

The Invitation Workbook

Revised

By Shawna M. Carpenter

The Invitation Workbook

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*This workbook is dedicated to the ministry school students who bore
with me as I created this curriculum and
to the Bible teachers and scholars who have ministered to me.*

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Introduction

Congratulations on deciding to take your Bible study to a deeper level. It is a great honor and joy for me as a teacher to help open up the Word of God to you in a fresh way. More importantly, I am equipping you to be able to find life and revelation through your own study of the Word. I have personally seen people, who did not think they would ever be Bible students, come alive with excitement as they realized the depth to which they could go in their Bible Study with just a few simple tools.

Along with “The Invitation” and “The Invitation Workbook” you will need:

- Your Bible in a modern translation such as ESV, NASB, or NIV
- If your Bible is not a Study Bible (such as the ESV Study Bible) you may want to purchase a Bible handbook that gives historical background and information on each book of the Bible. Some suggested resources:

Pat and David Alexander, ed. *Zondervan Handbook to the Bible*. Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan (1999).

Kay Arthur, *Discover the Bible for Yourself*. Harvest House Publishing, Eugene, Oregon (2000).

Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*. Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan (2002).

Jack W. Hayford ed. *The Hayford Bible Handbook*. Thomas Nelson Publishing, Nashville, TN (1995).

Also, the NIV Study Bible makes their introductory notes to each book of the Bible available at www.biblica.com/niv/study-bible.

- A notebook, journal or computer to record your study, thoughts and conversations with the Holy Spirit.
- Bible highlighters or colored pencils.
- An open heart and patience with yourself!

Unit 1: Isaiah 61:1-3 Comprehensive Bible Study

It may seem repetitive, but I cannot overemphasize the importance of inviting the Holy Spirit into the reading and studying process. Jesus, in John 16:13, calls the Holy Spirit the “Spirit of truth” who leads us into all truth. Paul tells us that “the Spirit searches everything; even the depths of God” and that “no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). It is because of the Spirit’s activity in revealing the thoughts of God to us that Paul declares us to have the mind of Christ! It is impossible to understand the truth and power of the Word of God unless the Holy Spirit reveals it to us. For this reason our study of God’s Word should include an ongoing invitation and conversation with the Holy Spirit. (*From “The Invitation” page 67*)

Exercise 1A: On the page below or in your notebook or journal write a prayer inviting the Holy Spirit into your study and meditation time. Remember to keep engaging the Holy Spirit in conversation and listening for revelation.

Discussion Question: How do you hear the Holy Spirit speak? Do you hear his still small voice, see pictures that mean something or in some other way? Discuss a time when you heard the Holy Spirit speak to you through Scripture and what he said.

Historical Setting

The first step in Biblical interpretation is always to seek to understand the historical setting in which the passage was written... A good Study Bible will begin to help you understand the historical background of the Biblical book you are studying and answer questions related to the author, the audience, the location and the time period of the text...

As you find information about the historical setting think about what life would have been like for the author and audience. Were they living in prosperity or impoverished, were they free or oppressed, did they live in peace or during a time of war? What challenges did they face? Was the author popular during his day or persecuted? What was his occupation? Answering these kinds of questions will help you to understand the setting and culture of the passage by connecting you to the people involved. (*From "The Invitation" page 69*)

Exercise 1B: Using a Bible study resource, answer the following questions:

1. Who was Isaiah? What do we know about his occupation, family and personality?
2. When was the book of Isaiah most likely written and what other world events were happening around that time?
3. What was happening in Judah during the time period of Isaiah's ministry?
4. Isaiah's ministry overlapped three other prophets. What were the messages of these other prophets?
 - a. Amos:
 - b. Hosea:
 - c. Micah:

-
5. Isaiah lived and ministered during the reigns of four Judean kings? What were these kings like?
 - a. Uzziah (Azariah): 2 Kings 15:1-7; 2 Chronicles 26
 - b. Jotham: 2 Kings 15:32-38; 2 Chronicles 27
 - c. Ahaz: 2 Kings 16; 2 Chronicles 28
 - d. Hezekiah: 2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chronicles 29-32
 6. Could Isaiah 61 have been written by a different author? If so, who and during what time period?
 7. According to your Study Bible or other resource, what is the theme of the book of Isaiah? Are there important sub-themes?
 8. According to your Study Bible or other resource, why was the book of Isaiah written? Was there a special occasion or purpose?

Each passage will also be written with a literary style relevant to the culture of the time. One author may be telling a story using narrative, another writing a poem, and another teaching through lecture. Just like you would read a letter from a friend with different expectations than a novel, different books of the Bible should be read with different expectations depending on their style. Also, different styles utilize different writing devices; some may use figurative language or cultural writing techniques that are unfamiliar to us today. Paul, for example, followed cultural protocols for constructing the letters that he wrote. (*From "The Invitation" page 69-70*)

Exercise 1C: Use the “Basic Literary Types” resource on page 36 (Unit 3) to answer the following questions:

1. What type of literature is Isaiah 61?
2. Is this passage forth-telling or foretelling?
3. Is this passage an announcement of disaster or of salvation?

