

HEARING THE WORD



NIGEL BARGE

**Introduction
Workbook**

Hearing the Word Introduction Workbook

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Nigel Barge, March 2017

Scripture Quotations taken from

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

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Preface

In the 16th century, one of the earliest ‘Reformers’ of the church rediscovered that the Bible was for everyone.

This inspired William Tyndale to translate it into English and print it for mass circulation. As he said to a leading clergyman of his day, “If God spare my life, e'er many years pass, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou dost.”

When we were first developing ‘Hearing the Word’, a friend in the city of Glasgow used it with his congregation. He reported two things. He said as they went through the course:

a) All kinds of folk benefited:

Someone who had only recently believed in Jesus and come to church interacted comfortably in a group with a student at Bible college.

b) The ‘secret’ of understanding the Bible was out:

A friend said to him later that he used to think what he did as a preacher on Sunday was clever, but now he knew how he did it!

It was perhaps a little shocking at first but it made my heart soar. Notwithstanding God’s treasured gift to the church of preachers and teachers, there was an echo of the promise of the New Covenant.

“I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:33,34)

Nigel Barge, 2017

Introduction

Welcome to '*Hearing the Word*'.

Hearing the Word is a model intended to help everyone to read the Bible and understand it for themselves. It is simple and basic. This makes it suitable for someone new to Bible reading. However it is also a reminder of good practice for a 'hardened' Bible Student.

People use different methods when reading the Bible: - the...

- ‘Lucky dip’ – a quick read of a Calendar texts
- ‘Horoscope’ – a speculative look to the future
- ‘Crossword puzzle’ – an interesting brain teaser
- ‘Comfort blanket’ – a recourse in troubled times
- ‘Spring board’ – a convenience to bounce from the text to a preferred platform
- ‘Starling chick’ – a resource where a preacher can find ‘worms’ to feed his congregation
- ‘Kingly audience’ – a way to read His autobiography with Him.

‘Hearing the Word’ assumes that The King is willing to speak with us through his Word and He expects us to ‘handle the word correctly’ (2 Tim 2:15). This is a skill, and as with all skills, we *all* need to learn the basic principles.

‘Hearing the Word’ lays out key principles for reading the Bible. In this Course, we will **teach** the principles, **try** them out on a Bible passage and then **talk** about our discoveries in small groups, before having some feedback from the Leader.

Once these principles have been grasped, they can be applied with good effect to any passage in the Bible.

NB The Goal of *Hearing the Word* is to look at **method**, not to teach **facts**. For the most part, no Bible knowledge is needed. Novice and expert can look at the principles in the same way. So - Look with fresh eyes. Listen to one another. Avoid downloading sermons past!

The approach

In seeking to hear God's Word, we need to:

1 Be Prayerful

It is written: 'For God, who said "Let light shine out of darkness," made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.' (2 Cor 4:6).

Thus, we depend on God to reveal Himself; so as we approach God's Word, we ask God himself to speak to us from it.

2 Be faithful

Believe that God will speak to you. "Anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists and rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6)

3 Be Careful

In reading, we utilise The Pomnneehal Pweor Of The Hmuan Mnid. Aoccdrnig to rsraeclh at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, *it deosn't mttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod ocucr; the olny iprmoatnt tihng is that the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you sittl raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.*

So when reading the Bible, *beware!* We may overlook much significant detail. To avoid this we must notice three dangers: ignorance, preconceptions and making careless assumptions.

a) Beware of ignorance. We may simply not recognise what is before us.

Example 1 – Read the sentence below. How many times does it use the letter 'F'? Write your answer in the box.

**FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT
OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC
STUDY COMBINED WITH
THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS**

b) Beware of preconceptions. We may not allow the text to say things that appear not to match what we *already believe*. Preconceptions can prevent us from learning new things.

Example 2 – “Many years ago in Latin America, I was astonished to discover that the Roman Catholic students (who in those days had little or no exposure to Scripture) and Communist students were far better at group Bible Study than students from Evangelical Churches. The Communists and Catholics were quick to see what the passage actually said. Many evangelical students, on the other hand, had a mental block at this point. They seemed able to see only what the Bible was ‘supposed’ to say. It was as though they screened Bible statements through a doctrinal filter, seeing what they had been trained to expect. (‘It *can’t* say that because the Bible doesn’t teach that.’)”

John White, ‘The Fight’, p.44

c) Beware of making careless assumptions. The mind is by nature lazy, presumptuous and stubborn! It takes snap-shots rather than movies, fills in the blanks for what it hasn’t noticed, and once it has decided something, it is reluctant to change!

Example 3 Carefully read the report of a police incident below. Then, on page 5, *without making any assumptions*, decide if each of the ten statements is **True** (in which case circle the ‘T’), **False** (circle the ‘F’) or **Unable to tell** (circle the question mark).

“A businessman had just turned off the lights in the store when a man appeared and demanded money. The owner opened a cash register. The contents of the cash register were scooped up and the man sped away. A member of the police force was notified promptly.”

