2:13-14.]
 - ✗ Civil Laws: how to live in their day in such a way that would be a testimony of God's laws. These would include judicial laws having to do with safety (Deut. 22:8), settling disputes, divorce, etc. These may include mixed relative and absolutes, as well as progressive or changeable truths.

✓ Historical.

✓ Wisdom-poetic.

✓ Prophets.

- God's New Testament message in the Gospels, Acts, Epistles and Revelation.
 - ✓ What was His overall central and relentless message? [Mankind is outside God's kingdom, but Jesus Christ so values humanity that He made it possible for any humble person, with a desire for God, to enter His kingdom. Hebrews 1:1-4]
 - ✓ What internal evidence is there that the writers were writing God's authoritative word? (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rev. 22:18-19)
 - ✓ What differences might exist between those who read it then and us today? [EX. language; history; form of communication; media; culture; politics; religious system; family structure; and economics.]

Clarify:

- The first level of interpreting the Bible must be trying to understand the recipient's culture (metaphors; definitions of beauty or truth; worldview) and how they may have translated and applied the message in that passage.
- With that information and the Spirit's help, communicate the practical application in such a manner that your listener can apply it in their daily decisions.

Extra Notes:

***Suzerain/Vassal Covenant:** (Cf. Ex. 20:2-17, 24:7, 25:21) Relationship between a greater and lesser kingdom. The suzerain (greater) benevolently provides kinship, total protection, for the lesser as in an adoption/marriage/nation. The vassal nation would provide pure love/loyalty. [In God's case, love Him with all...] That level of relationship makes it impossible to love more than one suzerain. Billy Graham wrote, "*whatever you love most, be it sports, pleasure, business, or God, that is your God*"! Therefore, such an attempt would be considered high treason.

***Attachment love/bond:** a relational-based bond that occurs in regeneration that creates a powerful bond between God and an individual. This bond created is more powerful than self-discipline. It is like the bond between a mother and newborn or a mother duck when her ducklings hatch. It is more like what Ezekiel 36:27 describes and Phil. 2:13 confirms "*He causes us to will and to do His good pleasure.*"

Next lesson: Distribute **Next lesson Assignment, Correctly Interpreting the Bible**, Digging Deeper–Streamlined, and Colossians 1:15-23 w meaning indicators.

Session 4 [Purpose: key principles for understanding and applying the Bible accurately.]

Game-changing principles for practical application of what the Bible says.

- **Bible Authority**

- ✓ The Bible is our authority since it was God's communication with us. (2 Tim. 3:16) Because He is the author, He has ultimate power and authority over how it is interpreted. Therefore, for those written words to carry their full authority, they require the Spirit to reveal the correct understanding and applicable meaning God intended for them to mean to us. **Imagine Him speaking to you.**
- ✓ **It is in wrestling with the perplexing words or concepts that the Holy Spirit normally reveals His whispers of wisdom.** As He breathed His life into Adam, so He breaths His truth into you resulting in holy moments of understanding and awe. His Word then becomes the authority each must obey and follow.
- ✓ While He speaks unique words according to where each one is in his / her spiritual journey, those whispered may be different to each person. However, **what is whispered must align with the contextual written words He has already given.**

[See **Correctly Interpreting the Bible handout.**] [Explain only what was unclear.]

- **Absolutes and Relatives** [changeable]

[*Personalize illustration*] When our girls were small, they had tricycles to ride. Connie and I explained it was important that they ride where they would be safe. So, we gave them a few important boundaries for riding their tricycle. They could ride on the sidewalk and driveway, but could not ride across specific cracks in the concrete. Doing so would result in disciplinary action. As they grew older and rode bicycles, we continued to change the rules as they learned to recognize the danger of riding near or in front of a moving vehicle.

- ✓ Which of those rules might we think of as an **absolute** (applicable to all people at all times), in that they never change? Which might be **relative** (only applicable to the original receivers of the message - dependent upon the context, individuals involved, or with time and circumstances)?
- ✓ In the Bible, God gave us both **absolute** and **relative** guidance. If we interpret an **absolute** as a **relative**, it is liberalism or liberal theology. EX: Lev. 20:13 (NLT2) “If a man practices homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman, both men have committed a detestable act. They must both be put to death, for they are guilty of a capital offense”. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because people there practiced it. **If God's prohibition of homosexuality is interpreted as relative, what is that called? [liberal theology]**

✗ Reflect on examples of today's liberalism?

- ✓ If something is interpreted as **relative**, written to a specific people for a specific time, as an **absolute**, it is legalism—you will not go to heaven if you don't follow this law. EX: Deuteronomy 22:5 (NLT2) “A woman must not put on men's clothing, and a man must not wear women's clothing. Anyone who does this is detestable in the sight of the LORD your God.” This law, among others, had an absolute factor (as I had for my daughter's safety) but became relative. God inspired such laws for the Hebrews at a specific time in their journey of learning God's absolute laws (10 Commandments). The absolute

aspect of it was the clarifying of gender uniquenesses He had purposefully created. It became relative when that became their norm. If a person takes that relative law at face value today and makes it an absolute to live by, that is called legalism.

✗ Can you think of other examples of legalism today?

- ✓ A third and more complex rule is a **relative absolute** [contextual]. You will find occasionally the Bible says things that sound contradictory to us. EX: 1 John 4:18 (ESV) “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.” Contrasted with 1 Peter 2:17 (ESV) “Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear of God. Honor the emperor”. Or Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV) “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast”. Contrasted with James 2:26 (NLT2) “Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works”. How are we to process these apparent contradictions?

First, **truth is found in the tension between two opposites**. It is not about ‘either/or’ but ‘both/and’. God is both merciful and just, two apparent opposites. If you carefully exam Biblical love and fear, you will find they are **like different sides of the same coin**, both needed to validate its worth. We can apply this concept to various Bible passages and apparent contradictory doctrines, such as Calvinism and Arminianism.

However, an absolute may **temporarily become a relative**, depending on unique factors. (Stop for red light—except funeral procession or police direction.) God was consistent with keeping holy what He had named as holy. It was the law that holy bread would sit in the holy place in the tabernacle and only priests could eat it (Lev. 24:9). However, Jesus referenced how the priest allowed David and his men to eat this holy bread because they needed to eat (Mark 2:25-26). It was the law not to work on the Sabbath, but if an ox fell into a pit, it was permissible to get him out (Luke 14:5). So, in unique circumstances, an absolute could temporarily change. Beyond that, sin and holiness are never compatible, so it is not a both/and issue. God hates sins because it separates man from God. It is hard for our minds to reconcile such things. However, God is the King and can decide when and what is to be the truth. When in Heaven we may find they are simply two sides of the same coin. While on earth, we would act presumptuously if we attempted to change something the King has given us as truth.

- **Rationalism and Hyper-Spirituality**—two extreme soul-driven approaches to God, both of which are manifestations of our human independence or sin nature.

- ✓ Rationalism is putting man’s thinking/mind above God and His word. This reduces God down to a cerebral concept. *If I cannot understand God, I do not believe he exists.* Or, *If I do not agree with what the Bible says, I will rewrite/reinterpret it to make it say what makes sense to me.* This is primarily where essential doctrines of faith like Jesus’ virgin birth and resurrection of Christ are unaccepted by unbelievers or theologians. Religious life (church) then becomes an empty ritual, power-less and unable to offer authentic life-change to

hurting people. No religious group is immune to such degeneration of faith. Even the church of Ephesus had somehow left their first love of God.

- ✓ Hyper-spirituality is putting man's emotions above God and His Word. This reduces God or faith in Him down to an emotion or an experience. *If I did not feel something today, God was not present. Or, If I do not feel it is wrong for me to do, God is saying I can do it.* Like Rationalism, if I do not feel a truth in the Bible fits my preference, I will twist what it says until it feels good to me.

Since **both contrasts are soul-driven**, it is vital to one's spiritual life to distinguish the difference between what is emanating from the soul (mind and emotions) and spirit (intuition and conscience). The function of the Spirit is not to disregard mind or emotions, but to help bring them under submission to God, enabling us to think and apply the Bible even better. Surrender your thoughts and feelings to the Holy Spirit's guidance. Remind your mind and feelings that nothing in God's Word will contradict itself.

Understand that God dwells in and primarily speaks to our spirit, not our soul. From your spirit within, He confirms we are His children (Romans 8:16) as well as leads us into all truth (John 14:17, Romans 8:6). When in doubt of something in the Bible, a) dial your mind and emotions down (silence them) and seek God's presence within your spirit, b) seek to confirm the validity of what conclusion from a God-fearing and Bible-loving person who has proven to hear God's whispers through reflection on God's Word.

