

Executive Summary
Focus on God's Word
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Imagine being among the individuals who got to experience Jesus – the Son of God, the Messiah, the author of creation. Imagine hearing Him share about the Kingdom of God. Imagine seeing Him touch a leper, put His own salve on eyes that were blind, or call a decaying corpse out of the tomb. Imagine being in the crowd when Jesus took a young lad's meager snacks and multiplied the loaves and fish. A mighty crowd received their daily portion of sustenance. Imagine being in the boat during a storm when Jesus spoke to the wind and waves, calmed them with the command of His voice, and appealed to have faith. Imagine also being among the individuals who heard the resurrected Jesus say, "Go ..., teach ..., baptizing ..., and remember, I am with you always."

What a remarkable privilege we have been given! We are being restored and revived by the power of His resurrection. We are to share the life-changing gift of helping others experience Jesus, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His suffering, and being conformed to His death and resurrection. It is a humbling privilege to be invited to come into His presence where we experience expressions of the Father's covenant.

We are given an invitation and assignment to come in His presence just as Isaiah did, just as Moses, Gideon, Joshua, Elijah, David, and Peter did. Imagine the life-changing opportunity we have to daily experience the Living Lord. This is the LORD who speaks through God's Holy Spirit, through His Word, and through the lives of persons who humble themselves, pray, seek His face, and turn from sin against Him.

And we are given the privilege of experiencing the Living Savior through the power of His Word. Moreover, we are given the assignment to teach others about Scripture-filled and experiential grace so they can teach others. Strangely enough, we somehow get more out of teaching God's Word than those who are on the receiving end of our endeavors. We find ourselves as those who are teachable in the nail-pierced hands of the merciful Messiah. Yes, we learn facts, but we also are privileged with handling the Word of Truth. God's Word changes everything. It changes us. He is at work to transform others! What a great God we serve.

So, our job is not simple, but it is directed by the Lord. We are to teach God's Word as though we were following the example of the Lord Himself. Our message is what Jesus lived and taught through all of Scripture. Our methods are to be influenced by the ways Jesus taught. Our model is Jesus Himself, and we are compelled to demonstrate how God's Word impacts our own lives and others. We appeal to Him. We call attention to Him. We celebrate how He works in our lives as He disciples us and others.

Imagine being given any portion of Scripture to study and teach. Since it was constructed by the Spirit of God, He has the sole right as the authority and instructor. But He has chosen individuals like you and me to be examples of people, families, and cultures who are being transformed to live by His words and guidance. Imagine being in the group seeking to hear from

God when Jesus came into His hometown synagogue, carefully opened the scroll and read from Isaiah. “The Spirit of the LORD God is on me because the LORD has anointed me to bring good tidings to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners; ... to comfort all who mourn” (Isaiah 61:1-2).

After Jesus read those words, He sat down and declared, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). And He delivers God’s word to us, for us, about us, and about Him!!

Let’s imagine now that we are given the opportunity to teach this passage. Select the story from Luke 4:16-22 or Isaiah 61:1-3. They’re the same words. This declares that God provides His people with a remarkable assignment to know Him, obey Him, and be instruments of His ministry and power. This remarkably demonstrates the fulfillment of one of God’s promises and declarations.

What could you and I do to prepare to engage others in any segment of Scripture?

1. Prepare as though God has an appointment with you. Read the Scripture. Read it several times, and let the words flow over and into you. Read what takes place immediately before and after the specific passage; that’s called the “context” of the passage. Take notes that help you investigate the meaning and message of the Scripture; that’s called the “content” of the passage. Prayerfully ask God what He wants to say to and through you, as well as to and through persons who could be in the group you will lead.
2. Prepare as though God will put at least one person in the group experience who is a divine appointment. That person could be someone who has seldom if ever encountered God through His word. It could be someone who attends routinely but is influenced by the LORD to encounter Him in a fresh way during this season of his or her life. Anticipate that God is at work to connect you with one or more persons who need the message from God. That person could be you! No matter how small or large the attendance might be, prepare by acknowledging that God is the One who knows the needs and heart of each person, and He wants you to celebrate how He is working.
3. Prepare and be flexible. Be confident that the Holy Spirit is the only real teacher of His Word, and He invites you to be dependent on His direction as you prepare and lead the group. You will best prepare as you investigate the Scripture, explore commentary designed to explain the passage, and consider ways the message relates to persons in your group. Consider asking and answering questions about keywords, phrases, and concepts that are found in the passage. Spend time during the days prior to meeting with the group praying about what God wants to share through you and through the group experience. You certainly need to prepare, but you also want to be flexible in following the ways the LORD will prompt and lead you and the group. The more you are prepared the more flexible you can be.

What could you and I do to engage others to discover and apply the profound message of God's Word?

1. Remember that people learn best by personally participating in the experiences rather than by merely listening or talking. Anticipate that people will learn and apply best when you plan experiences that help them remember what is being taught. For example, look for opportunities to use object lessons and other memory tools like what Jesus may have employed. Guide them to investigate and practice what is being taught. You can lead these opportunities before, during, and after the group experience.
2. Provide resources and learning aids for participants. Make sure individuals have a copy of God's Word, notetaking sheets or explanations (commentary) of the passage, and examples of questions they can consider.
3. Use a variety of Bible study experiences as you plan and lead the group. There are basic teaching approaches such as illustrated lecture, question and answer, and discussion. There are also additional teaching approaches that lead participants to use their senses as they explore and consider the truth of Scripture. Remember this important statement: "The worst way you can teach is the way you teach all the time."

What could you do to follow up with others as a result of this or any other treasures of God's Holy Word?

1. Lead others and yourself to put into practice what relates to life by investigating the passage. A key concept to embrace is: "What must I do to obey what God has said through His Word?"
2. Intentionally pursue ways to answer this question: "Who else needs what we experienced by engaging in this Scripture?" There are participants who will intersect with other people who could not attend. What are ways individuals in the group could share facts and feelings that surfaced as you all encountered that passage? Also, there are people who have no connection with the group but who also need to experience the impact of what God was doing through His Word.
3. Expect God to work in your life and in the lives of persons who have encounters with the family of faith. This will not merely be a "lesson" that was taught. This is part of a movement of God in and through the lives of people who intersect with Him, His Word, and people who seek Him.

Hallelujah, what a Savior! He invites us to follow Him, be disciplined by Him, and make disciples of Him. Let's recommit ourselves to following, trusting, and obeying Him. Let's recommit ourselves to joining Him in making disciples.