STATEMENTS ABOUT THE STORY

1	A man appeared after the owner had turned off his store lights.	T F ?
2	The store owner's age was not revealed in the story.	T F ?
3	The robber was a man.	T F ?
4	The man who appeared did not demand money.	T F ?
5	The man who opened the cash register was the owner.	T F ?
6	The store owner scooped up the contents of the register.	T F ?
7	Someone opened a cash register.	T F ?
8	The man who demanded the money ran away.	T F ?
9	The register contained an unspecified amount of cash.	T F ?
10	The story concerns a series of events in which 3 people are referred to: the owner of the store, a man who demanded money and a member of the police force.	T F ?

Compare your answers

Conclusion

Our conscious minds are brilliant - but not to be trusted! We often skim-read the Bible, ignore the detail and assume things. We tend to give as little time to our daily Bible reading as we gave to first reading the police incident!

When we approach God's Word, we need to give it our time and full attention.

Overview

We are going to work on the passage Mark 10:35-45 and practise the basics of handling the Word of God so we can learn to hear God speak. This will include: -



LOOK

What does it say?



LEARN

What does it *mean*?



LISTEN

What is the *message*?



LIVE

How should I *respond*?



LOOK

The first task is to look carefully at the text itself before going on to look at its context in the rest of the Bible.

Read Mark 10:35-45

1) The Text

To explore the text, it is helpful to ask questions of it and then follow them through until we are satisfied with the answers. Ask the 'W' questions: **Who?** **What?** **When?** **Where?** **Why/Why not?** **hOW?!**

Exploration 1 Mark 10 : 35-45 – Questions Raised



Read the passage carefully again. Use the examples given for verses 35 – 37 to guide you.

Then, compile a list of questions raised in your mind by the words or phrases noted in vs. 38–42.

Note:

- The task at this stage is simply to **ask** questions; don't try to answer them yet.
- Write down questions even though you know the answer.
- No questions are too simple.
-

(Leader will quote this after Exploration 1 on p 8:)

NB The Bible is very selective about the detail it includes - see John 21:25: '*Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.*'

It is therefore important to ask questions of it –

Why does it say this, here, and in this way?

Examples

35 'Then' e.g. *What were they doing before this?*
'James and John' e.g. *Who were they*
'We want you' e.g. *What does the manner of their approach suggest?*

36 'What do you want?' eg *Why didn't Jesus dismiss their request?*

37 'Sit on right and left'
eg *What was the significance of the request?*

'In your glory' eg *What did they imagine was Jesus' way to glory?*
What did Jesus believe was his way to glory?

38a 'You don't know'

.....

38b 'Cup and Baptism'

.....

39 'You will drink'

.....

40 'Places not for me to grant'

.....

'Ten indignant'

.....

41 'Rulers of Gentiles'

.....

Are there any other questions raised in the passage?

.....

What surprised you or caught your eye?

.....

2) The Context

The questions raised help to open up the passage. However, to answer these, and understand the meaning of the passage, *knowing the context is vital*.

For example: what does the Bible mean when it says 'There is no God' (Psalm 14:1)?

Seen in context, the Bible's actual message is the exact opposite!

We may approach the context of a passage in ever-widening circles



a) The SURROUNDING Text

When invited to a wedding, it's always interesting to note who has been placed beside you for the meal. Much thought, blood, sweat and tears have been dedicated to the seating plan. E.g. Have you never said "Why have they put me next to great-aunt Agatha?!"

Now, under God, the Bible has been carefully constructed. Each word, verse and passage has been placed deliberately and for a reason. So when we seek to understand a verse, we must look at passages around it.

Exploration 2



Text SURROUNDING Mark 10:35-45

Glance through the passages before and after Mark 10:35-45 (i.e. **Mark 9:1 to 11:11**). (Yes, this time, *glance!* Save your close attention to detail for Mark 10:35-45.) Write down anything that seems to be *relevant* to the questions raised on page 8.

b) The BOOK of the Bible

There are 66 books in the Bible. Although God is the ultimate 'author', they've been written through a variety of people from many backgrounds over a period of perhaps 1,500 years. As we read the Bible we need to take into account the context of each book.

So we need to ask: -

- *Who* wrote this book of the Bible?
- *What* is its background?
- *When* was it written?
- *To whom* was it written?
- *Why* was it written?

Eg. Mark's Gospel is thought to have been written:-

- by John Mark, from Peter's preaching
- during the 60's AD
- for the church in Rome under persecution

(see 'The New Bible Commentary')



c) The WHOLE BIBLE

God's unchanging truth about different subjects is revealed throughout the Bible. As this is drawn together, a unifying whole emerges i.e. what does the Bible say about sin, death, Jesus etc? (The collecting together of Biblical material on a particular subject is referred to as "Systematic Theology." Cf p15)

The Bible interprets itself. As we seek to understand one passage, it is important to look for other parts of the Bible which relate to it.

Exploration 3

Context of Mark 10:35-45 in the WHOLE BIBLE



Here are some of the subjects unearthed when we asked questions of the passage. In spaces 3-7, write down any other passages you can remember that also address the subject and might shed some light on the meaning of this passage. If you can't remember chapter & verse, just give the gist.

(A Concordance is a useful tool in this exercise. You can even look some up 'on-line', eg www.blueletterbible.org) See inside back cover)

1. The importance of seating

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.....
.....

2. Greatness in Kingdom

.....
.....
.....

3. Sharing in Jesus / with Jesus

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.....
.....

4. Servant leader

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.....
.....

Try some by yourself

5. Baptism

.....
.....

6. The Cup

.....
.....

7. Suffering

.....
.....

