

October 29, 2017

“Life Verse – A Close Encounter
When God Gives Direction for Our Lives.”

“Your Life Verse and more...”

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15

A. Let me remind you that God’s Word is...

“Keep reminding God’s people of these things.”

2 Timothy 2:14a

1. Inspired!

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for good work.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV

2. Alive!

“For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.” Hebrews 4:12 NLT

3. A Guide!

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

4. A Mirror!

“But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says.” James 1:22

B. “Do your best”...

2 Timothy 2:14-18

1. “Do”...be active in your pursuit of God’s Word.

2. “Your”...not compared to anyone else but only what you do. It is personal!

3. “Best”...Let the Word of God be your priority. Let it speak to you and invest your best in seeking God.

“Concentrate on doing your best for God” The Message

“Do your best to present yourself to God” NIV

“Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment,” 1 Peter 2:2 NLT

C. “Work hard”...

1. “Work”...To know God’s Word requires effort. It is an investment in eternal Truth!

2. “Hard”...The effort we put forth is not easy. It means making it a priority...making it a definite value that you add to your spiritual life!

“Do your best. Work from the heart for your real Master, for God, confident that you’ll get paid in full when you come into your inheritance. Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you’re serving is Christ. The sullen servant who does shoddy work will be held responsible. Being a follower of Jesus doesn’t cover up bad work.” Colossians 3:23-25 The Message

D. “Correctly handle”...

1. “Correctly”...There are right and wrong ways to study the Word of God. God’s Word is Truth and Life to our soul.

2. “Handle”...You need to hold onto truth so that you can investigate, evaluate, and apply it to your life.

“Context: How to Understand the Bible” –Jim Nocodem

a. Cross the Cultural Rivers – i.e when reading the Book of Proverbs, you’re going to have to travel from a twenty-first-century, Western, technological society to a tenth-century B.C., Middle Eastern, agrarian society. If you’re reading the New Testament letter of 1 Corinthians, you’ll cross into a first-century A.D., Greco-Roman, and urban culture. (A great Study Bible will help you navigate these waters.)

b. Ask the Journalistic Questions. A good reporter relentlessly asks five “w” questions – we have five “W’s”! Here they are – who, what, when, where and why.

c. These three questions will help as well:

● Observation: What does it say?

● Interpretation: What does it mean?

● Application: How do I respond?

“Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth.” John 17:17 NIV

E. What steps will you take to ‘Do your best, to work hard, and to correctly handle’ the Word of God?’

1. Begin by making a commitment to find time every day to read God’s Word!

“People do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”

Deuteronomy 8:3 NLT

2. Apply the Word of God to your life by being obedient to what you read!

“But don’t just listen to God’s Word. You must do what it says.” James 1:22 NIV

3. Let it be part of your conversation with others as to what God is showing or teaching you.

“speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,” Ephesians 5:19 NIV

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” 1 Thessalonians 5:11

4. Keep accountable to God’s authority in your life!

“If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.” James 4:17 NIV

Seasonal Sermon Series:

“‘Tis the Season...”

“Make the most of every chance you get. These are desperate times!” Ephesians 5:16 The Message
A Sermon Series Focusing on the Virtues of the Season

November 12, 2017 – To Be Loving!

November 19, 2017 – To Be Thankful!

November 26, 2017 – To Be Merciful!

December 3, 2017 – To Be Kind!

December 10, 2017 – To Be Generous!

December 17, 2017 – To Be Compassionate!

December 24, 2017 – To Be Full of Faith!

December 31, 2017 – To Be Hopeful!

Cross the Cultural Rivers. If you've ever traveled to another country you know the challenge of crossing cultures. In a similar way, when reading the Book of Proverbs, you're going to have to travel from a twenty-first-century, Western, technological society to a tenth-century B.C., Middle Eastern, agrarian society. If you're reading the New Testament letter of 1 Corinthians, you'll cross into a first-century A.D., Greco-Roman, and urban culture.

