

Icebreaker: Do you have a Bible story or verse memorized? Can you say it in front of the group? What significance does it have for you?

Discuss:

1. What kind of Bible study or reading do you engage in now? It may be in worship or home group or private study. Is your study daily, weekly, or an occasional practice?
2. One ancient way of reading scripture is Lectio Divina – which means “divine reading” and opens ourselves to let God say to us what he wants through the passage. So, have 2 people read aloud Matthew 4:1-11 and ask everyone to listen and then say what resonates most with them from the passage. Or each person can share what they struggled with in the passage.
3. Ask your group members what Bible translation they prefer and use. Discuss what they think are the advantages and disadvantages of using more traditional versus more contemporary translations.
4. Matthew 4 tells of Jesus being tempted by Satan. In what areas are you most likely to be tempted? When do you find yourself most vulnerable to temptation?
5. Jesus answers Satan’s temptation with scripture. How do you deal with temptation? Do you ever respond to temptation with scripture, asking for help, talking yourself out of it, running away from it, or prayer?
6. Does following Christ cost you anything? In Satan’s third temptation to Jesus (Matthew 4:8-10), Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world without going through the suffering of the cross. Being obedient to the will of the Father cost Jesus – he had to suffer and die. In what ways do you sacrifice for your faith or when does it cost you something?
7. On Sunday in worship, one statement the parents made to their 3rd graders as they gave them their Bibles was, “May it penetrate your soul.” What would you recommend to a 3rd grader to have scripture “penetrate his/her soul”?

Practice: Set aside time to practice reading scripture. Reflect on what God is teaching you. Perhaps join with other ZPCers in reading from the four gospels daily for the Lenten Reading Plan (March 1-April 16; details coming Sunday, February 26).

Prayer:

Share your prayer requests with one another and also remember those from our church family:

- > Prayers of comfort for Carol Milli and family in the death of Carol’s mother.
- > Prayers of healing for Steve Gates, John Lindenschmidt, and Horst Pimmler.

Leaders Notes:

The Bible is God’s Word – written by human hands and inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Bible claims to be living and active and is useful for training and equipping Christians to live for God (2 Tim 3:16). If we study the Bible just to gain knowledge, we are limiting ourselves. This week, we want to discuss how the Bible can impact us to change the way we live – to live more like Jesus in our daily thoughts and actions.

[Question 1] This is a question designed to get your group talking about how they read or study the Bible. If group members just read the Bible in worship or in home group, affirm that and do not make them feel guilty. This discussion will hopefully encourage everyone to make Bible study more a part of their lives.

[Question 2] In Lectio Divina, it is good for the readers not to rush through the text, but to slow down as they read aloud. Then give your group 30-60 seconds to reflect on what they heard or read. Each person can have their own Bible out to read along as the passage is read. Have your group share one or two thoughts on the passage.

[Question 3] Traditional translations may remind us of how we first learned the Bible and sound good to us. More contemporary versions sound more like Americans talk today. Here are some popular choices:

- KJV – the oldest English version which has been updated several times. This is how many of us (or our parents) first heard the Bible.
- NIV – a newer English version. It sounds more like we might have spoken in the 1980’s and is how many Christians who are Baby Boomers and younger know the Bible.
- NRSV – this is the version we use in worship at ZPC which is also a newer translation.
- The Message – a paraphrase of the Bible by Eugene Peterson that puts the Bible in everyday American English.

[Question 4] Temptation is real and common for Christians, even for Jesus as we see in this passage. Temptation itself is not sin and we can fight, as Jesus did using scripture, so temptation does not lead to sin. Jesus was alone and hungry when Satan tempted him. Often, we are tempted when vulnerable. Think about how you might avoid temptation.

[Question 5] This question actually gives some answers in the question. We can flee from temptation, pray for God’s help, memorize and use scripture, and ask for help from other trusted friends. Discuss healthy ways you all might fight back against real temptation that your group members face.

[Question 6] Satan offered Jesus power and the “whole world” if Jesus worshiped Satan. If Jesus gave in, he could avoid the cross, but would disrupt the plan for salvation. Following the will of the Father cost Jesus pain, humiliation, and even his earthly life. We can be tempted to want the “whole world” – things like power, wealth, and contentment. Worshiping God costs us something. What does it cost you? See if you can come up with some real examples with your group.

[Question 7] This question is meant to make you think. What does it mean for the Bible to penetrate one’s soul? Some thoughts might be to let the Bible soak into you as you read, pray for God to use it in your life, to help 3rd graders think practically how each passage affects them in school, at home, with family and friends. Help them see how Bible passages are about real people with real problems and a real Savior. Enjoy your study of scripture!