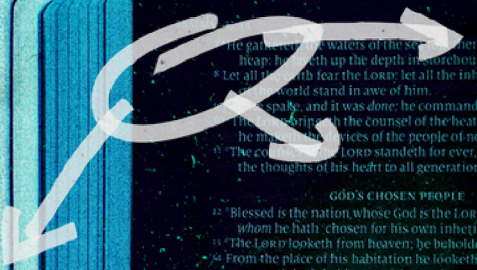


TERM 1 LIFE GROUP MATERIAL



10 He gathered the waters of the sea together as an heap; he piled up the depth in storehouses.
11 Let all that fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
12 In silence he spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.
13 The counsel of the heathen to nought; the thought of the people of none effect.
14 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.
13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men.
14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.
15 He fashioned their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.
16 There is no king saved by the multitude of an host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.
7 The angel of the LORD encampeth about them that fear him, and delivereth them from all evil.
8 O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

9 O fear the LORD, ye kings: for there is no want to them that fear him.
10 The young lions shall rack him, but they shall not hurt him; he shall break him in pieces, and shall devour him, and shall tread him under his feet.
11 Come, ye children, hearken unto the LORD: ye shall learn his counsel, and shall fear him.
12 What man is he that desireth his silver? what man is he that desireth his gold?
13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.
14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.
15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and he will hear their cry, and will deliver them from all their troubles.

PSALM 34

PRAISE TO THE LORD

A Psalm of Da-vid, when he changed his behaviour before A-bi-m-e-lech, who drove him away, and he departed.

I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
1 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.
2 I magnify the LORD, as he commanded me, and let us exalt his name together.
3 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.
4 They looked unto him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed.

11 Evil shall slay the wicked; and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.
12 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

PSALM 35

A PRAYER FOR SAFETY

A Psalm of Da-vid.

LORD, lead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me; fight against them that fight against me.
2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.
3 Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.



Bracken Ridge
BAPTIST CHURCH

STUDY 1 - How to Read and Study the Bible for Yourself

Nothing else fuels our growth like personally engaging with the Bible. Yet, many people lack the practical tools to confidently study the Bible for themselves.

One can attend church for many years, and listen to a lot of teaching, and not learn how to read the Bible for yourself.

King David knew (at a very personal level) what it was to go through darkness in life. In Psalm 119, David reveals that the Word is a lamp for when the path of life turned dark.

We all need a lamp for dark times.

Today, we have a culture with no lamp. Where do we turn when life turns dark? How do we know what next steps to take, or how to get direction in life?

Come on this journey with Pastor and author Benjamin Windle as your guide, as he teaches you how to use the Bible as a lamp for every question and challenge life throws at you. You will learn:

- How to engage in your own personal devotions.
- Get practical tools and easy to use methods on personal Bible Study.
- Discover the golden rule of how to interpret the Bible.
- Ignite a new passion for the Bible and its power to bring about change in your life.

Filmed on location in Australia, this 5-session series is not just about giving you a meal for a day, it will teach you how to be a self-feeder for the rest of your life.

Get the skills you need (that absolutely anyone can use) to read and apply the Bible in your own life.

ACCESSING THE MATERIAL

On the following pages you will find all of the information needed to go through the Life Group Material. There are corresponding videos that can be accessed through our "RightNow Media" account with the church. If you don't have an account, go to

rightnowmedia.org/Account/Invite/BrackenRidgeBaptistChurch.

After creating an account search the title of the series to access the videos.

If you are unable for some reason to access the material through these different means, please simply email office@brbc.org.au or call 07 3261 5045.



how to
READ
& STUDY THE
BIBLE
FOR YOURSELF
5 DAY READING PLAN

BENJAMIN WINDLE

**“How to Read and Study the Bible
for Yourself” Bible Reading Plan**



**SCAN HERE TO ACCESS THE
5 DAY BIBLE READING PLAN**

SESSION 1: A culture with no lamp

SESSION GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing our knowing, feeling and doing.

MAIN IDEA: We need a lamp to light our way as we navigate life.

Head Change: To know that learning to read and study the Bible for yourself is what brings about personal growth.

Heart Change: To believe that you have what it takes to get to know God's Word.

Life Change: To cook your own meal when it comes to Bible consumption – and not just eat out.

OPEN

Have you travelled to different parts of the world? If not, where would you love to go? Is reading a TripAdvisor review of the Eiffel Tower or the Serengeti or Ground Zero, the same as going there yourself?

TripAdvisor and other apps, maps and guidebooks are brilliant *supplements* when you're travelling. But they can never *replace* the experience of travel itself. In this study, Benjamin Windle reminds us that while there are excellent supplements we can use for our personal Bible study, there's no replacement for the real deal: reading the Bible yourself, talking to God in prayer about what you've read, and experiencing the comfort or conviction of the Holy Spirit as He works in your life, through the Word.

VIEW

As you watch, write down how Benjamin answers these questions.

Why is it important that we go back to the *source document* of our faith?

What do *feet* and a *path* represent, in Psalm 119?

What are the five generational challenges our culture faces?

Show SESSION #1: *A culture with no lamp* (11 minutes)

REVIEW

Benjamin begins by explaining that it's one thing to enjoy a plated meal – prepared and served by someone else – and quite another thing to cook the meal yourself – sourcing the ingredients, chopping, stirring, seasoning, and tasting. In the same way, it's possible for you to consume a lot of readymade Christian content by attending church for years, reading loads of books and listening to a huge selection of Christian podcasts – and yet never learn how to read the Bible for yourself.

Do you prefer eating out, or cooking at home? Which is easier? Has anyone ever taught you how to cook?

Do you prefer watching an excellent preach on YouTube, or spending twenty minutes reading the Bible? Which is easier? Has anyone ever taught you how to read the Bible?

Do you agree with Benjamin's statement that, culturally, we've normalised the experience of being served a finished product when it comes to Christian content?

Benjamin asserts that we tend to pick up Christian content near the end of the content development timeline – once someone else has processed an idea and packaged it for us. **Do you think there's a place for Christian books, podcasts, and Instagram influencers? If so, what is it? Which platform(s) do you generally tend to visit for Christian content? Why?**

When was the last time God spoke to you powerfully through *just* His Word?

