



United Methodist Church OF GENEVA

Study

An Lent sermon by Pastor Rob Hamilton in the The Walk
Delivered on March 13, 2022
on the following text:

2 Timothy 3:14-17 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, 15 and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

Preamble

Today is the second Sunday of Lent and if you are joining us for the first time, I am Rob Hamilton, Senior Pastor and I am honored to be journeying to the cross with Jesus together. The walk to the cross is one of the aspects of Lent, which is a season of preparation and penitence in the life of the church leading up to Easter.

Along this year's journey to the cross, we are focusing on 5 essential or core practices of the Christian faith to help us grow in our daily walk with Jesus. Each of the practices have both individual and communal or social aspects - meaning we can do all these practices both alone and together in community. Last week, I likened spiritual practices to spring training, but today let me turn it again and say that it's these core practices are lie working out. You can run, lift, walk solo and that is helpful and you can have a partner or group workouts that add a whole new element. For example, Mike Popplewell and I are training up to a 10K next month to celebrate my fortieth birthday. And while I run regularly, I can go farther, faster and it's often easier (or more tolerable) when I run with Mike and when we race downtown I'm sure there will be even more energy to draw upon and share from the crowd.

So these 5 practices are Worship and Prayer -which we covered last week. Giving God praise and thanksgiving is our worship and conversing with God as prayer. Today [series over-view slide] we are going to look at how we are called to Study and the coming weeks we will also look at Serving, Giving and Sharing. Today, I look forward to not only sharing such an important practice of study with you but also hearing from Bill Johnson as he shares his experience of study together today.

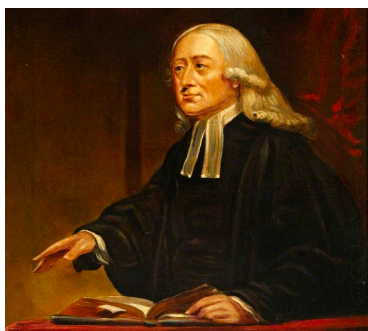
As we go deeper on this second core practices of the Christian walk of study, let us take a moment to pray for God's Holy Spirit to illumine us:



Prayer of Illumination

Spirit of the Living God, come and fall afresh on us, your children, as we seek to grow deeper in our walk with you. Speak to us through the Scripture, my message and the witness of others so that we may order our lives as you intend. Amen.

Sermon



John Wesley was the accidental founder of a new tribe of Christianity. Wesley was a preacher's kid and became a preacher himself in the Church of England, which he sought to reform and eventually that reformation formed Methodism. "Near the end of his life John Wesley wrote of how he had loved and believed the Scriptures from his earliest days. 'From a child I was taught to love and reverence the Scripture, the oracles of God.' This devotion to Scripture as the Word of God characterized Wesley's entire life and ministry. He described how 'Methodism' began at Oxford University in the late 1720s. When four young men unit-

ed together, each of them was *homo unius libri* – a man of one book. God taught them all to make the Bible 'a lantern unto their feet, and a light in all their paths.' These four men were one and all determined to be Bible-Christians. They were continually reproached for this very thing; some terming them in derision Bible-bigots; others Bible-moths – feeding, they said, upon the Bible as moths do upon cloth.

The phrase *homo unius libri*, meaning 'man of one book,' became a description of how John Wesley made Scripture the foundation for both his faith and his practice."¹ And this is how study is our second core practice. The Word of God -is actually Jesus (or Word of God made flesh)- and he is the primary revelation of God to the world. The Bible, on the other hand, is the collection of writings that the people of God have turned to as God's living word and an important source for connecting with God and shaping our walk.

Becoming a people of one book doesn't mean the Bible the only book we will ever read or study. Like Wesley, "he didn't mean by that being a man of one book that he read only the Bible. Far from it. The evidence from his Journal and his Letters tells us that he was one of the most widely read men of his century in England. From his days at Oxford University and throughout his busy life, he read widely in philosophy, history, biography, poetry, medicine and travel as well as divinity, theology and Church history. By 'man of one book' he meant that all other books were compared to the ONE book – the Bible. When he published the first series of his sermons in 1746, he described his own method of reading and studying the Bible.' Here then, I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his Book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of lights: 'Lord, is it not thy Word, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God?"'... Thou hast said, "If

¹ https://www.methodistevangelicals.org.uk/Articles/523299/John_Wesley_Man.aspx

any man be willing to do thy will, he shall know.” I am willing to do, let me know thy will.”² So that’s why studying the Bible is so important to us as Wesleyan Christians.

Now to be clear when we study the Bible we are reading it regularly. {We are asking questions of the Bible and we are committing Scripture to our heart and memory. Not for the purpose of rote memorization but to consume God’s will and way for our lives as revealed in Scripture. The apostle Paul wanted this same thing for his student and friend Timothy. That Timothy, would *“continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, 15 and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.”*

The first step to studying the Bible is to read it and read it regularly. This is the individual part of study. I read from the Bible everyday in the mornings from an app on my phone. I read about one chapter from the Old Testament and One Chapter from the New Testament and that’s even before I do any reading of Scripture for church work. I also include prayers in my reading. If you want to know what app I use visit me at the Greet the Pastor table and I’ll share it with you.

The book some are reading alongside this series and serves as the foundation of this series, **The Walk by Pastor Adam Hamilton** (no relation) he suggests a starting point is reading 5 verses of Scripture each day. There are apps for a verse a day too. But as we start reading the Bible and absorbing Scripture we not only pray for God to help us make sense of the Bible; we can come together in a group to study the Bible using the world of knowledge to help us.

Bill Johnson talks about his journey to becoming someone who didn’t even know how to open the Bible to start reading it to becoming a man of one book and having it shape his life and even how he reads all other books. I find Bill’s story to be encouraging. Let’s watch: [CLICK HERE TO WATCH VIDEO](#).

I appreciate Bill’s candor. I am sure amongst us worshipping today there are people who have more knowledge and experience of the studying the Bible than I do with a Masters Degree in it and there are some like Bill who only know the holiday stories. We can all help each other grow as disciples. Pick up a study, be forced into it. I’m sure Jami can sign you up for a study too. And at the study you’ll find help learning how to even open and read the Bible, that will lead to growing in your faith and connecting our faith to the rest of life.

That’s the purpose of study -and all the practices- to grow in love of God and neighbor. To take our faith outside the church and apply to the world we live in here and now and once we find ourselves engaged in the world, the more we will want to study the Bible to see how it helps us engage with world. Bill has a great list of secular books with religious overtones that can really help make the merge, if you want to ask him about it. It’s because he jumped in and discovered he could be a ‘man of one book’ that opened his world. We all are called to be people of one book.

And as I close here, that one book is the The Bible, God’s living word. Through the scriptures and our study of them whether daily reading or group discussion God speaks to us,

² https://www.methodistevangelicals.org.uk/Articles/523299/John_Wesley_Man.aspx

confounds us, comforts us and confronts us. The Bible can open us up before God to grow in ways we didn't think or could have imagined. We can read it from cover to cover, over and over and still discover God is still speaking to us through these ancient words and that's why it is so important to study the Bible for it is 'a lamp unto our feet' in our daily walk with Jesus and a light unto our path through life.

I invite you this week to take time each day to read just 5 verse of Scripture. If you don't know where to start, open the Gospel of Mark and begin there and let God speak to you through the holy Scriptures.

Close with prayer.