- **Obedience is essential to a correct interpretation of the Bible.** Jesus said, "Everyone who hears what I say but doesn't obey it will be like a foolish person who built a house on sand. Rain poured, and floods came. Winds blew and struck that house. It collapsed, and the result was a total disaster" (Matthew 7:26-27, GW).

Remember, sound Bible interpretation produces unity and righteous living. The lack of that produces confusion, disunity and unrighteous in laws and behavior.

It is essential that we allow the Holy Spirit's whispers within to guide our interpretation of the Bible. John 16:13 (ESV) "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."

- ✓ Summary: Read Scripture by listening to the text, reflecting on it, asking not merely what it technically means, but what the Spirit asking of me, what He asking me to hear.
- ✓ Point: **Lean into wrestling** with a word or statement because that may very well become a holy moment for you. (2 Cor. 3:6; Acts 1:2; Lk 18:31-33, 24:45)

Next lesson assignment:

1. **Distribute** & have them think through the Digging Deeper guidelines.
2. **Read** through the book of Colossians and answer the top set of questions on the worksheet.
3. **Use Step 2; 4th x** to uniquely mark the words that may have significant meaning to the passage.
4. Under the Meaning of keywords column, define the meaning of the words that you identified as having significant meaning to you. Colossians 1:15-23.

Four Significant Meaning Indicators:

1. Having the same/similar or contrasting meanings:
 - Referring to the same person or thing: Colossians 1:21-22 (NIV) like “God” (v 21) & “he” (v 22)
 - “Alienated” and “enemies” (v 21)
 - “Alienated” (v 20) and “reconciled” (v 22)

2. Stylistic features: repetition in form or similar meaning: (1 Cor. 1:22-23 NIV)
 - “Jews demanded miraculous signs” a
 - “Greeks look for wisdom” b
 - “But we preach Christ crucified” [central thought]
 - “A stumbling block to Jews” a
 - “And foolishness to Gentiles” b

3. Words that indicate relationships between different sentences or parts of sentences, connecting them together:
 - E.g. Colossians 1:21-23 (NIV) ‘and’, ‘because’ v 21; ‘but’, ‘and’ v 22, ‘if’, ‘and’ v 23
 - Hinge words: Rom. 11:30 “once” ... “but now”

4. Words or phrases that seem meaningful and could be ‘game changing’ or defining. This one is subjective and self-explanatory.

See Facilitator only Sample Exegesis of John 5:44 in the Facilitator’s Packet for a tool to assist others in how to select Significant Meaning Indicators

John 5:44 (NIV)	Key words and meaning	Summary of concept
How can you believe	Believe -be convinced of, have confidence in, entrust,	You cannot go north and south at the same time. If you grasp/collect honor from one another, you cannot be convinced of, or have confidence in, or trust God.
if you accept praise	Accept -to get something, grasp, collect, take hold of	
from one another,	From - source	
yet make no effort	One another/God – relationship	
to obtain the praise	Praise -honor, good opinion	
that comes from the only God ?	No effort –seek, try to get, look for, inquire into	

Believe – meaningful – subject

If – Conjunctive - conditional

Accept/no effort to obtain - Contrast

From (2) – Repetitious – the source if what is desired

Praise (2) - Repetitious – what is desired

One another/God - Relational (contrasting)

Session 5 [Purpose: Explain the fundamentals on how to position themselves for the Holy Spirit to reveal the truths buried in the Bible and apply them.]

What precise issues was hard to understand in the Dig Deeper document?

HOW TO DIG DEEPER into what the Bible says [Review Digging Deeper and Colossians 1:15-23 use worksheets to apply them.] (Limit digging to using only the 2nd Step/4th x [last] Meaningful Word Indicator on worksheet).

This engages any hungry person in discovering what God really says in His Word.

Digging Deeper

Overview: It is essential that we approach a passage with an open mind, not a preconceived idea. The purpose is to discover what the Bible really says, not what one has heard or thought it said.

1. Clarify the **contexts**.
2. Identify the primary and supportive **concepts**.
3. **Personalize** it. Step into the scene as a participant rather than spectator.
4. Speculatively summarize God's **overall purpose**/message in the passage.
5. Seek to discern how He may intend for us to **apply** that message to our daily life.

Tools needed:

- ✗ Access to various Bible translations
- ✗ Access to a Bible or Study Bible, Bible Dictionary, Lexicon or Bible Encyclopedia
- ✗ Access to various Commentaries

Step 1. Do your best to figure out the general **context** of the book/passage. The who, when, where, and why of the letter/passage.

- ✗ Who wrote it and what knowledge is available about him?
- ✗ When: When it may have been written?
- ✗ To whom was it written?
- ✗ Where might the author have been when writing it?
- ✗ Why: Are there any unique circumstances known of the recipient(s)?

Step 2. Identify notable **concepts**...

- ✗ [Facilitator only] The Spirit-inspired Bible authors communicated a coherent message in one book. Originally, they did not use chapter or verse divisions. Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, around 1227 inserted chapter divisions. The Swiss publisher Stephanus made the verse divisions in 1551. Therefore, read the book through, especially the chapters before and after you are examining. Note the thought flows and shift of concepts. Try to identify how the selected passage fits into the whole letter. If time allows, read through the book ignoring the chapter and verse notations.
- ✗ Read the selected passage from several Bible translations (not paraphrases) seeking to identify the common shifts in thought within each translation. When combined, they can add insightful clarifications to the author's intended message. Suggested Bible translations: [word for word] NKJV, NASB, ESV, [dynamic equivalent] GW, GNB, NLT.
- ✗ Write out the passage in smaller units.
- ✗ Use different markings (circles, squares, single and double underline, colors, etc.) to identify **persons/things**, **similar/contrasting/repetitive**, **actions**, **descriptive**, **key conjunctive** and **transitional** words with significant meaning (not just definition) to the overall message of the passage.
- ✗ Look at the entire passage from a bird's-eye view. Pinpoint the essential patterns or truths in the passage. What message does it convey?

Step 3. **Personalize** it. Imagine yourself as a participant (vs spectator) in the setting of what the scripture is saying or describing. **How might that make reading different?** Reflect on how you might interpret what you hear or see? What word pictures, emotions or questions come to mind?

Step 4. Speculatively summarize: To capture the **overall purpose** of the passage, reduce the verses into basic thoughts, then assign each collection a brief purpose statement.

✧ Consider...

- * What might be the difference between God's command and His promise? Is this passage a command, promise, or just information?
- * What might this whole passage or individual concepts reveal about God (His value system, ways, character)?
- * What might it expose about you or all humanity?
- * What should be your/humanity's response to these observations?

✧ **Is your interpretation consistent with the rest of scripture?** Using cross references, note other verses in the Bible that confirm your conclusions.

- ✓ commentaries: The Complete Biblical Library (Thoralf Gilbrant and Ralph Harris), Life Application Bible Commentary (New Testament only), Barclay New Testament Commentary, Adam Clarke, New International Commentary, Bible Knowledge Commentary, Matthew Henry.
- ✓ Share your discoveries with a person you know is enthusiastic about God's Word and seeks a closer relationship with Him.
- * Paul quoted the OT truth, "Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses," (2 Corinthians 13:1b, ESV). "First, you must understand this: No prophecy in Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation." (2 Peter 1:20, GW). It is too easy to fall into heresy if it is of private interpretation.

Step 5. How may it be practically **applied**? **Obedience is essential to a correct interpretation of the Bible.** Jesus said, "everyone who hears what I say but doesn't obey it will be like a foolish person who built a house on sand. Rain poured, and floods came. Winds blew and struck that house. It collapsed, and the result was a total disaster" (Matthew 7:26-27, GW).

✧ Consider journaling your thoughts and what you sense so you can remember them.

✧ **It might help to synthesize your thoughts by writing one or two open-ended questions** (as in the Jeopardy game show) **for each verse or concepts in that passage.** Word them in such a way it forces an examination before a response.

✧ Consider, could this be a thought you would want to share with others?

For individuals interested in digging even deeper, you can inquire about an extra model on how using various colors can stimulate additional insights.

Please keep these steps in mind as you now move into examining Scripture in order to better know the King and how His kingdom operates. Remember: What you will discover will differ markedly from what you commonly hear of the ways of our world.