NB In looking for cross references that may be relevant, we cast the net wide! However, what we 'catch' needs to be sifted. Some references will shed light on the passage before you, some will not!

d) The BIBLE STORY



The Bible tells a story.

From all eternity, God purposed a people for himself who would bring him glory. They were to be a bride for his son: he would love them and they would love him. The Bible describes how this relationship came about and so may be seen as a 'love story'.

It begins in Genesis with God's creation of man, male and female, in his image, and their expression of it in human marriage. It concludes in Revelation with The Marriage in Heaven of Jesus and His People, 'The Church'.

The story of the Bible is in fact, ***the*** Love Story from which all the 'classic' love stories get their pattern - Jane Austen, Mills and Boon, Walt Disney and all! The plot-development in these human love stories mirrors that of the one described in the Bible.

See how the parallel stories progress on p14, then try Exploration 4

Exploration 4

Context of Mark 10:35-45 in the BIBLE STORY



In which section of the Bible story does this text occur?

Select an answer from the categories (i) to (ix) on pages 14/15.

.....
.....
.....
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.....

In a couple of sentences, summarise the Bible story to this point.

i) The introduction of characters

Human: The lovers are introduced. All is well. What can go wrong?

Bible: God created man (male & female) in his own image & they are happy together in the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 1, 2)

ii) The Problem – separation

Human: The path of true love seldom runs smooth! There's an obstacle: a 'baddy' threatens to separate the lovers forever.

Bible: The Devil tempts man to sin. This sin is a barrier that separates mankind from God. Death results (Genesis 3)

iii) The Hope – rescue

Human: One day, somehow, someone will bring the lovers together.

Bible: God calls an individual, promises and preserves a nation (Abraham, Isaac et al) from whom would come the rescuer (Genesis 12-50, Exodus, Joshua)

The Need – reconciliation

Human: A means is presented which could enable the lovers to come together again.

Bible: The Law is given to Moses. Fulfilment of this will bring reconciliation and peace between God and mankind (Leviticus, Deuteronomy)

v) The Emotions – extreme!

Human: The passions of the lovers, their hearts and minds, are made known.

Bible: The thoughts and feelings of God and man are expressed (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon i.e. the Wisdom Literature)

vi) The Attempts – thwarted

Human: Efforts to overcome the obstacle are thwarted. The love seems doomed.

Bible: God's people are unfaithful to him; they do not / cannot keep the law. The problem seems insurmountable. (Judges to 2 Kings, Isaiah to Malachi: The 'Prophets')

vii) The Solution – surprising

Human: The obstacle is overcome. The ‘baddy’ is defeated - As an expression of love, the lover makes a great sacrifice.

Bible: Jesus fulfils the law and pays the price of sin for the church he loves, by dying on the cross. (The Gospels)

(If it had ended here, it would be tragic, but the Bible is no tragedy!)

viii) The Resolution – effective

Human: The solution is effective, the obstacle removed & the lovers may marry. The Kiss is delivered and the proposal is made!

Bible: Jesus rises from the dead, demonstrating that the barrier has been removed. God’s ‘proposal’ is given to all nations, who are invited to respond in faith to his love. (Acts, Letters)

ix) The Finish – marriage

Human: The lovers marry and live happily ever after.

Bible: God and those who have received and believed in him are united forever.

(Revelation) *Bible:*

As a love story unfolds, more is revealed about the characters involved. In the same way, as God’s story of the salvation of mankind progresses, he reveals more and more about himself. The revelation of God is therefore *cumulative*, and so every text is relevant and may be looked at within its setting in the overall story.

(This approach is described as ‘Biblical Theology’. Cf page 11)

From this perspective as we approach a text we can ask:

At what stage does it occur? and

What relevance does it have to the overall story?

Now go back to page 13 and try Exploration 4.



LEARN

The next stage is to try to learn what the particular passage of the Bible *means*. To do this we need to

- 1) Recognise the type of writing
- 2) Answer the questions the passage raises
- 3) Get an overview.

1. Recognise the type of writing

God's Word was given

- a) *through* a variety of writers – a shepherd, a king, prophets, a fisherman, a tax collector, a doctor, etc.
- b) *over* a period of 1,500 years.
- c) *within* a variety of types of writing – Law, Poetry, History, Wisdom, Prophecy, Letters, Apocalyptic (symbolic dreams and visions of end times), Story (narrative), Parable etc.

We generally approach different types of reading material in different ways: we don't read Shakespeare, a newspaper report, a car manual, a rule book, a poem and a 'txt msg' in the same way! We take into account why each was written and how it uses words.

So it is with the Bible. We acknowledge the miracle of the Bible - that it is all given by God, and all reveals his Truth. However, we need to take into account the *type of writing* in which his Word is given to be able to see *how* it is true and what we should do with it.

Exploration 5

Type of writing in Mark 10:35-45



Ask yourself three useful questions:

- 1) What **type** of literature is this? (Story, Letter, Prophecy, Law, Parable, Poetry, Dream / Vision)
- 2) In what way would you say this passage is **true**?
- 3) How might God want us to **respond** to it?

a) & b) below provide sample answers:

a) "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho" Lk 10:30

Type: *This is a Parable. It is not history. There was no man.*

Truth: *It illustrates a truth Jesus taught.*

Response: *Heed the point of the parable.*

b) "Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the centre of the throne.... He had seven horns & seven eyes" (Revelation 5:6)

Type: *This is a Vision*

Truth: *It describes truth in the form of a picture*

Response: *Imagine it and interpret it*

Now answer the same 3 questions for c) to g).

c) "The God of Jacob is our fortress" (Psalm 46:7)

(Literature type?)

