



## Overview- November: Study

This month's practice is Study. As committed followers of Christ, we all know we need this, yet study can sometimes be the most dreaded of practices (especially for our youth, many of whom already feel overwhelmed with how much studying they have for school).

The Spiritual Discipline of Study should be *life-giving*, rather than *life-draining*. Learning about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the early Church, the ancient world, and how it all effects our lives today can (and I might even say *should*) be exciting and interesting. But we can't just know how to read the bible, we must be taught to do it.

The practice of study follows meditation for a reason: meditation engages the emotional part of our brain as we read scripture, whereas study brings out the analytical side. While both are dependent on the word of God, the outcomes should be quite different. Hopefully, this shift will engage your youth in a different way than last month's practice did.

In this month's release you'll find tips on reading the Bible effectively, exercises you can do with your youth (be sure to check out the group Lectio Devina exercise!) and other resources (like books and podcasts) that will help you to effectively impart the importance of Study on deepening our faith walks. We recommend that you focus on relaying strategies of studying, alongside the biblical teaching you are already doing. The goal of Study should be to empower your youth to read their bibles more effectively and give them some tools to engage their minds to focus on Scripture to understand and apply biblical truths to their lives.

It is our prayer that this month the minds of your entire group be opened to the beauty of God's word, that it impacts your walk with the Lord, and that a new generation comes to love the Bible.

If you have any questions, or would like to recommend a resource to add to this folder, please contact CBOQ Youth by emailing Meghan at [mmatthews@baptist.ca](mailto:mmatthews@baptist.ca)

Blessings to you this month,

The CBOQ Youth team



## Scripture about Study

The following scriptures are *about* the practice of study, and while they themselves could be used for study, their primary purpose is to inform us of what study is, and why it is important for our faith walk. Hopefully, these scriptures will help you and your youth get in the right headspace to study the word of God.

### Deuteronomy 11:18-23

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth. If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow—to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him and to hold fast to him— then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you.

### Joshua 1:8

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

### Psalms 111:2

Great are the works of the Lord;  
They are studied by all who delight in them.

### Psalms 119:105

Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
a light on my path.

### Acts 17:11

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

### Romans 10:17

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

### Romans 15: 4

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

### 2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the servant of God may be equipped for every good work.



## LESSON SAMPLE (1 Hour version)

### Lesson Objectives:

#### Students will:

- Develop empathetic reading skills by considering a biblical story from different perspectives
- Discover the importance of study in understanding the bible

#### Materials Needed:

- Bibles (1 per participant is ideal) OR a printout of the story (available at the end of this lesson)
- Whiteboard/chalkboard/poster paper, or some other way to write up answers and ideas\*
- Paper for people to write on (for Minds On activity)
- Handout at the end of this lesson to distribute to everyone (if you don't want to print it out, you can use plain paper and explain how to divide the paper)
- Markers/pens (for each participant/group)
- A way to keep track of time (watch, phone, clock, etc.)

\*=optional

### Set Up

- Consider pre-splitting your group into groups of 4 (each group will need to have a Jacob, a Laban, a Rachael, and a Leah)
- Arrange your space so that groups can cluster together for small group discussion
- Get your whiteboard/chalkboard/poster paper ready to gather all the ideas on for larger group discussion
- Print out copies of the scripture and handouts

### Online Adaptations

- Pre-split your group into groups of 4 (each group will need to have a Jacob, a Laban, a Rachael, and a Leah), consider using a platform that allows for subgroups or “breakout rooms”
- Send digital copies of scripture, or put a link to the story in the chat so everyone can access it e.g. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+29%3A+14-35+%26amp;version=NIV>
- Use a Google Doc for everyone to add their ideas to (instead of a whiteboard/poster paper)



## Preamble (2 minutes)

**Say:** Today we are going to practice *studying* the bible. Study is an important part of the Christian walk, but it can be kind of intimidating to do. By looking at a biblical story and trying to see who the characters are and reading the story from *their* perspective, you will hopefully be able to approach studying the bible in a way that makes sense to you *and* helps reveal the truth God intends for us to learn in it.