Observation

“What does the passage say?”

Read and re-read the text in several translations and its literary context (the chapters surrounding the passage). In the various translations of the Bible, take note of words or phrases that communicate the ideas presented in a different way. As you read the context surrounding the passage take note of how it relates to the passage being studied. *(From “The Invitation” page 72)*

Review (Page 67)

- The basic steps of an inductive Bible study are _____, _____ and _____.
- Observation answers the question, “_____?”
- Interpretation answers the question, “_____?”
- And application answers the question, “_____?”
- Simply said, inductive Bible study tells us what a passage _____, _____ and _____.
- The primary source for answering these questions is _____.

Discussion Question: Why is it important to lay a foundation of observing the text before you begin the process of interpretation or application? What happens if you skip the observation phase of study?

Exercise 1D: Read Isaiah 61 in the ESV, NIV and NLT versions and compare the different translation with the words listed below and fill in the empty boxes. You can use an online Bible search website such as Biblegateway.com to do this.

<i>Verse</i>	<i>ESV</i>	<i>NIV</i>	<i>NLT</i>
1	“bring”		“bring”
	“bind up”	“bind up”	
	“proclaim freedom”		“proclaim release”
	“opening of the prison”	“release from darkness”	
	“to those who are bound”		“prisoners”
2	Note change in phrasing order in verse 2 between versions.		
	“year”	“year”	
	“vengeance”	“vengeance”	
3	“grand”		“give”
	“Zion”	“Zion”	
	“beautiful headdress”		
	“oil of gladness”	“oil of joy”	
	“garment of praise”	“garment of praise”	

Discussion Question: How does reading the passage in different translations help broaden your understanding of the passage itself? Did you find any phrases particularly surprising or enlightening once you read them in a translation you are not as familiar with?

Review (page 68)

- The literary context is composed of the _____ and _____ surrounding a passage.
- Sometimes a word itself is not enough to _____. You may need _____ (the context) to understand what the meaning of the word is.
- The context of a Bible passage will include, at the very least, _____.
- Often, I will also read _____ the passage, or _____.

Exercise 1E: Read the literary context of Isaiah 61:1-3 (Isaiah 59:1-63:6) and answer the questions below.

1. In this passage of Isaiah what is the problem (59:2) and what is not the problem (59:1)?
2. What is the result of the problem (59:9-15)?

-
3. What is the solution (59:16-21)?
 4. How is the person described in Isaiah 59:20-21 related to the person described in Isaiah 61:1-3?
 5. In Isaiah 60 what is the result of the Redeemer coming to Zion (59:20)?
 6. How is Isaiah 60:20-21 related to Isaiah 61:1-3?
 7. In Isaiah 61 how are verses 6, 7, 10, and 11 related to verses 1-3?
 8. What does the author pray for in Isaiah 62?
 9. How is Isaiah 62:3-5 related to Isaiah 61:1-3?
 10. How is Isaiah 63:1-6 related to Isaiah 59:16-21 and 61:1-3?

Discussion Question: How did reading the literary context of Isaiah 61:1-3 help broaden your understanding of the passage?

Exercise 1F: In your Bible or in the text below...

1. **Highlight** any thoughts or phrases that stand out to you. These should include comparisons made, things that are contrasted or lists that are made, as well as any “if-then” or “therefore” statements. You should also note when the “voice” changes in a passage. For example, the author may start out speaking as himself but then suddenly switch so that he is speaking on behalf of God.
2. **Circle** any repeated words, phrases or ideas. What is the most repeated word or phrase in the passage? This will give you a hint to the theme of the passage.
3. **Underline** any people, places, events or dates that may help to establish the historical setting of the passage or information regarding the author, audience or subject.

Isaiah 61:1-3: English Standard Version

¹The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, ^[SEP]because the Lord has anointed me ^[SEP]to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, ^[SEP]to proclaim liberty to the captives, ^[SEP]and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, ^[SEP]and the day of vengeance of our God; ^[SEP]to comfort all who mourn;

³ to grant to those who mourn in Zion—^[SEP]to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, ^[SEP]the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; ^[SEP]that they may be called oaks of righteousness, ^[SEP]the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

Exercise 1G: Ask open-ended questions! Sometimes the questions we ask can be answered by the passage itself; other times we may have to do research outside the text. At this point, only worry about asking the questions, not answering them.

Who _____?

What _____?

Where _____?

When _____?

Why _____?

How _____?

_____?

_____?

_____?

_____?

Exercise 1H: Taking the passage at face value, identify what seems to be the theme or title of the passage. In the text above, how would the author finish this sentence:

“I am writing about _____”

Discussion Question: How did you arrive at your conclusion about the theme of Isaiah 61:1-3?