(How is it true?

(How respond?)

d) *“When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, & my scrolls, especially the parchments.”* (2 Tim 4:13)

Type:

Truth:

Response:

e) *“You shall have no other gods before me”* (Deuteronomy 5:7)

Type:

Truth:

Response:

f) *“Afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy....”* (Joel 2:28)

Type:

Truth:

Response:

g) *“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and found that the stone had been removed from the entrance.”* (John 20:1)

Type:

Truth:

Response:

Conclusion

Therefore, in trying to find out **what** an author is saying, we must take into account **how** he is saying it. In the passage in question (Mark 10:35-45), Mark is **narrating** an incident in his Gospel. It is a report of an actual event, embarrassingly honest!

2) Address the questions

Once we recognise the type of writing in our passage, we can use the information gathered from the context to address the questions that the passage has raised.

Exploration 6



Mark 10:35-45 – Questions Answered

Below are some of the 'W' questions that might have been asked in **Exploration 1** (pp 7,8). Try to answer them by drawing on what you now know of the wider context of the passage.

Here are some examples for vv 35-37

v35 'Then': What were they doing before this?

e.g. *Jesus had just told them that He was going to be betrayed and killed but later He would rise.*

'James and John': Who were they?

e.g. *These brothers were privileged disciples of Jesus. They had previously argued about who was the greatest.*

Jesus called them 'Sons of thunder.' (Mark 3:17)

James was the first apostle to be killed. (Acts 12:2).

35 'We want you': What does the manner of their approach suggest?

e.g. *They were trying to trap him into granting their request. They were very at ease with Him.*

36 'What do you want?': Why didn't Jesus dismiss their request?

Jesus was patient, loving, determined they should learn.

37a 'Sit on right and left': What is the significance of the request?

The request was for places of glory and honour.

37b 'In your Glory'. What did they imagine was Jesus' way to glory?
Glory to them meant Jesus being enthroned as king in Jerusalem

What did Jesus know was his way to glory?

Jesus knew this meant crucifixion (John 17:1; 19:19)

Now try some by yourself:

38a 'You don't know' Why didn't they know what they were asking?

.....

.....

38b 'Cup and Baptism' What is the significance of these things?

.....

.....

.....

39 'You will drink' When and how would they share these?

.....

.....

40 'Places not for me to grant' Who would allocate them?
Who were they for?

.....

.....

41 'Ten indignant' Why were the others so annoyed?

.....

.....

42 ‘Rulers of Gentiles’ Why of Gentiles, not Jews, or the World?

.....
.....

*Try to answer any **other** questions you noted on page p8.*

.....
.....

Can you resolve anything that surprised you?

.....
.....
.....

3. Gain an Overview

Now that we have taken the passage to ‘bits’, we need to put it together again and take an overview. We can do this by trying to summarise it in a few sentences. (In English lessons, this known as a *précis*.)

Exploration 7 an Overall ‘Picture’ of Mark 10:35-45

Summarise the passage in a few sentences





LISTEN

1) The Main Point

Any unit of written communication (sentence, paragraph, chapter, book) has a central, unifying theme. It's the same with the Bible. Although we might learn many things from a passage, there will be a main point that the author is trying to communicate. To miss this is to 'miss the point'. Indeed, the tradition of calling a reading of the Bible, "***The Lesson***", points to this fact.

2) A key verse

At school, English teachers encourage us to look for a 'topical sentence' in a paragraph or passage. This is a sentence that sums up its theme. The exercise of looking for this may help us to crystallise in our minds what the main point of a passage is. The same is true of reading the Bible. Indeed, the key verse is sometimes used by preachers as a "text" when they start to preach, to give a window into the meaning of the passage.

NOTES

Trying to spot such a verse (if there is one) can be a helpful discipline – *but it's not a formula!*

Sometimes it is easier to spot the Key verse *first*, which may make the Main Point clearer.

Exploration 8 The Message of Mark 10:35-45



1 What do you consider to be the 'lesson' or the main point of the passage?

.....
.....
.....
.....

2 Which verse best sums up the message of this passage?

v ... “.....
.....
.....
.....”

3 What are the reasons for your choice?

.....
.....
.....



LIVE

Once we've discovered the theme or main point in a passage, we must then decide how to **respond**. The Word of God is meant to change how we *live*.

In doing this, however, we need to keep in mind that the subject of the Bible is **God**, not *people*! The Bible is God's word. It is his 'autobiography' in history. It describes how God worked out his unfolding plan of salvation for humanity. It is written by God 'with' human authors, just as many sports 'autobiographies' are written by others listening to the words of a famous athlete. Everything written is *about* God and *inspired* by God.

"All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16)

"For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as those carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21)

God's purpose in His Word is to reveal himself to us, so that we might glorify him and become like him. When we apply the Word of God to our lives, we should always ask first, 'What does this passage **show** us about **God**?' and only secondly, 'What should I then **do**?'

1 What does it show about God?

a) His nature and character?

