

I. Pursuing a Hunger for God through his Word

May God increase a hunger in us for himself through his word and use us as his servants to birth and sustain that same hunger in the next generation!

A. Isaiah 50:4-6

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B. Psalm 1

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C. Ideas for Application

1. Increase your own hunger for encountering God in his Word. For years John Piper preached a sermon every January at Bethlehem Baptist Church about seeking Jesus in the Word. Find these sermons and many more on the Bible and Christian growth here: <http://tinyurl.com/DGbibleresources>
2. Prayerfully develop a biblically robust vision (or purpose) statement fleshing out God's desires for Scriptural literacy & growth in the students you shepherd. Two examples include David & Sally Michael's "[A Vision for Biblical Literacy in the Next Generation](#)" and [Bethlehem Baptist Young Adult \(Sr. High\) Vision Pillar](#), "Feasting on God's Word".
3. Seek the LORD in prayer for the young people in your inner circle of care (your children, small group, etc.). What is God's next step for them in encountering himself in the Scriptures? (ie: salvation, consistency, where to begin, challenges with reading, help navigating a difficult biblical book, etc.). Pray regularly about that need, and seek his wisdom and equipping to serve them in moving forward.

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II. Doctrine

Right practice flows from right doctrine; therefore, we must build and maintain a solid foundation of biblical doctrine on all matters, including the Scripture itself and biblical interpretation (hermeneutics). See Titus 1:9.

A. Biblical Doctrines of God's Word

We must steep our young people in the amazing things God teaches us in the Bible about the Bible.

1. The Word of God We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20, 21; Mark 13:31; John 8:31,32; John 20:31; Acts 20:32) - Congregational Affirmation of Faith, Bethlehem Baptist Church <http://www.hopeingod.org/document/congregational-affirmation-faith>

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

B. Ideas for Application:

1. Study and refresh your own soul's appreciation about the doctrine of God's Word in Chapter 4-5 of Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*.
2. Read through and consider teaching sections from *God Wrote a Book* by James MacDonald. (This resource can be especially helpful for new believers or those not yet embracing Jesus Christ for salvation).
3. Intentionally teach your young people doctrine—systematically—on this subject.
4. In your family and corporate teaching, when a text speaks of itself as God's Word, take a two minute diversion and highlight the glories of God's Word in that text.

C. Properly Handling God's Word

We must hold to, practice, and instill Biblical convictions on the right use of the Bible.

“...the meaning of Biblical texts is a fixed historical reality, rooted in the historical, unchangeable intentions of its divine and human authors... Therefore, the process of discovering the intention of God in the Bible... is a humble and careful effort to find in the language of Scripture what the human authors intended to communicate.” - BBC Elder Affirmation of Faith (1.3 & 1.4)

D. Ideas for Application:

1. Study and build your own convictions on this matter. (One example is Robert H. Stein's *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules*).
2. Be ruthless in eliminating curriculum or teaching styles that ask the question, “What does this verse mean to you?”
3. Interview and/or train your teachers and staff hires on this matter.

4. When you teach, as often as possible, set up your text with background on the author & his original intention, as well as the original audience and situation.
5. Young people are impacted by our oft repeated, favorite phrases. Consider making one of yours something like, "What did this mean to them?"

III. Prayer

God by his Spirit is the main actor in interpreting spiritual truths to his people from the Word (1 Corinthians 2:13). Therefore, prayer is integral to our study of the Word and we should humbly beseech him for grace.

A. God's Call to Dependence

The Bible highlights the need and models the act of prayer over the Word.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13—"Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual."

B. Ideas for Application:

1. Refresh your own soul on the importance of prayer (*Cultivating Private Prayer as a Pastor* by Joe Beeke, January 31, 2001: <http://tinyurl.com/privateprayer>)
2. Develop a list of Scriptures to pray through for your times in the Word (like Psalm 119:18, 139:23-24, etc.), as well as Scriptures to pray for your young people and their interaction in the Word (Acts 17:11, Philippians 1:9-11, etc.)
3. Create a bookmark of Scriptures for your students to pray through as they launch into the Word.

IV. Read

All Scripture is profitable! We must labor to make it all accessible!

A. God's Word Beckons us to its Entirety

What is our diet? What are we serving up? What do we rave about?

B. Ideas for Application:

1. Evaluate your current Biblical diet, and consider spending time in books that may have been neglected.
 2. Familiarize (or re-familiarize) yourself with the tools in the ESV Study Bible and books like Fee & Stewart's *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* to make the more difficult books more accessible.
 3. Consider teaching from or through less familiar books of the Bible (the Minor Prophets, less familiar Psalms, etc.)
 4. Check out the three Bible Reading Journals written by the Young Adult (Sr. High) Team at Bethlehem which seek to help young people (and adults) walk through the Bible in three years: (<http://www.hopeingod.org/document/satisfied-word>).
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V. Rightly Handling the Word of Truth: Observation

The Bible was not originally written to us. It was written in a different time, in different languages, to people with different cultures, and the forms that we share (like narrative and poetry) play by different rules. Therefore, to interpret them correctly we need to learn their rules and seek to play by them.

A. God's Word is Meant to be Read on Its Own Terms

Oh to have the ears of the original audience!

