

Study

February 28, 2010

Deuteronomy 11:18-21; II Timothy 3:14-17

Welcome back to week two of our Bii Fit series where we're diving into the spiritual disciplines as the workout program God gives us to Bii Spiritually Fit. This week we're going to look at the discipline of Study, and pay special attention to the importance of Studying God's word. But first I want to look at a few pictures.

Pastor Dave has this great poster in his office [**Disney Vision pic**] of Walt Disney walking the empty lot where the Magic Kingdom now stands. It's one of those motivational posters that really make you stop and consider the power of vision. They were really popular a few years ago. You saw them all over the place in the corporate world. They adorned the walls of conference rooms and corporate lobbies. They had all sorts. Here's one on Ambition [**Ambition pic**], Aspire to climb as high as you can dream. Or Challenge [**Challenge pic**], Always set the trail, never follow the path. Or Leadership [**Leadership pic**], Until you spread your wings, you'll have no idea what it feels like to fly. Or even Opportunity [**Opportunity pic**], Let the dreams of today determine the opportunities of tomorrow.

All of these pictures were meant to remind us of the power of these great attributes. The constant exposure to these positive and inspirational scenes was meant to motivate us and stimulate us to do something greater with our lives, to never settle for second best. The theory was that if these pictures were always before you, then they would change the mentality and attitude of the work place making workers that were more creative, more dynamic, and ultimately more effective.

Of course, some people just couldn't resist creating some de-motivators, like this one [**Demotivator pic**], "Motivation: if a pretty poster and a cute saying are all it takes to motivate you, you probably have a very easy job. The kind robots will be doing soon." Okay, so I guess there is a little truth to that, but these pictures at least got the ball rolling. I mean, how many people have pictures of your family at work on your desk, or in your wallet or purse? Almost all of us! They mean a lot to you don't they? Seeing them over and over again reinforces the fact that you're loved. Interestingly God tells us to do the same thing with scripture. In Deuteronomy 11:18-21 we read:

¹⁸ Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, ²¹ so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.

Over and over God wants to reinforce his word in our lives. We need to keep it in our hearts and minds, wear a frontlet (kind of like a head band) where God's word can be tucked away. Write it

on your door frames and talk about it often, with your children and your family, all the time when you sit down, stand up, walk down the road. Repetition, repetition, repetition.

We Study God's Word through Repetitiously Redundant Repetition.

Repetition is a powerful tool. Even if you don't understand something, if you repeat it enough times, you will commit it to memory. In Biblical times, that was really important. Written copies of scripture were scarce and you had to commit the word to memory. Today most people scoff at the idea of repetitiously repeating scripture. It's redundant and a waste of time. But we haven't given up on the idea of repetition, have we?

Kids do it all the time to learn vocab words. When I was in college, I remember cramming for Spanish tests with flash cards. For others, when they hear a new song they like they'll download it on itunes and they play it over and over until it's committed to memory. Kathy has a saying with the choir, "practice makes permanent." Interesting that it's not "practice makes perfect," but that's the point. Repetition gets it through to your mind so that you remember it...even if it's wrong. Shoot, even exercise is all about repetition! How many reps, how many miles, how many situps? Repetition is the best way of doing lots of things. I mean consider this sermon...how many times have I used the word repetition? Hopefully you'll keep repeating it as you leave and it'll be ingrained in your memory! Hahaha!

I joke, but there's huge power in all of this. That's why small groups are encouraged to meet weekly and Christians do devotions daily. Whether you actually learn something new is not the point here. Just like the motivational posters, constant exposure makes the greatest impact.

Also in that scripture we see the importance of intentionality. God tells us to intentionally concentrate on the word.

We Study God's Word through Intentionally Concentrating.

If you're new to studying, you definitely know what I mean by intentionally concentrating. As with any habits that you're trying to foster or kill, you have to be intentional. You have to be on your guard and keep your eyes open to what you're doing. But in another sense, you have to be intentional because you're bucking culture here.

We live in a multi-tasking society. Most of us are multi-taskers. We can watch TV, do our homework, listen to music on an ipod and talk on the phone all at the same time. Okay, so that's a little extreme, but the point is still true that there are 100 things flying around this connected world all the time. You have to keep up with your home phone, your voicemail, your e-mail, your facebook page, and for those of you who tweet and blog you've got two other layers of madness. Multi-tasking is a matter of survival.

But in a world like that, there are times that we're learning we have to pause our multi-tasking. How safe is it to text and drive or eat and drive? How many people have been filling out some kind of paperwork while having a conversation and you wound up writing the wrong thing and

having to start over. Ain't it great! Studying God's word is no different. We need to turn off the TV and focus on scripture, intentionally concentrating on our study time.

So with all this study you might wonder where it's going. In II Timothy 3:14-17, Paul writes:

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that all God's people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Did you catch two of the things Paul mentioned? He said you "become convinced...[and are made] wise for salvation." The point is you will hit an "aha!" moment and you'll "get it". It will all click and take on a new meaning.

We Study God's Word in order to "Get It".

It's kind of like the equation $E = mc^2$. I'm going to go out on a limb and say most people have seen this equation. A few of us may even know that it stands for "*Energy = mass times the speed of light squared.*" But there are only a few people who actually get the deep meaning of this brilliant equation (I am not one of them). It doesn't click for me. For me, it's just wasted information. Useful only for sermon illustrations ☺ But that's the point about scripture. At some point we move past accumulating information to actually comprehending its wisdom.

That's real wisdom; it's comprehension. Consider the internet. Back in the early 90s it was a mess of information. No one could really make heads or tails out of it, and then Google came along and turned the world on its head. They comprehended the information and presented it in a way that was useable. That's "getting it"; that's wisdom.

And once we're wise, once we start "getting" scripture, then we have to figure out how to apply it. That's where the next step comes in:

We Study God's Word by Reflecting It In Our Living.

As Paul mentioned in II Timothy, "¹⁶ *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*" How many people know someone who has a scripture for whatever ails you? You know that person...they see your suffering and they try to cheer you up with: "*God heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds*" Ps. 147:3. It's like living with Ned Flanders. But in reality, we need to internalize that person. The Bible is our standard. As Christ followers we live our lives by Jesus' teachings and scripture is the first hand account of Jesus' teachings. So it only stands to reason that we need that voice rolling around in our own heads so that Jesus' teachings will "teach, rebuke, correct, and train" us!

Because that leads us to the whole point of this spiritual discipline:

We Study God's Word in order to "Live It".

We practice the discipline of Study is to that we can “live it.” Back in the Timothy passage Paul encourages us to keep with scripture ^{“17}*so that all God's people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” The word of God is God’s self-revelation. It is God telling us very clearly, this is who I am and this is what I want. Studying that word brings us face to face with God. We see what God wants on every page, in every verse. We learn who God is. And you may think “yeah, that’s great, but it’s going to be hard to change.” But no it’s not.

Did you read that teaching note clearly? We study...in order to...Live It. The studying causes the living. And that’s a fact. When my wife and I finally decided to start tithing, it wasn’t because of some powerful sermon we had heard. It wasn’t because of someone pressured us into doing it. It was because God had told us through our study that we were going to do this and it came naturally. It wasn’t painful, it wasn’t terribly difficult. It was a matter of our studying it causing our “living it”.

So what do you think God wants you to start doing in your life? Where will Jesus take you? Go ahead and study God’s word in a small group, in a morning devotional, any way you can and find out.