Psalm 119:105 says, 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.' (ESV) Benjamin explains that *feet* represent your next steps, and a *path* represents the overall direction of your life. **In which area of your life are you asking God for immediate guidance? How is the truth of God's Word informing the trajectory of your macro life story?**

Benjamin points out five challenges our generation faces, when it comes to reading the Bible for ourselves: we're consumers, we're biblically illiterate despite having access to tons of information, we've lost confidence in the Bible, we view the Bible as a collection of inspirational quotes or suggestions, and we lack the tools for effective Bible study. **Would you put yourself into any of these categories? Do you recognise any of these tendencies in your church community? If a non-believing friend said to you, 'You don't seem to know what the Bible actually says about a bunch of issues!', how might you respond?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

In Jeremiah 15:16, the prophet says, 'Your words were found, and I ate them. Your words became my joy and my heart's delight...' (BSB) Another version reads, 'When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart's delight...' (NLT) **What do you think this metaphor means? What might 'eating' God's Word look like in your life this week?**

What do 1 Corinthians 3:2 and Hebrews 5:12 reveal about God's desire for how we 'eat' His Word?

Read Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32, Proverbs 30:5-6 and Revelation 22:18-19. What's the warning? Can you point to examples throughout history, or trends prevalent in churches today, where people have added to, or ignored, parts of the Bible?

Read Amos 8:11. Is there a spiritual famine in the land right now? Is spiritual food available, but going to waste?

When Eve was tempted by the serpent, the question she was asked was, '*Did God really say* you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?' (Genesis 3:1, NLT) Have you heard your culture or community, or your co-workers or kids, ask that question: *Did God really say...?*

How does Matthew 4:4 inform how we should be reading, teaching, and preaching the Bible? Are there parts of the Bible you wish were mere suggestions, instead of loving commands? Which ones, and why?

LAST WORD

As we dive deeper into this series, let's allow God to show us our own hearts, and the habits of our culture. Let's take ownership of the opportunity we have to switch on the light of God's Word, so we can see our next steps, and illuminate our path to the future.

DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

Read: Psalm 119 is all about God's Word. It's also *super* long. But now is as good a time as any to start reading it. You could read five or ten verses a day, or you could just start reading it and ask the Holy Spirit to stop you when you need to meditate on a particular verse.

Write: Set a timer for ten minutes and spend that time freewriting any scriptures that come to mind. Which verses come tumbling out? It's ok if you don't get every word right. It's just a great way to see how much of God's Word is stored in your brain. Verses you memorised at Sunday School decades ago? The passage preached in the last sermon you heard? Verses you used in a big decision recently, or long ago?

Pray: Write out a prayer, or meet with a friend to pray, asking God to increase your love for His Word and your understanding of it. Thank Him that He hasn't left us to fumble in the dark on our own: He's with us, and His Word lights the way.

SESSION 2: How to do personal devotions

SESSION GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing our knowing, feeling and doing.

MAIN IDEA: When it comes to personal Bible study: instead of borrowing buckets, dig your own well so you can draw water for the rest of your life.

Head Change: To know that even in times of tragedy, transition, doubt or dread, you can access a well of fresh, living water for your soul.

Heart Change: To respond gratefully to God for the gift of His Word and the power of prayer.

Life Change: To 'dig your well' by committing to the practical steps of personal devotion.

OPEN

Can you remember a time when you were absolutely parched – extremely thirsty after a race or a hike – and water wasn't readily available?

Jesus says to the woman who comes to draw water at the well, 'But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.' (John 4:14, NLT) He promises so much more than a temporary fix. He's not interested in quenching her thirst just once. He wants to provide her with spiritual water, satisfying for all eternity her thirst for God and His goodness.

In the same way, we don't need to rely on handouts – the odd glass of water here and there when we're desperate. By God's grace, we've got what it takes to dig our own wells – through personal Bible study and prayer – and draw spiritual water to sustain us through the droughts and deluges of life.

VIEW

As you watch, take note of how Benjamin answers these questions.

What are three ways we can approach the Bible?

What are the three layers of the IN method of Bible study Benjamin recommends?

What are a few additional Bible study tools you may wish to acquire?

Show SESSION #2: *How to do personal devotions* (11 minutes)

REVIEW

Benjamin talks about the importance of digging your own spiritual well, so you can draw water (truth, comfort, conviction, direction, and inspiration from God's Word) for the rest of your life, as opposed to taking little sips of spiritual water from other peoples' buckets. **How do we dig our own wells?**

In church communities we use words like 'devotions' and 'quiet time' to describe the intentional act or habit of setting aside time to read the Bible and pray. **How would you explain or describe, to a nonbeliever, the daily appointment you have with the King of kings?**

We're encouraged to approach the Bible with a posture of faith. **What's your posture (the way you position yourself in attitude or expectation) when you approach a newsfeed on your phone? Your social media feeds? The novel on your bedside table? A podcast by your favourite influencer?**

Does reading the Bible feel like a chore? Why, or why not?

Do you feel confident to read God's Word, or do you feel like you don't really know what you're doing, or where to start?

It's possible you grew up with a traditional, 'churchy' idea of what it looked like to have personal devotions. It looked boring! On the one hand, we certainly don't want our time with God to feel wooden or clinical. On the other hand, discipline, structure, and schedule are important in creating the lifegiving habit of personal Bible study. **If our habits should *serve* not *control*, how could you cultivate a free-flowing, authentic rhythm in your personal devotions that leaves time and space for the Holy Spirit to work?**

What does a friendship or marriage require, to flourish?

What does your relationship with God require, to flourish?

How has bringing structure, order, and principles to a relationship with a loved one (for example, a regular date night with your spouse) grounded that relationship – making you feel secure in it – and so ensuring that it thrives despite the tedium, chaos, or unpredictability of life?

Could the same be true for your relationship with God?

Benjamin encourages us to bring excitement, expectation, and anticipation to our Bible reading time. **What mental soundtrack could you play for yourself, to change the way you think about getting up early, or staying up late, to spend time in your Bible?**

The IN method of Bible study involves *intention* (what is the author's intention?), *inspiration* (what is the Holy Spirit highlighting for me?) and *incarnation* (how will I embody this scripture?). **Which of these focus points comes most naturally to you? Which do you find particularly challenging?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

We're encouraged to approach the Word of God with *faith*. Read Romans 10:17. **Where can we go to get faith? Even though it may feel like a chicken-or-egg scenario, do you tend to approach the Word of God with faith that it will strengthen your faith?**

Read Psalm 119:25. **Do you ever feel as if life has you lying in the dust? How has God's Word revived you, in those times?**

In Psalm 143:8, David prays, 'Let me hear of Your unfailing love each morning, for I am trusting You. Show me where to walk, for I give myself to You.' **How do his words reflect the rhythm and intentionality of habit, as well as the flexibility and freedom of surrender to God?**

Read Hebrews 3:7-8. **How do you tend to listen for, and recognise, the promptings of the Holy Spirit, amidst your own thoughts?**

In Luke 11:28, Jesus says we're blessed if we hear the Word of God *and obey it*. Our obedience proves our understanding of the Word. **Can you think of a time when you put yourself at the centre of interpretation and forced scripture around your preference? Can you think of a time when you put scripture at the centre and bent your life around it? How did one or the other situation play out?**

LAST WORD

No one can spend time with God on your behalf. No one else can commit God's Word to memory, for you. The very idea of personal devotions is that they're *personal*. There's never going to be a better time than right now, to commit to being intentional about digging your own well, so that you can draw out living water to refresh your soul. Open your Bible. Begin today.

DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

Read: Carve out some uninterrupted time to read a chapter of the Bible. Ask God to help you approach with faith and anticipation, and to listen. Apply the IN method Benjamin suggests. What was the author's intention for writing? What is God nudging you towards? How will this chapter change a habit or relationship in your life this week?

Write: The IN method of Bible study offers a helpful template or framework for journaling your devotional discoveries. Why not try jotting down your thoughts as you read? Try it for three days.

Pray: Pray for the courage and commitment required to keep on keeping on, in your personal devotions. Pray against complacency. Pray that reading the Bible would never feel like a duty or an obligation.

SESSION 3: Four essential principles of how to read the Bible

SESSION GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing our knowing, feeling and doing.

MAIN IDEA: There are practical ways we can access the Bible, which gives us a (macro) worldview through which to see the (micro) narrative of our lives.

Head Change: To grasp a clear and simple framework for reading the Bible, including a general survey of what the Bible is, and why genres matter.

Heart Change: To adopt the right attitude when reading the Bible.

Life Change: To practise using the four essential principles of reading and interpreting the Bible.

OPEN

Do you read the instructions when you buy a new appliance? Have you ever bought a device and spent hours figuring out its apps or operating systems? Have you planned a holiday to a foreign country, and then bought guidebooks or language learning kits to prepare for the trip? Do you still remember how to do long division, when one of your kids asks for help with Maths homework, or do you need to YouTube it, to refresh your memory?

We tend to put in the necessary effort, without question, to learn the ropes when we encounter new systems or situations in life. We do what needs to be done. We happily do hard things when we're passionate about them. And yet, we're quick to make excuses about studying the Bible. *It's too hard. I don't understand it. It doesn't make sense. I don't know where to start.*

What if we determined not to give up so easily, but to make use of the help available for understanding and interpreting life's instruction manual, allowing it to change our worldview and our lives, so that our lives might change the world?

VIEW

As you watch, write down how Benjamin answers these questions.

In what way does the Bible address life on two levels, simultaneously?

What are the four most important principles of reading the Bible?

Show SESSION #3: *Four essential principles of how to read the Bible* (13 minutes)

REVIEW

Benjamin encourages you to read the Bible because God wants to be known, and because your full human expression comes to life through its pages. **Do you view the Bible as the means to gaining a deeper understanding of God? Do you view the Bible as the means to leaning into your full potential? Why or why not? Have you felt convicted that perhaps you're putting in a mediocre effort when it comes to your consumption of the Bible?**

The Bible consists of 66 books written over 1600 years and might be described as 'one story, many styles.' The books of the Bible fall into five broad genres: the law (the first five books of the Old Testament), poetry, wisdom literature, the writings of the prophets, the gospels, and the letters to the churches or individuals. **Why is genre important?**

In any form of communication – not just the Bible – context is king. We can't understand the full intention of any message if we don't understand the context from which it was sent.

Have you ever had someone crash a conversation you're conducting, listen to a sentence or two, and then make incorrect assumptions about what you're talking about? (Embarrassingly, we've all been the person doing the interrupting and misinterpreting.) Have you ever opened your Bible randomly and jumped into the middle of a 'conversation' in scripture, read a verse or two, and misinterpreted the meaning of the words because you haven't understood the context?

Benjamin urges us to read *chapters*, not just *verses*. How would things like a repeated key word, the use of contrast, a link or cross-reference to another passage of scripture, or a metaphor, help us understand or interpret a particular chapter?

Kevin Conner wrote what he called the Golden Rule of Interpretation:

'When the plain sense of the scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and obvious and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.'

In other words: don't make a passage of scripture more complex than it really is.

Can you think of a portion of the Bible you simply need to take at face value, in the current circumstances of your life?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Hebrews 4:12 reads, 'For the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.' (NIV)

Would you feel confident explaining to a nonbelieving friend or family member that the Bible is relevant in the world's post-Christian culture? Do you know, offhand, any passages of scripture that relate to the broader societal issues of politics, morality, vocation, or relationships? Which passages might you point to if someone asked you if the Bible was relevant to every individual's unique journey through life?

Read Luke 24:44-45. Genre was important to Jesus. As we've discovered, it's important for us too. **Are you naturally drawn to one genre of scripture, more than another? Why?**

You may come across a metaphor in your Bible reading this week (for example, the metaphor of a *tree* of life, or the *sword* of the Spirit). **Discuss how you would go about exploring this metaphor in other parts of the Bible.**

LAST WORD

The Bible is our indispensable guide to discovering God and our place in the world. And God, the giver of wisdom, has provided us with methods for internalising and applying the truth of His Word, so that we can operate effectively in the world, for His glory and the good of others. It will take intentionality, consistency, and humility, but we can begin today to practise the principles of reading and interpreting the Bible.

DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

Read: Choose a Bible reading plan for the next seven days (perhaps the seven chapters of Proverbs that correspond to the next seven days of the month?). For each chapter, run through this checklist: *Verse context? Passage context? Book context? Testament context?*

Write: In a journal, write down the following questions: *What is the broader context of what the author of saying? What is the thought progression? What is the logical flow of subject matter?* Now read a chapter of the Bible and spend time writing down your answers.

Pray: Repent of your laziness to give your best efforts to getting to know God's Word. Or, thank God for His tremendous kindness in giving us access to such a rich revelation of Himself. And keep praying that He would ignite in you a greater passion for His Word.

SESSION 4: A modern-day reformation

SESSION GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing our knowing, feeling and doing.

MAIN IDEA: When a generation begins to read the Bible for themselves, it triggers a reformation.

Head Change: To know that we are up against cultural forces opposing God's truth.

Heart Change: To feel grateful for the power, purity and permanence of the Bible.

Life Change: To align our lives with the God-breathed scriptures, confident that every word in every part of the Bible comes from God.

OPEN

Is there something you regret spending your time or money on? If you could go back, what would you spend your time or money on, instead? Do you still have, or are you still experiencing, the thing you spent those resources on?

Sometimes what we need isn't the latest series, trend, gadget, fad, or thrill. What we need is something that has stood the test of time throughout history – something that never diminishes in value, and remains relevant to our lives, every moment. What we need is the Word of God.

VIEW

As you watch, write down how Benjamin answers these questions.

What is verbal plenary inspiration?

What is sola scriptura?

What are the three mega cultural challenges we face today?

How did Jesus view scripture?

