

Episode 2-10: Basic Bible Study Principles

Resources:

Books

[Bible Knowledge Commentary](#)

[John McArthur Study Bible](#)

[Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary](#)

[Blue Letter Bible Commentaries](#)

[Warren Wiersbe Commentary](#)

Worksheet

[Basic Bible Study Principles Worksheet](#)

[Completed Sample Worksheet](#)

Article

[Six Questions to Ask When Studying the Bible in a Group](#)

App

[Blue Letter Bible App](#)

[Literal Word App](#)

[John MacArthur App](#)

Websites

[Masters of Arts in Biblical Counseling at Faith Bible Seminary](#)

[Logos](#)

Transcript:

Janet: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Alexandra: I just want to make it as totally simple and no-brainer as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy. Typically, I'll be joined by either Jocelyn or Alexandra, but for our first full episode listen as all three of us discuss the topic of joy.

Janet: Well, hello listeners. This is Janet. And I'm back again this week with my wonderful co-host Jocelyn.

Jocelyn: Hey there.

Janet: And today I have the privilege of introducing you to a special friend of mine. Her name is Sandy, and she is passionate about studying the word. And because of that, I had asked Sandy for our women's ministries classes at our church. She teaches a class on how to study the Bible, which I took. And I learned, but it's also not inaccessible. And I just appreciated that about Sandy. So Sandy, thank you for coming and being with us today. And I wanted to just ask you to begin with why are you so passionate about studying the word and helping other women grow to be confident in studying the word?

Sandy: I think, first of all, I'd have to say because of the need in my own life. I really wanted to study the Bible and wasn't sure just how to. Now I grew up in a Christian home. I started Sunday school when I was three years old and I had the benefits of biblical preaching. By the time I accepted Christ as my savior, I'd been faithfully taught the scriptures and they had pointed me to Jesus. Even after my salvation, I have benefited greatly from the sermons and the teachings of faithful teachers and godly pastors who love the Bible.

Janet: Yeah.

Sandy: That's one of the things that drew us to this church

Janet: Yes, we need that.

Sandy: Because they would take the Bible, they would open it up and explain what it had to say. And I was hungry for that. It was really good for me to get to do that. The problem was with me. I didn't know how to study the Bible on my own. So I'd go to church and I was so hungry to gobble up everything that they were saying that the word was so alive and fresh and I'd go home and I could study that passage again. but I just didn't know how to do it myself.

Janet: Yeah.

Sandy: And you know, I've been in small groups, I've used devotional books for Bible studies. Boy, I have read books by Christian authors.

Janet: All of which are good things.

Sandy: They're very good things. And they were helpful each in their own way. I've done read through the Bible plans and I appreciate that they helped me to grow spiritually and to mature in that way. But I still wanted to learn how to study God's word on my own to really dig in and figure out what he was saying through the pages of his letter to us, I guess you could say. I've

been a part of a BSF, which is Bible study fellowship. And I love it because they are in the word, they have work for you to do every day. And so that's helpful as far as the discipline and studying the word as well. And one of the rewards that I found there is it really helps you get ahold of what the scripture's teaching and then it works its way into your everyday life.

Janet: Yes.

Sandy: And that's what I needed for sure, but I know that's very helpful. So that was my big motivating factor. I'd have to say. And what if there's other ladies out there that just didn't know how to get started. They were like me and they wanted to, but didn't know how. So that was the driving force behind coming up with a plan to teach other ladies how to study the word.

Janet: And I love that, but I always try to think what if I'm a listener saying, but I am hearing godly preaching. Of course, one of my first questions is how do you know if you don't know the word. But I'm getting that in other ways, why do I really just need to study the Bible? Why do I need to do that?

Sandy: Well, you make a good point. How would, you know if it's biblical or not? If you've not been studying the scriptures, but that is how we get to know God. He reveals himself, you know, you might say in creation, you look around, look at the stars, look at the beauty of a sunset. And so, oh I see God in that.

Janet: For sure.

Sandy: But when Jesus came, he showed us more of himself because Jesus was just like God. You've seen Jesus, you've seen the father. Jesus said that himself. But the word. He's given us his word, and that is so helpful for us, for sure. I really liked Psalm 19: 7 through 11. It talks about how the law of the Lord is perfect. It refreshes the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy and it makes wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant or pure, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, clean, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They're more precious than gold than much pure gold. And they're sweeter than honey. Honey from the honeycomb. By them, your servant is warned in keeping them there's great reward. And I just looked at all those adjectives, oh, there's the former teacher coming out in me. And I said, look at all that the law of the Lord is, and then look what it does for the person.

Janet: Yes. I love that. Because as you're reading that, I'm thinking refreshing my soul, making me wise, giving me joy, giving me light. That's not what many of us think about. We think study the word, take medicine. You know, and yet that's not what you're saying it really means to study the word.

Sandy: No, it's not unpleasant.

Janet: Because medicine is.

