

CONNECTIONAL LAY COUNCIL

**DEPARTMENT OF LAY MINISTRY
OF THE
CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

PROGRAM OF STUDY

FEBRUARY 2007

**REGULAR BIBLE STUDY:
*IT'S GOOD FOR THE SOUL***

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INTRODUCTION

Laity submitting themselves to and taking part in regular Bible study can build a strong bridge for growth and understanding in the local church. Regular Bible study will lead to a fuller knowledge of Christ and the truth of God's word. In an article found in the Friendly Bible Study pamphlet, Lloyd W. Cary, said, "Our faith will be strengthened considerably as we come to appreciate that our Christian beliefs rest upon the foundation of the Scriptures themselves".

In *Points of Emphasis*, a pocket commentary printed and published in 1959, the author, Clifton J. Allen stated, "The study of the Bible pursued with reverence and regularity, will furnish the mind with spiritual wisdom and fill the heart with moral purpose". Allen went on to say that, "A knowledge of the Scriptures will kindle faith in God and cultivate righteousness in living." He concluded his statement by saying, "The Word of God, therefore, has been given to men that through it they might come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and thus experience his great salvation". - Allen's statement is one that has stood the test of time and is, therefore, totally relevant to the twenty-first century Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and Christian believers everywhere.

I, therefore, urge the laity of our great Zion that have made regular Bible study a routine activity, to stay the course and continue to feed on God's word; for those who are struggling with making a commitment to regular study, ask God for and *demand of yourself* a greater measure of discipline; and for those who simply don't see the need, pray for a change of heart and of mind.

Hence, the February 2007 Program of Study will highlight personal Bible study approaches that allow and encourage lay men and women to make regular Bible study a part of every day life. I have read, heard, and believe that prayer is fundamental to a Christian life; in that same spirit, the personal and corporate study of God's word is, I believe, fundamental to a "GROWING" Christian life. Thus, as laity let us: "*Study to show ourselves* approved unto God, - workmen who need not be ashamed, but *rightly dividing* the word of Truth" (2 Timothy 2: 15).

FOURTEEN RULES FOR PROFITABLE BIBLE STUDY

- 1.** If possible, have a regular private place for your Bible studies.
- 2.** Before each study ask God to give you a spirit of humility while reading His word and guide your heart to comprehending, accepting and practicing His precious truth.
- 3.** Start with Bible verses that are easy to understand when studying on a particular topic. Then, use these scriptures to understand harder, vaguer passages of God's word.
- 4.** Let the Bible interpret and prove the Bible. Don't look for what you want to prove; look for what the Bible actually proves.
- 5.** Seek to understand the general context of a particular Bible verse by reading the verses and chapters just before and after it. Does your understanding of a Bible passage harmonize with the rest of Scripture? Remember, the Bible does not contradict itself!
- 6.** Study the original language (Hebrew or Greek) words and their meaning(s) behind a Bible verse. Remember, however, that although study aids can be helpful, they should not be exclusively used to discover and prove what the Bible teaches.
- 7.** *Ask*, what does the scripture you are studying clearly say?
- 8.** *Ask*, what does the scripture you are studying not say?
- 9.** *Ask*, to whom was the Bible book containing the scripture you are studying written? Who wrote the book? Who is speaking the scripture(s) in question?
- 10.** Seek to understand the general time frame in history when the Bible verses you are studying were written.
- 11.** Remember that the Bible uses parables, allegories, symbols, poetry, metaphors and other figures of speech and literary techniques to reveal God's truth.
- 12.** Don't bring your own personal assumptions and preconceived notions into your understanding or conclusions.
- 13.** Base your study on scriptural knowledge that you already understand. What do you know up to this point in time?
- 14.** Do not form conclusions based on partial facts or insufficient information, or the opinions and speculations of others.

Reference - Fourteen Rules for Bible Study by F. Coulter.

APPROACHES TO BIBLE STUDY

DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY – Devotional Bible Study means reading and studying the Word of God in order that the believer may hear God’s voice and that he/she may know how to do His will and to live a better Christian Life.

- a. Begin Bible reading with prayer.
- b. Take notes on what is read.
- c. Read (chapters, paragraphs, etc.) slowly.
- d. One should ask him/herself: Who is talking? Who is being talked to? What is the key verse? **What is the lesson for life that I should adhere to?** > *Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3: 16: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” James 1: 22 says, “Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers.”*

As believers, the more we read and study the Word of God, the more we want to read; the more we read and study the more we will grow spiritually.

BIBLE STUDY BY CHAPTERS – One could make a pretty intensive study of the 1,189 chapters that make up the Old and New Testament in a bit over three years,-by taking a chapter per day.

- a. Read through a chapter carefully and seek to find its main subject(s).
- b. As chapters are read give them a title that suggests its main subject.
- c. Reread the chapter and make an outline, which will include its main subject.
- d. Ask and answer the questions that were listed under devotional Bible study: Who is talking? Who is being talked to? What is the key verse? What is the lesson for life that I should adhere to?

BIBLE STUDY BY PARAGRAPHS – Of course a paragraph is made up of several sentences of thought. Thus, usually, when the subject of emphasis or thought changes, the writer begins a new paragraph.

- a. Read the paragraph for its main thought or subject.
- b. Note taking can include rewriting some of the text (helps to find the relationship of the important words and sentences in a paragraph).
- c. From the text that has been rewritten make a simple outline.
- d. Use the concordance to look up important words that have appeared in the paragraph.

BIBLE STUDY BY VERSES – Studying by verses allows one to search out Bible truths that demand more detailed study. Ways that one can study a single Bible verse are:

- a. Studying by parts of speech (verbs and/or nouns).
- b. Studying through personalities revealed in a verse.
- c. Studying a verse by the great ideas revealed in it.

BIBLE STUDY BY BOOKS - It is suggested that one should use the “Studying By Books” method of Bible study only after using the approaches already mentioned. Some of the methods of Bible book study are:

- a. **The Inductive Method** – Method of studying in detail the contents of a Bible book and then drawing from these details general conclusions or principles concerning the contents and purpose of the book.

- b. **The Synthetic Method** – The Synthetic Method involves reading the Bible book over several times to receive the general impressions of the main ideas and purpose of the book, without giving attention to the details.

- c. **The Historical Method** – The study of a Bible book becomes a historical study if the book relates the history of a nation or a man or woman in a particular period of time.

BIBLE STUDY BY WORDS – There are said to be two beneficial ways of studying words or subjects found in the Word of God; one is Word Study By Bible Books and the other is General Word Study. Through the study of Bible words one can become familiar with the doctrines of the Bible and understand the theological principles, which the Bible reveals.

BIBLE STUDY BY TOPICS – Study by topics is closely related to the method of study by words. Examples include: Bible prayers, Bible promises, Bible sermons, Bible songs and Bible poems.

BIBLE STUDY THROUGH BIOGRAPHY – Both the Old and New Testaments are full of biographical studies. One can:

- a. Read a Bible book or passages in which a person’s life is prominent.
- b. If your Bible has a concordance, trace the character with the concordance.
- c. Look for other indirect references to the person in other portions of scripture.

SPECIAL NOTE TO LAY LEADERS: Before introducing this lesson to your lay council or presenting it at a workshop I recommend that you share the content with your pastor. Get his/her input and seek to employ them or their designee to teach this lesson. This is a perfect opportunity to get your pastor involved with your lay council.

**REFERENCE - The New Open Bible, Study Edition (1990) By Thomas Nelson Inc.
“How to Study the Bible” - Contributor: Donald E. Hoke, D.D., Pastor, Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church, Knoxville, Tennessee**