Show SESSION #4: *A modern-day reformation (sola scriptura and verbal plenary inspiration)* (12 minutes)

REVIEW

Benjamin opens with Isaiah 40:8: 'The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the Word of our God stands forever.' (NLT) Grass and flowers, no matter how beautiful, wither and die soon enough. God's Word stays eternally fresh, significant, and applicable. **Do you still have the flowers someone gave you a decade ago, or even a month ago? Is the truth you learned a decade ago, or a month ago, still true?**

It's been said of verbal plenary inspiration that 'no other explanation has been the belief of the church from the beginning,' and it means that every word of the Bible is inspired. The Bible itself claims that every word in every part of the Bible comes from God. **How might this assertion offend those who subscribe to the anything-goes, you-do-you culture we find ourselves in today?**

How might you describe to a nonbelieving friend that although the Bible was written by people, it was (also) (actually) written by God?

Martin Luther was passionate about bringing the gospel to bear on works righteousness and church hierarchy. He also translated the Bible into German, for the first time putting it into the eager hands of believers who could read it for themselves, in their own language. He was passionate about sola scriptura, advocating for the truth that scripture is its own interpreter. **What does this mean? How can scripture interpret itself?**

Consumerism says, 'Feed me!' Pluralism says, 'I'll pick and choose what I believe, as it suits me.' Humanism says, 'I'm at the centre of my own narrative and my lived experience is more valuable than scripture.' These are the three enormous cultural pressures we face as we try to elevate the Bible as the true authority on God and human existence. **Where have you seen consumerism, pluralism or humanism play out in the world around you, or even in your church community? Is the Holy Spirit convicting you that you tend to fall into one of these ways of thinking?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

A key scripture in the case for verbal plenary inspiration and sola scriptura is 2 Timothy 3:16-17, which reads, 'All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.' (NIV)

These verses highlight that scripture is indispensable to us in six distinct ways: doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction for righteousness, completeness, and equipping. **Can you think of passages of scripture God has used in your life to teach you the truth (doctrine), to reprove you, to correct you, to instruct you in His good ways, to complete you, or to equip you to do the work He's called you to do?**

It's only at the end of verse 17 that we see the end goal: ultimately, the Bible shows up in our *works* – our *actions* – our *life*. **Can you trace how the truth of God's Word has shaped your beliefs, which has challenged and changed your heart, which has corrected your course of behaviour, which has altered how you live out your identity and calling in the world?**

John 1:14 reads, 'So the Word became human and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness...' (NLT) Jesus *was* the Word, and when He was with friends, strangers, crowds of believers and cynics alike, and even with Satan, He *spoke* the Word. He had an extremely high regard for scripture. It was His source of truth, authority, and clarity at defining moments in His life. **Are you currently facing opposition, uncertainty, fear, or grief? How might it change your posture if you were to search the scriptures and bring God's truth to bear on your unique situation, saying, as Jesus did, 'It is written... It is written...?'**

LAST WORD

It may feel at times as though the cultural forces of consumerism, pluralism and humanism have ripped the rug of truth from beneath you, and you're battling to stand. Be encouraged! Human philosophies will come and go. The Bible isn't going anywhere. And if we could galvanize our generation to commit to reading God's immutable, powerful truth, for ourselves, then revival and reformation are inevitable.

DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

Read: Do a Bible search for all the scriptures about scripture! What does the Bible say about itself? What does God say about His Word?

Write: Perhaps you've never taken the time to be honest with yourself about what you really believe about the Bible. What do you love about it? What do you find boring? How do you *wish* you felt about the Bible? Do you know someone who can't wait to spend time in the Word? Is that person weird, or wonderful? Don't write down what you think someone else wants to hear. No one will see your pages. Just pour out your heart to God. Ask questions. Express frustrations. He's big enough to handle you.

Pray: Perhaps you could form a WhatsApp group with two or three friends, to hold each other accountable to Bible reading and prayer. Pray for each other, that you'd never see the Bible just like any other book. Pray that what you read would become real to you – and then real to others, as it changes you from the inside out.

SESSION 5: Deeper Methods of Bible Study

SESSION GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing our knowing, feeling and doing.

MAIN IDEA: When it comes to spiritual growth, we have a superfood available to us: the Bible.

Head Change: To know that we can't read the Bible vicariously through others; we need personal, rigorous engagement with the source document of our faith.

Heart Change: To feel grateful for how others might inspire us to study God's Word, and to welcome God's invitation to do the same.

Life Change: To integrate the Bible into our process of life so that our micro narrative becomes part of its grand story, causing dynamic growth.

OPEN

Did you ever copy someone's homework when you were at school? Have you ever been tempted to do your kid's homework for her, because it'll be quicker and easier than convincing her to get it done?

Copying someone else's homework or cheating in a test might feel like a momentary win but doesn't benefit you in the long run. It'll only land you in trouble. Doing your kid's homework might save her from after-school detention, but she won't have learned anything. In the same way, we can't get someone else to study the Bible for us and expect that to change our lives. There are no shortcuts. We can't outsource our spiritual growth. But the rewards of personal training in the truth of God's Word far outweigh anything that might feel like an easy or immediate win.

VIEW

As you watch, write down how Benjamin answers these questions.

What is the result of 'eating' the superfood of God's Word?

What are some of the ways you might dive into a deeper study of the Bible?

What three decisions did Benjamin make, about the Bible?

Show SESSION #5: *Deeper Methods of Bible Study* (14 minutes)

REVIEW

Benjamin highlights six different methods for deeper Bible study:

1. Word studies (taking a particular word or phrase and studying its use, meaning, application, or prevalence throughout scripture)
2. Topical studies (picking a subject or theme and searching scripture to see what God says about it)
3. Character studies (choose a Bible character and learn all you can about their context and character)
4. Place studies (pick a city, country, nation, mountain, or river, and research its geographical, historical, prophetic, or symbolic significance)
5. Passage studies (looking at a particular chapter or section of text and disciplining yourself to extract the meaning from the text, as opposed to overlaying the text with your own experience or bias)
6. Book studies (doing a deep analysis of a particular book of the Bible)

Which of these methods appeals most to you, or feels most accessible to you, as a place to start down the path of deeper study?

Is there a controversial topic that keeps coming up in your workplace or circle of friends? Do you know what the Bible really says about it?

Which book of the Bible have you never actually read, from start to finish?

Is there a man or woman mentioned in the Bible who fascinates you?

Do you know what mountains symbolise throughout scripture? Did you know that apart from people, trees are mentioned more than anything else, in the Bible?

What passage of scripture was preached at your church last week? Do you still have questions about it?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Romans 15:4 reads as follows in the NIV: 'For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.'

The NLT renders the verse, 'Such things were written in the scriptures long ago to teach us. And the scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled.'

