



Why Do We Study The Bible?

As I look forward to our third year of Disciple Bible Study here at St. Luke's, I pause to reflect on all of the experiences I've been blessed with including my own 'enlightenment' about the importance of the Bible in our lives. Like many of you, my 'reason' for agreeing to sign on for 34 weeks of study over 15 years ago had more to do with information than transformation. I really only wanted to be able to actually say I had read the entire Bible from cover-to-cover; something I had not been able to accomplish on my own.

Now, many years later, I must confess that I still haven't actually "read" every single word in the entire Bible to this day. What I did discover in over a decade of facilitating and learning is that reading the entire Bible is not the goal. The goal has been right in front of my eyes since I first agreed to take the basic Disciple Bible Study course. The name of that course is "Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study."

I was reminded of this while listening to Father Larry's Fourth of July sermon on the story of Jesus sending out the seventy that is detailed in The Gospel of Luke, Chapter 6. In his sermon, Larry reminded us that our work as Christians is not just about being "fed" by God's Word, but more about how we "feed" others. He gave a striking example of how we learn to do so from his own experience in seminary when his class thought they were going to attend a lecture only to be instructed by the guest speaker to choose a partner and "hit-the-street" to ask everyone they met if they could pray for them.

Like most of you, the prospect of being "sent" into the streets of Richmond to ask every stranger I meet if I could pray for them is...well...downright scary. That's probably why Jesus sent the 70 "in pairs" and why Larry's class was similarly told to "partner-up." God understands us much better than we understand ourselves and we always find support in the company of and relationship with one another. Those who have already graduated from Disciple Bible Study and Jesus in the Gospels know all too well how we constantly work in pairs and small groups to discuss and share understanding of Scripture. It is part of the process of following Jesus' model we find in the story of the "sending" of the seventy.

In September, we will invite 12 new disciples to join in the 34-week journey from Genesis to Revelation. A journey that begins and ends in a garden, or as the author of The Progress of Redemption puts it, "The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem." Another equally respected theologian describes it as "The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible."

In this course, we will begin by acquiring a firm appreciation of what we mean when we say that the Bible is "The Word of the Lord" every Sunday and move directly into exploring what it means in Genesis to be "made in the image of God." Preparation for and participation in the first four class meetings is critical to acquire the proper "trajectory" for our study of everything that follows in both the Old and New Testaments. Yes, there is homework and we meet weekly for about 2 ½ hours on Monday nights for video presentations by respected biblical scholars and group sharing of our prior week's reading and note-taking.

You can expect to gain a fresh and exciting understanding of what it means to own a “study Bible” and how much more you will gain from the resources that they contain. You will also come to see how the books of the Old Testament were the only “bible” that Jesus or Paul knew and preached from and how all of what we have as New Testament writings is supported by the foundation of those books. You can expect to gain a fresh perspective of how Jesus, through Scripture and the Holy Spirit, continues to interact directly with us today just as he did with the twelve He chose as his first disciples. And you can expect to graduate with this experience with a thirst for more...more of the Bible, more of God and more of Jesus’ call to each of us as his disciples.

In the coming weeks, you will hear brief testimony from St. Luke’s parishioners who have already take the course and I encourage you to seek out those you know who have completed Disciple to hear how it has changed their lives. You will, in every case, hear from them and from me how much easier it is to actually ask a loved one or even a stranger if you can pray for them. Mostly, you will hear from us all how much more aware we are of being active as a part of the Body of Christ here in His Church at St. Luke’s. Yes, we all are becoming disciples through Bible study and hope you will decide to join us this fall.

Father Larry and I welcome your calls and questions about the coming class. We will be having an “informational meeting” on this in August, so watch for the announcement in the church bulletin.

In Christ,
Jim Tucker