## Minds On- 5-8 minutes

Hand out paper and pens for everyone to write with.

**Ask:** What does it mean to have a perspective?

**Suggested answer:** Your perspective is the way you see something: Who you are, where you're from, what you do, all shape how you see the world, and interpret events/situations.

**Ask:** What kind of perspectives are in this room?

**Let students answer.** Answers might include Christian, Canadian, male, female, young etc.

**Say:** The Bible also represents many perspectives because there are so many people's stories told. I'm going to give you 2 minutes to write out as many examples as you can think of. For example, several of the Apostles are identified as Fishermen, that job shapes their perspective.

Any questions?

After 2 minutes, have students list all the different perspectives they wrote down. You can ask for volunteers OR go around the group. Have students to check off answers that are given by someone else, consider keeping a running tally to see which perspectives were most common. Keep going until all answers have been "checked off".



## Activity (30 minutes)

**Say:** We are now going to apply the idea of *perspective* to reading the Bible. I'm going to give you some background information to the story we are reading and then we'll be dividing into groups of 4.

**Set up the story:** The story we are going to study today is in the book of Genesis, and centers around the person, Jacob. At this point in the story, Jacob has fled from his home country because he lied to his brother and tricked his father into giving him a blessing, and is now at the home of his uncle Laban.

Divide students into groups of 4<sup>1</sup>. Within each group, have each student select 1 of the 4 characters in this story (Jacob, Laban, Rachael, or Leah); all 4 characters need to be covered by each group. Give a copy of Appendix A to each student.

Within each group, they will read through the story (Genesis 29: 14-35) together. Each student will identify information about their assigned character and fill out the three columns on the handout: what does *your* character say, what does *your* character do, and what do *others* say about *your* character.

Bonus: Students can also identify what kind of thoughts and/or feelings their character may have had.) Students have 10 minutes to complete the activity.

**After 10 minutes, say:** In your group 4, take time to share your insights about your character with each other by going over the 3 questions as well as how you think your character would have felt/thought in this story.

I'll give you 5 minutes. Go!

**After 5 minutes:** Invite the whole group back together.

**Ask:** Leah's tell us about your character,<sup>2</sup> go through each character asking for insights from each one.

You (or your students) can write these insights on your whiteboard/chalkboard/poster paper if that is something that will help your group.

**Online Adaptation:** Consider having a Google Doc to simultaneously collect thoughts

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<sup>1</sup> Ensure all groups have at least 4 people; some groups may have 5.

<sup>2</sup> Depending on the size of your group, you can have each person share for their character or ask for volunteers.



## Debrief (10-15 minutes)

**Say:** Now that we've read this story and heard it told from the 4 perspectives of the characters let's talk about this tool and what we've learned.

### Questions to ask:

- What were you surprised to learn about "your" character?
- What were you surprised to learn about another character?
- How did it feel to read the story and look for information about only one person?
- Was it easy or difficult to put yourself in the place of your character?
- How was your interpretation of this section of scripture shaped by reading through the perspective you were assigned?
- Do you think you could do this with other sections of scripture?
- What stories in the Bible would you like to read from a specific character's point of view? \*\*

\*\*Make sure to write down the answers to this question, so that students can use their own choice for the weekly challenge.

## Homework/Weekly Challenge

Using a story that your students identified in the debrief, or one that your group is familiar with (perhaps one you have been working through as a group) ask students to spend time over the course of the week reading and rereading the story from the *perspective* of different characters. Ask them to write down their insights (about the character, the characters perspective, and about the message of the section of scripture).

Remind them that you'll begin next week by asking for these insights.



## **Genesis 29: 14-35**

<sup>14</sup> Then Laban said to him, “You are my own flesh and blood.”

### **Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel**

After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, <sup>15</sup> Laban said to him, “Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be.”