The scriptures *teach* us, producing *endurance*, offering *encouragement* and *hope*, and strengthening us to *wait patiently* for God's promises to come to pass. **How has internalising God's Word changed you in these ways?**

Benjamin made a reasoned decision to embrace the Bible as credible and supported by historical evidence. He made a faith decision, accepting that his logic had limits and that he needed to take a step of faith. He made an everyday, real-life decision, adopting the Bible as the authority in his work life, home life, relationships, and decisions.

Have you made a similar decision? Why, or why not?

Can you point to a particular verse or passage of scripture that was life-changing in your faith journey, where the Word of God is concerned?

When has it been difficult for you to take God at His Word?

LAST WORD

This series is coming to an end, but your journey into the wondrous depths of God's Word is just beginning – because the more we learn, the more we realise how much we can still learn.

What decision will you make about the Bible? Will you choose to receive it by faith, and allow God to speak to you through its pages as He takes you on the adventure of a lifetime?

DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete as you close out the series.

Read: Practise a character study by choosing a man or woman mentioned in scripture. Find out all you can about their family, their place of birth, the chronological events of their life, and how their story in scripture points to Jesus. Or choose a place mentioned in scripture. What is its significance in God's big story on planet earth?

Write: Choose a word – like *love, redemption, peace, or hope*. Find at least ten verses containing that word, or describing it, and write them out. Then rewrite them in your own words, paraphrasing them or applying them to situations you currently face.

Pray: Spend time in prayer, alone or with a friend, asking God to direct your thoughts and ideas when it comes to deeper Bible study. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind topics or Bible books you'd do well to spend time studying.

STUDY 2 – The Lectio Course

Join Pete Greig, founder of 24-7 Prayer, for The Lectio Course, an absorbing and inspiring five-part series that walks you through the practice of Lectio Divina. Learn the rhythms of reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation as they apply to the Bible. Hear the astonishing stories of men and women who have encountered Jesus through this ancient yet astoundingly relevant spiritual habit. Discover how to hear God in His Word, so you can be equipped to take His love to the world.

ACCESSING THE MATERIAL

On the following pages you will find all of the information needed to go through the Life Group Material. There are corresponding videos that can be accessed through our "RightNow Media" account with the church. If you don't have an account, go to rightnowmedia.org/Account/Invite/BrackenRidgeBaptistChurch. After creating an account search the title of the series to access the videos.

If you are unable for some reason to access the material through these different means, please simply email office@brbc.org.au or call 07 3261 5045.

Introducing Lectio Divina

SESSION GOALS

To understand Lectio Divina and its four steps: read (lectio), meditate (meditatio), pray (oratio), contemplate (contemplatio).

OPEN

In this session, we'll explore what Lectio Divina is, and how we can start to hear God's voice through this ancient practice.

Describe a time God spoke to you. How did God do it? How did you know it was God?

Is there anything that worries you about hearing God? Have you ever experienced hearing God 'wrong', or been hurt by someone claiming to hear God say something?

Key Bible passage / verse:

'My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me.' (John 10:27, NIV)

VIEW

As you watch, write down how Pete answers these questions.

Is Lectio Divina more about the heart or the head?

What are the four steps of Lectio Divina?

According to Pete, are these four steps a fixed map, the rungs of a ladder, or a helpful guide?

What does Sister Mary Magdalen experience every time she practises Lectio Divina?

Show SESSION #1: *Introducing Lectio Divina* (15 minutes)

REVIEW

Pete explains that each session will feature biblical inspiration, an interview with someone who practises Lectio Divina, and some interaction around the theme of the session. The aim is to help you get more out of the Bible so you can develop a rhythm of walking and talking with God, hearing Him more clearly in your daily life. **What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?**

Pete shared the story of HMV and Nipper the dog longing to hear his master's voice. **How different would your life be if you were constantly guided by God's audible voice?**

Lectio Divina involves reading, meditating, praying, and contemplating. **Which of these steps, if any, come naturally to you? Which steps sound difficult to practise, or freak you out entirely? Why? Did anything Pete shared surprise you? Is there anything you're curious to learn more about?**

Sister Mary Magdalen describes her personal practice of Lectio Divina. **How does your approach to Bible reading compare with the concept of Lectio Divina?**

Sister Mary shares that whenever she practises Lectio Divina, she has a personal encounter with Christ. **How would it change the way you read the Bible if you were guaranteed an encounter with Jesus?**

Sister Mary reminds us that the Bible is the revealed Word of God, and that we should approach it with faith, expectancy, and love. **What does the Bible as God's revealed Word mean to you, and how might that affect the way you approach it?**

Would you say that every time you open your Bible, you're doing so with faith, expectancy, and love? If not, how do you approach the Bible (for example, with trepidation, boredom, doubt, or something else)?

Sister Mary says, 'He has a plan for me. He has something that he wants to say to me in that passage that perhaps He's never said to me before. I might have read that story a hundred times, but today, it will be different.' **Have you ever re-read a familiar passage of the Bible, and sensed God speaking to you through it in an entirely fresh way? What does pondering God's Word mean to you? Do you agree that Lectio Divina is a dialogue? Why, or why not?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

In John 10:27, our key verse for this session, Jesus says, 'My sheep listen to My voice. I know them and they follow Me.' According to Jesus, the primary mark of discipleship is *listening*. **Has this always been your understanding of what it means, first and foremost, to follow Jesus? What other discipleship practices are emphasised in your church community? How do Jesus' words in John 8:47 elaborate on the idea of disciples listening for, and recognising, His voice?**

We are saved by faith and blessed by obedience. Sometimes, however, we mix this up. We end up thinking we're saved by obedience and blessed by faith. In Deuteronomy 28:1–2, God invites His people to listen for His voice, and obey. **How does He promise to bless them for listening and obeying?**

In 1 Kings 19:11–13 we read about how God made His voice known to Elijah at a time when Elijah was desperate, hopeless, and afraid. God wasn't in the wind, or the earthquake, or the fire. Finally, Elijah heard God whisper. **Share about a time when God surprised you by the way He made His voice clear to you.**

Psalm 119 is all about learning to know God and His ways. The psalmist reads, meditates, prays, and contemplates – and hears God’s voice through His Word. **What is the psalmist’s prayer in Psalm 119:18? What is his declaration in Psalm 119:105 as he reads, meditates on, and contemplates God’s Word?**

Read James 1:22. **As we listen for God’s voice, what does James encourage us to do with what we hear?**

What one thing will you do differently because of this session?

GO DEEPER

Practical activity:

Try reading John 10:22–30 prayerfully as a group, using the four steps of Lectio Divina to reflect on Jesus’ teaching about hearing God’s voice.