Sandy: Because medicine can be, you know, take two and call me in the morning two aspirin or whatever. But, this just really, refreshing the soul, the first one. That's important. Just to

Janet: Yeah. And who doesn't want that.

Sandy: I know. To be refreshed. How wonderful is that?

Janet: But when you look at this big book, and even what you just read, there are some probably vocabulary words in there that people didn't know already. So it can be very overwhelming. So how would I get started? How would I get started when I just think I want to be refreshed? I want to be wise. I want to have joy, but you've gotta be kidding me.

Sandy: Well, that's where I was at one time too. so I decided to go about studying, how to study.

Janet: Very teacher-ish of you.

Sandy: Very teacher-ish of me.

Janet: Again, using your gifts and abilities.

Sandy: And I found out that there's three main steps in Bible study. You need to observe, which really is comprehend. I need to understand what's being said there. So what you just said about, there's some words there. We may not know. Oh, that's part of what we're going to do. And then you need to interpret what's said there. So observation, then interpretation and finally application, how does this apply? What does God want me to learn from what I've just read? So those were the three main steps that I found. And I was trying to figure it out a format that wouldn't intimidate

Janet: Yes.

Sandy: somebody who is new to studying the Bible. I didn't want them to be fearful about it, but just to be willing to jump right in and give them a method, even if they're inexperienced, to get started on it.

Janet: Yes. Yes. And I can remember when you were putting that worksheet together and asking me, okay, would you understand what this meant would you --? And I know that that was your heart is, how do I make this accessible to anybody? Yeah,

Sandy: Yeah, I would say that that is definitely true. And I really appreciated those times that we could get together. Cause you know, sometimes what you think is perfectly clear to you, everyone else goes, what in the world is she trying to ask, or say, or whatever? So, you know,

there are a lot of different methods that really use those three steps. And so I read things by Jen Wilkens.

Janet: Yeah.

Sandy: She's the author of *Women in the Word*. And she does a great job of laying out a program for studying. So did Howard Hendrix, his book was called *Living by the Book*. And Kay Arthur writes the *Precept Upon Precept* studies. So they each have their own method of study, but all depend on three basic steps. And so,

Janet: so I would say, okay, so I know the three-steps. Why do you think it's important to at least choose a method?

Sandy: Well, my thinking on that is it really helps to organize your thinking about that passage. And then it helps you break it down into bite sized pieces and really think about it. So to me, a method of study helps you get the most out of that passage.

Janet: And I would agree and you know, everybody's different. I am not one who is naturally gifted in slowing down. So I benefit from the structure of you need to stop and think about this. You need to think about these. You need to think about this. For some people, honestly, I have a very good friend who loves to study the word and she said, I can go on rabbit trails, digging things down and realize I'd been there for hours. I'm cooking dinner in my head. Like I battle to go slow.. Everything in my life. I feel like I need to hurry. I need to hurry. So having the method slows me down.

Jocelyn: That's a good point.

Sandy: It does. It is a good point. I may not be as naturally fast as you are, but I still found that reading of scripture, I was going too fast. I would get to the end of a passage and think, well, what did I just read there? Uh, I don't know.

Janet: Yes.

Sandy: And, one thing that I would say about that is that's pretty typical from my teaching background. That when I was teaching children, how to read, we want them to interact with the passage and not just call out the words. And I was reading scripture by just calling out the words I wasn't trying to think through how does that connect to this and what did they just say in the verse before that that would make an impact on this? And so I had to slow down too.

Janet: Yeah.

Sandy: For sure. So you begin with, what does it say? And that's the observation and the comprehension.

Janet: And that's an easier way. So anyone going observation, comprehension, you're already above me. What does it say? There it is.

Sandy: Yeah. What does it say?

Janet: Yeah.

Sandy: Then after you've gone through and really tried to figure out what it's saying, and you'll be looking up words that you don't understand. And, I would say that once you've worked your way through that part, that's the big, heavy lift that's where you're doing the most. That's probably going to take up most of your time. When I write the lesson for the ladies, I think it takes the first three days out of the five days of homework.

Jocelyn: Oh wow.

Sandy: You know? So you're really observing.

Janet: Yeah.

Sandy: But then you want to figure out what it means.

Janet: Yeah.

Sandy: Because finally you get to that, how does it work? And that's the last part, the application.

Janet: Which we're all in a hurry to get to.

Sandy: Yeah. A lot of people just skip one and two.

Janet: What do I need to do? What do I do? What do I do? Yeah.

Sandy: Exactly. So let's use the example of going to see the doctor. When you have a sore throat, what's the first question he asks you? Is it what's your disease?

Janet: And I would say I'm not the doctor. How would I know?

Sandy: Of course not. He's going to ask you how you feel. But he's going to find out for himself as well. So it's going to tell you to say, ah, it's probably going to stick a stick on your tongue to get you to really open up. He's going to look in your mouth and he's going to maybe note the colors. The shape, the size of your tonsils. But to those of us that aren't trained in medicine, we don't really know what to look for, but he does. And then he may ask you some questions, like, does it hurt or when did you start feeling sick? See, all of that is part of the observation.