<sup>16</sup> Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. <sup>17</sup> Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful. <sup>18</sup> Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, “I’ll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.”

<sup>19</sup> Laban said, “It’s better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me.” <sup>20</sup> So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

<sup>21</sup> Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to make love to her.”

<sup>22</sup> So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. <sup>23</sup> But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob made love to her. <sup>24</sup> And Laban gave his servant Zilpah to his daughter as her attendant.

<sup>25</sup> When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?”

<sup>26</sup> Laban replied, “It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. <sup>27</sup> Finish this daughter’s bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.”

<sup>28</sup> And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. <sup>29</sup> Laban gave his servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her attendant. <sup>30</sup> Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.

### **Jacob’s Children**

<sup>31</sup> When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive, but Rachel remained childless. <sup>32</sup> Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, “It is because the LORD has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now.”

<sup>33</sup> She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, “Because the LORD heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too.” So she named him Simeon

<sup>34</sup> Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, “Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” So he was named Levi. <sup>35</sup> She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, “This time I will praise the LORD.” So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.



## Character Analysis: Genesis 29: 14-35

Character Name:

What did they say?

What did they do?

What did others say  
about them?

Insights into your character:

## LESSON SAMPLE (15 Minute version)

### Lesson Objectives

#### Students will:

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#### Materials Needed

- Bibles (1 per participant is ideal) OR a printout of the story (available at the end of this lesson)
- Whiteboard/chalkboard/poster paper, or some other way to write up answers and ideas\*
- Markers/pens
- A way to keep track of time (watch, phone, clock, etc.)

#### Set Up

- Divide your whiteboard/chalkboard/poster paper into 4 sections
- Write the name of one character in each section (Jacob, Laban, Rachel, Leah)
- Arrange your space so that all students can see the surface you are writing on

#### Online Adaption

- Send digital copies of scripture, or put a link to the story in the chat so everyone can access it e.g. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+29%3A+14-35+&version=NIV>
- Use a Google Doc for everyone to add their ideas to (instead of a whiteboard/poster paper)

#### Preamble (1 minute)

**Say:** Today we are going to practice *studying* the bible. Study is an important part of the Christian walk, but it can be kind of intimidating to do. By looking at a biblical story and trying to see who the characters are and reading the story from *their* perspective, you will hopefully be able to approach studying the bible in a way that makes sense to you *and* helps reveal the truth God intends for us to learn in it.



### Activity (10 minutes)

Hand out bibles, or copies of the story. Ask someone to read the scripture through once (or do it yourself).

Starting with one character, ask the questions:

- 1) What do they say?
- 2) What do they do?
- 3) What do other people say about them?

Fill in the answers to these questions on your writing surface (or have someone in the group write so you can facilitate the conversation).

Once you have worked through the questions with one character, complete the questions for the other 3.

### Debrief (2-5 minutes)

- What were you surprised to learn about some characters?
- How did it feel to read the story and look for information about each person?
- Is it easy or difficult to put yourself in the place of a character?
- How was your interpretation of this section of scripture shaped by reading through the different perspectives?
- Do you think you could do this with other sections of scripture?
- What stories in the bible would you like to read from a specific character's point of view? \*\*

\*\*make sure to write down the answers to this question, so that students can use their own choice for the weekly challenge.

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# RESOURCES

## Book List for Study

Enns, Peter. *The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read it.* (2014)

*How the Bible Actually Works: In Which I Explain How an Ancient, Ambiguous, and Diverse Book Leads Us to Wisdom Rather Than Answers—and Why That's Great News.* (2019)

Fee, Gordon. *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth.*

Tverberg, Lois. *Reading the Bible with Rabbi Jesus.*

### General Books on Spiritual Practices:

Ahlberg-Calhoun, Adele. *The Spiritual Practices Handbook.*

Foster, Richard. *Celebration of Discipline.*

Shiflett, Diana. *Spiritual Practices in Community.*

Smith, Traci. *Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home.*

Thompson, Marjorie. *Soul Feast.*

Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines.*

## Podcast Recommendations

### Podcasts:

The Bible for Normal People; Peter Enns and Jared Byas

The Bible Project; Tim Mackie and Jon Collins (also a great YouTube channel)