God is always the same, though the extent to which he reveals himself progresses through the Bible. True, the supreme, complete revelation came when the eternal Word, Jesus, was made flesh and lived among us (John 1:1,14). But God shows us what he is like throughout the *whole* Bible, Old and New Testaments.

b) His grace to mankind?

God's supreme act of *grace* (giving to the undeserving) was the gift of his son (John 3:16). This was the full revelation of his 'grace & truth'. (John 1:17)

However, God has *always* been gracious and has shown his grace in *all* his dealings with his people. E.g. God brought His people out of Egypt *before* he gave them a Law to keep! It is therefore good to ask of every text – 'What do I see here that reminds me of God's grace: He does not treat us as we deserve, but gives to us freely?'

c) His revelation in Jesus?

God revealed himself gradually to the people of Israel, but in Jesus we saw 'the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his being. (Hebrews 1:3)

Jesus is the subject of the autobiography. It is all about him! As with all autobiographies, every part of it can be connected to its author.

E.g. if page 127 line 7 of an autobiography says . . .

'Mrs Daniels led her class through the reading drill'
. . . it must have something to do with the subject. (U.S. President George W Bush was visiting Booker school, Florida on Sept 11, 2001, when told of the second plane hitting the twin towers.)

In the same way *everything* in the Bible revolves round and is connected to Jesus. This is why he told the Pharisees:

'You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.... Moses ... wrote about me' (John 5:39,46).

(*Slide 100*- picture)

**Look at the picture;
what do you see?**

Is it 'a couple by the shore'?

° **Look again**, for something else.



◦ Can you see ‘**a baby in a tree**’?

Once you see the baby, you will never be able to miss it again. In the same way, **once you start to recognise Jesus in the whole Bible, you will see him everywhere you look!**

There are a few, rare places where Jesus himself specifically identifies Himself in the Old Testament, e.g.

John 3:14— “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up” – cf Numbers 21:6-9

Matthew 12:40 – “...for as Jonah was three days and nights in the belly of a huge fish so the son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” – cf Jonah 1:17

Luke 4:15-21 – “The Spirit of the Lord is on me’...today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” cf Isaiah 61:2

Many other OT verses allude to Jesus *indirectly*, as Cleopas and his friend discovered on the day of His resurrection:

Luke 24:27, 32 – “Beginning with Moses and the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”

The Bible is not a patchwork of stories and bits and pieces, but a seamless garment made of one cloth. At any given point, this unfolding Bible either **anticipates**, or **reveals** or **explains** Jesus!

The Bible reveals that the crucifixion was the central event of his life and of world history. Jesus was the ‘Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world’ (John 1:29). He came to give his life as a ‘ransom for many’ (Mark 10:45).

Therefore, as we read any part of the Word of God, it is right to ask how it relates to Jesus and his work of saving humanity from sin through his death on the cross. A way of acknowledging this is to write a sentence about the passage including the word, ‘Jesus’

e.g. Like **Jesus** ...

Unlike **Jesus** ...

... pointing to **Jesus**....

... as fulfilled by **Jesus** on the cross.

Exploration 9 Responding to Mark 10:35-45



1. What does the passage show about God

Father, Son or Holy Spirit ?

(We are looking for *statements* about God.)

a) His nature and character?

V.

V.

V.

V.

V.

b) His grace?

V.

V.

V.

c) Jesus / his salvation on the cross?

V.

V.

V.

Which one applies the Main Point? Underline it.

Words in circle in printed Workbook.

NB After every reading of the Bible it is possible and desirable to stop and praise God for all that he has revealed about Himself in that passage.

2 What should I do?

James writes “*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.* (James 1:22-25)

The Bible’s purpose is not only to change our attitude to God; it is also meant to change how we *live*.

In seeking how God would have us do this, it is good to try and discern from all we have learned about the context in which the Word was initially given how we think He wanted those who first received it to respond in their day.

Dick Lucas, an influential minister in 20th century London, used to teach that in order to apply the letters to the Corinthians, you had to “*go to Corinth*”! This means that, discerning how God might have wanted the first readers to apply the letter in *their* situation gives us a steer as to how God would expect us to apply it in *our* lives today.

So, we ask how God expected the original hearers of this Word to respond to it, **before** asking what we should do now.

Then, as we seek to apply the Word of God to our lives, we ask,

What would God have me do to change my actions?

In applying the lesson(s) we let the Holy Spirit scan our lives and highlight the areas for action. After that is up to us to act!

Exploration 10 What should I do? From Mark 10:35-45



V...

V...

V...

V...

V...

Which one applies the Main Point? Underline it.

CONCLUSION

As we read the Word, we may think that God wants us to act on it in some specific way. How can we be sure that it is God's 'voice' and what should we do when we hear it?

1) Is it God?

Ways in which we may test this are by referring to:

a) *The rest of the Word*

If it is God, it will always be in line with the general teaching of the Bible – God doesn't contradict himself.

b) *Other believers*

We might usually expect other believers to confirm this is what the passage means. The 'witness of the Spirit' means that the same God who inspired the writers can today help readers who are genuinely 'seeking God's will, in his Word, so as to join in doing his work'.

c) *Experience*

God's is a 'still, small voice', but it is one that is 'known by his sheep' (John 10:27). The more we listen for and obediently live out the Word of God, the more familiar we will be with God's voice.

2) What should I do?