Janet: Everything up to this so far.

Sandy: He's observing. Then after that, after he's done the careful observation, then he's going to tell you what he thinks you're suffering from. In other words, his diagnosis, which is the interpretation. That's the step two. And then he'll write you a prescription for medication and that's the application step right there.

Janet: So interesting.

Sandy: So first, the doctor employs observation, but he goes through all three steps. We laugh when we think how silly it is to just go straight to application. But hopefully this makes the point. Hey, doctors do it too. Different application, you know, it's medicine versus studying the Bible, but it's the same three steps.

Janet: Well, and when you say that, it makes it clearer. How frustrated I would be if my doctor skipped all those steps and how many times have I said, I don't feel like he listened to me. I don't feel like-- I'm trying to give him the background. I'm trying to tell them all these things. And he didn't listen to any of that.

Jocelyn: He just skipped right over it. Yeah.

Janet: He skipped over that and decided it's this and wanted to give me this. And

Jocelyn: Which ends up being completely ineffective.

Janet: Right. So how can he know what I need if he's not observing and doing that part. And then I have to go okay. I can come to some very wrong conclusions about scripture and very wrong applications. And I can claim I'm doing it because it's what God wants, but I never really knew what that passage even meant.

Jocelyn: Great point.

Janet: So how could I figure out what to do with it?

Sandy: Right. Very good point. That's why the observation step is so critical. You have got to see what's actually in there. And then as far as interpretation goes, you do want to be careful about what does the rest of scripture say as well?

Janet: Yes.

Sandy: It ties in-- all of scripture is God's story, and it ties together. So if you're coming with some wacko way out, outer space, kind of idea, you might want to check that out.

Janet: You're probably not the first one in the last 2000 years that saw that in scripture. So if it's that different, you need to consider it.

Sandy: And we're going to get to a part of what we discuss as far as how you can check yourself on those kinds of things. That's coming up, but I just love the idea of carefully observing. When you carefully study, boy, it can make a difference in your life. And you know, we've talked about doing things fast. I'm not promoting speed reading here. It's really important to read and read carefully and reread it because you're not going to be running through the drive-through for some biblical fast food. We want to be sitting down to a feast at the banquet of God's word. And that's what our study, a careful study, lets us do.

Janet: That's a beautiful picture.

Sandy: I'm so thankful for what God has accomplished in my life, just in trying to do these very things as well. So yeah, I'm really thankful. So as I searched for a method, I just kind of stumbled across a format to get started that used questions from a small group discussion of a passage. And I've worked with that initial idea and pondered about how to make it helpful for individual study as well. And so then we came up with this worksheet,

Janet: which we are going to put-- it is in our show notes. So if any of you want to pull that up and be looking along with us, you can pause this and get that from the show notes.

Sandy: So you're looking for the Bible study basics worksheet on the show notes, and we'll just kind of walk through it and you can see what the intent was and perhaps that'll help you use it, if you would desire to do that.

Janet: Excellent.

Sandy: It's divided into daily assignments for each of five days. The first day, the study concentrates on the background information about the passage. Now, usually when we're doing this, as I teach it, we go through a whole chapter at a time. But it can also be done for a small select passage. Before you begin your study each day, pray. Pray, ask God for help to understand what's right in front of you, for his spirit to teach you and illumine your mind. That's part of the work of the Holy Spirit. And ask God to help you not miss what he's trying to show you. So always start with prayer. And also on this day, I go ahead and print out a copy of the passage so that I can write all over it. I don't want that big of a mess in my Bible, so I just print it out. I use super wide margins. I make, Oh like double space or two and a half is the space between the lines. And that usually gives me plenty of room to mark to pull something out to the side and write it down there. And that's really helpful. The other thing that I would want to say is on this same day, I just take another piece of paper and I look at the passage and try and divide it into two, three, maybe four sections. Now, if you're wondering how to do that, here's what I do. I look at my Bible and it usually has those paragraphs.

Janet: There's a section.

Sandy: There's a section. And so on the sheet of paper. I just will say maybe verses one through five or wherever the section ends and then verses six through 12, maybe is the next paragraph. But anyway, with each paragraph, then it go back and reread. And I think now what are two or three things I'm observing going on here? And I just write down what I think. I'm not looking for fancy words or theological statements. It may just be, Paul's writing a letter to Timothy.

Janet: Right. Whatever is there.

Sandy: Whatever is there I'm just making two or three observations for each section.

Janet: Excellent. So that's basically that's day one.

Sandy: Right.

Janet: So now. By day two, we're applying it, right? No.

Sandy: Oh my dear, there's more observation to go through. So if you have a copy of the worksheet in front of you, you'll see the questions that are there for the background information. And honestly, if we're studying a whole book, we only do this the first week.

Janet: Right.

Sandy: So go ahead, figure out who wrote it, when it was written, who it was written to, and then just add in the cultural setting and other helpful information that you think will help you understand it. And then it'll give you a couple assignments to get finished up on there. And you're done with day one. Here comes day two.