### Episodes:

[Groundwork: Study and Memorization](#)

## YouTube Videos

### Channels:

[The Bible Project](#)

### Specific Videos:

[The Spiritual Discipline of Study - Why should I Study the Bible<sup>3</sup>](#)

[Spiritual Discipline- Study<sup>4</sup>](#)

[Spiritual Discipline- Study: sermon by Tim Chaddick<sup>5</sup>](#)

[Basics for How to Study the Bible<sup>6</sup>](#)

[How to Read the Bible \(Inductive Study\) part 1](#)

[How to Read the Bible \(Inductive Study\) part 2 \(Example with Matthew 2\)](#)

[Whiteboard series: How to Read the Bible<sup>7</sup>](#)

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<sup>3</sup> The host is wearing a terrible t-shirt, but his content is really good. He touches on the difference between memorization and reading and studying.

<sup>4</sup> This video, made by the Salvation Army, is less than 3 minutes. It is a good intro video for the Discipline of Study but is not exhaustive.

<sup>5</sup> A strong personal story about why study is so important to the Christian walk.

<sup>6</sup> A good comparison between bible reading and bible studying

<sup>7</sup> This video has great practical tips on getting ready to read the bible, the visuals are constantly changing and should hold the attention of your youth better than a 'talking head' video.



## **Celebration of Discipline**

### **The Discipline of Study**

(Excerpts from Richard Foster)

#### **The Purpose**

1. The purpose of the Spiritual Disciplines is the total transformation of the person. They aim at replacing old destructive habits of thought with new life-giving habits. Nowhere is this purpose more clearly seen than in the Discipline of Study.
2. The apostle Paul tells us that we are transformed through the renewal of the mind (Rom. 12:2). The mind is renewed by applying it to those things that will transform it (Phil. 4:8). Therefore, we should rejoice that we are not left to our own devices but have been given this means of God's grace for the changing of our inner spirit.
3. Jesus made it unmistakably clear that the knowledge of the truth will set us free (John 8:32). Good feelings, ecstatic experiences or "getting high on Jesus" will not free us. Without a knowledge of the truth, we will not be free.

#### **What is Study?**

1. Study is a specific kind of experience in which through careful attention to reality the mind is enabled to move in a specific direction. Remember, the mind will always take on an order conforming to the order upon which it concentrates.
2. Perhaps we observe a tree or read a book. We see it, feel it, understand it, and draw conclusions from it. As we do, our thought processes take on an order conforming to the order in the tree or book. When this is done with concentration, perception, and repetition, ingrained habits of thought are formed.
3. The Old Testament instructed the Israelites to a regular exposure to God's instructions (Deut. 11:18). The purpose of this instruction is to direct the mind repeatedly and regularly toward certain modes of thought about God and human relationships.
4. What we study determines the kind of habits that are formed in the mind, which is why Paul urges us to focus on things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and gracious.



## The Difference Between Study and Meditation

1. The process that occurs in study should be distinguished from meditation. Meditation is devotional; study is analytical. Meditation will relish a word; study will explicate it.
2. Although study and meditation often overlap, they constitute two distinct experiences. Study provides a certain objective framework within which meditation can successfully function.

## Four Steps

1. **Repetition:** Repetition regularly channels the mind in a specific direction. This is why the issue of television programming is so important. With innumerable murders being portrayed each evening on prime-time TV, the repetition alone trains the inner mind in destructive thought patterns.
2. **Concentration:** Concentration focuses the attention on what is being studied. We live in a culture that does not value concentration. Distraction is the order of the day. Some will read a book and watch TV at the same time. Most people find it virtually impossible to go through an entire day focusing on a single thing.
3. **Comprehension:** Comprehension focuses on the knowledge of the truth. All of us have had the experience of reading something over and over and then, all of the sudden, we understand what it means. This “eureka” experience of understanding catapults onto a new level of growth and freedom.
4. **Reflection:** Reflection defines the significance of what we are studying. Reflection brings us to see things from God’s perspective.