1. **Read (Lectio)** Read the passage out loud, reflecting on the passage as you read.
2. **Meditate (Meditatio)** Read the passage again and encourage each member of the group to say out loud one word or phrase that stood out to them (the same word or phrase can be repeated by different people).
3. **Pray (Oratio)** Read the passage again and allow space for members of the group to pray out short prayers related to the themes, words, or phrases of the passage.
4. **Contemplate (Contemplatio)** Read the passage a final time and sit quietly to reflect individually. Each member of the group might like to ask themselves the question, ‘What’s the one thing from this passage I will take into my week?’

Go deeper this week:

Practise Lectio Divina as you read the Bible. Perhaps follow Sister Mary’s advice and start with a story from the gospels, paying close attention to what God might want to say to you.

If you find your mind wandering, jot down your thoughts in a journal as you read, meditate, pray, and contemplate.

As optional additions to this series, you may want to download the free Lectio 365 app, or grab a copy of Pete's book, *How to Hear God*. This first session of the series correlates with Chapter 1 (*Hearing God's Word in Jesus*).

Read: Hearing God in the Bible

SESSION GOAL

To understand the importance of the Bible as the primary way God speaks, and the centrality of Jesus as the Word of God.

OPEN

In this session, we'll explore the first step of Lectio Divina, read, by exploring the Bible slowly, prayerfully, and reverently.

How do you feel when you think about reading the Bible? What emotions does it spark?

Key Bible passage / verse:

“They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32, NIV)

VIEW

As you watch, write down how Pete answers these questions.

What is the primary way in which God speaks to us?

Lectio Divina is a way of viewing God's world through God's _____;
the whole of life through the life of _____.

How can reading the Bible become a conversation with God?

According to Helen Berhane, when does Christianity become difficult?

Show SESSION #2: *Read: Hearing God in the Bible* (18 minutes)

REVIEW

What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?

Pete illustrates (with the help of his dog!) that while animals are way better than humans at sensing certain things, we are designed to hear the voice of God. However, while hearing God's voice is natural, it's not always easy. **How does God typically speak to you? Does this tell you anything about the way you may be wired to hear?**

Pete says when it comes to hearing God, the Bible is the primary way in which He speaks. **What do you love about the Bible and how do you best engage with it?**

George Gallup called the Bible the best-selling, least read book. **Why don't we read the Bible more?**

Archbishop Francois Fénelon said, 'Imagine that Jesus Christ in person is about to talk to you about the most important thing in the world. Give Him your complete attention.' **How would you live tomorrow differently if you began your day with this in mind?**

Pete encourages us to look *through* the Bible's text – to view God's world through God's Word, and to view all of life through the life of Christ. He reminds us that the Word of God is first and foremost a *person* – Jesus, the living Word – and only secondly, a *book*. Our relationship is with the living Word of God in Jesus through the written Word of God in the Bible – not the other way around. **How comfortable do you feel reading the Bible prayerfully, intimately, and conversationally, rather than studying it for information?**

Pete's illustration using the picture frame challenges us to reframe how we see life. **If you're currently facing a difficult situation, which promise from God's Word might help you to view it differently?**

Helen Berhane says that Christianity is only hard when we don't hear God – or when we only half-hear Him. **Describe the last time God spoke to you. How did it impact your faith?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

In Luke 24:13–33, our key passage for this session, Jesus meets two guys on the road to Emmaus. **How does Jesus draw them into conversation? Why do you think Jesus first leads them through the prophecies of Moses and others, instead of immediately revealing Himself to them? Have you ever recognised Jesus in the pages of the Old Testament? Has your heart burned within you after listening to someone preach God's Word?**

Paul writes, 'All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.' (2 Timothy 3:16–17) **Describe a time in your life when God's Word taught, rebuked, corrected, or trained you in righteousness, and so thoroughly equipped you for what God was calling you to do.**

Joshua 1:8 and Romans 15:4 both describe the benefits of reading and remembering God's Word. **How has the Bible been a source of endurance, encouragement, hope, and success in your life?**

It's possible we've found ourselves thinking that reading the Bible is arduous, pointless, and even irrelevant. **Read Isaiah 55:11 and Matthew 24:35. How do Isaiah and Jesus explain that nothing could be further from the truth?**

What one thing will you do differently because of this session?

GO DEEPER

Practical activity:

Try reading Mark 4:35–41 prayerfully as a group, using the four steps of Lectio Divina to reflect on the story of Jesus calming the storm.

1. **Read (Lectio)** Read the passage out loud, reflecting on the passage as you read.
2. **Meditate (Meditatio)** Read the passage again and encourage each member of the group to say out loud one word or phrase that stood out to them (the same word or phrase can be repeated by different people).
3. **Pray (Oratio)** Read the passage again and allow space for members of the group to pray out short prayers related to the themes, words, or phrases of the passage.
4. **Contemplate (Contemplatio)** Read the passage a final time and sit quietly to reflect individually. Each member of the group might like to ask themselves the question, 'What's the one thing from this passage I will take into my week?'

Go deeper this week:

Continue to reflect on the Bible prayerfully and slowly, rather than reading for information. Perhaps return to the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–33) and reflect on it every day this week.

Consider setting up triggers for prayer or reflection. Like, every time you put your key in the front door, or switch on the kettle, or push *send* on an email, bring to mind what you read in the Bible earlier in the day. Or set a reminder on your phone to make a hard stop, somewhere in your day, for five minutes of musing over what God has been saying to you through His Word.

If you've opted to get Pete's book, *How to Hear God*, this session correlates with Chapter 2 (*Hearing God's voice in the Bible*).

Meditate: Hearing the Holy Spirit in our thoughts

SESSION GOAL

To understand the three keys to biblical meditation, and how meditation can help us engage with God using our imagination.

OPEN

In this session, we'll explore the second step of Lectio Divina, moving from reading the text to meditating on it.

What comes to mind when you think about meditation? Do you feel positively or negatively about it?

Key Bible passage / verse:

'May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.' (Psalm 19:14, NIV)

VIEW

As you watch, write down how Pete answers these questions.

Is Christian meditation about emptying or filling our minds?

What are the three keys to meditation?

According to Mara Klemich, should we approach scripture with logic, or emotion, or both?

Show SESSION #3: *Meditate: Hearing the Holy Spirit in our thoughts* (18 minutes)

REVIEW

What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?