I find it helpful to create a general outline of the passage using the observational notes I've taken. I can use this outline as a foundation when I begin the interpretation phase of my study. (*From "The Invitation" page 73*)

Exercise II: Fill in the outline below.

Isaiah 61:1-3 Outline

I. Historical Setting

- a. Author: _____
- b. Audience: _____
- c. Location: _____
- d. Date: _____
- e. Literary style: _____

II. Observation

a. Three thoughts or phrases that stood out and why:

- i. _____

- ii. _____

- iii. _____

b. Three repeated words, phrases or ideas:

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

c. People, places, events or dates:

i. Person: _____

ii. Place: _____

iii. Date/Event: _____

d. Three important questions:

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

e. The theme of Isaiah 61:1-3 is _____

_____.

Interpretation

“What does the passage mean?”

Correct application of the passage is dependent on a correct understanding of what the author and the Spirit inspiring him intended to say. It is important that we not rush to conclusions but patiently and prayerfully take our time in uncovering the meaning of the passage and the heart of God behind the words. Sometimes we can take a verse at face value, such as when John writes, “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are” (I John 3:1). Other times we have to give some thought and maybe research to find out what a metaphor means, such as when Jesus tells a parable. (*“The Invitation”* page 82)

Discussion Question: Why is it easy to jump to the interpretation of a passage quickly before we have taken the time to investigate the intended meaning of the words and their relevance for our culture? How can we avoid doing this?

Review (pages 77-78)

- The passage will make sense with the rest of _____.
- You can use _____ (finding passages with the same topic) to compare the passage you are studying with similar passages in the Bible.
- Some Bibles will include cross-references in the _____ or a _____ in the back where you can look up words to see where else they are used in Scripture.
- By seeing what the whole Bible has to say about a topic you get a much more _____ interpretation of a passage, and it prevents you from interpreting the Bible in a way that _____.

Exercise 1K: Using www.Blueletterbible.org or another word study tool, find the Hebrew definitions for the words below.

- Anointed (v. 1) *mashach*
- Proclaim (v.1) *qara'*
- Liberty (v.1) *derowr*
- Favor (v. 2) *ratsown*
- Headdress (v. 3) *peer*
- Ashes (v. 3) *'epher*
- Fainting (v. 3) *keheh*
- Oaks (v. 3) *'ayil*

Discussion Question: Were there any word meanings that surprised you or gave you additional insight into the passage? What was the insight?

Exercise 1L: Using your Study Bible, “Dictionary of Biblical Imagery” or another Bible study tool, find the Hebrew meanings for the figurative language below.

- Beautiful headdress (v. 3)
- Oil of gladness (v. 3)
- Garments of praise (v. 3)
- Oaks of righteousness (v. 3)

Discussion Question: What are these different phrases of figurative language painting a picture of all together?

Review (pages 75-77)

- The Bible was written in and for a culture totally different than our own. They had different _____, _____, _____ and different ways of _____.
- Investigating the _____ in a story can give greater understanding about the message of the story and why the author included it.

-
- Whenever the Bible gives us an _____ that seems irrelevant we should ask the Holy Spirit to reveal why that command was given and how it relates to our culture by dealing with the same heart issue.
 - It is easy to distinguish what was _____ about Biblical culture in most passages. However, there are some areas where it may be harder to discern what was specific to their culture and what is _____ for all time and in all cultures.

Here's the moment of truth – literally. All the study you've done comes down to this. What does it all mean?... the interpretation of the passage will never change (regardless of culture or time) because what the author of the passage intended to communicate will never change.

Begin by identifying the main point the author is trying to get across. You can do this by...

- Looking at the repeat words and phrases,
- Identifying a verse that seems to sum up the passage,
- Or by determining what question is being answered by the author.

Your interpretation should line up with the truth that the author is trying to communicate. You may want to refer to relevant outside resources such as a commentary to see if your conclusion is similar to what others have interpreted the passage to mean. (*From "The Invitation" page 85-86*).

Exercise 1M: Write two short paragraphs. The first describing the cultural distinctiveness of Isaiah 61:1-3 (the things that would be considered foreign or culturally irrelevant to us today) and what aspects of the passage still carry meaning for our culture. For the second paragraph, write your interpretation of the passage.

Discussion Question: Discuss your interpretation with a study partner or find another person's interpretation of the passage in an outside resource such as a commentary. Where do your interpretations agree or disagree? Is one of the interpretations incorrect?

Meditation

“Filling your mind with the Word of God”

“Meditate” literally means “to mutter.” Have you ever tried to commit a phone number or grocery list to memory by repeating it over and over again to yourself? Maybe you’ve lain awake at night rehearsing a situation from the day or plans for the next day. That is what meditation is like. In fact, the psalmist says that he lies awake at night thinking about God’s Word (Psalm 63:6). When we meditate we repeatedly bring the passage to mind and converse with the Holy Spirit about it. We ask questions, we pray, we listen, waiting for the moment when the Holy Spirit lifts the veil and we see something we haven’t seen before. In other words, we wait for the passage to impact us as the Spirit uncovers something that is revelation to us. (*From “The Invitation” pages 89-90*).