B. Ideas for Application:

1. Brush up on your genre skills with books like *Grasping God's Word* by Duvall & Hays or *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Fee & Stewart.
2. Teach through a book of the Bible with two purposes: 1) to pass on proper skills for interpretation and 2) to allow God to mold you by his powerful Word.
3. Join an inductive Bible study to not only study the Bible, but also to learn Bible study skills.
4. Don't wait until students are in high school—consider taking younger children through one of the many "*Discover 4 Yourself*" Inductive Bible Studies for Kids by Kay Arthur & Janna Arndt.

VI. Strive for Biblical Accuracy: Interpretation

The Bible is twisted by the ignorant and unstable to their destruction (see 2 Timothy 2:23). Therefore, it is our calling to strive to both become Bereans ourselves, and to disciple young people to be Bereans who examine the Scriptures daily to see if the things they read and are taught are truly so (see Acts 17:11).

A. Four Simple Questions to Increase Accuracy:

- #1: How does the surrounding context help me understand the meaning of this passage?
- #2: What did the original author want to communicate to the original audience here?
- #3: What is unclear in this passage that could be clarified by other clear passages?
- #4: Do other passages say the same thing to confirm truths found here?

B. Ideas for Application:

1. Use and adapt the above questions in your personal Bible study, and incorporate them into your times with young people in the Word.
2. Cultivate a heart of gentleness and respect in your young people (see Colossians 4:3-6 & 1 Peter 3:15-16) while at the same time allowing them to interact with “heretical case studies” from the news, websites of other religious groups, or real life occurrences. (For example, if you are studying eternal punishment in hell, bring in some quotes with Biblical texts used by those who support annihilation or universalism).
3. Provide opportunities for your young people to wrestle with difficult texts where interpretation is difficult.

VII. Let Every Text Propel You to the Gospel

It is God's desire that every text of Scripture beckon us to faith in him. Therefore, we must train our young people to look in the mirror of God's Word and see their sinfulness in light of God's holiness, gaze at the glorious person and cross-work of Christ, and rejoice in the benefits and glorious promises bought by it.

A. Five Questions to Propel You Towards Faith in Christ:

- Our Need: How does this text show the sinful heart & gospel need of the original audience and of myself? (Dorani, 171-172)
- Christ's Solution: How does this or other texts show that faith in Jesus is the remedy to my sinful condition? (Dorani, 171-172)

- Arrows Ahead: Does this Old Testament text act as a “preview” of the glorious saving work of Jesus Christ, or does it “point” to Jesus the Glorious Coming One?
- Glory on Display: Does this New Testament text highlight the wondrous Savior, Jesus Christ, and the gospel work accomplished in him?
- His Benefits Become Ours: Does this text display fruits earned for the believer because of Jesus’ sacrifice?

B. Ideas for Application:

1. Expand your thinking on this matter by consulting:
 - a) *Getting the Message* by Daniel Doriani (Chapter 12).
 - b) Reading the article, “History of Salvation in the Old Testament; Preparing the Way for Christ.” The English Standard Version Study Bible, pages 2635-2261).
 - c) Listening to the sermon, “[If You Believed Moses, You Would Believe Me, for He Wrote of Me](#)” by John Piper, October 4, 2009.
 2. Use and adapt the above questions in your personal Bible study and incorporate them into your times with young people in the Word.
 3. Intentionally teach in a way that highlights some of these aspects (our sinful condition, etc.).
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VIII. Humble Reception and Real Life Application

The thrust of our spending time in the Word is to encounter the living God and be changed. We dare not let ourselves or our people merely hear the words and build a house upon the sand; rather, we must put them into practice and build our house upon the rock.

A. We Need Help Knowing What to Apply

Does this text give me:

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| ❖ A command to obey | ❖ A character quality to imitate |
| ❖ A promise to hold on to | ❖ A prayer topic |
| ❖ An example to follow | ❖ Something to be thankful for |
| ❖ An example to avoid | ❖ A temptation to resist |
| ❖ A warning to heed | ❖ An error to avoid |
| ❖ Advice to follow | ❖ A perspective to ponder |
| ❖ An attitude to change | ❖ A priority to establish |
| ❖ Truth to believe | ❖ A tactic to employ |
| ❖ Teaching to put into practice | ❖ A verse to memorize |
| ❖ Sin to repent of and turn from | ❖ Something to teach or tell others |

B. Applying Scripture Biblically: “Living By Faith in Future Grace”

Does this passage present promises (or call me to search for promises) which, when heard and believed, will fuel life change?

“Seeing Jesus in All His Greatness!”

What sin is God calling me to kill? When I pursue that sin what aspect of Jesus’ greatness am I missing (i.e. his supreme value, satisfaction, sovereignty)? What Scriptures about Jesus can I meditate on to draw my affections to Jesus and away from sin?(2 Corinthians 3:18)

C. Ideas for Application:

1. Be equipped in this area through the various resources on the topic “Living By Faith in Future Grace” (a.k.a. Battling Unbelief) by John Piper at www.desiringGod.org.
 2. Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ: consider the role of beholding Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18) in sanctification and how you might lead your students to do so. See this blog posting by Tony Reinke: <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/we-become-what-we-worship>.
 3. Lead your young people through a series on Battling Unbelief (*Faith in Future Grace*).
 4. Use and adapt the above chart in your personal Bible study and incorporate it into your times with young people in the Word.
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IX. Teachers Must Equip the Flock!

Ephesians 4:11-16—And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

A. To handle God’s Word well to avoiding “being tossed to and fro.”

B. To encourage parents and mentors in prayerful close proximity shepherding.

X. Concluding Words