Have faith in God! This is not an inward feeling or an outward proof. It is the action that follows the belief that God may be speaking to you. You will not see till you do!

*"Faith is being sure of what we hope for
and certain of what we do not see".*

(Hebrews 11:1)

Summary



LOOK – What does it say?

- 1) The Text
 - a) What questions does it raise -
Who, What, When, Where, Why, how?
 - b) What surprises you?
- 2) The Context?
 - a) the surrounding text p9
 - b) the Book of the Bible p10
 - c) the whole Bible p11
 - d) the place in the Bible Story p13



LEARN – What does it mean?

- 1) What type of writing is it? p17
- 2) Answer the questions p19
- 3) Summarise the passage p22



LISTEN – What is God's message?

- 1) What is the main point? p23
- 2) Which is the key verse?



LIVE – How should we respond?

- 1) What does it show about God,
(Father, Son, Holy Spirit) p25
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace?
 - c) Jesus / his salvation on the cross?
- 2) What should I do? p29

The Next Step?

Immediate practice is essential to cement the principles learned!

Follow on studies

The Follow-on material (see separate file) contains six studies covering Mark 10:46 - 12:17, the passages immediately after the one studied already. After a page of background information, they provide an expanded outline of the *Hearing the Word* model (on page 31) giving you space to write down your thoughts.

Completing these studies provides a good way for those who have learned the principles to try them out by themselves on passages whose contexts they already know.

If, thereafter, there is an opportunity for people to gather and talk about their findings and then receive some feed back, it will re-create the 'Teach, Try, Talk' learning method of the Introduction.

Bible Study material

The model, once established in our minds, can be applied to any passage. A series of studies is available for use by individuals or groups that cover different books in the Bible (see inside back cover) The booklets give guidance about reading the particular type of literature in the context of social, historical, geographical and religious information that was familiar to those who first received the word.

In a Group

Hearing the Word can be used alone, with one other person, or in a Bible Study or House Group. It works both with people in the church, and with those who are not believers but would like to know more. Even the novice can join in when you start by listing all the *questions* and God may reveal Jesus through any part of the Word.

'Completing the loop'

If the studies happen *prior to* a sermon on the passage, the benefit may be great – the preacher then speaks into a context where his hearers have thought and talked about the text beforehand.

(END OF COURSE)

Conducting a ‘Follow on’ Bible study

When we learn something we need to put it into practice *soon*, so that our skills move forward. So we now apply the ‘Hearing the Word’ model to the next six passages in Mark’s Gospel after the James and John incident.

1) Preparation

Ideally, participants should work on the passage on their own beforehand, writing their responses in their work-books. One way of doing this is to read the passage early in the week and then spend 10 minutes a day working on it. This gives plenty of time to chew it over.

Advance preparation is not *essential* to participate in group discussion - but it will make it very much more *worthwhile*.

2) Groups

When you meet together, try to maintain the original small groups, as a degree of intimacy may have already been already established.

3) Format for Bible study

It is very time consuming to go through the whole ‘Hearing the Word’ process again in the group, section by section. The following is a more basic outline that may be useful to fit the study to suit the time available. It could last from 15 minutes to an hour. (The less the time available to the group, the more the benefit from good preparation by all.)

Having read the passage together, discuss it as follows

a) **LOOK** – Questions?

Go round the group, gathering all the questions that the passage prompted. (It may help to have one person write them down.)

Allow just questions at this stage; this needs discipline! Encourage all to give questions even if they know the answers. Stress ‘No question is too simple.’ This lets the spectrum of participants include beginners.

b) **LEARN** – Answers?

Work through the questions, discussing possible answers. While doing this, participants can bring in other relevant parts of the Bible which help them with their conclusions.

It is very important to learn from the Bible *together*. If one reader has more knowledge than others, it is tempting to dominate the answer time by imparting that knowledge. Resist it! One of the goals of doing this

together is to encourage us to think, to work things out for ourselves. Can we read, understand and apply God's Word and share it with others, even when there is no-one to tell us it's meaning? Yes!

c) **LISTEN** – Main Point?

Invite suggestions as to what is the main point in the passage and which key verse best sums it up. This will prompt further discussion as folk explain their reasoning and choices. Try to come to a consensus based on what the passage says.

d) **LIVE** – Action?

To apply the message, invite participants' thoughts on:

- (i) what the passage shows about God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit;
- (ii) what God might want us to do, individually or as a group.

NB *for each, start with the applications of the Key Verse and only then move on to more general applications from other verses*

***Always ensure sufficient time for this last section
(e.g. allocate a quarter of the total available time?)***

4) **Feedback**

To encourage participants, and enable them to get the most benefit, it is important to give feedback. This might work in a number of ways:

a) Midweek Service or Bible Study

People come prepared and spend the first part of the evening in groups discussing their thoughts in the format suggested above. At the end of the group time, the leader might conduct a plenary / give a short talk / offer a copy of the Leader's Guide for that study.

b) Sunday Service

People come prepared, having discussed the passage at their small groups during the week. Feedback can be given on Sunday either by handing out a Leader's Guide for the previous week's passage or by the minister preaching on it.

Study 1

Mark 10:46-52

Bartimaeus receives his sight

Word List

46 *Jericho* City in Jordan valley, 15 miles NE of Jerusalem, and over 3,000 feet below it, on main road south down the valley from Galilee. Last stop before dangerous ascent to Jerusalem.