- ✓ **Digging deeper:** Colossians 1:15-23 [see worksheet] Purpose: **Endeavor to position them to EXPERIENCE the awesomeness of God, the King.** **This is His way of linking His unseen kingdom life with our physically obsessed life.**

~ The most critical part of where we go next is for the scripture to **position you to experientially sense the awesomeness of God**, our King. **I cannot make you do this. You must decide if you want to do it. Since it begins with knowledge and ends with going beyond knowledge, I can only coach you in where to start with your thinking.** After you are able to connect the Spirit and Soul concept with the awe-inspiring nature of God, your study of Scripture will take on much more of a dynamic dimension. **Pray!** Let's begin by applying the highlights of our Digging Deeper guidelines.

~ **Contextual** information within the book.

- * Who wrote the book? [Col. 1:1 Paul]
- * Who was with the author when he wrote it? [Col. 1:1 Timothy]
- * To whom was the letter written? [1:2 Church in Colossae]
- * Where was Paul when he wrote the letter? [4:18 In captivity–Rome]
- * Who preached the gospel to the believers who received the letter? [1:7 Epaphras]
- * Had Paul ministered to the Colossians before? [2:1, 5 Indirectly, he had never met them]
- * What did the Colossians have to watch out for?
- * What was the false teaching they need to resist? [2:16 Legalism]
- * Where was Epaphras when Paul wrote the letter? [4:12-13 With Paul]

You can find additional information in study-Bibles, Bible encyclopedias and other reference books.

Privately request the Holy Spirit to reveal God and yourselves and to ignite a passion. This phase is pivotal to building future value for deeper analysis of God's Word!

- ✓ When you did your homework on this, did you notice a shift in focus within the passage? [between line v 20-21] How should we differentiate that focus shift? (v 15-20 is about God while v 21 shifts to relating about man)
 - * Did you happen to notice any change deeper within you? If so, pay attention to it.
- ✓ **Slowly work through Digging Deeper step by step together.** This is our first time so we will limit our digging to the 4th (last) Meaningful Word Indicator. While the two passages are integrally related, I've chosen to examine them separately and then together. Let's 1st reflect on the awe-inspiring factors of /God in Christ in verses 15-20.
 - ~ 1st, remember how you felt when you were in awe of something/one. **Personalize each thought as you ponder it.** Have most of them share what seemed to be the most critical-sobering-enlightening discovery words and why. (Prime a discussion with what stood out to you and asking them to share their experiences.)
 - ◇ **Vss. 15-20 This shows how our incredible God/King cares about each of us. Discuss the difference between theoretical and experiential? When have you experienced such AWE-your jaws virtually dropped, and you were virtually speechless? Point: Help them experience God's awesomeness as they reflect on Scripture, not just intellectually knowing a concept. God's awesomeness is sensed when watching Louie Giglio's star-gazing pictures in his video "How Great is our God"—can be Googled.**
 - ◇ What might "the image of the invisible God" imply? (Cf. John 14:9, Col 1:19)
 - ◇ What might "for him" (line 8) imply about God, man and all creation? (Cf. vs 20)
 - ◇ Describe how reflecting on this section of verses has affected your spirit.

- ◇ How does alienation feel? Have you ever felt it?
- ◇ Note line 19 (v 21). The Greek words suggest this can be translated different ways. Your worksheet is from the NIV, but the ESV exchanges the word “because of your” with the word “doing”. Why? **The ESV is saying you were not alienated because of your evil deeds. Rather, your evil deed only revealed your already hostile mind. (cf., Jm.1:14-15, Eph 2:3, Titus 1:16) How might that reshape the how we think of sin?**
- ◇ How might you describe a spiritually dead person? [? zombie] What part of us is dead? (Matt 6:22-23)
- ◇ How would you describe the describe the incredible change the application of Christ’s death and resurrection could make in a spiritual zombie?
- ◇ What does faith mean to you? How does the Bible define it? [Hebrews 11:1-3; Ephesians 2:8]. Point out there is a **faith of Propriety** (mental or social acceptance, politeness, fire insurance), **faith of Desperation** and **faith Sufficiency** (abundance) The rich young had propriety type. When Jesus called him to sacrifice, he bailed.
- ◇ How do you explain the qualifying statement *if you continue in your faith?*

- ✓ What might this whole passage or individual concepts reveal about God (His value system, ways, character)?
- ✓ What might it expose about you or all humanity?
- ✓ What should be your/humanity’s response to these observations?
- ✓ Discuss how it may apply in our culture.

- ✓ How might what we have just reflected on be relevant and/or helpful to someone you know? (Try to personalize our King’s desire to communicate with His favored creation through His Bible by reviewing principles discussed in the first session.)

Next week: First **read Acts 19** about the recipients. Then have them take time to use Digging Deeper guidelines to go through **Eph. 2:1-10** (provide **worksheet**). Take time to reflect on the guidelines on **How to Create a Bible Study**.

Session 6 [Purpose: Inspire them to see how God wants them to see the connection between the **seen** and **unseen** worlds.]

◇ Linking the natural/physical/seen with the Spiritual/unseen through water baptism. (allow 15 min.)

- ✓ **Using their Bibles**, reflect on verses commanding **water baptism** (Mt 28:19, Acts 2:38) the description of water baptism explained in **Romans 6:1-14**. [Lead them to pick out game-changing words in this passage that adds insight to water baptism.]

[The latter (vs 5) connects the watery burial and the coming out of the water with the unseen death, burial and resurrection Jesus experienced on our behalf.]

- ✓ Discuss how baptism relates to salvation, and why it is important. [While there is a value for water baptism to serve as a public testimony of one's faith in God, yet as learned from the eunuch's baptism with no observers (Acts 8:36-39), there is a far greater value to the one being baptized. **Like circumcision (Col. 2:10-12), God ordained it to be a physical act that would help a person better identify with Jesus' death and resurrection.** Considering oneself dead (Romans 6:11) as Jesus was—dead people have no feelings and are immuned to temptation—then being raised out of the grave. This can be a very liberating and defensive weapon against Satan's temptations and accusations of one's past. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17) It can also help a person better understand how they can live Jesus did in both the seen and unseen worlds at the same time.]

Taking the next step to imagine yourself being risen with Jesus into heaven (Eph. 2:4-6) can add additional perspective on how to overcome daily encounters in life. Sitting with Christ in Heaven reminds us how He is with us to empower, equip and guide our lives on earth.

- ✓ **How might what we have just reflected on be relevant/helpful to someone you know?**

Facilitating Spiritual Formation:

Plant in the heart seeds of discipleship by discussing what it would look and feel like to identify a spiritually hungry person and walk with them through what you have been learning. How different might it look if the spiritually hungry person the Spirit put in your path has not yet become a believer? Imagine the joy you would feel watching them take baby steps into a spiritual life and/or maturity.

Begin praying for the Holy Spirit to bring a spiritually hungry person across your path. Let us keep talking about how He might be answering that prayer.

◇ Digging deeper: (Ephesians 2:1-10)—**Provide the worksheet for them. Purpose: Use the Digging Deeper method to discover God's overview of the Christian's life.**

- ✓ Have them report on last week's DD experience. Then briefly review context step.

(Context: Not in learner's notes:)

- ~ On Paul's 3rd missionary tour, Acts 19 reports He stayed about 2-3 years and had an incredibly life-giving revival.
- ~ Verses 17-20 reference supernatural signs & wonders, the fear of God, and deep conviction that led to citizens burning their scrolls about sorcery valued at 50,000

pieces of silver. Many think Epaphras was saved in this time and later planted churches in Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis.

Verses 11-40 record this revival created conflicts on 2 levels: 1) physically and socially between the Jews and new gentile believers; and 2) between demonic power and the power of God in the unseen world, manifest in financial matters.

On his way back to Jerusalem where he would be imprisoned and later taken to Rome, Acts 20:13-18 records his last deeply moving meeting in Miletus with the elders of the Ephesian church. While imprisoned in Rome, he writes back to the church of Ephesus, Colossians and Philemon.

- ✓ (1:1) Paul is the author.
- ✓ (1:1) writing to Ephesians (all believers).
- ✓ (4:1) writes from prison in Rome.

