

Perhaps I should not admit this, but some of my most memorable worship experiences have been outside of the sanctuary. While on vacation, we sometimes choose to choose a quiet place, gather as a family, and join in an informal worship. We may sing a well known song, have a brief moment of confession, offer prayers, and even proclaim a benediction; but most centrally, we open scripture and discuss it's relevance to our lives. These informal times have provided substantial blessings as we discern together how God is challenging us to better follow our Lord. The Holy Spirit has always been faithful to guide our insights, blessing our discussions and drawing us closer in communion with each other.

Below is a model for Bible Study that we often use. It was first taught to me by someone who had returned from a missionary trip to Africa. It does not need a leader or preparation to use. It simply trusts that Christ will be present in the gathering of His people and that the word has something to say if we listen to it. No one needs to be insightful or learned, just honest and willing.

While developed for community, this study can also be used alone as a bible study and journaling meditation. Step two and five could be altered to write down three words and then three insight,, questions or challenges. My daughters have used this method of study occasionally in their journaling: writing down the three words (step 2), insight/question/challenges (step 5), call (step 8), and prayer (step 11) that they find out of the text. When they do this in their prayer journal, instead of sharing each step with the group, they creatively draw pictures or color the page in a way that is meaningful to them and the insights of their study. While this last artistic step might not fit less artistic individuals like myself, creative souls may find it a helpful step. And example of this can be found on the web page.

However utilized, I pray that you might find this study a helpful tool in your personal/family worship.

An African Model for Bible Study

1. Read the text aloud
2. As the text is read, everyone writes down one word found in the text that they find interesting, important, or even confusing.
3. In clockwise order, each shares their word and briefly why they chose it.
4. Read the text aloud (second time)
5. As the text is read, everyone writes down one general insight, question, or challenge that they have discovered from the text.
6. In clockwise order, each shares their insight, question, or challenge.
7. Read the text aloud (third time)
8. As the text is read, everyone writes down one way this text is calling him/her to faithfully change/ follow during the week.
9. In clockwise order, each shares what this text is calling them to be/do.
10. Read the text aloud (final time)
11. In clockwise order, each person briefly prays for the individual to their left that they might find the Spirit's aid to faithfully change or follow in the ways the text has called them.
12. (optional) The next time you gather, individuals can begin by sharing difference God has made in their life through the past week, especially as it pertains to the ways they were called through the previous week's text to change/follow.