

REL 402 - Christianity - Bible Study

It took much longer than I had anticipated deciding on a topic for this paper. I could have taken it easy, but I wanted to challenge myself. I have never been very good at sticking to a Bible study. Even when I was involved with a religious organization nine years ago, I would begin a study and then lose interest after the first day or two. I have always struggled with staying on task during Bible studies, so I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to try one. I knew I would stick with it because it was an assignment for class. I am so happy that I chose this spiritual aid for my essay. I learned quite a bit about my thoughts on marriage, family, Scripture, and myself.

My first step toward making sure that I stuck to this Bible study was to first determine what a Bible study was and how to do one properly. I found an excellent resource from BH Publishing entitled *"How to Do a Devotional Bible Study."* It goes through a four-step process that teaches you "how to complete a devotional Bible study and apply it to the four areas of your relationship with God, your life, your relationships with others, and the church" ("How to Do..."). While I do not attend church and I am unsure of my relationship with God, I still found this aid to be extremely helpful at keeping me on track with my study.

My next goal was to choose a Bible study. I tried searching for "week-long" studies, but I could not find one. After getting over my disappointment, I decided to look for a study that was on a topic that I found interesting. I had always been fascinated by the account in Proverbs 31 of God's perfect woman. I searched for a study that I thought would be entertaining and informative. I chose the study titled *"My Second Love: A Proverbs 31 Study"* from www.mysecondlove.net.

The Bible study begins with a short description of what the study is about. It even gives "Instructions for Participants", which was a huge help at keeping me on track. I also followed all the tips the site gave on "How to participate in an online study." I appreciated the extra information and the option to join their Facebook page for accountability. I also enjoyed reading the sections on the "Mission" of the website, what a "Statement of Faith" is to a Christian, "Meet the Author," and the "Great Resources" section for added assistance or further reading when this study is completed. I learned that this particular study was broken down into short weekly studies. For the purpose of this assignment, I chose to condense one week into one day because I felt that it would give me a better understanding of what this Bible study entails (rather than following the weekly schedule for the study and only accomplishing one section for this assignment).

After reading over all the pre-study material, I pulled out my pink and brown journal, yellow pen with bright blue ink, and my copy of the Christian Bible, and I set out on my journey to learn who the Proverbs 31 woman was. At the start of my first day, I had no idea what to expect. I assumed it would be something like "you must submit to being lower than your husband," "do everything he says", "stay quiet/don't have a voice", and "if he does something bad to you, just pray that everything will be fine". I was pleasantly surprised by what I read. I learned what "Biblical submission" is, what it is not, and why it is important.

The second half of the first day study surprised me. I was not expecting an extra assignment on top of reading the study and the Bible. The author of the study asked all women taking the study to memorize two pieces of Scripture, Psalm 139:23-24 and Psalm 19:14. Reading and memorizing Scripture brought an added depth to the study.

The memorization of Scripture was surprising, but I was not at all expecting a disclaimer regarding the study. The author of the study describes it as "intense and requires a strong commitment" (Shell). She goes on to say, "if you do not feel that you are at a place in your life where you can make such an unwavering commitment to God and your family, I advise you not to take this journey until you are able" (Shell). She asks the reader to read Luke 14:27-33 first, and "consider carefully the cost of traveling down this road to Christ-likeness" (Shell).

This disclaimer was a bit overwhelming. It made me question if I was ready for such a study, but I knew that my curiosity about who this Proverbs 31 woman was, and how I could be more like her, was too strong to be dismissed. I read over the passage in Luke a few more times just to be sure. Once I knew I was ready, I finished my study for the day and prepared myself for the next day's journey into the Proverbs 31 woman's world.

Over the course of the next four days, I learned quite a lot about myself, much more than I ever thought I would from a Christian Bible study. I had always considered myself to be fairly progressive. I am not a staunch liberal, but I thought I fell somewhere in the middle of the pack. After my five-day Bible study, I learned that I am much more of a traditionalist than I thought. I love the idea of supporting my husband and putting his needs, and the needs of my family, before my own. I certainly do not believe in neglecting myself entirely, but it is good to put others' needs before mine. I also learned that I like the idea of being the stay-at-home mother and wife. I am perfectly fine with my husband being the breadwinner and my role being the homemaker. This was shocking to me because I always thought that I wanted to

work and provide for my family. I thought that having materialistic “things” was important, but I learned that family is more important than having “things.” This was not my only surprise.

During the course of this study, there has been a lot of Scripture to read and take in. I expected this, but I thought that it would either be boring or too overwhelming to take in, but something surprising happened. I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was thought provoking to read the Scripture and to push myself to understand its true meaning. I began to learn how to take a piece of Scripture, break it down and to find the meaning.

The most important, and possibly life changing, thing I learned from this study was how to begin to apply Scripture to my life. I noticed that I began to take the time to pay attention to what I was reading. I did not try to read over the words as quickly as possible so that I could move on to the next passage. I read every word and contemplated its meaning. I thought of how I could make the lessons that were being taught relevant to my life in this day and time. I have become so grateful to have the makings of a new and valuable skill that will help me explore Christianity. I have applied this skill to all areas of my life, and I will continue to do so.

When I began this assignment, I was not sure of what I wanted to study. When I finally decided on a topic of interest, I thought I would just get an enjoyable five-day read out of it, but I got so much more than that. I gained a better understanding of myself and my thoughts and feelings when it comes to marriage and family. I developed the patience to read as thoroughly and in-depth as possible until I understand the concepts. My greatest achievement during this study was my acquirement of the skill to read and use Scripture in my daily life. I would not say that I am an expert on any of these matters. In fact, I would describe myself as a novice, but I have the desire to learn more and grow my study skills. I love the Bible study that I chose, and I plan to continue it until the end. I am excited to learn more about this Proverbs 31 woman, who she is, what lessons she has to teach me, and how I can apply them to my life.

Works Cited

- “How to Do a Devotional Bible Study.” *BH Publishing Group*. Lifeway Press, n.d. Web. 3 March 2013. <[http://www.bhpublishinggroup.com/readthebible/downloads/cdrom/Week_09/Devotional_Study .pdf](http://www.bhpublishinggroup.com/readthebible/downloads/cdrom/Week_09/Devotional_Study.pdf)>
- Shell, Sunny. “My Second Love: A Proverbs 31 Study.” N.p., n.d. Web. 3 March 2013. <<http://www.mysecondlove.net>>