

Serving WORDshop
Originally taught on January 9, 2007

Welcome and Prayer

So What's a WORDshop?

- An opportunity to add to specific tools to your Toolbox for a Life of Faith

Equipping Your Toolbox for a Life of Faith

◆ **More Than Mere Words**

- ▶ “When God invites us to read and study the Word, God doesn't require us to understand everything. Nor does God invite us to the Scriptures to solve all our problems. God invites us into a relationship through the words of the Bible and that relationship is primarily with God's Son, Jesus whom we call the Living Word.”
- *Real Faith for Real Life*, Mike Foss, p. 58
- ▶ “How can a disciple truly hear the voice of God in the words of the Bible? . . . The Christian Church has historically offered a three-step process for listening and discerning: First, in a quiet place where you will not be interrupted, begin to pray that God would speak to you in the words you are going to read in the Bible. . . . Second read the passage, stopping when it speaks to you or when you have reached the end of that section. Then ask these few questions. What does this passage tell me about God or life? How does what I hear fit with what I know about Jesus – his life and teaching, death and resurrection? What life lesson is here for me? The third step is to pray that God will plant deeply within you the words”
- *Real Faith for Real Life*, Mike Foss, pp. 59-60
- ▶ *Take a few minutes and try the three steps outlined above using Romans 8:31-39*

◆ **The Voice of God in the Words of People**

- ▶ “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness.”
- 2 Timothy 3:16
- ▶ “I also encourage those who are beginning to read the Bible to know the difference between devotional and scholastic reading of the Bible. . . . The scholastic reading is focused on knowledge about the writer, the historical context and the theological framework or contribution of the book. A devotional reading will focus on hearing the text for the spiritual growth of the individual. . . . I also recommend beginning with one of the Gospels, preferably Luke or Mark. . . . Reading from the book of Psalms can be a wonderful foray into the heart of Old Testament spirituality. The New Testament letters of Paul and James can extend the spiritual awareness of the reader.”
- *Real Faith for Real Life*, Mike Foss, p. 63
- ▶ “So how can we be attentive to the voice of God in the words of human beings? First recognize what inspiration means. It does not mean that God used human beings like a “dicta-phone” . . . God uses the personalities and life experience of the writers through the Bible's texts. . . . Second, we recognize that there is a progression in the Word. . . . This also means that, although we believe that God is unchanging, our awareness of God and the world is not. . . . Third, read each passage as part of God's whole story. . . . So approach your reading with the expectation that God has something wonderful to say to you.”
- *Real Faith for Real Life*, Mike Foss, pp. 64-65

◆ **Praying the Scriptures / Lectio Divina**

- ▶ “The process for praying the Scriptures is simple. We take a passage and with each part, turn it into prayer. . . . There are four steps in the process: - Thank God for the truth and power of the words we have read. - Ask God through the power of the Holy Spirit to open us to them so that we not only read but also can live them. -Pray for others within the context of our understanding of the text. - Recall the universal community of faith through which we have received the Bible and its witness.”

- *Real Faith for Real Life*, Mike Foss, pp. 67-68

- ▶ Lectio Divina - “A passage of Scripture is chosen and read aloud, usually three times with a periods of silence after each reading. Those who hear it are asked to listen for the voice of Jesus. How? By focusing in on that word or phrase that stikes an inner chord and imagine that it is Jesus who is speaking to you. Then follow your thoughts as they progress around and from those words. Meditate on the words. . . . This form of meditation usually takes time – at least twenty minutes for reading, silence and prayerful reflection. It is best to have someone read the words and allow you to hear them, not read them yourself.”

- *Real Faith for Real Life*, Mike Foss, p. 70

- ▶ *Does either of the methods seem helpful as you consider your reading of scripture?*

◆ **Living in the Word of God**

- ▶ “Reading the Bible daily equips us to live in the Word of God. This connects us to God’s loving purpose for our lives. And if we truly believe that God desires nothing less than that we have life and have it in abundance, then the Bible will only guide us to make the decisions that lead to such a life over time.”

- ▶ “Without a consistent connection with the Bible, we can lose our way and miss out on the grace and abundance God offers”

- *Real Faith for Real Life*, Mike Foss, p. 75

◆ **Sent into the World**

- ▶ If the idea of daily Bible reading seems overwhelming, then find a pattern that will fit your life. One day a week of Bible reading is better than none.
- ▶ Various tools exist to help you in your Bible reading. Study Bibles can provide helpful hints. A Daily Lectionary (found in our hymnal) can give guidance for what to read. The Daily Toolbox from St. Michael provides daily readings and prayer thoughts. Devotional books are available from the church and from various bookstores.

This WORDshop is based on “Real Faith for Real Life” by Michael Foss, Augsburg Fortress, 2004. All page numbers above refer to the book.