Janet: And I see though on day one, cause already some people are saying I'd have no idea how to find out when it was written. I have no idea how to know the cultural setting, but you have in the worksheet. So hopefully they're looking at. Blue letter Bible. That will answer a lot of those questions for you. Or if you have a commentary or if you happen to have a study Bible, those answers are there. They're very accessible now.

Sandy: They really are. Even on the Blue Letter Bible, John MacArthur has written an introduction for every book of the Bible.

Jocelyn: I was actually just thinking, I love my John MacArthur study Bible app on my phone. It costs like \$5. I got it years ago and you can click into his intro for every book. So he gives a paragraph intro. He also, you can click all through it. It tells you the setting. He even takes you to maps, but I love that because he has a really concise summary of the book.

Sandy: He does.

Janet: Nice.

Sandy: Nice. I'm sure it's the same one that's in his study Bible, and I have that. And in Blue Letter Bible. So that is wonderful. Maybe you'll have to give us more information on that.

Jocelyn: I can link that in the show notes.

Janet: Yeah. We'll link that too.

Sandy: That's perfect. So on this day, then we begin to use something that I remember from high school English class, the five W's and the H. Because observation really has to do with comprehension. It's so important to engage your mind. And they really help you do that. You want to start formulating questions in your mind about the things that you're reading. So read through the entire paragraph or the passage actually, and use the five Ws and the H to help you generate those questions. So it's going to be about who. So like who are the key people? Who are we talking about here? What are they saying? And here I try and look for, are there lists, are there phrases that are used over and over again? Are there key words? And do they mention key dates and times in the passage itself? Now that's a little different than looking at the background information.

Janet: Yep.

Sandy: But you're trying to pull things right out of the passage. And then the why and the how, and that's to help you understand more of the purpose behind teaching of the text. But the great thing is those questions start to help you engage your mind, and that really aids in your comprehension.

Janet: And again, I'm going to just keep thinking, who's getting overwhelmed right now. I don't know how to do a key word. I don't know-- practice, practice. So at least if you've read it over and over and you're thinking about it, whatever you learn is more than you knew before and something is always better than nothing.

Jocelyn: I think one of the things that Sandy just pointed out is that you're looking for repetition or concepts that keep coming up, which would be what a key word is or key phrase.

Sandy: Definitely.

Janet: Excellent.

Sandy: One of the passages that I typically start the class with is second Timothy, 3:15 through 17. It's not a whole chapter. It's just a little section, but it talks about how important scripture is. And, one of the things there it's like, so why is Paul writing to Timothy in this section? Why is he even doing that? And sometimes I have to back up and read other things that come before the passage I'm looking at. And that's just fine, because context is really important as you're doing that. But what is Timothy supposed to do with this information that he's getting from Paul at this

time? And so it just begins to generate a lot of questions. One of my questions is what in the world do those words mean? And you'll see that we have a portion on the worksheet that says, did it raise any questions for you?

Janet: Yeah.

Sandy: Well, on second Timothy, 3:15 through 17. My page is so full. I had all of those words that I wanted to look up and get their definitions. The teaching, the reproof, the correction, the training in righteousness. I wanted to know what they were talking about.

Jocelyn: Yeah. And what's the difference between them.

Janet: Because we tend to slide over that. We just say those words and move on.

Jocelyn: Say them real quick. Move on.

Sandy: Right. One thing that I've found recently, a friend just showed me is an app. Also like you were talking about Jocelyn, called literal word.

Jocelyn: Oh, cool.

Janet: I've never heard of that.

Sandy: I know. I hadn't either. You can look up the passage, and then in the upper right-hand corner, there are two buttons. The one that's inside is the one you hit. The passage underlines all the keywords that are in there, and you can tap on any one of those words, and it gives you the definition.

Jocelyn: Wow. Literal word. Ok, I'm gonna check that out.

Sandy: It'll also give you the word in Hebrew and Greek or wherever

Jocelyn: Which the Blue Letter Bible does as well, if you look at the interlinear section.

Sandy: Yeah. Yeah. So if we're getting too deep again, you can use the regular dictionary. That is just fine, but sometimes it's just really fun to see how it's used in context here. Plus that Literal Word will give you all sorts of passages that same word is used in.

Jocelyn: Oh, that's cool.

Sandy: So that's fun too. Rabbit trails perhaps, but,

Janet: But fun rabbit trails.

Jocelyn: It helps you understand it better sometimes.

Sandy: It may help you understand it better. Absolutely. So once again, you're just trying to understand and observe the passage. Now I would have to say day three really, really is one of my favorite questions.

Janet: I guess you're allowed to have a favorite question that's okay.