- ✓ Summary of passage: The fundamental truth here is that all were dead (spiritual zombies) and when we die to that life through humble submission to the King, His Spirit transforms us, and it makes us alive in Christ for good works.
- ✓ Using the previously discussed concept of Digging Deeper, discuss what they discovered when digging deeper into Ephesians 2:1-10. **Have each share the discovery that seemed most critical/enlightening to them and why.**
 - ~ v 2 What might “the course of this world/prince ... of the air, passions of the flesh and carrying out the desires of the body and mind” look like in real time and in what ways are we continually influenced by it? How necessary... (v7, 10) **How can we help ourselves and others overcome the world’s influence?**
 - ~ v 3 What do the “desires of the body and mind” look like? How might they be manifest in us?

- ✓ What might this whole passage or individual concepts reveal about God (His value system, ways, character)?
- ✓ What might it expose about you or all humanity?
- ✓ What should be your/humanity’s response to these observations?
- ✓ Discuss how it may apply in our culture.

- ✓ Divide the group into teams of two/three. Have each team select a passage that caught their attention and create a question for another team that would force them to have to have read the passage in order to correctly answer the question. [like the old Jeopardy TV show]. Then have each state their question to a different team to see if they can correctly answer the question.
- ✓ Discuss with the focus on **how they can apply this type of Spiritual Formation to one’s daily life.**
- ✓ Ask: How might what we have just reflected on be relevant and/or helpful to someone you know?

Review How to Create a Bible Study:

Use the [How to Create a Bible Study](#) to [create an imaginary Bible Study](#) on a passage using the Self-discovery teaching method. [Point out the red-colored section in the handout is the part to consider for this lesson. **You will have them use this as part of a future lesson so stress its value now.**]

- ~ In this passage, determine what you believe to be the most critical, primary or secondary thoughts. Link concepts to verses or words in the passage. Have each person/team write out a creative, leading, open-ended question for each verse or concept. This technique is popularized by the TV show Jeopardy. The purpose would be to force others to think through a specific verse(s) in order to answer the question. Your aim is to lead them to [understand](#), own and therefore [apply](#) the message you sense the Spirit would have them remember. Explain that this process is what a high-impact Bible study is all about.

Assignment for next week:

Distribute [Next Week's Assignment guidelines](#), [Identification with Christ's Ministry](#) worksheet for this next lesson. [see additional directions below] Review it with them.

Next Week's Assignment

The **Identification with Christ's Ministry** document contains narrative scripture passages from John 20:19-22, Acts 1:4-8, 2:1-13, and 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. This brief comparative study is very revealing and helpful in understanding the different works of the Holy Spirit.

- The passages from John and Acts are **narratives (stories)** rather than **Exposition (explains doctrine)** or **Exhortation (specific instructions)** genre. **Narratives are easiest to understand when broken down into different sections of thought.** The 1 Corinthians passage is of the **Exposition** genre. However, we will not be breaking it down this next week. Therefore, mark only the parts that you would like to discuss.
- When marking the words in the Narrative passages, please **mark only the key or major conjunctive words** like since/therefore, etc., not the minor ones like and, in, etc. I.e., the **meaningful words that affect the concept being communicated.** **Note each change of thought and the sequence or guesstimated timeline of events.** Last, reflect on the why factors or message of each passage.
- Spend some time **examining the different purposes** for each of Jesus' actions and words John 20:22 and Acts 1:8 and 2:4. **In what ways are they uniquely different?**
- **Also read in your Bible Acts 2:14, 41;** (you don't need to read vs. 15-40 since it is Peter's impromptu Spirit inspired sermon). **Compare Peter's response in Mark 14:66-71 with his response in Acts 2:14.** (You can find additional details about it in Matthew 26:69-75, Luke 22:56-62, John 18:25-27.) Discuss: **What might it take to produce such a dramatic change in you?**
- What seems to be the purpose for Paul's explanation 1 Corinthians 12? **How might what happened to Peter serve as a model for Paul's explanation of the variety of gifts of the same Holy Spirit in believers today?**

Write out an imaginary Bible study based on this material.

Session 7 The cross/resurrection triggered a **dramatic shift (cp. Rapture)** in how God works with man—they changed everything from law to grace; from Jesus ministry to the Apostles and church. [Purpose: Inspire them to see how God’s new strategy was to share His power with believers so they can do His work with Him. This puts exceptional meaning on everything Jesus said and did before Pentecost.]

◇ What did you learn from doing your imaginary Bible Study about yourself, this model of Spiritual Formation, and how you might use it to bring life-change in someone in your future?

◇ **Identification with Christ’s ministry** (“filled with the Spirit”)

Lay the Groundwork.

The Holy Spirit inspired four different men to write the first four books in the New Testament. When harmonized, these books offers greater insight into what Jesus said and did. The same is true when we synchronize what the Spirit has inspired to be in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, about common topics. Paul wrote about similar topics in various of his letters and, by harmonizing them, we gain more clarity on that subject.

Ephesians interfaced with Colossians, provided great insight into our identity with Christ. It also allows us greater insight into the contrast of unique unseen powers involved in the Kingdom of God and those active in our world. We also can see, although we participate with Him, **what our King has done is not just about us**. Ephesians 2:6-7 points out our salvation is about glorifying Christ [to whom? Eph 1:21, 3:10, 6:12], not just providing fire insurance for us. And Ephesians 2:10 points out **Christ saved us for the good works already prepared** for us to do, not just so we can have an identity or skill. This section’s work will bring greater clarity to working with God to do the work Paul wrote about.

Now let’s apply this principle when we inspect more closely our identification with Christ’s ministry. [See **Identification with Christ’s ministry** handout which are worksheets for Digging Deeper in this lesson.]

Context: Provoke discussion of **the context** by using questions such as...

- 1) Why did Jesus have to die and rise again? [reconcile us with the Father]
- 2) How were people ‘saved’ before He died? [faith looking forward to the perfect sacrifice as we look backwards to it] ... after He died and rose again?? **John 7:39**
- 3) How and when were the disciples spiritually regenerated/transformed as we are today?

Digging Deeper: John 20:19-22 (GW) Purpose: Help them discover insightful truth and understand that the coming of the Holy Spirit into us when regenerated serves a different purpose than when the disciples were later filled with the Spirit.

Context of passage.

- ~ John is the author.
- ~ Writing to all believers.
- ~ When: possibly while pastoring the church in Ephesus.
- ~ Review **the sequence** in these verses: [Jesus had died & arisen, leaving the disciples grieving and in shock. Jesus had appeared to Mary who told the disciples what Jesus had said. Now, the disciples are still confused and fearfully locked in a room, Jesus appears for the **first time since His death and resurrection.**]

Digging Deeper: John 20:19-22 [Ask participants to **share words or phrases they felt as having significant meaning in this passage.**] **Try to imagine yourself as one of them.**

19 “That Sunday evening, the disciples were together behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jews. Jesus stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you!’”

✕ What day is this in relationship to the resurrection? (Imagine yourself a disciple.
How might you see yourself responding to seeing Jesus and hearing those words?)

✕ This was ‘Easter’ evening. What do you suppose the disciples thought when Jesus appeared to them in a room with locked doors?

20 “When he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were glad to see the Lord.”

✕ Why might Jesus showing the disciples his hands and side suggests the state of mind and emotions of the disciples?

✕ How might they have responded seeing His wounds and hearing His voice?

21 “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.’”

✕ Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14, Would their natural mind understand those words? Therefore, the next thing Jesus did was to give them what Ez. 36:25-27 described; **positive trauma trajectory change, a spiritual reset so they could begin to grasp what Jesus’ had just said.** (cp. **Purposes of Ez. 36:25-27 w/ Acts 1:8 | careful to obey vs empowerment**)

✕ How might what Jesus did here, prepare them for their future assignment?

22 “After he had said this, he breathed on the disciples and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

✕ In **Genesis 2:7, when the Spirit breathed into formed dirt, Adam became a living soul.** Here **Christ breathed** [emphusáō/pronounced em-foo-sah'-o: **verb- only use in NT**] **on the disciples also** giving new life to them. **This regenerated them in the same way He new believers are today.** (Cf. Rom 8:9; 2 Cor. 5:17)

✕ What was different after you were regenerated? (fresh passion to obey / John 16:23 requests **could go straight to the Father,** and John 14:26 **the Spirit would teach (Acts 1:2)** and lead as Jesus had done. **Jesus now had to teach them to utilize their restored spirit** just as we must learn to hear and obey our spirit!

~ How was this different from what happened in Acts 2? **Cp. Ez. 36:25-27 - Acts 1:8 ...careful to obey vs empowerment**

✕ **How might what we have just reflected on be relevant and/or helpful to someone you know?**

◇ **Digging Deeper:** Acts 1:4-8 [**Provide worksheet ahead of time**] Purpose: **Overview: What do you notice to be the difference in focus between the four gospels and Acts?** (Jesus’ acts vs the Disciple’s Spirit empowered actions.