Timaeus Means ‘defiled.’

Bartimaeus Means ‘son of the defiled one.’

47 *Son of David* Title for the Messiah, the awaited King.

50 *Cloak* A beggar’s most important possession. Protection for night and day.

51 *Rabbi* Means teacher.

52 *Healed* Literal meaning is ‘saved’.

Bible Connections

46 *Jericho* The city that barred Israel’s way to the promised land (Joshua 5:10). Destroyed and never to be rebuilt, on pain of death (Joshua 6:26). Now on a different site.

47 *Son of David* Compare Mark 11:10; Psalm 2:8; Isaiah 9:6,7.
An eternal kingdom had been promised under the rule of a son of King David. (1 Chronicles 17:14)

48 *blind man* Compare John chapter 9.

52 *healed by faith* Compare Ephesians 2:8,9.

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – might help you understand this passage?
surrounding text,

individual book,

whole Bible,

Bible story -

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?
- 2) Which verse best sums up the passage’s message?

LIVE

- 1) What does the passage say about God (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character
 - b) His grace
 - c) Jesus and his salvation

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 2

Mark 11:1-11

Jesus enters Jerusalem

Word List

1 *Jerusalem* ‘Capital’ of Holy land, site of the Temple.

Bethphage / Bethany Villages outside Jerusalem (1- 2 miles).

Mt of Olives Small hill opposite Jerusalem on route from Bethany

2 *Colt* Foal of an ass. Transport of a King coming in peace.

3 *The Lord* Yahweh, The God of Israel.

7 *Cloaks* Outer garments.

9 *Hosanna* An exclamation of praise; literally, ‘save now’.

10 *Kingdom of David* The territory of David, a former King of Israel.

11 *The Temple* Centre of Jewish religion, where God's presence was manifest. Where sacrifices were made.

The twelve The chosen disciples of Jesus.

Bible Connections

1 *Bethany* The raising of Lazarus John 11

2 *Colt* A prophecy of the Messiah Zechariah 9:9

10 *Kingdom of David* : See 1 Chronicles 17:14

Hosanna Compare Psalm 118:25; 2 Kings 6:26

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – might help you understand this passage?
surrounding text,

individual book,

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Bible story -

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

- 3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?
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LIVE

- 1) What does the passage say about God (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character
 - b) His grace
 - c) Jesus and his salvation

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 3

Mark 11:12-25

Cleansing of temple and the withered fig tree

Word list

15 *Temple area* The outer courtyard was as far as Gentiles could go. It was meant to be the place of prayer for them, but also a place of preparation for Jews to go further in.

Money changers Roman coins in everyday use were secular, deemed unfit for the temple. So temple tax, and purchase of 'spotless' lambs, had to be paid for in Jewish-approved shekels.

Changers could make extortionate profit on other currencies.

Doves a poor man's sacrifice (Leviticus 12:8; 14:22).

18 *Chief priests* those in charge of Temple sacrifices.

Teachers of the Law Scribes and Pharisees.

Bible Connections

13	<i>Fig tree</i>	Symbol of Israel at peace: The blessing conferred on Israel No fruit results in judgement Sign of harmonious relationship between God and people.	1 Kings 4:5; Micah 4:4 Romans 9:4,5 Matthew 21:33-45 Micah 4:4; Joel 2:22
13	<i>fruit</i>	cf John Baptist looking for fruit of repentance	Luke 3:8
15	<i>driving out</i>	Similar incident <i>early</i> in his ministry	John 2:15
17	<i>House of prayer for all nations</i> <i>'a den of robbers'</i>		Isaiah 56:7 Jeremiah 7:11
18	<i>amazed at Jesus</i>	cf Mark 1:22,27; 2:12; 6:2,51; 7:37	
21	<i>The power of the word to create / destroy</i>		Genesis 1:3
22	<i>faith in God</i>		see also 2:5; 5:34
24	<i>Requests not granted</i> <i>Requests granted</i>	Matthew 26:36-39; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 Luke 11:13; Mathew 7:11	
25	<i>Forgiveness of others</i>	Matthew 6:12; 18:21-35; Luke 23:34	

Study 4

Mark 11:27-33

Questioning about Jesus' authority

Word List

27 *Temple courts*

Areas where Rabbis would walk with followers and teach them; further in than the court of the Gentiles were courts for Jewish women, then Jewish men. Beyond that was the Temple itself, entered only by priests.

Teachers of Law, elders, chief priests The 3 groups in the ‘Sanhedrin’ (the religious court) i.e. this was an official deputation.

John’s baptism A baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

32 *A prophet*

One who speaks God’s word on his behalf.

Bible connections

28 *Jesus & authority*

Luke 4:18; Matthew 28:18; Mark 2:10; John 10:18

Cf. Pharaoh doubted Moses’ authority Exodus 5:2

38 *John’s baptism*

Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:1-18; John 1:19-28

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – might help you understand this passage?
surrounding text,

individual book,

whole Bible,

Bible story -

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

- 3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?
- 2) Which verse best sums up the passage’s message?

LIVE

- 1) What does the passage say about God (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character
 - b) His grace
 - c) Jesus and his salvation

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Study 5

Mark 12: 1-12

The Parable of the Tenants

Word List

1 *parable* A story with one main point, reached in a roundabout way. Jesus often used them in his teaching.

