

Lesson 12

Practicum

Now that you have learned some basic Bible study skills, it is time for you to practice them and to formulate your own plan for studying Scripture. Before you begin this lesson, stop and pray for God's guidance as you open His holy Word. Pray that God would open your eyes and your heart and that He would allow you to learn His will through this study. This should become a consistent habit in your devotional life: Always ask God for His wisdom and understanding before you begin. Have you prayed for God's guidance as you study the Scripture in this lesson?

Practicing Bible Study Skills

The passage we have chosen to study is 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12. Read it now and write down some of your impressions and insights.

Now let's begin to dig for some more information. Who wrote the book of 1 Thessalonians and to whom was it written (1 Thessalonians 1:1)?

What do we already know about the Thessalonian church? Look up the following passages and write down what you learn about the situation in Thessalonica and Paul's previous ministry there.

Acts 17:1-4

Acts 17:5-9

From looking at this historical background, what do you think Paul's purpose for writing this letter might be?

From the context of the book as a whole, what do you learn about Paul's purpose for writing to the Thessalonians?

1 Thessalonians 2:1-4

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5

1 Thessalonians 3:6-8

1 Thessalonians 3:10; 4:1-2 ; 4:10

Now that we know the circumstances surrounding Paul's writing of this letter, let's look at our study passage a little closer. Are there any words you need to look up in a dictionary? If there is a word you do not fully understand, write it below along with its definition. Make sure you find the definition that matches the meaning of the word in its context.

Are there any similes, metaphors, hyperboles or symbols used in this passage? What are they?

Paul compares his ministry to the Thessalonians to both a mother and a father. What characteristics are being compared? In what way were Paul and his companions like a mother?

Can you think of any other characteristics unique to a mother that might have prompted Paul's analogy?

If we genuinely love others (as a mother loves her children), what will we do? (1 Thessalonians 2:8)

What did you learn about love when you studied the fruit of the Spirit that might help you better understand this verse?

In what ways was Paul like a father?

What other characteristics unique to a father might also describe Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians?

In 1 Thessalonians 2:12, where Paul compares his ministry to that of a father, he relates the father's primary responsibility regarding his children. What is it?

Father's are to encourage and urge their children to live lives worthy of God. The word translated "encourage" is the Greek word *parakaleo* (a form of which is translated in the Gospel of John as "Comforter," another name for the Holy Spirit). If you were to look this word up in the Greek dictionary in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, you would find the following definition: "to call near, i.e. invite, invoke (by imploration, hortation or consolation): — beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort(-ation), entreat, pray." It is a combination of both comforting and exhorting (admonishing, warning or urging with advice). There are 254 uses of this word (and the two words it's related to) in the New Testament, so to look them all up would take a considerable amount of time. But we can look at how Paul uses the word in 1 Thessalonians, where he uses it nine times. *Parakaleo* is translated in the NIV as encourage, appeal, instruct and urge. Find the word in the following verses and write down what you learn about encouragement. (Remember to interpret each verse in context — you might need to read the verses immediately before and after each verse listed.)

1 Thessalonians 2:3

1 Thessalonians 2:12

1 Thessalonians 3:2

1 Thessalonians 3:7

1 Thessalonians 4:1

1 Thessalonians 4:10

1 Thessalonians 4:18

1 Thessalonians 5:11

1 Thessalonians 5:14

The fact that Paul uses the same word nine times is significant. It helps us understand his purpose for writing. Why would the Thessalonians have been in need of such encouragement at this point?

What practical applications can you make about your need to encourage others (through both exhortation and comfort) and the source of your own encouragement? How would you apply this verse to your own life?

What other words in this passage might make interesting word studies?

Look again at 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12. What kind of an example did Paul set for the Thessalonian believers?

What was the result of his godly example?

1 Thessalonians 1:6-9

1 Thessalonians 3:6

What kind of example should you be setting for other believers? What kind of effect might it have?

What other practical applications can you make from these verses? What has God spoken to your heart about through this study?

Planning Your Own Bible Study

It is now time for you to prepare your own plan for Bible study. In order to continue to grow as a Christian, it is imperative that you spend as much time as possible studying God's Word. Your success in walking

with the Lord is directly proportionate to the amount of time you spend fellowshiping with Him through prayer and reading His Word (coupled with obedience, of course). Reading haphazardly will cause you to be confused and to lose interest, so you should carefully plan your Bible study. You might want to begin studying an entire book of the Bible (one of the Gospels or Paul's letters) or you might want to study some passages about particular topics that interest you. You should also plan when you will study. Planning a regular time of Bible study or "devotions" is important for developing a healthy habit of getting alone with God. Consider this time your "appointment with God" — an appointment that can't be broken. Plan your day around your appointment with God. On the following page, write out your plan for studying God's Word. Write down what you plan to study, when you'll begin, how long you'll study and what type of studying you will do. Here are some suggestions: Nehemiah, any one of the Psalms, Daniel 1-6, Mathew 5-7, Mark, Romans 6-8, Galatians, Philippians, 2 Timothy, Titus, James, 1 Peter, 1 John or Revelation 1-3.

Now that you have a plan, you are ready to begin. Before you start your study, ask God to help you to truly understand the meaning of the text and how it applies to your life today. Do that right now. If you chose a particular passage or verse from the Bible, read it through now. If you chose to study an entire book of the Bible, read the first one or two paragraphs now. From your initial reading, what do you learn from the passage?

Now look at the passage in its context. You might need to read an entire chapter or just the verses immediately preceding or following the passage you're studying. Does your understanding of the passage change as a result of reading it in context? What additional insight do you gain?

Who wrote the passage and to whom was it written?

Can you tell what the tone of the passage is? (Does it express thankfulness or discouragement; does it commend others or scold them?)

What do you already know about the book of the Bible your passage is found in? When was it written and under what circumstances? Can you learn anything about the author's purpose from the context?

Are there any words that are repeated that might give a clue to the author's purpose? What are they and what do you learn from them?

Are you unsure of the meaning of any of the words in the text? If so, look them up in a dictionary and write their definitions below.

Is the grammar confusing? Are there any sentences that don't seem to make sense to you? If so, write them down below and ask another adult for help in understanding them.

Are there any similes, metaphors, hyperboles, symbols or use of personification in the passage? If so, write them down along with the meaning.

Are there any interesting words that would make a good word study? Write them down. If you have a concordance in the back of your Bible, look up the verses that use the same word and write out your insights below. If you don't have a concordance, look through the book your passage is found in for other occurrences of the same word. Write down what you learn from those verses about the meaning of your word.

Now look for some practical applications. Are there any promises made to the original audience that you can also claim? Are there any warnings or admonitions that you need to heed? Is the passage telling you to avoid something or to do something? Write down all the applications to your own life that you can think of.

Does this passage apply to anyone you know? In what ways? Are you willing to share your insights from this passage with that person?

Are there any questions raised by this passage that need to be answered? What are they? How will you go about finding the answers?

What passage will you study next?

Hopefully you have learned something valuable from your first Bible study. If you have some good Bible study tools like a commentary, concordance or Bible dictionary, you will be able to do a much more in-depth study of the Bible, but God can speak to you through His Word even if you don't have them. As you continue to faithfully study God's Word daily, truly seeking to understand His message and His will for your

life and sincerely striving to obey what you read, God will enable you to learn more than you could ever imagine. He will help you to understand and will guide you to passages that bear light on the one you're studying. He will place people in your path to answer your questions. Remember that God wants you to understand His Word even more than you want to. Be diligent. Be faithful. Devote yourself to the study of the Scriptures and see how mightily God will use you and will bless your life.