Sandy: I guess. But my thinking was that, I want the ladies that are studying to be thinking about God, because this is God's book. And so what are the attributes of God that you see? Now, typically when I'm teaching the class, I'll give them a list of attributes. But hey, I found them on the internet. You can too. So go looking for attributes of God and download a sheet that'll help you think through what different ones are. You know, like to me, I always think of love and, God is faithful. Yeah. Yeah. But the list may generate some new thoughts for you. You know, is he father-like in this passage or is he showing wisdom, compassion. There are so many to choose from and that'll help to stimulate. But boy, here's what I think I want in my own mind as well, because I need it not just for people I'm teaching that. I want to see God and just about everything that's going on in my life.

Janet: Yes.

Sandy: You know, I, want to praise him and be thankful. There's just so much. And this question, the reason I like it so much is because it opens my mind up to those kinds of things.

Janet: Yes. I love that.

Sandy: And it is his book after all. So the thing that I say then at the rest of day three is now is the time to consult trusted commentaries. Get after it. Find your study Bible notes, or what you can find on Blue Letter Bible, as you mentioned. And mark your passage up. Print out the ideas, or copy them down in the margins, of things that help you understand this passage better. And then, I always say, be sure to attribute who wrote those comments, because if you're anything like me, you'll go back and go, now I wonder who wrote that?

Jocelyn: Totally. Where did I read that?

Janet: Where did I read that? Yes.

Jocelyn: What book was that in?

Janet: Yes.

Sandy: Exactly.

Jocelyn: Especially when you want to share it with someone. You can't find it.

Sandy: And I, you know, am kind of a nerdy elementary school teacher

Jocelyn: That's why we love you.

Sandy: By trade. And so I color-coded one of the books we did, by which author I was reading. So I think Warren Wiersbe was in orange and, John MacArthur was in purple, you know?

Janet: Yeah.

Sandy: I just did it because then I could see which commentary to pick up again, if I wanted to go read more about it. So it really was just to help me. I'm not saying that that's something that you would need to do, but I would put their name by it. And maybe even what page you found it in case you do want to go back and read some more about it.

Jocelyn: I love commentaries because don't you just dream of one day, just being able to study stuff all day long every day of the entire week and the entire year. It's not feasible. We have a whole career or a schedule that doesn't include us becoming, you know, divinity students on Hebrew or Greek, but we get to explore the stuff that they've studied because we get to read their commentary. So I'm really grateful for the men who have studied and have written stuff that we can read and understand. Like it's understandable. It's not archaic language that is not accessible to us.

Janet: Right. And we will in the show notes list several, and-- cause there are more academic commentaries and people really benefit from those. But we're going to also put in there some that are more lay terms.

Jocelyn: Easier to understand. Yes.

Janet: Yes. All right. So we've had three days of understanding the passage. Now what?

Sandy: Now it's time to do the interpretation work. So begin to think on day four, what's the point of this passage and honestly, some of what you've been reading in the commentaries are going to help you understand what the point of it is. Like you Jocelyn, I am so thankful for men that have had the opportunity to study, and have done a faithful job. I sometimes look back at old sermons that I can find online because they're helpful too. But figure out why would God want me to know what's in this passage that I just read and maybe you'd say, well, I'm just drawing a blank on that one. And that's fine. Pray. Stop. Read some more. See if you, when you reread scripture itself, if because now you're looking for what's going on here. What's the point of this passage? Now, maybe it's going to start to click with you on that. So when you get to day four, we really focus on observation the first three days. So now that important step's done. But we turn our attention to the interpretation of the passage. You're working on what it means. And hopefully the commentaries have added to your understanding of what the scripture says. And as you've read the commentaries, then you've begun to think about what does this mean? You really could observe all week. Can I say that? Or all month or for your entire life to get at the meaning.

But if God brings to mind another piece of understanding, go back and jot it on your scripture printout. So Jen Wilkin in her book called *Women of the Word* talks about the big story of the Bible, saying that from the beginning to the end, the Bible is a book about God. Our study should cause us to ask, what does this passage tell us about God. It's not primarily about us.

Janet: I think that's important.

Jocelyn: So important. So important.

Sandy: Well, when you're in the mind frame, this is all about me, that's why you skip observation and interpretation.

Janet: Right. It's just what do you want me to do? And how's it gonna help me feel better?

Jocelyn: It's about you.

Sandy: But Jen says it's really about the reign and rule of God,. And that's the big story of the Bible, the purpose for which it was written. Each of its 66 books contributes to telling the big story, the story of creation, of the fall, of redemption, and restoration. The Bible purposes to tell us this big story in a thousand smaller stories from its first page to its last. And several of the thoughts in that are straight from Jen Wilkin's book. So that's what you want to think about when you're going after the point of the passage. But as Jen Wilkin just mentioned, there's these four major themes that run through the Bible. And so you want to begin to think in terms too of how does this passage fit into the big picture of God's story, or one of those four major themes? The creation, the fall, the redemption and restoration. And while you're at it, think, are there other places in scripture that I've read something that reminds me of this, or is similar in nature? That would be a good time to plug that in here on day four as well.