Discussion Question: Have you ever tried to meditate on Scripture before? If so, what methods did you use and how effective was it in revealing truth to you?

Review (pages 90-91)

- As you begin to think about the interpretation and application of the passage take time to meditate and keep listening for the Holy Spirit to give you _____.
- Spend time “_____” in the passage.
- _____ the passage or pray in the Spirit while you think about the passage.
- _____ about it! Share with someone what you feel the Spirit is revealing to you and get their feedback.
- Keep a _____ of your journey. Record your conversations with the Holy Spirit and what he is revealing to you.

Exercise 1N: Begin meditating on your Bible passage. Remember to engage the Holy Spirit in conversation. Try some of the techniques discussed in this chapter such as soaking, praying, sharing and journaling.

Application & Activation

“How does the passage work?”

Observation and interpretation of the Bible is not complete with applying the Word to our life... Application asks, “What difference does this passage make for people today?” It bridges the cultural gap between biblical times and our time with truth from God’s Word that is relevant to all people in every culture and time. (From *“The Invitation”* page 86).

Exercise 1O: Write a paragraph about how Isaiah 61:1-3 and its interpretation generally applies to people today?

Discussion Question: Come up with some questions you can ask that will help you and others to personalize the application of this passage.

Review (page 86)

- Observation and interpretation of the Bible is not complete without _____.
- Application asks, “_____?”
- It bridges the _____ between biblical times and our time with truth from God’s word that is relevant to all people in every culture and time.
- The first and most important way the Word should be applied to our lives is in _____ so that we trust _____ and _____ more than our own will.
- He helps me to understand his _____ in a matter and it is always to _____, _____, and _____ me.

I’ll admit that as a Bible student the idea that the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to speak personal prophetic words to people in ways that have nothing to do with the context or historical setting of the text is a little scary. However, it has happened in my own life many times. For example, when my husband was deployed with the military to Iraq, God brought me Psalm 126:6, “He who goes out weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.” He showed me this verse not only for encouragement, but also as a promise to me that Dave was going to be safe and come home (coincidentally he was apart of unit 126). As a Spirit-filled Christian I absolutely believe that God speaks to people through prophetic words giving them revelation and promises for their lives today. However, there are two concerns I have.

First, when the Holy Spirit uses Scripture to give us a prophetic word, we must still judge the word. All prophecy is subject to examination; “Let two or three prophets speak and let the others weigh what is said” (1 Corinthians 14:29). Even the most seasoned prophets get it wrong sometimes. This does not mean that they are false prophets, but that they are human. Anyone who has tried to live in obedience to the voice of God knows that sometimes we miss it. Our own

thoughts, character flaws and imagination sometimes get in the way of us hearing clearly. That doesn't mean we stop listening for God's voice, but that we submit ourselves to a community of loving and wise people who can help us discern what the Holy Spirit is saying.

Secondly, the prophetic word should not be mistaken for the interpretation of the passage. The truth that God is communicating through a Scripture passage will be true for all people throughout history. The prophetic word however will probably not apply to another person or another circumstance. A few years later when my husband was deployed to Afghanistan, God did not give me a word that Dave would come home safe, only that regardless of what happened I could trust in God. My trust in him grew as I faced my fears about Dave not coming home this time. (He did make it home by the way).

To understand the meaning of Scripture we must still spend time studying and meditating on the Word. It is dangerous to think that because God is speaking prophetically through his Word that we do not need to study or understand the historical setting or context of the passage. People who have used this method of interpreting the Bible through the prophetic gift usually end up perpetuating heresy.

With those cautions in mind, I still believe that God gives us promises and prophetic words through Scripture to encourage us while we become the person who will see that word fulfilled. I treasure the promises that the Holy Spirit has spoken to me, but I also know that I do not understand the whole picture because "we prophesy in part" (I Corinthians 13:9) or that I may even misunderstand or read my own desire into the prophetic word because I am still growing. With humility, I rely on the community of faith that I am a part of to help me discern if and how much of what I am hearing is the Holy Spirit. (*From "The Invitation" pages 93-95*).

<p>Discussion Question: Has the Holy Spirit used the Word of God to speak a prophetic word to you in the past? How did he use the prophetic word to help encourage you in a specific situation?</p>
--

Exercise 1P: Ask the Holy Spirit for any additional revelation, especially about how this passage applies to you personally. Record any promises or verses he uses to speak prophetically to you.

Review (pages 84-85)

- Activation is the final step to take in your study of the Word, which means is to decide what you specifically are _____.
- Is there a _____ you need to make to your lifestyle or beliefs?
- Is there a _____ you need to hold onto?
- Is there something you need to _____ better?
- Finally, look for ways to _____ the Word of God that has been written on your heart into situations.

