

LIVING THE LIVING WORD
Bible-Based Bible Study and Application

Grace Chapel
Orange, CA

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SYLLABUS

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND SYNOPSIS

Living the Living Word is a course in how to use your Bible. Rather than indulge in the common practice of studying what a lot of well-educated people have said about studying the Bible, in this course students will focus primarily on what the Bible says about studying the Bible. As we will discover, the Bible won't just allow us to study it; if we are going to take the Bible on its own terms, we'll have to apply it as well.

We will begin at the beginning, studying creation and the fall, then moving on to God's covenant with Noah and His law given at Mt. Sinai. These accounts will provide us with the foundational truths about revelation that we'll need in order to understand the way Scripture handles itself in the remainder of the course.

Starting with David and Solomon, we will begin to look at how the biblical authors use the Bible. We will continue with the prophets, and then move into the New Testament to see how Jesus and the apostles use Old Testament truth in their ministries. We will conclude by looking at the use of previous Scripture in a few of the epistles.

2. THE CASE FOR CHURCH-BASED EQUIPPING

Why do this kind of thing in church? Isn't this what Bible colleges and seminaries are for? In a way, it is what those schools are for, but the truth of the matter is that those schools are not strictly necessary, and while they can be helpful at times, they often exist only because the church has failed to do its job.

Toward a Biblical Ecclesiology

You will scour the New Testament in vain looking for a Bible college or a seminary. Jesus' closing instruction to His disciples (Matthew 28:18-20) was not to go forth and found seminaries but to go forth and make disciples who would follow Jesus' commands, *including the command to make disciples*. Peter and John and those guys were supposed to make disciples, who would make more disciples, and so on.

We find a similar command in 2 Timothy 2:2, where Paul instructs a young man in church ministry, "The things which you heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

Although this verse is often taken as a charter verse for seminaries (including the one where I work), it is actually a prescription for a healthy *church*.

As the pastors and future teachers are supposed to be prepared in the church, so also are the saints, as we find in Ephesians 4:11-16. Using the foundation provided by the apostles and prophets, the evangelists, pastors, and teachers equip the saints in the church for the work of the ministry. The saints build up the body, and the whole body grows up in Christ to full maturity.

Let me be clear here: I am not saying that seminaries are necessarily illegitimate. Just as a godly vision for healthy families doesn't mean that orphanages are illegitimate, so a godly vision for healthy churches doesn't mean that it's wrong to fill in the gaps for churches that aren't ready to handle their responsibilities right now. Seminaries often function as "orphanages" for people who go to incapable, ineffective churches. Seminaries also should (although few *do*) help to work themselves out of a job by equipping churches.

Although I'm not saying that seminaries are illegitimate, I *am* saying that they are not strictly necessary. We often say that seminaries are *necessary* because many good churches just don't have the vision, funds, or expertise to fully prepare people for ministry. This is wrong for two reasons. First of all, if seminaries are necessary, then where are they in the book of Acts? What seminary did Timothy go to, or Titus, or John Mark? So clearly these things can be done in a church setting. Second, when we say that "good" churches can't prepare people for ministry, we clearly don't share the Bible's definition of a good church.

In light of that, part of the goal of this course is to equip *the church* with these skills so that members of the church can share them with each other. In other words, I don't want to come back and teach the same course every five years. I'm giving it to you; you pass it on to others.

Not Many Teachers, but All Disciple-makers

Of course the command to pass it on comes with a caution. James 3:1 warns us that not many should become teachers. Probably not many of you ever will get up in front of a room full of people and teach as I am teaching. But *all* of you should be disciple-makers, and in that capacity you will need to share some of the truths you will learn here.

3. EXERCISES AVAILABLE

As you will see, there is a lot of work in the handouts. There are little exercises that will take a half hour or so, and there are some that will take quite a long time. The goal of all this material is to take you as far as you want to go. If you're so busy you're lucky just to make it to church, then come and listen. I guarantee you'll take away something worth having. But ultimately, developing skills takes time and effort. If your goal is intensive skill development, it isn't enough to just listen; you need practice, and lots of it. If you have some time and

you want to develop your skills further, we have a wide range of options available to you.

Below is a list of the types of exercises you will find throughout the course. It may seem a bit like overkill to list so much work. It probably is, but remember, the goal is to equip *the church* with the tools to pass this material on to others. The exercises that you don't get to in the next 10 weeks will furnish you with study material for months to come, if you're so inclined.

As we go through the next 10 weeks together, feel free to mix and match as your schedule allows and your inclinations carry you along. In the unlikely event that you're doing everything listed, and you still want more, by all means ask. There's plenty more where this came from.

Honing Skills (30-60 min.)

The "Honing Skills" exercises will all be in Psalm 139. You'll be amazed what happens when you spend 10 weeks of constant exposure to the same little bit of Scripture. Every week there will be a different exercise, designed to help you build skill at understanding a chunk of Scripture and working its truths into your life. These exercises will reward all the time you can pour into them, but if you can manage to at least put in a half hour to an hour each week, you should see good benefit from it.

Reading (1-3 hrs.)

While the focus in this course is on what the Bible tells us about the Bible, sometimes it helps to get some perspective from another believer who has already worked through some of the questions you're struggling with. That's why I teach. It's also why some people write books. In the reading assignments, you'll encounter two of the best books around on the subject of Bible study. Howard Hendricks' *Living by the Book* is the most non-threatening introduction to Bible study in print, and it also has the best material on observation that I have ever seen. It is a very easy read, with short chapters and good illustrations. Leland Ryken's *Words of Delight* is more challenging. The whole book is good material, but because of time, we will only use Part One, which is one of the best treatments available of how stories work, and how to understand them.

One disclaimer should always go with non-biblical reading assignments: all this stuff was written by fallible men. There *will* be errors in it. So stay alert, and use discernment.

Heavy-Duty Homework (2-3 hrs.)

These exercises will be more challenging. They will be related in some way to the week's lecture topic, and allow you to explore the material in the lecture from another angle. These exercises are also designed to acquaint you with certain key issues in interpretation (e.g., interpreting poetry and parables) as well as important Bible study methods and tools (e.g., topical study, biographical study, horizontal chart).

4. SCHEDULE

We'll meet for 10 weeks, according to the following schedule. Assignments are due on the date listed. Of course you don't actually have to do *any* of the assignments if you don't want to (but if you're doing them, on time is good).

	Date	Lecture	Honing Skills	Reading	Heavy Homework
1	19MAR	Creation to Curse			
2	26MAR	Contract and Law	Observation	Hendricks ch. 1-7	Background Study: Gen. 1-3 and <i>Enuma Elish</i>
3	02APR	David	Questions	Hendricks ch. 8-18	Theme Study: Blessing and cursing in Abraham's family
4	09APR	Solomon	Memory	Hendricks ch. 19-26	Topic Study: Meditation
5	16APR	Prophets	Prelim. Interpretation	Hendricks ch. 27-34	Prose-Poetry Comparison: Ex. 14-15
6	23APR	Jesus	Application	Hendricks ch. 39-41	Horizontal Chart: 2 Chronicles
7	30APR	Acts	Memory	Hendricks ch. 35-38	Interpreting Parables: Mat. 13
8	07MAY	Paul	Application Progress	Hendricks ch. 42-45	Biographical Study: John Mark
9	14MAY	Peter	Reflection	Ryken intro, ch. 1-2	OT Quotes in Romans 1-3
10	21MAY	Hebrews	Memory, Summary	Ryken ch. 3-6	Theme Study: the Flood