Janet: You know, the first time you do something like this, you may say it doesn't remind me of anything cause I don't know anything. But how cool is it? You just are doing this and you learn and you learn, and then you're going to do this again. And you're going to remember something from another one.

Sandy: Absolutely.

Janet: That's when it starts getting even more fun.

Sandy: Absolutely. Well, creation is one of the four major themes and all the other themes really relate right back to this, because this points to the perfect God and his perfect creation.

Jocelyn: I love that theme so much.

Sandy: So then comes sin when Adam and Eve decide to believe Satan's deceit and they doubt God's goodness, they end up rejecting God's authority. Throughout the scriptures you see examples of people rejecting God's way in favor of what they think is a better way, because sin is a problem for all of us. O as you're reading a passage that shows you what God's perfect world has gone to, you know, or you see the sin in that passage, you can relate that to creation because once it started perfect. And now here it is, or you could say that really is part of the fall.

Janet: Yeah.

Sandy: Because that's when the sin entered. It may have gone from what was perfect to now what this is.

Janet: Yeah.

Sandy: I love the redemption theme and probably see that most throughout the passages of scripture, because a Redeemer's first promised in Genesis three.

Jocelyn: All of it is pointing to him.

Sandy: All of it's pointing to him. And there were consequences for sin, but God had that plan of salvation since before the beginning of time.

Janet: So amazing.

Sandy: Look how many times he rescues his people. And all of that points to salvation in Jesus Christ. And finally the last major theme that I've picked up on and pointed out here is the restoration. It's coming. The Bible runs from creation to Genesis to the new creation-- in Revelation. And God promises to make all things new through redemption in his son, Jesus Christ.

Jocelyn: I love that theme.

Sandy: This is kind of a fun day too, you know, as you begin to think through how, what you're reading is part of the big story of what God's trying to communicate to you.

Janet: It is pretty interesting to think that when you're studying scripture, everything you're reading is going to fit into one of these themes. Now they overlap. And you already mentioned that you could say this is creation, but it's causing you to think. It's in the big picture of creation, fall, redemption, restoration how does this story fit? Well, it shows me some of creation. It certainly shows me the fall. It shows me hints of a Redeemer.

Jocelyn: In a whisper of a redeemer.

Janet: Yeah. But now I'm thinking in those themes. And again, it slows me down to think about that and to rejoice in the big picture and not just got caught up in the one little bit.

Jocelyn: Or to like piecemeal the Bible and just break it into little stories that are individual. Like the whole Bible is one book. It's all one story with a trajectory and you can see where you are on that story in different passages of scripture.

Sandy: Absolutely. And that's fun too. I guess that's part of, you know, if we go back to that passage from Psalms where it refreshes your soul. This refreshes my soul to see how God's at work through all that's going on there. And I just love that. So day four is a really fun one too. And then we come to day five. And this is the final step. You know, you've been to the doctor for your sore throat. He's observed. Now he says, I think you have strep throat. And so he gets to the application, or he writes your prescription. Well, because you've done all those layers of work, you're ready to attack this application question. And there's only one today for day five, but it requires thought. Howard Hendricks, that man that I mentioned before, was a former Bible professor down at Dallas theological seminary. He wrote this and boy, it just struck me. He said the Bible was not written to satisfy your curiosity. It's to change your life.

Jocelyn: That's cool.

Janet: I love that.

Sandy: To help you conform to Christ's image. It is not to make you a smarter sinner, but to make you more like the savior.

Janet: Oh, that's beautiful.

Sandy: I love that too.

Jocelyn: That's beautiful. And keeping that in mind will help us to really embrace humility because we can really pridefully approach our Bible study and just say, oh, I'm just getting so smart, studying all this amazing stuff.

Janet: Yes. I can win Bible jeopardy every time.

Sandy: And you can prove that you're the smartest sinner on the planet.

Jocelyn: Exactly. That's not the point of it. You're not supposed to just know stuff about the Bible.

Sandy: Right. This is an important last step. You know, we laugh about, sometimes people want to skip the first two. And just get straight to the third. But there are people that just want to do the first two and skip the third.

Janet: Correct.

Jocelyn: Yeah, we can be wrong on several different extremes.

Sandy: And humility is really important as you attack this last one, for sure. I would say, as you get ready to do it, prayerfully reread that passage before you attempt to even answer the question. However, I do understand having done this myself, you may have seen applications coming up in the week as you're studying, you know, and going through thinking, oh Lord, I need to change that, don't I? And that's fine. You can write those down there too. But still take this exercise on the fifth day. So the question then is for personal application, how should this passage change me? And we put in some things to think about as almost like a tagline under this question. You know, is God teaching me something about himself? Remember it's not always about us. Sometimes it's to observe God himself in all his glory.

Janet: And just to worship.

