

What's Bible study like? \* Q's from the pews  
August 2, 2020 \* Langford Community Church \* Graham Gladstone

This morning we've got a neat question to take on and I really appreciate its honesty.

Here's the question – I've always wanted to come to Bible study but don't know what to expect. What's Bible study like and is it important?

That's a great question and I'm glad you asked. I know growing up, church consisted of Sunday mornings and that's it. You go to church on Sunday mornings and maybe you read your Bible through the week, but Sunday was pretty much it. But then in university, I started meeting other believers who did this OTHER thing called 'Bible study' and I wasn't sure what to make of it. And I had the very same question that this person has asked. What's it like? Do I have to talk? Is it boring? What if I ask a dumb question or reveal I don't know that much? These are questions that went through my head and maybe you've had them too.

What I want to do this morning is put your mind at ease and show you what Bible study is like. We're going to do a Bible study live here 'in church.' And let me say, there's no such thing as a stupid question. You don't HAVE to talk but you're welcome to. It's not possible to out yourself as knowing too little. If you are making an effort to grow, that's all that's important.

And I would add that Bible study is a very important way for us to grow as Christians. Let me give you just a few of reasons. First, corporate Bible study is important because it makes us slow down and think about what we're reading. It's all too easy to blast through our Bible reading and then go – wait, what did I just read? Bible study slows us down to make us think about what we've read and often times, it will reveal something that you've never seen before. 'I've never thought about it that way before.' Corporate Bible study is important because it makes us slow down and think.

Second, corporate Bible study is important because it allows us to hear from another perspective. We might read a passage one way, but in Bible study with others, we get to hear from other perspectives that can sharpen our understanding. So it slows us down, helps us to hear from other perspectives and

Third – it gets us into the Word. I know we have busy lives and sometimes we don't make time to read the Bible. I'd like that not to be true, but I suspect that it is sometimes true, and so I think that corporate Bible study is important because it holds us accountable – it gets us into the Word when we might not do it by ourselves. So – is it important to participate in Bible study? Yes, very much so. It gets us into the Word, it gives us different perspectives, it makes us THINK about what we're reading. Bible study – very important. What's it like? Well, let's take a look.

I'm actually going to kick off a five week video study on the Exodus with this – kind of like the 'Does God hold grudges?' study from a few weeks back. I'll post the questions and you can do the reading and then I'll post a video so you can hear my thoughts. But today we're going to set the stage with a very important part of the Bible – the Joseph story.

## Into Egypt (*Genesis 37-50*)

1. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are central figures in the story of redemption because promise of salvation by faith came through them and ultimately through Jacob's sons – the twelve tribes of Israel (Jacob=Israel). Read Genesis 37:2-5. **Why do you think Jacob (Israel) loved Joseph more than his other sons? Was he wise to heap so much affection on him? How does favoritism like this affect family dynamics?**

2. Now read Genesis 25:28 in light of Jacob's favoritism. **Where do you suppose he got it from? What patterns are you setting for the next generation?**

3. One day, Jacob sent Joseph off to check in with his brothers who were out caring for the flocks. Read Genesis 37:18-24 and 25-28. **What's the bitter irony of Judah's words in verse 27?** (Note that there is already in-fighting and disunity amongst the twelve tribes of Israel. This will continue throughout the OT).

4. In Egypt, Joseph was sold to Potiphar, the captain of the guard. He served Potiphar well but was jailed when Potiphar's wife framed him for sexual misconduct (to put it mildly). Joseph's life just got 'worse and worse' and yet look at what 39:21 says – 'the LORD was with him.' **What does that tell you about God's presence in the experience of trials? Do trials mean that God's not there?**

5. Joseph was eventually released from prison and elevated to a position of tremendous authority when God enabled him to interpret Pharaoh's dreams of famine. The Pharaoh made Joseph his second-in-command and commanded him to prepare the nation for seven lean years. This famine reached all the way to Canaan and Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy food. Joseph eventually reveals that he is their long-lost (victimised) brother. Now that the secret's out, what will Joseph do? Seek vengeance? Pay them back? He's the vice-president of the

world's superpower and they're less than refugees in his country. What's he going to do? **What would you do?**

6. Read 45:4-8. **How does Joseph interpret the trials of his life? In his view, who sent him to Egypt? To what end? Are we willing to be used in that way? If we can look back and realize that God was at work in our trials, how can that deepen our faith in the midst of those trials?**

7. Joseph spared his brothers, but they weren't convinced that they were in the clear. Read Genesis 50:15-19. **What assurance does Joseph give to his brothers? What does it take to forgive like that?**

8. **What does this episode teach us about human freedom and the sovereignty of God? How does Jesus' death on our behalf echo this principle?**

Through something wrong done to him God did something good for other people. The supreme example is the story of the wrong done to Jesus. In Joseph's story and Jesus' story, at least, it is on the large scale, in events that have universal implications, that God coolly takes the most wicked of human acts and turns them into acts that can achieve something. -- John Goldingay (*OT for everyone*).