Leading Students to Feast on God’s Word

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I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.—Job 23:12

A. Deuteronomy 8:1-3—Food sustains mere existence; God’s word sustains “real life.” (See C. Wright “Deuteronomy,” pg 123-124.)

1. Context: (Author, Audience, Situation, Immediate Context)

2. Moses’ Message to His Audience:

3. God’s Message to Us Today:

4. Ideas for Application:
   b)Equip yourself and/or your parents with truth through the Children Desiring God seminar by Sally Michael: Leading Children To A Solid Faith: Preparing Children to Hear the Gospel http://www.childrendesiringgod.org/events/conference2007.php
   c) Treat unbelievers like unbelievers, move towards them with the gospel, and pray with earnestness.

B. Doctrine—Right practice flows from right doctrine; therefore we must build and maintain a solid foundation of Biblical Doctrine on all matters, including the Scripture itself and Biblical interpretation (Hermeneutics).

1. Biblical Doctrines of God’s Word We must steep our young people in the amazing things God teaches us in the Bible about the Bible.

“1. The Word of God We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20, 21; Mark 13:31; John 8:31, 32; John 20:31; Acts 20:32)” ~ Congregational Affirmation of Faith, Bethlehem Baptist Church http://www.hopeingod.org/document/congregational-affirmation-faith

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2. **Ideas for Application:**
   a) Study and refresh your own soul’s appreciation about the doctrine of God’s Word in Chapters 4-5 of Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology*.
   b) Read through and consider teaching sections from *God Wrote A Book* by James MacDonald. (This resource can be especially helpful for new believers or those not yet embracing Jesus Christ for salvation.)
   c) Intentionally teach your young people doctrine—systematically—on this subject.
   d) In your family and corporate teaching, when a text speaks of itself as God’s Word, take a two-minute diversion (parenthesis) and highlight the glories of God’s Word in that text.

3. **Properly Handling God’s Word**—*We must hold, practice, and instill Biblical convictions on the right use of the Bible.*

   “...the meaning of Biblical texts is a fixed historical reality, rooted in the historical, unchangeable intentions of its divine and human authors... Therefore, the process of discovering the intention of God in the Bible... is a humble and careful effort to find in the language of Scripture what the human authors intended to communicate.” ~ *Elder Affirmation of Faith*, Bethlehem Baptist Church (1.3 & 1.4) [http://www.hopeingod.org/document/elder-affirmation-faith](http://www.hopeingod.org/document/elder-affirmation-faith)

4. **Ideas for Application:**
   a) Study and build your own convictions on this matter. (One example is: Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules*.)
   b) Be ruthless to **eliminate** curriculum or teaching styles that ask the question, “What does this verse mean to you?”
   c) Interview and/or equip your teachers and staff hires on this matter.
   d) When you teach, as often as possible set up your text with the author, audience, situation, and seek to present the intention of the author.
   e) Young people are impacted by our often repeated, favorite phrases. Consider making one of yours something like, “What did this mean to them?”

C. **Prayer**—*God by his Spirit is the main actor in interpreting spiritual truths to his people from the Word* (1 Corinthians 2:13). Therefore, prayer is integral to our study of the Word and we should humbly beseech him for grace.

1. **God’s Call to Dependence**—The Bible highlights the need and models the act of prayer over the Word.
2. **Ideas for Application:**
   b) Develop a list of Scriptures to pray through for your times in the Word (e.g. Psalm 119:18, 139:23-24, etc.) as well as Scriptures to pray for your young people and their interaction in the Word (e.g. Acts 17:11, Philippians 1:9-11, etc.)
   c) Create a bookmark of Scriptures for the students you shepherd to pray through as they launch into the Word.

D. **Read**—*All Scripture is profitable! We must labor to make it all accessible!*

   1. **God’s Word Beckons us to its Entirety**—What is our diet? What are we serving up? What do we rave about?

2. **Ideas for Application:**
   a) Evaluate your current Biblical diet, and consider spending time in books that may have been neglected.
   b) Familiarize yourself with tools in the ESV Study Bible and books like Fee & Stewart’s *How to Read the Bible Book by Book* to make the more difficult books more accessible.
   c) Consider teaching from or through less familiar books of the Bible (the Minor Prophets, less familiar Psalms, etc.)

E. **Rightly Handling the Word of Truth: Observation**—*The Bible was not originally written to us. It was written in a different time, in different languages, to people with different cultures, and the forms that we share (like narrative and poetry), play by different rules. Therefore to interpret them correctly we need to learn their rules and seek to play by them.*

   1. **God’s Word is Meant to be Read on Its Own Terms**—Oh, to have the ears of the original audience!