✕ Read Mt 1.1, Mk 1:1, Luke 1:1-2, John 1.1, **Acts 1:1, 8.**

~ **The gospels were the acts and teachings of Jesus. The book of Acts comprises the Acts of Christ through the early church believers.**

~ Keep in mind that the following prototypes illustrate what each believer today can do. The same Holy Spirit that empowered early believers will empower believers today.

- ✧ How would you briefly summarize what is happening in this chapter? [a landmark (dispensational) transition, handing off of the baton.]
- ✓ Read and reflect together on Acts 1:4-8.
Ask the participants to **share words or phrases they have noticed as having significant meaning in this passage.**
- ✧ How focused do you think the disciples were when Jesus was starting such a dispensational transition? What mental distraction might they have encountered?
- ✧ What thoughts might have gone through your mind if you had been one of the disciples who heard this commissioning statement in v 4?
- ✧ Why do you suppose Jesus felt a need to order the disciples to wait in Jerusalem?
- ✧ What insights and tools are they receiving to enable them to identify with and continue in Jesus Christ's ministry?
- ✓ Alternately read Acts 2:1-21 together, then discuss observations.
Ask the participants to **share words or phrases they have noticed as having significant meaning in this passage.**
 - ✧ What v 4 records is what Paul explains in 1 Cor. 14:2. Just as the disciple's spirit spoke words inspired by the Holy Spirit to God, so it is when a person today is filled with the Spirit. (Cf. Acts 2:11, they were praising God)
 - ✧ What was the most dynamic evidence of the transformation resulting from the baptism/infilling of the Spirit? Cp. Luke 22:57-60 To what extent was Peter's action a first sample of the work referred to in Ephesians 2:10?
 - ✧ How might what happened here to Peter give you a glimpse into the work God has "already planned" for you and every other spirit-filled believer today?
 - ✧ Ask each to identify a passage that impacted you and write a question that would require a person to have read that passage to give the correct answer? Share questions.
 - ✧ What do you sense you would need in order to lead someone convincingly through this teaching on the Holy Spirit? [This question could reveal your next step in helping them own the lesson.]
- ✓ What might this whole passage or individual concepts reveal about God (His value system, ways, character)?
- ✓ What might it expose about you or all humanity?

- ✓ What should be your/humanity's response to these observations?
- ✓ Discuss how it may apply in our culture.

After reviewing these verses, does 1 Cor. 12:1-11 feel any different to you? Briefly Discuss how spiritual gifts are distributed among us today. (1 Cor. 12:1-11)

Next week: 1 Determine subject for final session; 2. Tonight, next step in the weaning process.

- 1) Break the group into thirds.
- 2) Assign each third to use Digging Deeper and the red section of How to Create a Bible Study to prepare to lead the group to embrace a significant truth they found in their assigned passage.
 - a) This means you will want to reflect deeply on what your passage is saying in its context & journaling on the side what it tells you about God, yourself and what your next step is. (The book context of Digging Deeper was done earlier in session 5: Colossians 1:15-23. Refer to it only to remind them why it is a helpful step.)

Email out before the next session

I'm looking forward to our next meeting. Now that we have begun digging more deeply in a passage; just so you know, I will be dialing down my coaching. This worksheet will be the last I provide. I want to urge you to continue digging deeper into your assigned passage. You will want to keep the Digging Deeper instructions handy in your preparation.

It is time to stress marking the words in the passage. Be sure to uniquely mark words or phrases with significant meaning to the overall message of the passage as well as synthesize an overview of the passage. Cf.: Digging Deeper [pg. 16-17] Again, look for the following things:

1. Persons
2. Things (events, etc.) I highly recommend you create a shared code to identify your marked word types.
3. Action words
4. Descriptive words
5. Key conjunctive words
6. Examine the passage thoroughly and aim to recognize each key truth or pattern in the message, then list them in the initial column.
7. Take each fundamental idea and its related concepts and compress them into a single point in the main message of the passage, then document your findings next to the verses.
8. The third column should summarize each concept in relation to the passage's message and the book's theme.

I will be praying for you to hear God's gentle and energizing whispers.

Session 8 [Purpose: Stress God’s plan and empowerment for Christ-followers to live holy lives on earth.

Review assignment.—Col. 3:1-17 Break the passages into 3 groups (vv 1-4, 5-11, 12-17) using **Digging Deeper** & the red section of **How to Create a Bible Study**, prepare to **lead the group to discover what your team found important and what tells you about God, yourself, and what you see to be their next step is**. You can skip the context part because we did that piece in Session 5—Colossians 1:15-23 (Refer to it only to remind them why it is a helpful step when it is the first time in a book of the Bible.

Have each team lead the group discussion on their assigned passage.

Did you gain any insights or experience any discoveries in processing this assignment?

Identification with Christ: Digging Deeper: Col. 3:1-17

✓ **Supplemental:** Slowly lead the discussion of the passage, noting the value in the Digging Deeper steps and the discoveries within the passage. **Look for what it reveals to you about God, about yourself or humanity, and what you need to do?**

✕ Note the indirect reference to the kingdom authority factor in v 1 “on things above - unseen” in contrast to “on earthly things - seen”.

✕ **V 2 [We must choose to set..] We don’t have the power to change our hearts. But we do have the power to reorient our minds. EX: If I stop justifying that activity or that habit—if I reorient my mind — God will use His power to change my heart. But He won’t change my heart until I take the initiative to reorient my mind.**

✓ [ref. chorus: Turn your Eyes Upon Jesus] When we fix our eyes on God’s kingdom life, He changes our heart’s desires and perspectives. It is like what happens when you shift from looking for a mate to being married to a person.

✓ How might the perspective of a childhood traumatization (raised in a ghetto with parents on drugs or in gangs OR in a privileged affluent home) become changed? When a person is spiritually regenerated (Ez. 36:27), the Spirit stamps a love for Christ in your heart (**attachment love**). Subsequently, like a newborn child with its mother or a duckling with its mother, you want to follow/please Christ.

✓ Paul is teaching, since you are dead to self and alive to Christ, intentionally look at your earthly life through the lens of your attachment/mutual mind with Christ, who is in heaven. A solid encounter with Christ has proven to dramatically change the perspective of scores of people throughout history.

✓ How might 1 Cor 9:24-27 offer insight into the extent to which we should go to change the focus of our minds?

a) Divide the group into smaller groups or ask them to join with someone else to reflect on what they found interesting in these passages.

b) **Figure out together what you believe to be the most critical thoughts in this passage.**

c) **Write out 6-8 open-ended thought-provoking questions, related to your discoveries in this passage, which will force others to think through a specific verse(s) deeply enough to answer the question and realize the see the message you believe the Spirit would have them remember.**

d) Make every effort to lead others to self-discover that message. This is what writing an effective Bible study is all about.

- ✧ V 3 What might it mean if we are ‘hidden’? a) our well-being is dependent on His well-being, b) we are with Christ, or c) “hidden in Christ in God”? How secure might that be until we appear with Christ in His glory?
 - ✓ How significant might the word “dead” be in the context of the promise of being “hidden with Christ in God”?

✧ What might this whole passage or individual concepts reveal about God (His value system, ways, character)?

✧ What might it expose about you or all of humanity?

✧ What should be your/humanity’s response to these observations?

✧ Discuss how it may apply in our culture.

- ✓ What did you learn from this assignment? Did it give you a sense of how you can continue your personal study after these sessions are completed?
- ✓ How might what we have just reflected on be relevant and/or helpful to someone you know?

Assignment before the last Session:

1. As our last session approaches, you get to pick the passage we use. You may
 - a) Pick a passage you find meaningful, and we’ll explore it together.
 - b) Decide on a passage that the group will develop and direct.
 - c) Select the standard Galatians 5:16-26 (fruit of the Spirit) and have everyone create their own Digging Deeper style for insightful nuggets.
2. **Regardless of your selection, anticipate the Spirit's guidance while considering and discussing the text.**
3. If you select B or C (above), using the Sample Daily Study handout (plus Digging Deeper and How to Create a Bible Study documents), create your own unique study method for our passage, then explain its design, reasoning, and insights. Make sure you write down your discussion question answers. **This exercise will set you on your way to future devotional times. Studying the Bible regularly will help you grow spiritually.**

Session 9 Purpose: Ask for each to briefly report on the following Questions. Privately assess how well they have learned all the skills presented by...

