

MENTOR GUIDE

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:

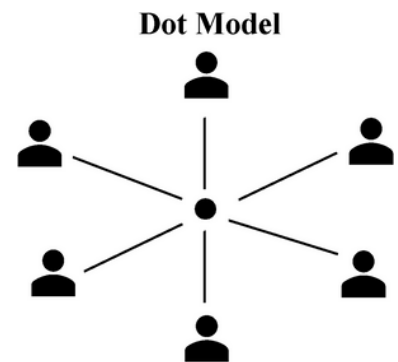
1. Why does how I read the Bible impact what I receive from it?
2. How can I learn to interpret the Bible more faithfully?

SESSION 1: HOW WE READ THE BIBLE

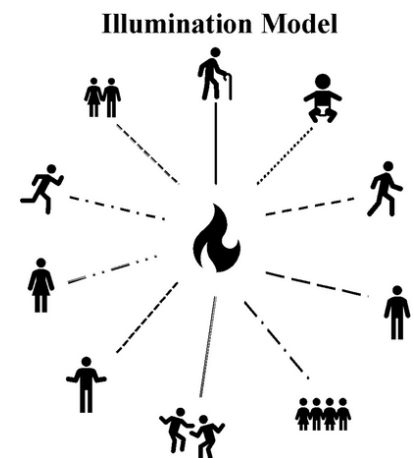
Video Notes

1. **When you read the Bible, you are reading it *for* something: information, direction, or transformation** (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12). Often, people read the Bible for information, to learn about God so they can believe the right thing. Also, people read the Bible 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 the correct model of faithful Biblical interpretation.**

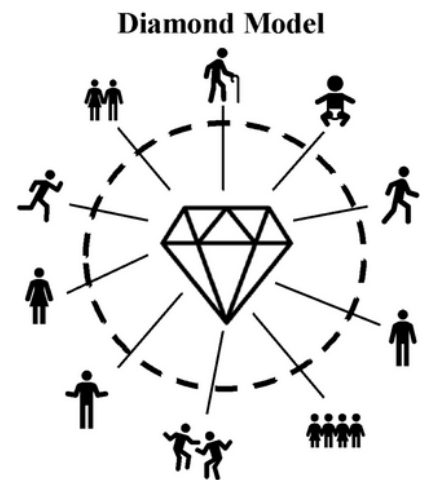
A. The dot model assumes every biblical text has a single meaning—one point intended by the author that we can identify. No matter who we are, our backgrounds, or our experiences, we can all come to the same meaning by reading the Bible literally. The plain meaning of the text is right there for anyone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

Participant Reflection Questions

After watching the video, participants will answer or journal the following questions for reflection. Feel free to utilize these questions for discussion at your next Coaching Session.

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 1: ACTIVITY

Choose one of the following areas to focus more attention on in the coming weeks:

- **Historical-cultural background:** Use one of the Additional Resources offering historical-cultural background information, and read the information it offers for the biblical passages you're reading.
- **Literary context:** When you read a verse or passage, look at the larger literary context of the section or chapter, and consider how that literary context helps you understand your verse or passage.
- **Context of the larger biblical story:** As you read passages, consider which act of the biblical drama they fit into and how they contribute to that act. Explore some of the cross-references in the margins of your Bible and see if they shed any light on your passage.
- **Genre:** Choose a genre and watch the BibleProject videos on that genre in the Additional Resources. Then use what you learned about that genre as you read some passages.

As you read your Bible this week and use the resources associated with your focus, keep a journal about what you learn. Bring that journal to your next mentor meeting.

SESSION 2: READING BIBLICAL NARRATIVES

Video Notes

To interpret biblical narrative faithfully, you need to:

- 1. Have correct assumptions about the text.** Each narrative has been carefully selected and arranged to communicate the author's aims and pay attention to the details the author included (and those they did not). Noticing what the biblical authors chose to include and what they emphasized can help you discern the message they wanted to communicate.
- 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?

ACTIVATION ASSIGNMENT

Put This Into Practice

In this module, we discussed how building skills and experience in biblical interpretation changes how we read and understand the Bible, and how we are transformed by what we encounter.

Use this Activation Assignment to share what you've learned from your practice of reading the Bible this month.

This assignment will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

You've spent the last month learning more about biblical interpretation and practicing what you've learned.

1. What resources on biblical interpretation did you read or watch? What did you learn?
2. You were asked to use a journal to keep track of what you were learning as you read your Bible this month. Summarize what you noticed as you read.
3. How would you like to keep growing in this area in the coming months?
4. How can your mentor support you as you grow in faithful biblical interpretation?

MENTOR SESSION GUIDE

While the content we've provided will be impactful for participants, as a VLE mentor, the time you spend helping participants process will be transformative. Please use this time to make thoughtful observations and be prepared to speak into their lives. This time together will provide many opportunities to have an "ICNU (I See In You) Conversation", which will be catalytic in their growth and development! Here is a sample agenda you might consider using for your time together:

Connection (5-10 minutes). This is a great opportunity for small talk, to warm up the conversation. You can ask how their week has been, or if they have anything exciting coming up.

Celebration (5-10 minutes). Ask them if they have seen God do something in their lives or ministry in the past two weeks that they'd like to share. This is an opportunity for you to affirm and reinforce the good growth that is happening.

Coaching Conversation (40 minutes). See Coaching Conversation Section on the next page. This portion will be specific to each module.

Care & Prayer (10-20 minutes). As you wrap up your time together, make space for the work of the Holy Spirit. This could look different every time, especially if you are meeting with an individual versus a group. If you are with an individual, you could ask if the Holy Spirit has brought anything to the surface for them, and then pray into that. If you are with a group, this might be an opportunity for a hot seat, or for participants to break off into pairs and pray for each other.

Closing Communication (5 minutes). This is the time to highlight the next module, important church events, or announcements, etc.

MODULE 2: COACHING CONVERSATION

Module 2: Reading the Bible Responsibly equips participants to approach Scripture with humility, curiosity, and discernment. Rather than reading for information or inspiration alone, this module calls leaders to engage the Bible in a way that forms their worldview and shapes their character. Healthy biblical interpretation is essential for leading others well in a Vineyard context.

1. **Start by sharing your own experience and journey with Scripture.**

- How has your understanding of the Bible changed over time?
- Was there a key moment where Scripture came alive for you in a new way?

2. **Next, invite participants to share insights from the Activation Assignment.**

- What did you learn as you applied the interpretive tools this month?
- Was there a passage that surprised or challenged you as you read more intentionally?
- How did the focus on narrative reading shape your perspective?

3. **Highlight a few major themes from the module and guide**

conversation. Remember, as a mentor, it is always appropriate to share your own answers as a way of sharing your own personal experience and understanding.

- Interpretive posture: What does it mean to read the Bible with humility?
- Context matters: How does understanding the original audience or genre shift your reading?
- Transformation over information: How are you being formed—not just informed—by what you read?

4. Now, you'll want to dive into how this material applies to their individual leadership. Ask:

- How does your approach to Scripture impact how you lead others?
- What will you do differently when preparing to teach, lead, or disciple others with Scripture?
- Where do you need to slow down or go deeper in your personal Bible engagement?

5. End with prayer and ministry time.

- Ask participants if they are feeling a lack of, or low confidence in handling or discerning Scripture.
- Ask the Spirit to increase hunger, understanding, and clarity as they develop their life and relationship with the Word of God.
- Consider praying specific Scriptures over each other, depending on what your conversation has brought up.

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).