Exercise 1Q: Decide how you can activate this word in your life. Write a paragraph about what you can specifically do so that you are stewarding the Word and seeing it active in your life?

<p>Discussion Question: How has the truth you have learned in Isaiah 61:1-3 impacted you? What life long changes do you expect to see because of it?</p>

Unit 2: John 15:1-10 Bible Study Exercises

Exercise 2A: In your notebook or journal, write a prayer inviting the Holy Spirit into your study and meditation time. Remember to keep engaging the Holy Spirit in conversation and listening for revelation.

Historical Setting

Exercise 2B: Using a Study Bible or Bible Handbook, answer the following questions:

1. Who wrote the Gospel of John? What do we know about his occupation, family and personality?
2. Who was the Gospel of John written for (the audience) and what kind of circumstances were they experiencing?
3. When was the Gospel of John probably written and what other world events were happening around that time?
4. According to your Study Bible or other resource, what is the theme of the Gospel of John? Are there important sub-themes?
5. According to your Study Bible or other resource, why was the Gospel of John written? Was there a special occasion or purpose?

Exercise 2C: Use the “Basic Literary Types” resource on page 36 (Unit 3) to answer the following questions:

1. What type of literature is the Gospel of John?
2. Is this passage narrative (biographical) or a teaching (theological)?
3. If this passage is Jesus teaching, who is the audience (the crowd, the disciples, etc.)?
4. Is this passage repeated in any of the other gospels?

Observation

“What does the passage say?”

Exercise 2D: Read John 15:1-10 in the ESV, NIV and NLT versions and compare the words and phrases of different translations with the words listed and fill in the table below. You can use an online Bible search website such as Biblegateway.com to do this.

<i>Verse</i>	<i>ESV</i>	<i>NIV</i>	<i>NLT</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>“Vine”</i>		
	<i>“Vinedresser”</i>		
<i>2</i>	<i>“takes away”</i>		
<i>3</i>	<i>“clean”</i>		
<i>4</i>	<i>“abide”</i>		
<i>8</i>	<i>“prove”</i>		
<i>9</i>	<i>“abide”</i>		

Exercise 2E: Read John 13-16 and answer the questions below.

1. From Chapter 13, describe the setting of Jesus’ speech in John 13-16.
2. What verses/phrases in Chapter 14 are repeated in Chapter 15?
3. How does Chapter 15 build on what Jesus has said in Chapter 14?
4. What verses/phrases in Chapter 15 are repeated in Chapter 16?
5. How does Chapter 16 build on what Jesus has said in Chapter 14?
6. Any other observations from John 13-16?

Exercise 2F: In your Bible or in the text below...

-
1. **Highlight** any thoughts or phrases that stand out to you. These should include comparisons made, things that are contrasted or lists that are made, as well as any “if-then” or “therefore” statements. You should also note when the “voice” changes in a passage. For example, the author may start out speaking as himself but then suddenly switch so that he is speaking on behalf of God.
 2. **Circle** any repeated words, phrases or ideas. What is the most repeated word or phrase in the passage? This will give you a hint to the theme of the passage.
 3. **Underline** any people, places, events or dates that may help to establish the historical setting of the passage or information regarding the author, audience or subject.

John 15:1-10 (English Standard Version)

¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep

my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

Exercise 2G: Ask open-ended questions! Sometimes the questions we asked can be answered by the passage itself, other times we may have to do research outside the text. At this point only worry about asking the questions, not answering them. What questions do you have regarding the text above?

Who _____ ?

What _____ ?

Where _____ ?

When _____ ?

Why _____ ?

How _____ ?

_____ ?

_____ ?

_____ ?

_____ ?

Exercise 2H: Taking the passage at face value, identify what seems to be the theme or title of the passage. In the text above, how would the author finish this sentence:

“I am writing about _____
_____”

Exercise 2I: Fill in the outline below.

John 15:1-10 Outline

I. Historical Setting

- a. Author: _____
- b. Audience: _____
- c. Location: _____
- d. Date: _____
- e. Literary style: _____

II. Observation

- a. Three thoughts or phrases that stood out and why:

- i. _____

- ii. _____

- iii. _____

- b. Four repeated words, phrases or ideas:

- i. _____
- ii. _____

iii. _____

iv. _____

c. People, places, events or dates:

i. Person: _____

ii. Person: _____

iii. Place: _____

d. Three important questions:

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

e. The theme of John 15:1-10 is _____

Interpretation

“What does the passage mean?”

Exercise 2J: Pick several cross-references from the margin of your Study Bible or from a concordance and describe how they relate to John 15:1-10.

Exercise 2K: Using www.Blueletterbible.org or another word study tool, find the Greek definitions for key words in John 15:1-10. Hint: look for words that are repeated or central to the theme of the passage.

Exercise 2L: Using your Study Bible, “Bible of Biblical Imagery” or another Bible study tool, find the Hebrew meanings for the figurative language found in John 15:1-10.

