

MODULE 2: READING THE BIBLE RESPONSIBLY

INTRODUCTION

In this module, **Brittany Kim** teaches how developing skills for faithful interpretation of the Bible leads to spiritual transformation in your life. Then, she presents tools to help enrich your engagement with the narratives of the Bible.



This module's teaching will help you answer two central questions:

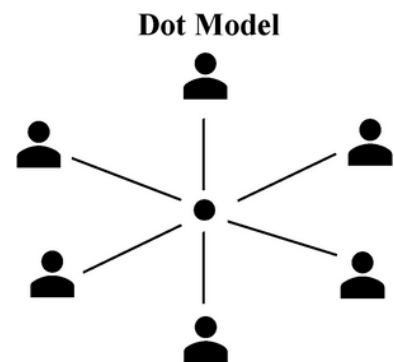
1. How does the way I read the Bible impact what I receive from it?
2. How can I learn to interpret the Bible more faithfully?

SESSION 1: HOW WE READ THE BIBLE

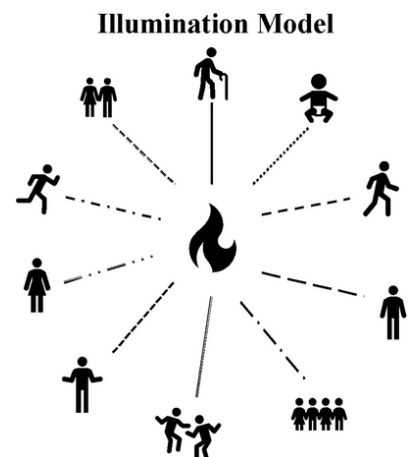
Video Notes

1. **When you read the Bible, you are reading it for something, often for information, direction, or transformation (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12).** Many people read the Bible primarily for information, to learn about God so they can believe the right thing. Other people read the Bible primarily for direction, looking to the Bible to tell us how to live and what to do. But we're missing something crucial if we only read the Bible for *information* and *direction*. We should also read the Bible for *transformation*.
2. **To experience the transformational power of the Bible, you need a model of faithful Biblical interpretation that accounts for how the Bible communicates God's word through its human authors and that leads to transformative encounter with God.**

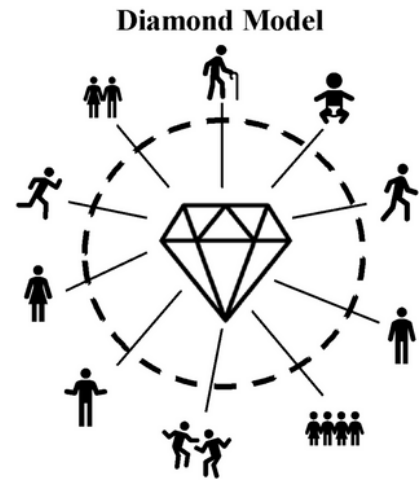
A. The dot model assumes that every biblical text has a single meaning—one point intended by the author that we can identify. No matter who we are—our backgrounds, or our experiences—we can all come to the same meaning by reading the Bible literally. The plain meaning of the text is right there for anyone to find.



B. In the illumination model, the Holy Spirit illuminates things through our reading of the Bible. The Holy Spirit might use the same passage to reveal different things to different people. What the biblical author intended to communicate doesn't matter—what matters is how the Holy Spirit is speaking to us through the text today.



C. Instead, Brittany presents the diamond model. In this model, you are invited to use your whole self—your cultural background, embodied experiences, emotions, and imagination—to engage with the text and see different facets of its meaning. But recognizing that you have certain blind spots also leads you to read the Bible in community with people different from you, so they can help you see things you can't.



3. You can stay within the circle of faithful interpretation by:

- **Interpreting passages against the background of the author's historical-cultural situation rather than your own.** We can't always assume that terms, institutions, or customs have the same meaning or significance in the biblical world as they do in our contemporary context, and biblical passages are often addressing ancient questions, not modern ones.
- **Interpreting each verse or passage within its literary context.**
- **Interpreting each passage within the context of the whole biblical story.** That means seeing how each passage fits into larger themes that run throughout Scripture.
- **Paying attention to its genre.** A genre is simply a type of literature that operates by certain conventions. Authors choose to write in a particular genre to cue readers about the kinds of assumptions they should have as they're reading. The primary genres found in the Bible are historical narrative, law, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, apocalyptic literature, gospel, and letter.

SESSION 1: HOW WE READ THE BIBLE

Reflection Questions

1. Brittany teaches that people often read the Bible for *information* and *direction*. The Bible does provide these things, but the most important reason to read the Bible is for *transformation*.

In the past, what have you primarily read the Bible *for*?

2. Brittany offered three models of Biblical interpretation: Did any of the models of interpretation discussed in the video resonate with your experience of how you've read the Bible?

And if not, how would you describe *how* you've read the Bible?

3. When you think about paying attention to the historical-cultural background, literary context, context of the larger biblical story, or genre of a passage, which seems most helpful to you and why?

Which is likely the most challenging?

SESSION 2: READING BIBLICAL NARRATIVES

Video Notes

To interpret biblical narrative faithfully, you need to:

- 1. Adopt the assumptions of that ancient genre.** Each narrative has been carefully selected and arranged to communicate the author's aims. And the biblical authors often don't tell us directly how they—or God—evaluate a particular character or situation but instead offer subtle clues or connections with other biblical passages that can help us assess them.
- 2. Evaluate characters and situations and discern the author's message.**
 - a. Pay attention to repeated words and structural patterns.
 - b. Note striking details or omissions.
 - c. Identify how the plot develops—from setting to rising conflict to climax and finally to resolution.
 - d. Notice how characters are portrayed—primarily through their actions and speech but occasionally through the narrator's description.
 - e. Look out for connections to other passages in the Bible.
- 3. Avoid speculating too much on questions the story doesn't answer.** Instead, focus on why the story is told the way it is.

SESSION 2: READING BIBLICAL NARRATIVES

Reflection Questions

1. Brittany teaches that faithful interpretation of biblical narrative involves paying attention to the details of the narrative and connecting it to other passages in the Bible. How does this approach to biblical narratives compare with how you've read them in the past?
2. What do we gain by paying attention to setting, plot, and characterization in biblical narratives?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

How to Read the Bible:

- BibleProject, [Introduction to the Hebrew Bible Class](#)
- Andrew Abernethy, [Savoring Scripture: A Six-Step Guide to Studying the Bible](#) (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022).

Historical-Cultural Background Information:

- [Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible](#) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).
- John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012).
- Craig S. Keener, ed. [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#), 2d ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014).
- John H. Walton, ed. [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Old Testament](#), 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2009).
- Clinton E. Arnold, ed. [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: New Testament](#), 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019).

Genre:

- Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, [How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth](#), 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2014).
- BibleProject, [How to Read the Bible Videos](#)

Introductions to the Bible/Biblical Story:

- Sandra L. Richter, [Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008).
- Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, [The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story](#), 3d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2024).
- Judy Fentress-Williams, [Holy Imagination: A Literary and Theological Introduction to the Whole Bible](#) (Nashville: Abingdon, 2021).