Sandy: And to worship. Is it showing me an aspect of his character that should cause me to worship him or to thank him? And maybe he is going to correct a wrong thinking or behavior, or prepare me to live more effectively for him. What would it look like if I applied the truths that were in this passage? It's a hard question to do sometimes. Sometimes I don't want to see where I'm sinning. And that's of course, total lack of humility. But asking God to help me to see what he wants me to see, and to ferret out what needs to change that would be for his glory. Oh, that's the point of question in day five. I've been calling the whole worksheet, your homework, you know, your five days of homework. and I'm sure that's the teacher in me, but you can see from this last day's question, it's really heart work rather than homework.

Janet: Oh, I love that.

Jocelyn: And speaking of the teacher in you, I found over my lifetime that when I have to learn something new and big, that is very complex, I have actually found the greatest source of understandable information in the children's section of the library. Because I go to the kids' section and I find a book. Like if I have to understand hurricanes or something, I go to the children's section and get a book on hurricanes because they take this big, huge, complex issue and they make it understandable. And as you are an elementary teacher by trade, you've taken a really, really big, complex issue that could be way over complicated and have really digested it down and made it very simple. And I think this worksheet is so helpful. With five days of work, you can really understand a passage, not just fly right over it and just get smarter about it, but understand it. Understand the context. Understand why it was written, what God was trying to get us to understand. And then finally to say, and then, because I understand it, how does it change me? How should this truth about God and the way he wants his world to work, how does it change what I actually do today when I'm hanging with my kids or doing my work or going to church.

Sandy: That's what's been really exciting for me too, to get to that point in my own life that way.

Janet: That's excellent. So as I'm listening to all of this, you've just given us, Sandy, an amazing tool that I think your passion for it is contagious. Like you're excited about it and it makes me get excited about it, but there's a lot of us that are going, okay and then I, still don't do anything. So I want to just, as you were talking, some things that were in my mind, that I want to challenge those who are hearing this, do something. Do something.

Jocelyn: Yeah, start somewhere.

Janet: I'm not saying do everything, do something to start aiding your understanding. And I love that when Elizabeth, George said something is always better than nothing.

Sandy: Absolutely.

Janet: For some of us, if I can't have 45 minutes a day to do all of the things, then I don't do anything. Well, something is always better than nothing. So do something.

Sandy: Great point.

Jocelyn: Even just listening to scripture is going to be better than not studying anything at all.

Janet: Right. So do something. And maybe instead of just listening one time, maybe your takeaway will be, I'm going to read, listen, reread, read again, the same passage. I can do that. Maybe that's a step I can take. To be thinking you made the comment we typically do a book at a time, a chapter at a time, but really a book at a time, and then the chapter.

Sandy: Yeah. But we do one chapter a week typically.

Janet: Right. But we do a book. Yeah. Because it's like we read anything else. You don't read the eighth chapter of a book and say, oh, I know what they're talking about.

Jocelyn: Now I get it.

Janet: So if nothing else I decide when I read, I'm going to read intentionally, and I'm going to read a book at a time.

Jocelyn: And in an orderly way.

Janet: Yes. Because if I wrote you a letter and you only read the fourth page, that's kind of offensive to me that you think you know what I was talking about?

Jocelyn: Exactly. You had lost the meaning.

Janet: Yes. So I'm learning. Okay. If nothing else, I need to read it like I would read anything else. I don't just read a verse in the middle and say, oh, I like that. I read the book and it might take me a long time. And that's okay.

Jocelyn: That's totally fine.

Janet: But I'll do that.

Sandy: You may not do all the questions in a week.

Janet: Yes.

Sandy: You may slow down more than that. And that is perfectly fine.

Janet: I did a Bible study once that was called 30 day walk with God in the Psalms. And I got my money's worth because it was a 60 day walk for me. And I was like, you know what, a 60 day walk with God in the Psalms, that works just fine. So yes, whatever pace. And we can't be thinking because I'm not very good at it I shouldn't do it. How did you learn how to ride a bike? You were really bad at it and you kept doing it. So practice, practice, practice, and I believe find someone to practice with you.

Jocelyn: That's a great idea. Then you have someone to talk to about it.

Janet: And to go, I didn't get anything from this. Did you? And they might go and I didn't either. Well, now, Okay. Maybe it's not just me. Let's look it up somewhere. Let's go ask someone else. Finding someone to do it with

Sandy: is a great idea. And that's how we do it when we teach it as a class, we divide into groups and where you've been saying maybe all week, I got nothing out of this. You get together in your small group. And somebody says, well, I was thinking that I see in this verse this, and you'll go. Well, I see it too.

Janet: Right.

Sandy: And that may help you take a step of growth.

Janet: You may see it next time. So it's okay that you... cause I've had people say that so frustrating. How come I never see those things? Well now you will.

Jocelyn: Eventually you will.

Janet: Yeah. But you've got to keep exposing yourself to it. So don't give up. It's worth the effort.

Sandy: Definitely.

Jocelyn: That's one of the things that Janet has been so passionate about for years now is biblical literacy. The women of God, knowing how to study the word of God, and being able to get something out of it when you read it. You are responsible in your relationship with God to be growing. You're not just-- Although absolutely we should be going to church and listening with open ears.