## An Essential Quality

1. It soon becomes obvious that study demands humility. Study simply cannot happen until we are willing to be subjects to the subject matter. We must submit to the system. We must come as students, not the teacher. Arrogance and a teachable spirit are mutually exclusive.
2. All of us know persons who parade their information in an offensive manner. We should feel profound sorrow for such people. They do not understand the Spiritual Discipline of Study. They have mistaken the accumulation of information for knowledge. They equate the spouting of words with wisdom. How tragic!



## Study of Books

1. Three intrinsic rules:
  - a. Understanding of the book—what is the author saying?
  - b. Interpreting the book—what does the author mean?
  - c. Evaluating the book—is the author right or wrong?
2. Three extrinsic rules:
  - a. Experience: Experience is the only way we can interpret and relate to what we read.
  - b. Other books: Books often have meaning only when they are read in relation to other writings.
  - c. Live discussion: Live discussion refers to the ordinary interaction that occurs among human beings as they pursue a particular course of study.

## Non-Verbal Books

1. We now come to the least recognized but perhaps the most important field of study: the observation of reality in things, events, and actions.
2. Pay attention to nature—the mysteries of God often are experienced there, like the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly.
3. Observe relationships. Observe how we relate in these relationships. What controls us? Where do we need transformation?
4. We also need to study institutions, cultures, and events of our time.

## **The Practice of Group Lectio Divina**

Lectio divina, or “holy reading,” is an ancient practice from the Christian tradition, dating from the early medieval era of prayerful study of Scripture in monasteries. Lectio divina is a slow, quiet, and thoughtful encounter with Scripture. Reading and responding to the biblical passage three times provides time and space for God’s Word to move from our lips, into our minds, and finally into our hearts.

Based on the image of Jacob’s ladder, a twelfth century Carthusian monk named Guigo II described four steps of lectio divina: lectio (reading), meditatio (meditation), oratio (prayer), and contemplation (contemplation). Through these four steps, God’s Word sinks deeper into our hearts and imagination.

Facilitators may wish to use lectio with a Scripture passage or poem as an opening or closing prayer for the group’s meeting. A version of this prayer outline for participants is included on the following page.

### **To begin:**

- » Ask for three volunteers to read the Scripture passage.
- » Invite the group into prayer with a few moments of silence.

### **We listen to God’s Word for the first time.**

- » We listen for a word or phrase that God will speak to us today.
- » We reflect in silence.
- » We share aloud the word or phrase that spoke to our heart.

### **We listen to God’s Word for the second time.**

- » We reflect in silence on what God may be saying to us through the word or phrase that spoke to our heart.
- » We share aloud what this word or phrase means to us.

### **We listen to God’s Word for the third time.**

- » We reflect in silence on how God may be calling us to act through the word or phrase that spoke to our heart.
- » We share aloud how we feel God may be calling us to respond.

### **We thank God in prayer.**

- » The facilitator closes with a prayer thanking God for this encounter with the Word.
- » Or each participant may be invited to offer a short prayer of thanksgiving.

Source: Laura Kelly Fanucci | © 2016 Collegeville Institute



## Guidelines for Group Lectio Divina

- ▶ Make yourself comfortable as you settle in for a time of quiet prayer. Breathe deeply to settle your body and your mind, becoming aware that you are in God's presence.
- ▶ Listen to the first person read the Scripture passage aloud. Spend a few moments in quiet reflection on the passage. What word or phrase speaks to your heart? When the group is invited to share, **speak that word or phrase aloud.**
- ▶ Listen to the second person read the Scripture passage aloud, keeping in mind the word or phrase that first spoke to you. Spend a few moments in quiet reflection on what God may be saying to you through this word or phrase. When the group is invited to speak, **share what this word or phrase means to you.**
- ▶ Listen to the third person read the Scripture passage aloud. Spend a few moments in quiet reflection on how God may be calling you to act through the word or phrase that spoke to you. When the group is invited to speak, **share how you feel God may be calling you to respond.**
- ▶ Our group will close our practice of lectio divina with a prayer of thanksgiving for our encounter with God's Word.