Exercise 2M: Write two short paragraphs. The first describing the cultural distinctiveness of John 15:1-10 (the things that would be considered foreign or culturally irrelevant to us today) and what aspects of the passage still carry meaning for our culture. For the second paragraph, write your interpretation of the passage.

Meditation

“Filling Your Mind with the Word of God”

Exercise 2N: Begin meditating on your Bible passage. Remember to engage the Holy Spirit in conversation. Try some of the techniques discussed in this chapter such as soaking, praying, sharing and journaling.

Application & Activation

“How does the passage work?”

Exercise 2O: Write a paragraph about how John 15:1-5 and its interpretation generally applies to people today?

Exercise 2P: Ask the Holy Spirit for any additional revelation, especially about how this passage applies to you personally. Record any promises or verses he uses to speak prophetically to you.

Exercise 2Q: Decide how you can activate this word in your life. Write a

paragraph about what you can specifically do so that you are stewarding the Word and seeing it active in your life? Give yourself a time and place to do this and commit to it.

Unit 3: Additional Resources

Bible Study Steps Outline

- I. Prayer
- II. Historical Setting
 - a. Author, audience, location and date
 - b. Literary style
- III. Observation
 - a. Read and re-read the text and literary context
 - b. Thoughts or phrases that stand out
 - c. Repeated words, phrases or ideas
 - d. People, places, events or dates
 - e. Ask open-ended questions
 - f. Identify the theme
 - g. Create an outline
- IV. Interpretation (Begin to Focus Your Study)
 - a. Cross-Reference
 - b. Word Studies
 - c. Figurative & Prophetic Language
 - d. Cultural Distinctiveness and Relevance
 - e. Write down your interpretation.
- V. Meditation
 - a. Soak
 - b. Pray
 - c. Share
 - d. Journal
- VI. Application
- VII. Activation: What are you going to do and when?

Discussion Questions for “The Invitation”

Chapter 1: The Transforming Power of the Word

1. What are some of the obstacles to studying the Bible? If you have attempted to study the Bible in the past, but became frustrated, can you identify the source of the frustration?
2. Describe how the Bible can be more than a self-help or guidebook?
3. Why is a relationship with God necessary to see real inner transformation in someone’s life?
4. How can the Holy Spirit help you as you study the Scripture? How does he write God’s Word on your heart?

Chapter 2: Cultivating of the Heart

1. How have you heard the Holy Spirit speak to you in the past? What are some new ways you will be listening for his voice?
2. How does a hard heart affect our ability to receive the Word of God? How do we keep our hearts from becoming hard so that we can receive God’s Word?
3. Why is testing unavoidable and actually a good thing?
4. How can we keep from neglecting the Word of God sown into our lives?

Chapter 3: Being a Student of the Spirit

1. Do you consider yourself a good student? Why or why not? What motivates you to want to study?
2. What thought patterns and focuses might you have to change in order to have a more positive outlook on Bible study?
3. Why is it important to pay attention to the context of Scripture?
4. How can you remain a student even as you gain more and more knowledge?

Chapter 4: The Authority of Scripture

1. What does it mean that someone or something has authority? For example, think of a police officer versus a civilian trying to enforce a law.
2. How is it that the Pharisees could be the Bible Scholars of their day and yet miss who Jesus was?
3. How do we submit to God's Word? How do we resist it?
4. Why is authority without submission fruitless?

Chapter 5: Theology and Doctrine

- 1.

Chapter 6: Choosing a Translation

2. What translation have you used in the past and why? What do you like and what do you not like about it?
3. Why is it important to make a distinction between the original inspiration of the Biblical writers and the scholars who translate the Scripture?
4. How do we know if our Bible translation is reliable?
5. Why would we not want to use a devotional Bible or a Bible from a specific theological stance for study?

Chapter 7: Laying the Foundation

1. How might someone's approach to reading the Bible affect how they interpret Scripture?
2. How might someone's culture, theology or misconceptions affect how they interpret Scripture?
3. How can we best remove our lenses and preconceived ideas so that they do not affect our interpretation of Scripture?
4. How might the historical context of Scripture impact our interpretation of Scripture?

Chapter 8: Reading With Purpose

1. What is the benefit to reading the Scripture everyday, and to reading through the entire Bible?
2. Why is it important to differentiate between cultural distinctives and protocols of that day and that which is relative to every culture and time in Scripture?
3. Why is it important to understand the heart of God in giving an instruction or commandment?
4. Why might the Bible seem to have contradictions?

Chapter 9: Finding Meaning

1. Why is it important to take our time and not rush to conclusions when interpreting Scripture passages?
2. How would our study be affected if all we understood were the modern English meaning of a word or figurative language?
3. Why is it dangerous to read modern elements into the symbolism of prophetic and apocalyptic writing? Why should we look for the meaning of prophecy in the Bible before we look at the modern world?
4. Can different people have different interpretations of Scripture? Why or why not?