2. **Ideas for Application:**
   a) Brush up on your genre skills with books like *Grasping God’s Word* by Duvall & Hays or *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Fee & Stewart.
   b) Teach through a book of the Bible with two purposes:
      i. To pass on proper skills for interpretation; and
      ii. To allow God to mold you by his powerful Word.
c) Join an inductive Bible study to not only study the Bible, but also to learn Bible study skills.
d) Don’t wait until students are in High School—consider taking younger children through one of the many “Discover 4 Yourself” Inductive Bible Studies for Kids by Kay Arthur & Janna Arndt.

F. Strive for Biblical Accuracy: Interpretation—The Bible is twisted by the ignorant and unstable to their destruction (see 2 Timothy 2:23). Therefore it is our calling to strive to both become Bereans ourselves and to disciple young people to be Bereans who examine the Scriptures daily to see if the things they read and are taught are truly so (see Acts 17:11).

1. Four Simple Questions to Increase Accuracy:
   a) #1: How does the surrounding context help me understand the meaning of this passage?
   b) #2: What did the original author want to communicate to the original audience here?
   c) #3: What is unclear in this passage that could be clarified by other clear passages?
   d) #4: Do other passages say the same thing to confirm truths found here?

2. Ideas for Application:
   a) Use and adapt the above questions in your personal Bible study, and incorporate them into your times with young people in the Word.
   b) Cultivate a heart of gentleness and respect in your young people (see Colossians 4:3-6 and 1 Peter 3:15-16) while at the same time allowing them to interact with “heretical case studies” from the news, Web sites of other religious groups, or real life occurrences. (For example, if you are studying eternal punishment in hell, bring in some quotes with Biblical texts used by those who propose annihilation or universalism.)
   c) Provide opportunities for your young people to wrestle with difficult texts where interpretation is difficult.
G. Let Every Text Propel You to the Gospel—*It is God’s desire that every text of Scripture beckons us to faith in him. Therefore we must train our young people to look at the mirror of God’s Word and see their sinfulness in light of God’s holiness, gaze at the glorious person and cross-work of Christ, and rejoice in the benefits and glorious promises bought by it.*

1. Five Questions to Propel You Towards Faith in Christ:
   - **Our Need**: How does this text show the sinful heart/gospel need of the original audience and of myself?\(^1\)
   
   **Christ’s Solution**: How does this or other texts show that faith in Jesus is the remedy to my sinful condition?\(^2\)

   **Arrows Ahead**: Does this Old Testament text act as a “preview” of the glorious saving work of Jesus Christ, or does it “point” to Jesus the Glorious Coming One? (See Luke 24:27 and John 5:39.)

   **Glory on Display**: Does this New Testament text highlight the wondrous Savior, Jesus Christ, and the gospel work accomplished in Christ?

   **His Benefits Become Ours**: Does this text display fruits earned for the believer because of Jesus’ sacrifice?

2. Ideas for Application:
   a) Expand your thinking on this matter by consulting:
      i. *Getting the Message* by Daniel Doriani.

   b) Use and adapt the above questions in your personal Bible study and incorporate them into your times with young people in the Word.

   c) Intentionally teach in a way that highlights some of these aspects (our sinful condition, etc.).


\(^2\) Ibid.
H. Humble Reception and Real Life Application—The thrust of our spending time in the Word is to encounter the living God and be changed. We dare not let ourselves or our people merely hear the words and build a house upon the sand, rather we must put them into practice and build our house upon the rock.

1. **We Need Help Knowing What to Apply**—Does this text give me...

   - A command to obey
   - A character quality to imitate
   - A promise to hold on to
   - A prayer topic
   - An example to follow
   - Something to be thankful for
   - An example to avoid
   - A temptation to resist
   - A warning to heed
   - An error to avoid
   - Advice to follow
   - A perspective to ponder
   - An attitude to change
   - A priority to establish
   - Truth to believe
   - A tactic to employ
   - Teaching to put into practice
   - A verse to memorize
   - Sin to repent of and turn from
   - Something to teach or tell others

2. **Applying Scripture Biblically = “Living By Faith in Future Grace”**—Does this passage present promises (or call me to search for promises) which when heard and believed will fuel life change?

3. **Ideas for Application:**
   a) Be equipped in this area through the various resources on the topic “Living By Faith in Future Grace” (a.k.a. Battling Unbelief) by John Piper at [www.desiringGod.org](http://www.desiringGod.org).
   b) Lead your young people through a series on Battling Unbelief (Faith in Future Grace).
   c) Use and adapt the above chart in your personal Bible study and incorporate it into your times with young people in the Word.

I. Concluding Words
Bibliography


Arthur, Kay and Janna Arndt. *How to Study Your Bible for Kids*. (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2001). *(The Discover 4 Yourself® series includes many other studies for kids, such as Genesis, James, etc.)*


Mathewson, Steven D. *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002). *(Don’t let the title intimidate you. Mathewson’s goal is to help the student of Scripture interpret it correctly first. Therefore in the genre of narrative passages, pages 43-78 are extremely helpful.)*