*"Listen with the ear of your heart."*

—Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue 1

Source: Laura Kelly Fanucci | © 2016 Collegeville Institute



## Study

*“... but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.” – Romans 12:2*

Dallas Willard says, “As solitude is the primary discipline of abstinence for the early part of our spiritual life, so study is the primary discipline of engagement.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it is very important that we understand the practice of this discipline in our lives. It is different than meditation. Meditation is more devotional in nature whereas study is more analytical. Study is the primary way we engage ourselves with the written and spoken Word of God. Study can also focus on the reading of good books. An often-neglected area of study involves the observation of things and people. Study can also be enhanced by listening to gifted teachers who help us to understand the Bible in deep and refreshing ways and challenge us to deeper personal levels of study.

While some might be turned off by the idea of study being a spiritual discipline, it is important to understand both the experiential nature of this type of study and the consequential results. Richard Foster defines study as

*a specific kind of experience in which through careful observation of objective structures we cause thought processes to move in a certain way. Perhaps we study a tree or book. We see it, feel it. As we do, our thought processes take on an order conforming to the order in the tree or book. When done with concentration, perception and repetition, ingrained habits of thought are formed.*<sup>9</sup>

The discipline of study will provide the basis for knowledge and understanding as you venture on your journey. It is always important to undertake study with an attitude of humility and teachability since any practice of increasing knowledge can have a tendency to feed one’s pride or arrogance.

- Using a concordance (either book form or computer work fine), choose a topic of interest to you that you have been desiring to learn more about. Look up the word/concept in the concordance, reading each portion of Scripture where it is found. After you have done this, write several paragraphs summarizing what the Bible has to say about the topic.
- Obtain a series of tapes on a portion of Scripture by a good Bible teacher. Spend some time listening to these tapes where you can really concentrate, take notes, and reflect on the passage(s) of Scripture being studied. After listening to the tapes, spend some time on your own studying the same portion of the Bible to see what other observations, principles, or application you come up with.

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<sup>8</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 176.

<sup>9</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 55.

- A significant aspect of study is the constant reading of the Bible as a whole. If you read 3-4 chapters a day, you can read the entire Bible in one year. Many people find it helpful to use a Bible reading calendar to keep track. There are also Bibles that are designed and laid out to be read over the period of a year. If you find it difficult reading the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, you might try reading a chronological Bible instead.
- Choose a book on a topic of interest. If you do not have one, visit a local bookstore. As you read the book, spend at least a half hour in reflection for every hour you spend reading. Use a highlighter or pen to mark sections of the book you find especially helpful. Write down specific page numbers or notes in the front or back of the book that will help you return to portions you find significant. When you are finished reading the book, you might want to write a one-page summary listing six to eight key quotations, as well as a paragraph critique describing how the book has had impact on your spiritual formation.
- One of the easiest ways to begin studying people more closely is to go “people watching.” Go to a mall or someplace where there are a lot of people participating in a variety of activities. It is even better if you can hear many of them talking. Spend at least an hour just observing and listening. You might choose to go with someone who you can discuss your observations with. How do the things you have observed support what the Bible says about people? What concepts that you are currently learning can be observed?

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**“What we study determines the kind of habits that are formed...” Richard Foster in  
Celebration of Discipline, p. 64**

Ordinary time – the spiritual discipline of study

**Scripture: Proverbs 1**

The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

2 For learning about wisdom and instruction,  
for understanding words of insight,  
3 for gaining instruction in wise dealing,  
righteousness, justice, and equity;  
4 to teach shrewdness to the simple,  
knowledge and prudence to the young—  
5 let the wise also hear and gain in learning,  
and the discerning acquire skill,

6 to understand a proverb and a figure, the  
words of the wise and their riddles.

