

# DIVING DEEP

*in pursuit of knowing God*

Hello Everyone, just a quick note before we begin with this session!

I apologize for the lapses in loading the lessons on the site; I do not have direct access to the webmaster, and since it is summer and people are taking vacations, it's a matter of juggling a few different schedules to make sure they get up there! Hopefully you have been able to get the ones that have been provided thus far...

I'm not sure how many people are following through with the lessons, but I am encouraged by those whom I know are following it! It is difficult to take something that should be used in a serious small group setting and put it all into a written lesson; much of the depth that comes from this experience comes in the form of learning through community. So thanks for being committed, and I hope you have been blessed through the study of God's Word!

## *The Parables*

Parables are often studied because of their simplistic style and purpose, which is to communicate a very complex spiritual principal or characteristic of heaven through commonplace objects or situations that the listeners can relate to. We do this all the time, usually in the form of analogies or metaphors (hello, English class). Take these limited definitions:

**Metaphor:** something used, or regarded as being used, to represent something else; emblem; symbol.

**Analogies:** a form of reasoning in which one thing is inferred to be similar to another thing in a certain respect, on the basis of the known similarity between the things in other respects.

Now, because analogies are typically associated with philosophers, this is where people get the idea that Jesus was a great philosopher, in a humanistic sense (and thus using it as the "He was a great man, but nothing more" argument). But this would be entirely incorrect, especially since many of the parables Jesus Christ gave us were not simply on rules for right living and spiritual principles (which sounds much like wisdom literature, does it not?) but were more for us to understand something complex or abstract about the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, our ultimate goal and destination.

Having said that, my suggestion would be to approach reading the parables as a whole unit after having studied the gospels for their historical narrative. In other words, after you have studied the life of Jesus Christ, and his comings and goings, then concentrate on the parables. Put them into two different categories:

Principles about living in obedience to God

Heaven, the end times, future events, etc.

Some parables will pertain to both categories. As you work through a parable, note all of the symbols that are being used and why they are being used: for example, seeds, money, non-Jews, etc. There are very deep metaphors being drawn between two things, and you must consider the purpose for that symbol being used.

Using your list of symbols, relate the parable in your own words, not necessarily retelling the entire story but perhaps giving a summary of the principle Jesus was communicating. Then, write a description of what this tells us 1.) about God, and 2.) about the purpose of the Savior's coming as a human being to earth. Remember, he came to fulfill the Law not to abolish it, so his lessons are to tell us as much about his unique purposes as they are about God.

### *Word Studies*

#### *What is a Word Study?*

A word study is when you take a word or phrase and do a thorough examination of its usage in the Bible, taking into consideration contexts, languages, and translations.

#### *What resources do I need for a Word Study?*

A Bible, of course, but then also a good website that offers several translations of the Bible for comparison. A concordance is an index of words in Scripture and where they can be found, but again it depends on the translation you are reading. If you are looking for the most intense experience, you could use what is called a lexicon which offers you some original vocabulary in Greek or Hebrew and then you can do true comparisons of word uses in Scripture! But that takes a large amount of time and commitment to learn to use that!

#### *Going about a word study:*

There are some common words in Christian culture that you could choose—love, heaven, church, law, for example—that will provide you with so many different references you could spend a couple years just studying that! Many people look at the names of God (of which there are many) to learn more about Him. But you might also choose more obscure words that you wouldn't immediately think to do. For instance, what kinds of references do you think you would get for words like "lion", "blood", "mountain", "tree"? One of the beautiful things about Scripture is that many of the symbols and concepts come full circle in the story of God's people, and you might be surprised by how the most commonplace objects tell a very meaningful story.

Choose your subject, and before you begin your study, journal for a couple sessions about your thoughts on the word. What ideas or images does it inspire in you? How do you imagine you will find this word used in Scripture? Spend time reflecting on it before diving in!

Begin by doing your initial search, using a concordance or a search site (look below for some suggested sites). Keep it basic, especially if you are doing a phrase such as "one another". Compile your list of

references, and make sure you note what translation they come from. In addition to this, look through other translations of the Bible where it is used, and again make sure you note it next to the reference.

As you go through each passage (and try to commit yourself to doing at least four passages per devotional time), read the context of its use, or the situation in which it is used. Then write your summary of what the word means in that given situation. Make use of a thesaurus if you feel like there are other words that could also fit there.

To take it to the next level, compare passages where your chosen word is used in some translations but not in others. Try and reason why the translators may have used an alternate word. How does it change the meaning of the passage, if at all?

The experience you get from a word study is a deep and meaningful embracing of a very large concept through the whole of Scripture, but it does take a lot of time. I would suggest doing a word study after having experienced doing a study in each of the genres of writing, but you might find the word study is less intimidating to begin with.

Sites to help you:

[www.elijah.com/lexicon.html](http://www.elijah.com/lexicon.html)

[www.mybibletools.com/bible/word-study.htm](http://www.mybibletools.com/bible/word-study.htm)

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

[www.bibleverses.com](http://www.bibleverses.com)

[www.bibletab.com](http://www.bibletab.com)