Chapter 10: Biblical Meditation

1. Why is meditation neglected in the western Church while study is encouraged?
2. How is the mind best used to glorify God or, in other words, how do we “love God” with our entire mind?
3. What is the difference between revelation and information?
4. How do we rightly receive and apply the prophetic words given to us by the Spirit through Scripture?

Memory and Meditation Verses Related to “The Invitation”

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.” Deuteronomy 6:5-6

“...the hand of his God was on him. For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord...” Ezra 7:9-10

“...his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does he prospers.” Psalm 1:2-3

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105

“As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.” Matthew 13:23

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Matthew 7:24

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”
John 15:7

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” John 6:63

“And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 2:13

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow; and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
Hebrews 4:12

Answers to Unit 1 Reviews

- Page 6: observation; interpretation; application
“What does the passage say?”
“What does the passage mean?”
“What do I do about it?”
says; means; how it works
the Bible
- Page 8: paragraphs; chapters
decipher the author’s intent; what surrounds the word
the entirety of the chapter
the chapters before and after; the entire book
- Page 14: Scripture
cross-referencing
margins; concordance
balanced; contradicts itself
- Page 17-18: values; social norms; religious rituals; thinking
cultural distinctives
instruction
distinct; relevant
- Page 20: revelation
soaking
pray
talk
journal
- Page 22: applying the Word to our life
What difference does this passage make for people today?
Cultural gap
Changing the way we think, God’s Word, will
Heart, bless, protect love,
- Page 24: going to do with it
understand
change
promise; thinking
speak

Picking A Bible Translation

Sometimes choosing a Bible, either in a bookstore or online, can be confusing and overwhelming. Here are some aids to help you choose the right translation for you.

- 1) If you have used a particular Bible for a long time, but are seeking a new or secondary one ask yourself what about your translation or Bible's format do you like and what do you not like? This will give you a starting off point for finding a Bible that solves the problems with your current version while keeping the features you like.
- 2) First, narrow down what translation you want to use by going to a website like biblegateway.org to compare translations side by side. Try to choose modern translation written in modern language such as NIV or ESV, but be weary of some modern translations that take a lot of liberty with the text such as The Message. The Message and other Bibles like it are good for different perspectives, but not good as study Bibles.
- 3) Once you've decided on a translation the best place to go is a Christian bookstore where you can actually handle and look through the Bibles. However, many online bookstores will allow a preview of the interior of the Bible as well. You can eliminate any Bible that has the word "devotional" in the title. These are not good study Bibles because they give you their application rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to speak directly to you through the Word. If you are going to invest money in a Bible you should choose one that has good study aids rather than plain text. It will cost a little more but will be worth it in the long run. You should be able to narrow your selection down to just a few choices this way.
- 4) Some study Bibles provide study notes in a particular area of interest such as Biblical Archeology, Word studies or from a particular theological stance. If you choose a study Bible oriented around theology make sure that you are careful to investigate the views of those who might disagree with that particular stance. If this is your first study Bible I recommend a more general version such as The ESV Study Bible or The NIV Study Bible.

Basic Biblical Literature Types

I. Historic Narrative

- A. Example: Genesis, Joshua, Esther, Mark, Acts
- B. Stories with a message: In ancient, largely illiterate societies, stories were an important way of teaching heritage and history.
- C. The authors were describing events, not necessarily endorsing the circumstance or choices made. For example, David and Solomon both had many wives. This does not endorse polygamy as a lifestyle.
- D. Because God worked one way in a Bible character's life does not necessarily mean he works that way all of the time. For example, Joseph was released from prison and promoted into a high-ranking position in Egypt. John the Baptist was not released from prison but ended up being martyred.
- E. When reading look for character development, plot, climax and the moral of the story.

II. Law

- A. Parts of Exodus, Leviticus-Deuteronomy
- B. Read about the importance of Israel's law in Deuteronomy 4:5-9
- C. God desired that Israel be set apart from the pagan idolatrous nations around them and established laws that reflected his values and will. Israel was to be known as God's people and thus needed to reflect godliness to the people around them.
- D. Many of the instructions were specific to their culture and time and may seem ambiguous and irrelevant for us today.
- E. When reading look for the principle behind the law that God was giving and ask how that same principle can be applied today. For example Leviticus 19:27 instructs men not to "round off the hair on your temples or mar the edges of your beard." The principle behind the instruction relates back to Israel not even looking like the pagan nations around them.