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of  
knowledge; fools despise wisdom and  
instruction.

8 Hear, my child, your father’s instruction,  
and do not reject your mother’s teaching;

9 for they are a fair garland for your head, and  
pendants for your neck.

**Voice of wisdom:**

“The purpose of the Spiritual Disciplines is the total transformation of the person. They aim at replacing old destructive habits of thought with new life-giving habits. Nowhere is this purpose more clearly seen than in the Discipline of study...Study is a specific kind of experience in which through careful attention to reality the mind is enabled to move in a certain direction. Remember, the mind will always take on an order conforming to the order upon which it concentrates. Perhaps we observe a tree or read a book. We see it, feel it, understand it, draw conclusions from it. And as we do, our thought processes take on an order conforming to the order in the tree or book. When this is done with concentration, perception, and repetition, ingrained habits of thought are formed.

“The Old Testament instructs the Israelites to write the Laws on gates and doorposts and bind them to their wrists so that ‘they shall be as frontlets between your eyes’ (Deut. 11:18). The purpose of this instruction is to direct the mind repeatedly and regularly toward certain modes of thought about God and human relationships. A rosary or a prayer wheel has the same objective. Of course, the New Testament replaces laws written on the doorposts with laws written on the heart and lead us to Jesus, our ever-present and inward Teacher.

“We must once again emphasize that the ingrained habits of thought that are formed will conform to the order of the thing being studied. What we study determines the kind of habits that are formed, which is why Paul urges us to focus on things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and gracious.

“The process that occurs in study should be distinguished from meditation. Meditation is devotional; study is analytical. Meditation will relish a word; study will explicate it. Although meditation and study often overlap, they constitute two distinct experiences. Study provides a certain objective framework within which meditation can successfully function.”



## Contemplation:

What key words and ideas stand out to you? How do they help you take a deeper look at study as a spiritual discipline?

How would you articulate the difference between the spiritual discipline of study, and the habit of pursuing knowledge out of curiosity or just to gain information?

If “the purpose of the Spiritual Disciplines is the total transformation of the person” how could you practice a more intentional discipline of study?

## Practices:

Write down one or two of the key phrases that are important to you. Hold them (literally) before God and wait silently on him. Record any further thoughts he may give you.

This week, instead of jumping right into the discipline of study, use your time in the other disciplines we’ve talked about (mediation, prayer, and fasting) to ask God what it is he desires you to study right now in your life. Perhaps it is a particular book or Scripture passage, perhaps a certain topic or practice. Pray that he gives you a clear enough idea that you can be intentional and focused in your practice of the discipline of study.

If this whets your appetite for learning more about study, I encourage you to get a copy of *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster and see a much fuller picture of this spiritual discipline!

Quotes from Richard Foster in *Celebration of Discipline*, pgs. 62-64.

©sharonracke These contemplative studies are the result of the thoughtful and transformative teaching I have received both at The Dwelling Place ([dwellingplaceindy.org](http://dwellingplaceindy.org)), and as a student of The Renovare Institute ([renovare.org](http://renovare.org)). I pray that as you use them, you will experience the presence and love of God, and learn more about living with Christ daily. Sharon Racke ([recess.racke@gmail.com](mailto:recess.racke@gmail.com))

# >>> SOAP <<<

BIBLE STUDY METHOD

Pray, asking God for guidance through His Word and to get rid of other distractions.

Read the passage / chapter and find the one thing that you ponder on or jumps off the page as you read.

## **S:** SCRIPTURE:

Which scripture stuck out to you most? Write it down.

## **O:** OBSERVATION:

What you think about the verse?  
What does God seem to be revealing through it?

## **A:** APPLICATION:

How do you apply this little truth to your life?

## **P:** PRAYER:

Write a prayer asking how to implement this verse in your life.

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