If we don't cross these cultural rivers, we won't understand much of what we read. As an example, Nicodem refers to the Book of Ruth. Ruth is a destitute widow with a distant relative named Boaz, who buys her a piece of property. Ruth 4:7 tells us that the guy who sells Boaz the land seals the deal by handing Boaz his sandal. My guess is that someone didn't give you a sandal when you closed on your house! An understanding of the culture at that time is extremely helpful because the sandal-passing custom was a way for the seller to say: "The property that I used to walk on as my own now belongs to you."

You may be thinking that there's no way you can discover these cultural connections on your own. But let me give you some great news! You don't have to go to Bible school or seminary to learn all this. Here's a simple suggestion – pick up a good Study Bible and use it when you're reading the Bible. Think of a Study Bible as a bridge that will enable you to cross cultural rivers. I highly recommend the ESV Study Bible – that's the one I use for my daily reading. I also like the Life Application Bible.

Ask the Journalistic Questions. A good reporter relentlessly asks five "w" questions – we have four "G's" and now we have five "W's"! Here they are – who, what, when, where and why.

● **Who Questions.** For instance, if you were to read the Book of Jonah, it would be very important to know who the Ninevites were because that's who Jonah is told to preach to. Instead of obeying, Jonah jumps on a ship and heads in the exact opposite direction. He was eventually thrown overboard and ends up in the belly of a giant fish. That's where he decides to send up some prayers and then the fish chucks him up on the beach and he ends up reluctantly preaching to the Ninevites.

Nineveh was the capital city of ancient Assyria and the superpower of Jonah's day. The Assyrians were the archenemies of Israel and were notorious for beheading their victims and stacking up their heads in piles or skinning their captives alive. It makes sense why Jonah tried to get out of his assignment, doesn't it? Simply knowing the who of a Bible passage enables you to better interpret it.

● **What Questions.** When you read the Bible, you'll come across some practices or words that don't make sense in our society. For example, Psalm 1:4 tells us that the wicked "*are like chaff that the wind drives away.*" For most of us city slickers, we don't have a clue what this means. Again, a study Bible is so helpful.

Chaff is the thin, outer husk that surrounds a kernel of wheat. In the ancient world before John Deere combines, farmers would thresh their wheat by throwing it up in the air where the useless chaff would blow away and the hard kernels would then fall to the ground. The psalmist is telling us that if we're not anchored to the Word, our wicked lives will be blown away.

● **When Questions.** Knowing when a book was written is also really helpful. For instance, the theme of the Book of Philippians is joy. This is incredible because Paul wrote this book when he was in prison. Knowing the "when" helps us understand that joy is possible even when our circumstances are bad.

● **Where Questions.** One example of the importance of asking the where question is found in Revelation 3:15-16: "*I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.*" These words from Jesus are given to a church located in a town called Laodicea. Knowing a little about Laodicea helps us understand this passage.

You see, Laodicea had a problem with its drinking water. The local river was too muddy so water had to be brought in by an aqueduct. The water originated from a cool spring five miles away but by the time it reached the town it was tepid and tasted terrible. One swallow and you'd want to spew! Because of where they lived, this church got the message quickly that Jesus didn't want them to be spiritually lukewarm.

● **Why Questions.** There are a lot of why questions to ask but here's one example of why asking why is so important. Have you ever wondered why Elijah confronted the false prophets of the pagan god Baal on top of Mount Carmel? You can read more about this in 1 Kings 18. God's people had caved into idol worship so God sent his prophet Elijah to duke it out with the priests of Baal. A spiritual smackdown was set up in which both Elijah and the false prophets would build altars and whatever deity answered with fire would be declared the winner.

So why did Elijah choose Mount Carmel for this match? Because this mountain was considered to be the dwelling place of Baal, thus giving

Baal home-field advantage. That made the victory even bigger when Elijah's God was the only one who sent fire from heaven.

Just asking the who, what, when, where and why questions will help us correctly understand verses in their context and enable us to apply the Scriptures to our context.