

# SESSION 3: SCRIPTURE AS AUTHORITATIVE TEXT

## Main Text:

2 Timothy 3:10-17

## Take Home Exercise:

Scripture  
Memorization



## OPENING EXERCISE (5 Minutes)

Spend a moment in prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to guide your time together, and then lead your group through the following exercise.

Gather together as a community group in a comfortable setting—around a table, on a couch, on a living room floor, etc. Invite someone in your group to pray and invite the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time together.

As a way of holding an open posture toward God's Word, spend the next 8-10 minutes engaging with a short passage from Psalm 119 using the ancient practice of *lectio divina*, literally translated "divine reading," is a prayerful, formative exercise of listening to God through scripture. In this practice, the passage is read three or four times, and there is intentional space for silence between each reading. This enables us to slow down and be attentive to God's presence and direction. The goal of *lectio divina* is not to interpret the text but rather to meet God in it.

Slowly move through the four steps detailed below as you engage with **Psalm 119:9-16** as a group:

**1. Quietly Prepare Your Heart (Silencio) 1 Minute:** Enter into God's presence, slow down, and take a few deep breaths. Identify and release the thoughts and cares in your mind to him.

**2. Read the Passage (Lectio) 1 Minute:** Read Psalm 119:1-8 aloud for the group. Invite your group to take note of any word or phrase that catches their attention. Don't analyze it, judge it, or feel the need to do anything with it; just listen and wait.

**3. Meditate (Meditatio) 2 Minutes:** Slowly reread the passage, and invite your group to listen for any invitation God may be extending to them. Take time to listen, ponder, and explore that further with him.

**4. Respond in Prayer (Oratio) 2 Minutes:** Read the passage a third time. Dialogue individually with God about your experience of reading this passage, responding truthfully and authentically to the text. Where have you been encouraged? Where might you be resistant to the text and what God has brought to mind?

**5. Rest (Contemplatio) 2 Minutes:** Rest and wait in the presence of God. Allow some time and space for the Word to sink deeper in. Once again, yield and surrender yourself to God. Consider how you might carry this time in the Word into the rest of your day.

## **HABIT CHECK IN (5 Minutes)**

**Spend some time together debriefing the take-home exercise from your last gathering.**

In the last gathering, you were encouraged to study scripture using the SOAP method. Reflect on your experience together and share any takeaways. Giving yourself immense grace, share with the group how this went.

What was this experience like for you? Was there anything particularly encouraging, challenging, or surprising to you?

Were there any observations, applications, or questions that stuck with you from the passage you studied?

Have you used the SOAP method before? Are there other methods of studying scripture that you have found helpful?

## **STUDY THIS TOGETHER (20 Minutes)**

**Lead the study and discussion below for your group. Feel free to read it in its entirety or put it in your own words.**

Invite someone in your group to read **2 Timothy 3:10-17** aloud.

What stands out to you from Paul's encouragement to Timothy in this passage?

In the space below, write out words and phrases you see used to describe scripture in verses 14-17. What stands out to you from these words? What role does scripture play in the life of an apprentice of Jesus?

Re-read verse 16. In this verse, we are told that all scripture is God-breathed. What does this mean? How do you understand this statement?

What does this passage reveal about the authority of scripture?

What does this passage reveal about the usefulness of scripture? (v.16-17) How might you have experienced these to be true in your own life?

## **DISCUSSION (20 Minutes)**

**Spend a few moments debriefing this week's sermon together and discuss the following questions as a group.**

The modern world is largely allergic to the concept of authority. We are uncomfortable with authority being imposed on others and view it as an intrusion into one's freedom to be themselves. As apprentices to Jesus, we make the claim that scripture is authoritative. In the passage studied above, Paul writes to young Timothy and connects the authority of scripture to how Timothy is to live his life (note specifically 3:16-17). Ultimately, we are called to do more than simply believe the Bible. We are called to become the kind of people who live out its vision of reality.

How has your view of God shaped your approach and response to the Bible? On the other hand, how has your understanding of the Bible shaped the way you view God?

What, if anything, makes it difficult for you to trust the authority and inspiration of the Bible? What

has helped you trust the Bible?

How might submitting to God's Word as authority be freeing? How, or why, might that be challenging for you?

What implications does approaching God's Word as an authority have for your daily living? How would this impact the various dimensions of your life (work, family, friendships, etc.)?

## TAKE HOME EXERCISE (5 Minutes)

**Read through the exercise below, adapted from Practicing the Way, which each individual will do before your next gathering. Talk through any questions people may have about what they are to do. Again, it is about practice, not perfection. Give yourselves grace.**

As apprentices of Jesus, memorization is a practical way for us to heed Paul's exhortation in Romans 12, which is to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. What we think about or dwell on shapes the way that we live and, ultimately, who we are becoming. Memorization is an embodied practice of getting the very truth of God's Word into our minds and hearts. Psalm 119:11 points to the importance of internalizing, or hiding away God's Word in our hearts: "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." When we memorize scripture, we can more readily recall truth that brings strength, wisdom, encouragement, and hope, especially in times of trials, testing, and stress.

The exercise for this week is to commit to memorizing a short passage of scripture from the Sermon on the Mount. Feel free to select any portion of the text from Matthew 5-7, but a good one to start may be Matthew 5:3-12. Any text will do; just be sure to make it long enough to challenge you but short enough to accomplish its memorization in the next week.

It will likely take time to develop memorization skills, so if you find this difficult, do not be discouraged and give in to the temptation to give up. Keep it simple, and start small. You may find it helpful to use other tools to help you keep the verse(s) in front of you—using flashcards, writing the passage on your bathroom mirror, listening to the scripture while walking or driving, reciting the verse out loud, setting an image with the verse on it as your phone background, or using song or rhythm. Some find that doing something with your hands that involves repetitive motion (i.e., knitting, squeezing a stress ball) can help with concentration.

## CLOSE IN PRAYER (5 Minutes)

**Close your time by reading and reflecting on the following prayer. Then take some time to share any prayer requests/updates and pray for each other's upcoming week.**

Thank You, loving Father, for the God-breathed scriptures. Teach us, convict us, correct us, and train us through the living, powerful, inspired Word of truth so that we may be equipped to carry out the work that you have ordained for us to do. In Jesus' name, we pray, amen.