- a) How did you go about preparing for tonight's passage?
 - b) What significant insights did you sense God's Spirit may be revealed to you? (Observe: How many insights they discover in the selected passage?)
 - c) Observe their energy level as they present their work? [Information you glean from this will provide you insights on how to coach them when they work through this material others.]
- This passage offers exceptionally powerful spiritual insights, so be careful not to rush going through the Digging Deeper steps with them. Pray for the Holy Spirit to speak through the passage to as many as possible in the group.

◇ Profile of a Growing Christ-follower

Digging Deeper: Galatians 5:16-26

Purpose: Explore the fruit of God's work in a believer's life and review several concepts presented in the sessions. Stress it is about being filled with God's Spirit instead of wasting energy fighting bad ideas.

Use all but the last 15 minutes to walk through the passage using the Digging Deeper steps. [Keep in mind they will model how you lead through the steps.]

1. As you go through the passage verse by verse, first ask them to share their Bible Study question(s) related to each verse. Be sensitive since what they share will most likely bear marks of the Spirit's revelation to them. Try hard to express affirmation about what your spirit leads you to affirm in what they share.
2. Share revelations you also picked up as you prepared so they can feel you are with them on this journey. [Sample questions.]
 - In this context, what might the word "fruit" imply about spiritual life? [not works or gifts, it comes naturally in one's growing relationship with Christ.]
 - ✓ Why do we find it so difficult to bear the fruit of the Spirit in our circumstances? [Our constant battle with our sin nature. Flip the script on Satan by investing in proactivity—adjusting your life to bear healthy fruit in contrast to wasting energy on not doing bad things.] (Chasing after being more intimate with God is far more rewarding. Furthermore, it is impossible to head North (towards God) and South (towards fleshly desires) at the same time.
 - If you compare side by side the list in vss. 19-21 with those in vss. 22-23, what does it reveal about the root motivation in one's life? [The first list focuses on self-gratification, while the second focuses on honoring our awesomeness God.]
 - Gal. 5:24—How do we have victory over the sinful nature because of what Christ achieved on the cross? What does this passage teach us about how we can implement this victory in our lives? Fruit is the operative word here. [put into practice what we already have in Christ—command; Romans 8:13] put to death... Rom. 6:11 reckon ourselves dead and alive.]
 - If the author wrote the passage to unbelievers vs believers, how might it influence interpretation Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14 Keep this in mind when sharing scripture with others.
3. Again, point out the reference to the connection to the Kingdom of God (5:21). This will help them keep the concept of the unseen qualities of Kingdom of God in their mind when they share the material with others.

- ✓ What might this whole passage or individual concepts reveal about God (His value system, ways, character)?
- ✓ What might it expose about you or all humanity?
- ✓ What should be your/humanity's response to these observations?
- ✓ Discuss how it may apply in our culture.

Explore: How do you imagine using what you have learned in your personal quiet time with God? Distribute and discuss a **Sample Bible Study** model that can be modified to fit their personality.

Use the last 5-7 minutes, push them a bit to answer at least the essence of the following evaluation questions. Their answers can provide ideas on how to adapt this material when used with others.

◇ **Evaluation.**

- ✓ Using a scale of 1-10 (10 is high), try to identify the level of **your hunger to know God** through His Word before and after these sessions. Before ___; After ___
- ✓ **What parts** of our experience together were **most effective in giving you a greater passion** for hearing God's whispers as you read God's word?... most confusing.
- ✓ Discuss how this model of Bible study can engage those they may lead in a deeper life-giving study of God's word.
- ✓ **How can I help you achieve that objective?**

◇ **Suggestions for moving forward to help others.**

- ✓ Explore your desire to know God better through His Word, with 3-5 individuals who you sense may share that hunger. Try to get the group to meet weekly to adapt the Digging Deeper model to go through a book of the Bible together.
- ✓ If each person uses the How to Prepare a Bible Study model to prepare one thought stimulating question, your time together can be very rewarding.
- ✓ I suggest 3 or more attendees because there are valid reasons some cannot attend one week. I also recommend limiting it to 6 so everyone will freely contribute their thoughts.
- ✓ I recommend starting with a shorter book like James, Colossians, Philippians, or one of John's three books. If brave enough, you can try a longer one, like the gospel of John or Mark.
- ✓ Always begin and end with prayer, especially for needs mentioned in the group.

Pray over them, asking the Spirit to empower and direct them as they seek His guidance for leading others in developing this skill set for reading the Bible.

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Colossians 1:15-23 with Meaning Indicators

<p>Four types of meaning indicators:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Those that have the <u>same, similar or contrasting meanings</u>: Colossians 1:21-22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Referring to the same person or thing: (NIV) like “God” (v 21) & “he” (v 22) * “Alienated” and “enemies” (v 21) * “Alienated” (v 20) and “reconciled” (v 22) 2. Those that indicate <u>stylistic features, e.g. repetition in form or meaning</u>: (1 Corinthians 1:22-23 NIV) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Jews demanded miraculous signs” a * “Greeks look for wisdom” b * “But we preach Christ crucified” [central thought] * “A stumbling block to Jews” a * “And foolishness to Gentiles” b 3. Those that indicate the relationships between the different sentences and parts of sentences, <u>connecting them together, e.g. conjunctive type words like and, if, so that, etc.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Colossians 1:21-23 ‘and’, ‘because’ v 21; ‘but’, ‘and’ v 22; ‘if’, ‘and’ v 23 * Hinge words: Rom. 11:30 “once” “but now” 4. Those words or phrases that seem meaningful and could be ‘game changing’ or defining.
<p>Contextual information within the book of Colossians:</p> <p>1:1 Who wrote the book? <u>Paul</u></p> <p>1:1,4:12, 14 Who was with the author when he wrote it? <u>Timothy, Epaphras, Luke, Demas</u></p> <p>1:2 To whom was the letter written? <u>Colossians</u></p> <p>4:18 Where was Paul when the letter was written? <u>Prison in Rome</u></p> <p>1:7 Who preached the gospel to the believers who received the letter? <u>Epaphras</u></p> <p>2:1 Had Paul ministered to the Colossians before? <u>No</u></p> <p>2:8 What did the Colossians have to watch out for? <u>False teachers</u></p> <p>2:16 What was the false teaching they needed to resist? <u>Gnosticism</u></p> <p>4:12-13 Where was Epaphras when the letter was written? <u>With Timothy and others in Rome</u></p>

Colossians 1:15-23 (NIV)

1. 15 He is the image of the invisible God,
2. the firstborn over all creation.
3. 16 For by him all things were created:
4. things in heaven and on earth,
5. visible and invisible,
6. whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities;
7. all things were created by him
8. **and** for him.
9. 17 He is before all things, **and**
10. in him all things hold together.
11. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church;

Meaning of keywords

Image [likeness, representative, VS invisible] [formless] [trichotomy? Gen. 1:26-27]

Firstborn [preeminence over]

By Him/for Him

Heaven/invisible vs. earth/visible
? spirits (Is. 45:7) cf. Ez. 28:15)

Incomprehensible – Awe Col. 2:6-8

Before/held together

Head of body=church

Synopsis

Response to heresy that depreciated the person and work of Christ

This section portrays the awesomeness of Christ

12. he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead,
13. **so that** in everything **he might have the supremacy.**
14. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,
15. 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things,
16. whether things on earth or things in heaven,
17. by making peace through his blood,
18. shed on the cross.
19. **21** Once you were **alienated** from God
20. and were **enemies in your minds**
21. *because of your* evil behavior.
22. 22 But now he has **reconciled** you
23. by Christ's physical body
24. through death
25. **to present you**
26. **holy** in his sight,
27. **without blemish**
28. and **free from accusation**—
29. 23 **if** you **continue** in your faith,
30. established and firm,
31. not moved from the hope
32. held out in the **gospel**.
33. This is the **gospel** that you heard
34. and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven,
35. and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Supremacy- Ref. “firstborn”, “beginning”, “head” Ex context provides definition

God’s motivation for doing all that is recorded – (?? spilled milk)

all His fullness

He wanted to reconcile ALL things, include..|other spirits?