Pete opens this session acknowledging that many Christians are wary of meditation, associating it with Eastern religions, the New Age movement, or general weirdness. He reminds us that meditation has nothing to do with *emptying* our minds and everything to do with *filling* them with the beauty of biblical truth. **What does the word *meditation* mean? How does your idea of meditation differ from or align with Pete's explanation?**

The three keys to meditation are to embrace interruption (slow down and be patient), exercise intuition (explore the implications of a word or phrase) and apply imagination (adopt a mental playfulness). **Which of these three keys is easiest for you to focus on? Which feels the hardest? Why do you think some people are afraid to engage their imagination when approaching the Bible?**

Mara explains the vital role that both logic and imagination play in our understanding of scripture. **Which practical idea from Pete and Mara's conversation could you apply next time you read the Bible? Do you consider yourself more of a logical or imaginative person? Do you think this impacts the ways in which you hear God?**

Jesus often taught His followers using metaphor and symbolism, essentially appealing to His listeners' limbic system (the part of the brain that manages memories, emotions, and empathy). **Does the fact that we can relate to**

Biblical truth both rationally and emotionally excite you or make you nervous? Why? How can we practise discernment when we're praying imaginatively?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

In Psalm 19:14, our key verse for this session, the psalmist asks God to guide the meditations of his heart and to make them pleasing to God. **Do you ever pray before reading and meditating on God's Word? If so, does it make a difference?**

God commands the prophet Ezekiel to eat a scroll of scripture, and apparently, it's delicious (Ezekiel 3:2–3). Similarly, Jeremiah says, 'When Your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight...' (Jeremiah 15:16) The psalmist invites Israel to 'taste and see that the Lord is good.' (Psalm 34:8) **Do you see meditating on the Bible as an obligation, or an opportunity for sustenance? What's your favourite food? How would it change your engagement with the Bible if you saw it as feeding your soul with whatever you find most delectable? What does Jesus compare God's Word to, in Matthew 4:4?**

Psalm 1, Psalm 55, and Psalm 63 mention meditating in the morning, at noon, and at night. **Do you find it easiest to concentrate on God's Word in the early morning, during your lunchbreak, or at bedtime? How could you establish consistent rhythms of meditation at times that work best for you?**

Psalm 119:15 reads, 'I will meditate on Your precepts and fix my eyes on Your ways.' **In this season of your life, where is God prompting you to fix your gaze? What verse or passage of scripture are you meditating on, to keep you focused?**

Read Philippians 4:8–9. **What does Paul urge us to meditate on? Why?**

What one thing will you do differently because of this session?

GO DEEPER

Practical activity:

As a group, use the steps of Lectio Divina to reflect on the Parable of the Lost Son in Luke 15:11–32. This time, try to focus on engaging with the parable imaginatively. What do you see, hear, taste, and smell? Imagine yourself on the scene as you read the passage.

1. **Read (Lectio)** Read the passage out loud, reflecting on the passage as you read.
2. **Meditate (Meditatio)** Read the passage again and encourage each member of the group to say out loud one word or phrase that stood out to them (the same word or phrase can be repeated by different people).
3. **Pray (Oratio)** Read the passage again and allow space for members of the group to pray out short prayers related to the themes, words, or phrases of the passage.
4. **Contemplate (Contemplatio)** Read the passage a final time and sit quietly to reflect individually. Each member of the group might like to ask themselves the question, 'What's the one thing from this passage I will take into my week?'

Go deeper this week:

Try using *interruption* (slow down as you read), *intuition* (what captures your attention?) and *imagination* (allow your mind to think creatively as you read), to explore hearing God as you read the Bible.

If you're into sketching or doodling, fill a page of your journal with impressions of a particular biblical scene you're meditating on. Or draw a mind map imagining the sensory experiences of the characters depicted: what did they see, hear, smell, taste, or feel?

If you've opted to get Pete's book, *How to Hear God*, this session correlates with Chapter 3 (*Hearing God's word in prayer: Lectio Divina*) and Chapter 5 (*Hearing God's whisper*).

Pray: Responding to God in prayer and prophecy

SESSION GOAL

To understand how the Bible can equip us to pray, and to understand how the prophetic can encourage others.

OPEN

In this session, we'll explore prayer and prophecy, turning our inward meditation upwards in conversation with God, and outwards in declaration of God's Word to the world.

What is your experience or understanding of prayer and prophecy? How are they linked?

Key Bible passage / verse:

'Ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it.' (John 14:14, NIV)

VIEW

As you watch, write down how Pete answers these questions.

Is the Bible meant to be read and understood, or prayed and lived, or both?

When are our prayer lives at their best?

According to Pete, why is praying through scripture a 'powerful detonator'?

What's the ABC checklist you can use to discern if a prophetic word you've received is from God and not just from your imagination?

Show SESSION #4: *Pray: Responding to God in prayer and prophecy* (15 minutes)

REVIEW

What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?

In the Bible, we read about a lot of different (and extremely unusual) ways in which God spoke to people. **What stands out to you as the weirdest biblical account of God making His voice heard? Why do you think it's important for us to familiarise ourselves with all the different ways in which God communicates to human beings? What's the primary way in which God still speaks to us today?**

Pete says our prayer lives are at their best not when we talk to God about big things occasionally, but little things continuously. **Have you experienced the conversational kind of prayer that Pete describes in his tree story? What did God's voice sound like? If you're comfortable to do so, share some of the little things you talked to God about today, and some of the big things.**

Praying through scripture is essentially praying God's truth back to Him. It's powerful because when you pray God's Word you can be sure you're praying God's will. **What situations do you currently face where it would be helpful to pray the scriptures? Which Bible passages could impact what you're going through right now?**

James shares how surprised he was when his prayer for healing was answered. **Have you, or has anyone in your community, ever experienced a miraculous answer to prayer? How did this experience impact you?**

James says that our prayers never die; they just accumulate. **What practical steps could you build into your routine to ensure you keep persevering in prayer?**

Pete reminds us that Lectio Divina isn't just for our personal spiritual formation. It's a powerful tool for changing the world. Some people are comfortable with this kind of prophetic ministry, while others may have questions about it, or be downright terrified.

What are your concerns or fears around the prophetic? What do you think Christians get right, and what do you think Christians could do better when talking about or sharing the prophetic? What three helpful steps does Pete suggest we use to check the authenticity of a prophetic word?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

In John 14:14, our key verse for this session, Jesus promises, 'Ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it.' How would you explain this verse to a friend or colleague who has recently become a Christian? Is Jesus saying He will give us whatever we ask for, so long as we tack on the phrase, 'in Jesus' name'? If not, why not?

Amos 3:7 refers to God's prophets as *servants*, implying that those who exercise a prophetic gift from God should be doing so with humility and other-centredness. What does this scripture also reveal about God's character and the relationship He desires with His people?

Read Joel 2:28–32 and Acts 2:16–21. Who is speaking, in each passage? Why is it significant that the speaker in Acts 2 prophesies using scripture? How have you seen this ancient prophecy fulfilled in your community?