Janet: Oh we need that.

Jocelyn: We also need to be studying God's word on our own because this is my relationship with God. And yes, that relationship is lived out in the context of my greater Christian community, and learning in my church is important, but I need to be studying. And both Janet and I are so passionate about women knowing how to do that.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: It feels so scary when you first, you know, realize, like, I really do need to study the Bible. I need to learn for myself. It's like, okay, where do I go? Just like flip it open and just choose a mystical place to start. What do I, what book do I start with? So it is a little overwhelming if you've never done it before. And we really want studying God's word to be an approachable topic that doesn't scare you, because you aren't going to learn theology. You're not going to learn how God thinks and how he wants us to function in his world, unless we are reading his word and it takes a little bit of work to learn how to do that.

Sandy: It does. And well, there's a very good point. The biblical literacy thing. If you don't know what's in your Bible, how in the world can you ever come up with how to live your daily life?

Janet: Yeah.

Sandy: And I've had example of that this week. Someone unfairly attacked my daughter. So, you know, mama bear. Grr. But because of what God has built into my life, through his word, I was able to say, yeah, I see how this hurts and how this stings, but here's something to think about.

Janet: What's God up to?

Sandy: Yep. What's God up to? Can you extend grace in the face of what really was not grace for you? And I think if God hadn't been teaching me all along, I wouldn't know how to answer her.

Janet: You wouldn't know how to help her.

Sandy: I wouldn't know how to help her.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: I love the point that you made that this is God's word and we are living in God's world. God made us for him. He designed this whole thing. He dreamt it up. And we can't just assume that we can be able to get through life in any successful way without approaching him humbly as the creator and saying, what did you dream this should look like? That's what God's word is. Helping us understand his mind about how the world should work. I love that point that you reminded us, this is God's world, and God's word is helping us learn how to live in it.

Janet: I want to just mention, it's not wrong to also use structured Bible studies.

Sandy: Oh, definitely not.

Janet: So that we're not saying, and I know you're not, but I'm like, okay, so someone might say, yeah, but I use, but the more I understand scripture I'll understand whether I'm.... understand that whenever you use a structured Bible study, you're getting their interpretation. So that's not necessarily wrong. That's true with my pastor. It's true with commentaries.

Jocelyn: But they need to be read with discernment.

Janet: So I can do that. At one point I did a Bible study on the book of Hebrews and I think it was one by Nancy Guthrie who does a lot of in-depth studies as well. It was very good, but basically she does a teaching chapter, which I'm going to call her commentary. Totally appropriate. But what I decided is I would take the one chapter of the Bible, read it, and then try to do some work on my own. The next day, read it again, and then answered some of her questions. Then the next day, read it again. And then I read her teaching chapter and then the next day I read it again and then I read another commentary. So by the end of the week, I'd read the same passage, how many times?

Jocelyn: That's cool.

Janet: So it's different than what you did, but it was using a structure already in place, but also saying I'm not going to let it think for me, but I'm going to use their structure and it helps me to use their structure. I use daily grace Bible studies, and I think they're really helpful, but they are their own commentary. So I need to read the passage and I think it'd be cool to say maybe one day, I'm going to read the passage and I'm not going to do the rest of their study. I'm going to try this. And then the next day, maybe I'll read theirs. So that it's, oh.

Jocelyn: You're not only receiving pre digested material.

Janet: Yes. it's a little at a time, so I'm not overwhelmed with like, I'm trying to do it all on my own now.

Sandy: Right.

Janet: You know, so it's okay to use a variety of things, but the more I know, and for me, I try to read through the scriptures every year. And that is not studying, you know.

Jocelyn: That's just reading.

Janet: And I do that because over the years of doing that and doing it over and over, when you say, have you ever seen that somewhere else in scripture? I'll be reading. And I'll think I read about that in Peter, because I've read it so many times the patterns become more apparent. So just the repetition. I want the big picture and I can't study the whole Bible every year, but I can read it every year and then I can study portions, but I will study the portions better in light of the big picture, if I'm also in the big picture.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Every year. So, it's different with different people in how we do it, but do something.

Jocelyn: Do something. Get started.

Janet: Yes. Excellent. Well, thank you. We will have links to some of the commentaries that we use. Bible knowledge commentary, John MacArthur study Bible and John MacArthur app, Blue Letter Bible commentaries. So we will link to a lot of those things. We will definitely, we're going to have the worksheet in the show notes. And we just encourage you, do something. Take the next step.

Jocelyn: Get started.

Janet: And then I would love for you to let us know how God is changing your life. That would be pretty awesome.

Jocelyn: I can't wait to hear. That would be so cool.

Sandy: That would be awesome. Oh, that would just-- well think about how that would thrill God.

Janet: Yes, yes.

Jocelyn: Oh, yeah. Totally.

Janet: Okay. Thank you for coming this week. Thank you, Sandy, for joining us. Thank you listeners for coming back and I do hope you're going to be able to make it to our next episode as we go on this journey together.

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