Earth & Heaven

w/o shedding of blood (Heb. 9:22)

alienated/enemies in your minds vs reconciled
*Italic means not original; it isn’t because of **behavior**.
 Bad behavior is a product of a misled mind/ideas. Gen. 6:5*

Here’s the Why

His purpose “is to”

Holy/without blemish/free from accusation

What might “if” mean?
 [how does one not continue? Neglecting relationship?
 [abide in Him cp. Jn. 15:4-9]

Established/firm/not moved
 What is the gospel? [Good News of the Kingdom.. Mt. 4:23, 9:35, 24:14]

This section focuses on the possible affects the works of the awesome Christ had on humanity

Ephesians 2:1-10 (ESV)

1. 1 And you were dead [what does dead look like? zombie – Col. 1 alienated, enemies]
2. in the trespasses [stepping off the path] and sins [a miss].
3. 2 in which you once walked,
4. following the course of this world, [what does ‘course of the world’ look like? Cultural thinking, mores?]
5. following the prince of the power of the air,
6. the spirit that is now at work
7. in the sons of disobedience
8. 3 among whom we all once lived
9. in the passions of our flesh,
10. carrying out the desires of the body and the mind,
11. and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
12. 4 But God, being rich in mercy,
13. because of the great love with which he loved us,
14. 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses,
15. made us alive together with Christ
16. by grace you have been saved
17. 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places
18. in Christ Jesus,
19. 7 so that in the coming ages (cf. Eph 3:10; similar to Pharaoh in Rom 9:17)
20. he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
21. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. [intuitive conviction - whose faith?? What does faith look like? Hebrews 11; We must be willing to see God as he is before God can further reveal himself to us and give us more faith.
22. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
23. 9 not a result of works,
24. [why?] so that no one may boast.

25. 10 For we are his workmanship,
26. created in Christ Jesus for good works,
27. which God prepared beforehand,
28. that we should walk in them.

Colossians 3:1-17 (NIV)

- 1 Since, then, you have been raised [cf 2:12] with Christ,
- 2 **set** [God doesn't force this, **you must choose to do this**] your hearts [desires] on things above, (**as unbelievers seek** wealth, popularity, sex, etc. **believers seek** more intimacy with Christ, Bible truths about Christ & God, etc.)
- 3 where Christ is seated at the right hand of God [kingdom authority/rule factor].
- 4 **2 Set** [cf. other translations] your minds [thinking/concentrating on] **on things above**, [prioritize pleasing the king] in what way might "where Christ is seated" suggest as to what the "things above" might refer to? Kingdom of God/authority or rule of God]
- 5 **not on earthly things**. [in contrast with w/ independence of man/self-rule
- 6 **3 For** you died, [Rom. 6: emerged & resurrected in water baptism- dead people don't have an appetite)
- 7 and your life is now hidden [unseen/dead used to be referred to as hidden in the earth] **with Christ in God**. [Total security]
- 8 **4 When Christ, who is your life, appears,**
- 9 **then you also will appear** [seen] **with him in glory**. People won't see you for who you are, as a co-heir with Christ, until He appears in His glory [honor/fame]. We will then be taking part in His glory

Colossians 3:5-11 (NIV)

- 1 **5 Put to death, therefore**, (Rom. 6:11) [after being regenerated, you have new desires but old ones still linger and tempt you. Like dead or diseased limbs on a tree, take initiative to cut them off)
- 2 whatever belongs to your **earthly nature**:
- 3 sexual immorality,
- 4 impurity,
- 5 lust,
- 6 evil desires
- 7 and greed,
- 8 **which is idolatry**.
- 9 **6 Because of these**, the wrath of God is coming.
- 10 **7 You used to walk in these ways**,
- 11 **in the life you once lived**.
- 12 **8 But now you** must **rid yourselves** (like **you** put off/disrobe the old, filthy clothes)
- 13 **of all such things as these**:
- 14 anger,

15 rage,
16 malice,
17 slander,
18 and filthy language from your lips.
19 9 Do not lie to each other,
20 since you have taken off your old self with its practices
21 10 and have put on the new self, (put on clean clothes)
22 which is being renewed in knowledge
23 in the image of its Creator. (Cf. Eph 4:13)
24 11 Here (in Christ) there is no Greek or Jew,
25 circumcised or uncircumcised,
26 barbarian,
27 Scythian,
28 slave or free,
29 but Christ is all, and is in all.

Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV)

1 12 Therefore, as God's chosen people,
2 holy and dearly loved,
3 clothe yourselves with compassion, (put on like putting on clean/new clothes. You do
this by taking initiative to break old habits like breaking eating/cursing habits)
4 kindness,
5 humility,
6 gentleness
7 and patience.
8 13 Bear with each other
9 and forgive whatever grievances
10 you may have against one another.
11 Forgive as the Lord forgave you.
12 14 And over all these virtues put on love,
13 which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Colossians 3:15-17 (NIV)

Note the context....

- 1 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
- 2 since as members of one body you were called to peace.
- 3 And be thankful.
- 4 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly
- 5 as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom,
- 6 and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs
- 7 with gratitude in your hearts to God.
- 8 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed,
- 9 do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus,
- 10 giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Galatians 5:16-26 (NIV)

- ✓ What are the most poignant points you would want help others grasp?
- ✓ How would you plan to bring them to that discovery?

16 So I say, **live** by the **Spirit**,
and you will not gratify the **desires** of the **sinful nature**.

17 For the **sinful nature desires** what is contrary to the Spirit,
and the **Spirit** what is contrary to the sinful nature.

They are **in conflict** with each other,
so that you do not do what you want (same as desires in previous verse). Rm 7?

18 But **if** you are led by the **Spirit**, (Rm 8)
you are not under **law**. (Mosaic)

19 The **acts** of the **sinful nature** are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft (??); hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

I warn you, as I did before, that those who **live** like this **will not inherit** (receive full benefits of) the **kingdom of God**.
(Key is in understanding the whole/the reign of His rule and authority over our desires/preferences/ambitions)

22 But the **fruit** (singular; grows with our cooperation, not self-discipline) of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.

Against such things there is no **law**. (righteous vs Mosaic law)

24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the **sinful nature** (Rm 6:11-13)

with its passions and **desires**. (*How do you know you have crucified them?*)

25 Since we **live** by the **Spirit**, let us keep in step with the **Spirit**.

26 Let us not become conceited (expression of the **sin nature**), provoking and envying each other.

- Contrast between the fruit of the **Spirit** (selflessness) and **sin nature** (self, flesh/soul)
- Just as we live in two worlds, we also have two natures with very different **desires** within us living at the same time.
 - ✓ How do you distinguish the difference between their voices?
 - ✓ Which is the real you? You must decide!
- “Witchcraft”: use of spiritual tools to get what you want/to manipulate others/spiritual manipulation.
- What does “live” look like to you?
- Is the **Spirit** (v 25) the same as Jesus?
- What does “keep in step” look like to you?

Sample Exegesis of John 5:44 (NIV)

1st Notice the internal juxtaposition (contrasting concepts)

2nd note key words (those you are drawn to) in each line

3rd define the key words

4th summary of what Jesus is saying

John 5:44	Meaning of Keywords	Synopsis
<p>How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?</p>	<p>Believe—be convinced of, have confidence in, entrust,</p> <p>Accept—to get something, grasp, collect, take hold of</p> <p>From—source</p> <p>One another/God—relationship</p> <p>Praise—honor, good opinion</p> <p>No effort—seek, try to get, look for, inquire into</p>	<p>You cannot go north and south at the same time. If you grasp/collect honor from one another, you cannot be convinced of, or have confidence in, or trust God.</p>

Believe – meaningful - subject

If – Conjunctive - conditional

Accept/no effort to obtain - Contrast

From (2) – Repetitious – the source if what is desired

Praise (2) - Repetitious – what is desired

One another/God - Relational (contrasting)

Questions:

How might Jesus' words here be warning us of the respectability trap?

What might this tell us happens to our spiritual progress the moment we find ourselves seeking respectability from others

Galatians 5:16-26 (NIV) [notes by line numbers]

The more fully you understand and apply the meaning of this passage and begin to live it out, no matter how mature you are in your Christian faith, you will find more freedom than you have ever had in your entire life. This passage presents the gospel in its clearest and most beautiful, profound form. It best summarizes and presents God's promise to us through Christ Jesus. What then do we have to do to see that the fruit in our lives comes through surrendering and reconnecting with God in the Word and prayer?