III. Poetry/Wisdom

- A. Primarily found in Job-Song of Solomon, sometimes other types of Biblical literature will include poetry such as Paul's hymn about the humility and exaltation of Christ in Philippians 2:6-11.
- B. May use sounds, rhythm, meter, parallel lines and figurative language.
- C. Typically written to evoke emotion.
- D. May be written as a personal poem or song. In this case relate the emotions and life experience of the author to your own. Have you felt what the writer is describing?
- E. May also be written as a corporate song of prayer or praise. Look for it's central message and how this song would have been useful in a corporate setting.
- F. Proverbs are not the same as promises. Wise principles put us in the best position to succeed but do not guarantee success. For example Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."
- G. May take the form of a story (Proverbs 7:4-27), reflection (Ecclesiastes 9:1) or an instruction (Proverbs 4:14).
- H. When reading identify any figurative language or cultural ambiguity and using outside resources such as *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (InterVarsity Press) find out the meaning. Also identify the main emotion or principle that is being addressed.

IV. Prophetic or Apocalyptic

- A. Isaiah-Malachi, Revelation
- B. May be forth-telling (delivering a message addressing the recipients behavior or circumstance) or fore-telling (revealing God's future plans), or both.
- C. May pronounce judgment (Micah 1:2-7) or salvation (Amos 9:11-15).
- D. Prophecy may be conditional such as in the case of Jonah where Ninevah's repentance caused God to withdraw his judgment.
- E. See "*The Invitation*" pages 66-67 more guidelines.
- F. When reading seek understanding on the historical setting that the prophecy is addressing, determine the nature of the judgment or blessing being announced, find why the Lord is acting for or against the recipient.

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- V. Epistles/Letters
- A. Romans – Revelation
 - B. New Testament letters written by the Apostle Paul or other church leaders (Peter, John etc...) to address specific situations in churches. These letters would have been passed around to different churches in the region and were usually intended to be read in a corporate setting.
 - C. Revelation is a letter written to seven churches. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ (not the anti-christ) and readers should not get distracted with elements of prediction but should focus on the message John had for his readers.
 - D. When reading seek to understand the historical setting and culture of the letter's recipients and what issues the author is addressing.
- VI. Special considerations when reading the Gospels.
- A. The Gospels are both biographical (about Jesus' life) and theological (records of Jesus' teaching). Even the way Jesus lived his life can be considered theological in that he modeled for us the kind of life that God desires us to live.
 - B. Each Gospel writer had a unique motivation and audience. Use your Study Bible or an outside resource to understand the authors intent.
 - C. Compare similar accounts found in different Gospels to get a bigger picture.

Leading a Bible Study

If you're anything like me I love to think out loud, bounce my ideas off people, and expose myself to different ways of thinking about something. In fact, I find that this is one of the primary ways the Lord uses to give me revelation. Jesus did not just save us from our sins he saved us to be a part of his Body, and innate to our new nature in Christ is the need to be together, learn together and serve together. We must remember that when Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would "guide you into all truth" (John 16:13) he was not addressing an individual, but the group of his disciples. So often the Lord will give an person a piece of a puzzle and only in coming together with others can we get an idea of what the picture is about.

I would ask you to consider and pray about whether you are suppose to gather a few people and start a group to study and discuss the Bible together. You do not need to be a Bible scholar to lead a group if you are coming as a student. Below are a few ideas and suggestions to help you initiate this wonderful learning experience.

- 1) Bigger may not be better. Too big a group and you lose the ability for everyone to contribute. Gather 2-5 people who are committed. If there are more people that want to be involved then maybe there is the need for more groups.
- 2) Don't forget that not only should we engage the Holy Spirit personally, but as a group. Start each time together in thanksgiving for how he's spoken and earnest prayer for him to reveal more. Be sensitive to him throughout your time together. You may need to stop and pray for clarity or confirmation during the course of your meeting.
- 3) Decide on a sustainable pace. How much time is reasonable for each person to spend preparing every week? If it is only an hour a week commitment then you will simply pick a small passage and move ahead step by step until you have completed your study on it. For example, maybe the first week you simply investigate the historical background, and the second week you only read and re-read the passage in various translations, the third week you read the literary context of the passage, etc... If the group wants to commit to more time, then you can perhaps do all of the observation steps in a week, and all the interpretation steps the next week, etc...
- 4) Have a flexible schedule. You should know about how long the study of a particular passage is going to take, but remain flexible if you discover you need to spend an extra week on a step.

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- 5) Each person should have a chance to share what he or she have learned or questions that they had during the course of their study. The attitude should be that we are all students and have something that we can learn, and we all have the capacity to hear from God so that there is something we have to share.
 - 6) No one should have all the answers and no one should have no answers. Maybe you or someone in your group has a gift of teaching or wisdom, or simply more Bible study experience. This person should look for ways to ask questions that open up the discussion rather than dominate the discussion. A good leader/teacher helps others to discover truth – rather than continually “telling” them the truth.
 - 7) Hold each other accountable to greatness rather than using accountability to produce guilt. If someone does not complete their study that week then encourage them that what they bring to the group is important. You look forward to hearing what they have discovered and miss that when they aren’t able to contribute. If someone is perpetually lax in his or her commitment perhaps the group needs to slow the pace down.
 - 8) This process should remain exciting and fresh. If it becomes tedious or overwhelming then go back to focusing on engaging the Holy Spirit as a group.