Paul writes, 'Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.' (1 Corinthians 14:1) Read on a bit and explain why Paul urges us to pursue prophecy. Describe a time when you were strengthened, encouraged, or comforted through someone's gift of prophecy. What have you read in the Bible recently that you knew would put wind in the sails of someone you love? Have you shared it with them?

Peter writes, 'For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.' (2 Peter 1:21) How does this help you exercise discernment and make sense of some of the craziness that can potentially go down in church communities, where the prophetic may be manipulated or misused for personal gain?

What one thing will you do differently because of this session?

GO DEEPER

Practical activity:

As a group, practise hearing God's voice for others. Remember Pete's ABC guide: Is what you're sharing *affirming* (does it strengthen, encourage, comfort, edify, and build others up?), *biblical* (is it consistent with the broad teaching and witness of scripture?), and *Christlike* (does it sound like the kind of thing Jesus would've said, or feel like the kind of person He was?)

Depending on your group there are different ways you might like to do this:

1. Split into smaller groups (3–4 people) and spend a bit of time listening to what God may be saying to each person. As you pray, note any Bible verses, words, phrases, or pictures that come to mind and share them with the group, remembering the ABC guide as you listen and pray.
2. Lay out assorted pictures cut from magazines and newspapers. Invite each person to select one that they're drawn to. Welcome the Holy Spirit and ask the Lord to speak to each of you through this image. Once everyone's ready, take it in turns to share what you sensed God saying, whether it was for you or someone else. If a word feels like it resonates with someone, take time to pray for them.

For some people in the group, this way of listening to God might come naturally and feel easy. For others this could feel harder or take longer. Don't rush the experience, and don't pressure anyone in the group to share if they're not comfortable to do so.

Go deeper this week:

Practise regular prayer and listening to God by setting aside 15 minutes each day to pause, pray, and listen. Perhaps pray intentionally for the same thing every day or choose different things to pray for.

Each time you pray, also spend a moment in silence, welcoming God's presence and asking if there's anything God wants to say about the situation, person, or people you're praying for.

Consider meeting up with a friend to pray, trusting God to give you encouraging words for one another that are affirming, biblical, and Christlike.

If you've opted to get Pete's book, *How to Hear God*, this session correlates with Chapter 4 (*Hearing God's word in prophecy*) and Chapter 6 (*Hearing God's whisper in dreams and the unconscious*).

Contemplate: Hearing God in all of life

SESSION GOAL

To understand the importance of applying Lectio Divina to our lives.

OPEN

In this session, we'll explore moving from meditation and conversation to contemplation, encountering God beyond the text in the whole of life.

Do you seek to encounter God in every part of your life? Do you place any conscious or unconscious restrictions on where you may encounter God?

Key Bible passage / verse:

'The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything. Rather, He himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.' (Acts 17:24–25, NIV)

VIEW

As you watch, write down how Pete answers these questions.

How does Lectio Divina set us free to change the world?

How did Teresa of Ávila describe contemplative prayer?

What evidence is there in our everyday lives that we're all capable of contemplation and worship – being caught up in something greater than ourselves?

How did the monks of Lindisfarne engage with the Bible?

Show SESSION #5: *Contemplate: Hearing God in all of life* (17 minutes)

REVIEW

What did you find most helpful or most challenging in the video?

Pete explains that contemplation, the final step of Lectio Divina, is about encountering God beyond the text, in all of life. **What does the word *contemplation* make you think of? Does this match or differ from the content of this final session?**

Pete recounts the story of Kumbuka the gorilla escaping from his cage to occupy himself fairly unadventurously in his keeper's kitchen. **What 'spiritual sugar rush' traps can we fall into as Christians? Do you tend to see Bible reading and prayer as something for your personal spiritual growth, or as something that God will use to build His Kingdom and change the world?**

Pete says that the more we find God in His Word, the more our eyes are primed to see Him in the world. **What would be different if you expected to encounter Jesus in every part of your life? How does reading the Bible impact the way you see the world?**

Teresa of Ávila described contemplative prayer as ‘an intimate sharing between friends’. **How could you foster this attitude in your prayer life?**

Aiden and the monks of Lindisfarne lived their lives to the rhythms of the tide. They withdrew to pray and practise Lectio Divina on their holy island, and then when the tide receded, they would venture forth to proclaim the good news of Jesus, caring for the poor and establishing colonies of heaven wherever they went. They prayed the Word and preached the Word. **In your current context, what would it look like for you to establish similar, almost tidal rhythms of quiet prayer and contemplation, and front-footed engagement with the world for the sake of the gospel?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

In Acts 17:24–25, our key verses for this session, Paul references the idols worshiped by the people of Athens to turn the conversation to Jesus. He says, ‘The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything. Rather, He himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.’ **What are the idols worshiped by people in your culture or community (like, social media, alcohol, shopping, pornography, or other things)? As a group, brainstorm ways you might bring the gospel to bear on situations where friends or co-workers are focused on these false idols.**

Jesus’ final instruction to His disciples was, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.’ (Mark 16:15). Later Paul writes, ‘Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.’ (Colossians 3:16) **Discuss how these two instructions – to let the Word of God dwell deeply in our hearts, and to tell everyone about Jesus – are not mutually exclusive, but mutually indispensable.**

What has been your biggest revelation from The Lectio Course? What impact will it have on your daily life?

GO DEEPER

Practical activity:

As a group, use the steps of Lectio Divina to reflect on Jesus' feeding of the 5000 recorded in Matthew 14:13–21.

1. **Read (Lectio)** Read the passage out loud, reflecting on the passage as you read.
2. **Meditate (Meditatio)** Read the passage again and encourage each member of the group to say out loud one word or phrase that stood out to them (the same word or phrase can be repeated by different people).
3. **Pray (Oratio)** Read the passage again and allow space for members of the group to pray out short prayers related to the themes, words, or phrases of the passage.
4. **Contemplate (Contemplatio)** Read the passage a final time and sit quietly to reflect individually. Each member of the group might like to ask themselves the question, 'What's the one thing from this passage I will take into my week?'

Go deeper this week:

Decide on one thing you're going to do – a new habit you'll build – to help you hear God in your daily life. You might like to set a reminder on your phone or write a note in your diary. It can be helpful to find someone who can encourage you by checking in and seeing how your commitment is going.

Perhaps you can try journaling or freewriting, as a helpful way of recognising how God may be calling you to impact the world. After reading, meditating, and praying through a particular Bible passage, spend some time scrawling out whatever thoughts come to mind.

Don't worry about your spelling and grammar. Allow the Holy Spirit to use pen and paper to bring clarity to your thoughts, ideas, and desires.

If you've opted to get Pete's book, *How to Hear God*, this session correlates with Chapter 7 (*Hearing God's whisper in community, creation and culture*) and Chapter 8 (*The Word, the whisper, the way*).



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