1. 16 So I say [The preceding passage (context) speaks of living a life of freedom], live [what does live mean here/where might it be similar-line 17, 24-25] by the Spirit, [What might live BY refer to?]
2. and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. [A concise form of the heart of this passage]
3. 17 For the sinful nature desires
4. what is contrary to the Spirit,
5. and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. [Where might personal wants come into the picture, or is it either the Spirit's desires or the sinful nature's desire?]
6. They are in conflict with each other, [cf. Rom. 7:14-24]
7. so that you do not do what you want. [same as desires in lines 2, 3]
8. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit,
9. you are not under the law. [What law is he referring to? .. not the righteous law but the efforts to perform]
10. 19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: [Celts were known for their crudeness—perhaps still evident in the church]
11. sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;
12. 20 idolatry and witchcraft; [witchcraft = use of spiritual tools to get what you want as to manipulate/spiritual manipulation]
13. hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition,
14. dissensions, factions, and envy,
15. drunkenness, orgies, and the like.
16. I warn you, as I did before,
17. that those who live like this
18. will not inherit [receive the full benefit of] the kingdom of God. [Kingdom is key to understanding the whole/the reign of His rule or authority]
19. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
20. faithfulness, 23, gentleness and self-control. [fruit {singular} the natural results of God's Spirit grown in us as we pursue spiritual nourishment in His Word, prayer, etc.]

21. Against such things there is no **law**. [What law is he referring to? Mosaic or righteous law]
22. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus
23. have crucified the **sinful nature**
24. with its **passions and desires**.
25. 25 Since we live by the **Spirit**, [Does the Spirit mean the same as Christ Jesus?]
26. let us keep in step [what does this refer to? Live out what you have been given] with the **Spirit**.
27. 26 Let us not become conceited, [conceit is an expression of the sin nature/independence]
28. provoking and envying each other.

False teachings the church at Colossae faced.

The NIV Study Bible provides information on the false teaching that Paul sought to warn the Colossians about: Paul never explicitly describes the false teaching he opposes in the Colossian letter. The nature of the heresy must be inferred from statements he made in opposition to the false teachers. An analysis of his refutation suggests that the heresy was diverse in nature. Some of the elements of its teachings were:

1. Ceremonialism. It held to strict rules about the kinds of permissible food and drink, religious festivals (2:16-17) and circumcision (2:11; 3:11).
2. Asceticism. “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” (2:21; cf 2:23).
3. Angel worship. See 2:18.
4. Devaluing the person and work of Christ. This is implied in Paul’s stress on the supremacy of Christ (1:15-20; 2:2-3, 9).
5. Secret knowledge. They taught salvation comes through a secret (‘gnosis’ – knowledge) that frees the soul from the body of sin. The Gnostics boasted of this (see 2:18 and Paul’s emphasis in 2:2-3 on Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom”).
6. Reliance on human wisdom and tradition. See 2:4, 8.

These elements seem to fall into two categories, Jewish and Gnostic. It is likely, therefore, that the Colossian heresy was a mixture of an extreme form of Judaism and an early stage of Gnosticism.

Gnosticism

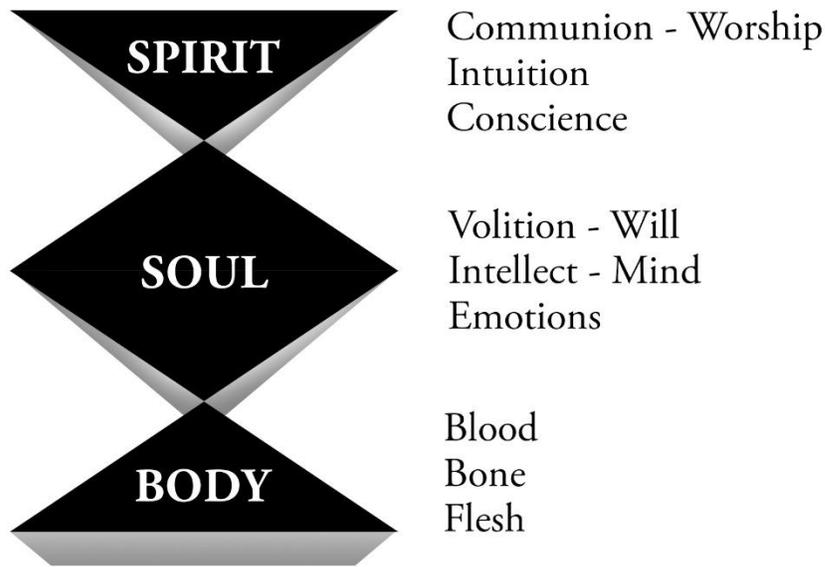
Gnosticism is a mystical religion that mixes myths and practices from a variety of religious traditions including occultism and magic. One of the central teachings of Gnosticism is that ‘matter’ is totally evil but that the ‘spiritual’ is totally good. This dualism leads to wrong thinking and suggests:

- One must escape from the world and the body (which are evil) by trying to obtain secret knowledge and so return to the spiritual world. This is the Gnostic concept of salvation. In contrast Paul writes that in Christ ‘are hidden all the treasures of wisdom’ (Col 2:2-3).
- Because the body is evil, it has to be treated harshly. In response, Paul deals with this in Col 2:21-23.
- Alternatively, because the body is evil, sin committed by the body has no moral consequence. In contrast, Paul strongly advises the believers to ‘put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature’ (Col 3:5).

The Gnostics denied the humanity of Christ in two ways. Some taught that Christ only seemed to have a body and was thus not really human. Others said that the divine (spiritual) Christ joined the man Jesus at his baptism and left him again just before he died on the cross.

This skewed teaching is so subtle that a form of this is found in many levels of society as well as religion—in nearly every church. The extremism of having inner spiritual that separates one from other Biblically focused believers could be a classic example of this. Therefore, the underlying principle of Gnostics needs to be understood well enough to avoid falling into such heresy today.

Spirit, Soul, Body



God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. John 4: 24 (NIV)

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like ourselves. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." Genesis 1:26 (NLT2)

Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person. Genesis 2:7 (NLT2)

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NIV)

When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables." Mark 4:10-11 (NIV)

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things?" Mark 2:8 (NIV)

1 Corinthians 2:14 (NIV) The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The “Why” of the Bible

The Bible presents God as the Creator and King of all creation, describing Him as an incredibly powerful, self-sustaining energy source who speaks with such authority that material objects appear out of nothing. God created all things and continues to hold all that is physical together.

When God created humans in His own image, they were superior to His other creations. Their virtues included a creative mind, the capacity to rule, and free will. God’s ultimate purpose was to delegate a slice of His absolute authority to His children to rule with Him over all His creation.

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve succumbed to the devil’s seduction, disregarding God’s authority and asserting their independence. This compelled a totally just God to banish His now fallen creation from His perfect kingdom. This brief backstory leads us to *why the Bible*. God empowered His Word to be written to communicate His authority, truth, mercy, and grace to His prized yet imperfect creation. He desires for us to turn from our independence, receive His mercy and grace, and live again under His authority in His kingdom.

While we chose independence from His authority, our choice did not keep His purpose from being fulfilled. Just delayed. His curse included a promise that one of Eve’s offspring would crush the devil’s head. (Genesis 3:15) Jesus, God the Son, fulfilled this promise: those who choose to surrender to Him, He would use to fulfill His original purpose.

Inspired by the Spirit of God, the Bible uses facts, metaphors and multiple literary genres to communicate the unseen world and His authority to fallen humanity. Instead of being angry and vindictive, God displays His unexplainable mercy and grace. He also reveals the life-giving principles of His authority as King and His relentless love. For those who choose to reverse Adam and Eve’s choice to be independent, He graciously restores and empowers to live an abundant life on earth and eternity, ruling and reigning with Him forever.

God’s kingdom is not a place but a condition where His authority, presence and power flow in and through His people. Wherever the supernatural occurs and God’s sovereign will is fulfilled, His future kingdom has come into the present, here and now. When a miracle happens, a prophecy is made, teaching is anointed, His kingdom is being made real.

Bringing His kingdom, His reign in heaven to earth, is the dominate theme throughout the Bible, especially in Jesus’ teachings. This kingdom represents a governing authority which has existed from before creation and will never end. (Psalm 145:13, Daniel 7:14) Like the man who sold everything to buy a field with a hidden treasure or the merchant in search of fine pearls who sold everything he owned when he discovered a pearl of immense value, we will never regret selling everything to be best friends with our Creator. (Matthew 13:44-46)

Prepare to Discuss:

1. What might it take to motivate the described responses in a person?
2. What relevant treasures and pearls of truth might our King long for us to know and enjoy about Him and His kingdom when we drill down into what the Bible says?