Vineyard Literally, a field for growing vines to produce grapes.

Wine press e.g. two hollows in rock, one for trampling grapes, the other at a lower level so the juice could run into it.

Watchtower So that a farmer could guard his vineyard at a time when thieves might steal the ripe grapes.

7 *The heir* Son of the owner.

Capstone A large stone on top of e.g. a dry-stone wall to finish it by applying pressure on stones below, increasing friction and so permanence; a flat stone as a roof of a megalithic chamber. *Figuratively*, a concluding achievement.

Alternative translation:

Cornerstone The first stone the builders lay, chosen or dressed to have all its faces at right angles; it determines the alignment of the whole building and whether the walls are vertical.

Bible connections

1 God speaks about his unfaithful Israel as a fruitless vine *Isaiah 5:1-7*

5 Slow to anger but not leaving the guilty unpunished *Exodus 34:6*

7 The oldest lie – Man can ignore God’s Word and take his place *Genesis 3:5*

8 Stephen tells the story of Israel with the same conclusion:
the Son / ‘the righteous one’ dies. *Acts 7:51 -53*

The rejection of the Son by his own *John 1:11*

The righteous one dies *Romans 5:6-8*

9 In the past God has overlooked such ignorance but now he commands all people everywhere to repent *Acts 17:30*

The wages of sin is death *Romans 6:23*

10 God raises his servant, despite the ‘builders’ rejection
Isaiah 53:3,11,12; John 11:47-53; Acts 9:13, 26,27

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – might help you understand this passage?
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Bible story -

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1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

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- 1) What does the passage say about God (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character
 - b) His grace
 - c) Jesus and his salvation

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Give God his due

Word List

13 *Pharisees* A distinct group who upheld the letter of the Law.

Herodians Not a distinct group; a term referring to collaborators who sided with Herod and deferred to Rome on paying taxes.

15 *Denarius* A Roman coin, equivalent to the daily wage for a labourer. Previously translated ‘penny’. (In UK money up to 1971, a penny was written: ‘1d,’ abbreviated from the Latin, *denarius*.) On the reverse was an image of the Roman Emperor, guaranteeing its authenticity and value.

A poll tax that was levied from every person.

Bible connections

15 Woe to hypocrites *Matthew 23:23-29*

16 Caesar ordered a census. Once he knew the population of an area, he could calculate how much tax to charge each person in it to raise the revenue needed that year. *Luke 2:1*

17 NO king but Caesar *John 19:15*

Obeying the state *Romans 13:1,2*

Honour the Father and Son *John 5:23*

Spiritual worship *Romans 12:1*

LOOK

1) The Text

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Bible Study Guides

A **Manual** is available, explaining the thinking behind Hearing the Word. It contains a full script for a Presenter to teach this course, with a CD of presentation files (in both MS Powerpoint® and Apple Keynote®)

When first written, the books of the Bible were simply read or spoken out loud. The goal of the Hearing the Word **Study Guides** is to provide relevant information that puts today's readers in the position of the original readers or hearers, so allowing them to process the Word of God for themselves. As such, each provides:

- a) Some help in reading this particular type of Bible literature.
- b) Background information about the book and its author.
- c) Explanatory notes about contemporary customs and religious words whose meaning is not self evident in the text.
- d) Some basic references to relevant passages in the rest of the Bible.
- e) A copy of the Hearing the Word model
- f) Encouragement to share your reading of the Word of God with others.

Studies cover seven different *genres* of Biblical material, see below.

To see the current list of Studies available, visit <https://hearingtheword.org.uk>

<i>Prophecy</i>	Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Jonah	<i>Parable</i>	'Six Parables Jesus told'
<i>Poetry</i>	Psalms (2 vols)	<i>History</i>	Joseph Genesis 37-50
<i>Letter</i>	2 Corinthians (2 vols) Galatians (2 vols) Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, James		Exodus ch 1-5; 6-13 Esther, Daniel 1-6 Matthew 1-2 Luke (in 13 parts)
<i>Law</i>	Leviticus		John - 'The Seven Miraculous Signs'
<i>Vision</i>	Daniel (7-12)		

Further help available in:

The New Bible Dictionary, 3rd edition, published by IVP (Inter Varsity Press)

The New Bible Commentary, 21st century edition. A one volume commentary on every book of the Bible, IVP. From all Christian booksellers
www.blueletterbible.org, an exhaustive concordance for most translations, maps, commentaries and other tools in Bible study

'I can read the Bible for myself!'

'Hearing the Word' is a tool devised to show that the Bible is accessible to all.

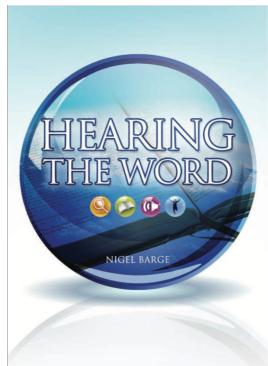
The Manual explains the basic principles of Bible reading, teaches them by means of an interactive course, and practises them on a single passage, Mark 10:35-45.

Participants follow using this Introduction Workbook, which also contains the next six passages in Mark, so they may 'Follow on' for themselves.

As the principles apply equally to all, it serves well both as in an instruction for the novice, and as a refresher for the 'hardened' Bible student!

Hearing the Word

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