



Becoming Self-Feeders through Life Group

The Why: We believe the ability to read and understand the Bible is central to connecting with God in a first-hand and personal way. And we don't want anyone to miss out on that exciting opportunity!

But have you ever felt like the Bible isn't relevant to your life? It doesn't make sense to you? It's too intimidating or difficult to navigate on your own...??? Then join the club! We have been there too. 😊 As powerful and meaningful as the Bible is, the reality is that it is a collection of ancient writings—which means it contains a variety of works written thousands of years ago in very different times, cultures and languages.

Becoming familiar and comfortable with navigating the Bible does not come naturally or easily for most. It is a journey that requires effort, intentionality, and some important tools for success. The *goal* of this journey is to become “biblically saturated”—a person passionate about God's Word, hungry for it, excited about it, thirsting for it as your lifeline and window into God's heart for you *so it shapes your daily life and decisions*.

The Aim: Our aim at Vintage Grace is to empower every person with the tools and ability to be a “self-feeder.” That is the term we use to describe someone who can go directly to the Bible to feed their soul as they read, understand, and engage with God through His word. This isn't just for the purpose of head knowledge, but with the aim of heart transformation. Our call as followers of Jesus isn't just to know a lot about God, but to become disciples of Jesus who are following Him, being changed by Him, and joining Him on His mission to change the world.

Or, to use our R-cubed framework, we want every “VGer” to live the abundant Christian life, which consists of three vital relationships: R1—a deepening relationship with God; R2—Life-changing relationships with other believers; and R3—Engaging relationships with the yet-to-believe. Becoming a self-feeder as a student of God's word is key to growing in R1, and that fuels our passion for R2 and R3!

The How: We purposefully spend extended time in our Life Groups studying the Bible together in community. We want you to study each week's passage individually using the Study Guide on the back of the sermon notes (also on website & weekly VG email). Don't just rush through them. Spend quality time reading, reflecting, and writing down your thoughts. Then, bring those ideas with you to your Life Group gathering. As the Life Group reflects together, we trust that the Holy Spirit will do a powerful work illuminating and even transforming our hearts as we seek God's face together in community—to know Him, and most importantly to love Him more!

This is central to our intentional strategy to empower every person at Vintage Grace to become a Self-Feeder. And it shapes everything from how we preach God's Word on Sunday mornings, how we equip our people with Study Guide questions, and how we shape our Life Group gatherings. Beyond being Biblically saturated, we also want to be Biblically literate. This isn't an arrogance thing, it is a recognition that any person can memorize verses from the Bible and make them mean/say whatever they want them to. Sometimes (often times) the Bible is challenging to understand correctly and therefore apply appropriately to our lives.

The Hope: We do all of these things in a specific, intentional way with the hope that you will eventually be able to confidently go to God's Word and understand it accurately, encounter God in a profound and meaningful way, and be transformed by Him as the Holy Spirit illuminates the truth to exert its power on your heart. Not just so you can claim to be a great Bible student – But so we can treasure Jesus with both our hearts and our minds. As we do that, we become more like Him in how we live out our faith as the Living Proof of our Loving God!

The Help: To help with this process, we have put together a resource with some of our key terminology that we hope will help equip you to engage with the Bible intentionally and accurately.



Guide to Key Bible Study Terms

Based on "Grasping God's Word"

Context – Historical, Literary & Surrounding

Every writer in the Bible wrote at a specific time in history, from a specific location, to a specific (or general) audience, and with a specific purpose in mind. These elements (author/timing/location/audience/purpose) form a Historical Context for their message (their letter/book in the Bible). Also, writers used various literary forms to communicate (poetry, narrative, law, prophecy, wisdom, gospel, history, letters). Understanding the historical and literary contexts are key to being able to understand what the writer was intending to communicate in their writing.

Anytime we read a specific passage of Scripture, we want to pay attention to the surrounding context it fits in. People often get in trouble misinterpreting the bible when they divorce a verse or passage from its context. So as a simple practice, always read the previous passage or the surrounding chapter before trying to establish a certain meaning to a verse/passage. Understanding the context surrounding a passage or idea not only helps ensure accurate interpretation, but it often brings the idea to life with greater intensity & significance.

Author's Intent

The writer of any book has a meaning in mind when they write. We do not create meaning out of a text; rather, we seek to find the meaning that is already there. The text can never mean what it was never intended to mean. So, it is important to figure out what exactly the author wanted to communicate in his message. Clarity on the context (above) will help direct us to the author's intent behind his writing. (It is different from an art piece, which could be intended to have multiple meanings to people based on how they look at it.)

Small Idea/Big Idea

Every unit of thought (i.e. passage) in the Bible is filled with many small ideas. These small ideas fit together like puzzle pieces to form a big idea, which is the author's primary message for that unit/passage. And this big idea fits into the big idea of the section of Scripture that the unit is found. As we study a specific passage, we want to understand the small ideas as well as piece them together to discover any big ideas the author is communicating.

Logic & Flow

No text stands alone. Every text is connected and each letter/book of the Bible follows a certain logic and flow. This is important in identifying the Big Idea of a passage because the author of the text is utilizing language to communicate a truth. When reading a specific text, consider how it is connected to the paragraph before and the paragraph after it. Consider how it relates to the larger theme of the section it is in and the overall writing. Recognizing the writer's context, purpose and themes can reveal the logic and flow they are using to communicate. And this logic and flow will help us uncover the intended meaning of small ideas as well as the big ideas the writer wants us to understand.

Application: Their Town/Our Town

As explained above, the books of the Bible were written at specific times/places and by specific people. This Historical Context is important because it involves certain presuppositions held by the author. The intended audience will understand the various cultural references (i.e. colloquialisms/idioms) woven into Scripture. This is particularly relevant to prophets, wisdom literature, and the sayings of Jesus.

When the parables of Jesus are read in our context, certain illustrations and meanings are lost on us. For example, the act of separating wheat from chaff is not familiar to an increasingly tech-minded society. To the agrarian first century Jews, separating wheat from chaff was a common practice. The illustration would have been more readily accessible to that audience.

Our task in interpretation is to bridge the gap between the original audience (Their Town) and our current culture (Our Town). There is an important process that must be followed to do this accurately to prevent us from potentially misunderstanding and misapplying the message of Scripture for our lives. We must ask key, specific questions of the text to understand its original meaning and application to Their Town so that it can appropriately be related to Our Town. Once we have uncovered the original meaning for Their Town, then we can draw out the timeless principle from the message that can span the gaps of time/culture/language and create a bridge to our current day—Our Town. Once this “principlizing bridge” has been constructed, we can confidently apply the principle from the passage to our own context and practical life situations.