



REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

EMPOWERNOTES

A Publication of Empower Ministries and BSI
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ONLINE EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT FOR THE FUTURE

Many people make up stories to illustrate some point they want to get across to others; but we have found that factual situations frequently demonstrate biblical themes better than fiction. Our Lord often used them to teach powerful lessons about the Christian life.

Such was certainly the case of virtuoso violinist Jascha Heifetz, who accepted an appointment as professor of music at UCLA, after a distinguished performing career. Asked what had prompted his change of career, Heifetz replied: *'Violin playing is a perishable art. It must be passed on as a personal skill; otherwise it is lost.'*

We should listen to the wisdom of this great musician, because living the Christian life is also a *highly personal* experience. We can't pull it off merely by watching skilled

veterans 'perform.'" We need *hands-on* instruction.

Whoever attends one of Dr. G's workshops hears him draw a sharp distinction between *mentoring* and *discipleship*: mentors *equip* Christ's followers with skills to improve their learning-experience with Him in the school of Christ; but Rabbi Jesus is the only one in His school who can transform His followers—His disciples—into duplicates of himself.

Like Heifetz, Christian pastors, leaders, educators, and other virtuoso disciples *mentor*—*pass on and preserve the art of discipleship as a personal skill to others*. Instead of **performing** while others watch, they **empower** proteges for a personal experience with Jesus through *hands-on* instruction in the art of following Christ. That's what Bible Study Institute is all about!

When we opened BSI in 2006, we envisioned an on-campus ministry with onsite, online, and by-mail flexibility; since relocating to Reno, however, our emphasis has shifted to online education with onsite, on-campus, and by mail options.

Online education has its' advantages. First of all, we now offer the same accredited courses as we did on-campus, but at a fraction of the cost. In addition to lower overhead, online teachers have more time for personal interaction with students. As a rule, we may spend more time developing courses for an individual learning experience than our on-campus counterparts; but freedom from class schedules releases us from many time-consuming, institutional responsibilities to *answer* students' questions, *explore* possibilities, and *offer* guidance.

A Class to Remember

The best way to tell you what is happening at BSI is to let you hear what our students are saying about it. The following emails come from two ladies in Billings, Montana who are currently taking the Basic Bible Study Methods course for credit:

The first email comes from Penny Hudson, a Home Schooler and former professional educator who is taking the course for enrichment. She writes:

Hi, Dr. Lee

I am enjoying the Bible study course. It's challenging me to think outside the box from how I usually study the Word (secondhand), so I can get a broader understanding of the different books of the Bible. I look forward to applying the skills I am learning to other books of the Bible as well (the course concentrates on the books of Jonah and Jude). Thanks for your personal guidance and willingness to help. I really enjoy taking the course with Heidi because we are able to bounce things off each other.

God bless, Penny

The other email comes from Penny's home-schooler friend, Heidi Hoffner, who is taking the course to qualify for professional certification as a teacher. She writes:

Hello Dr. Lee,

Working through the Bible study course with Penny is great! It is especially helpful to me as I'm the type of learner who needs a lot of different styles of presentation (see, below). Of course doing something like this with a friend is just an added bonus. Thanks for the opportunity.

Blessings, Heidi

In order to create an individual learning experience for our online students, we have formatted our course to present and evaluate the material, as follows:

1. First, we ask students to read required materials
2. Then, we ask them to view a presentation of the skill that we want them to learn
3. Next, we ask them to pause for a quiz so they can check their ability to absorb the lesson and we can see their progress (*or lack of it*)
4. After that, we ask them to review the lesson and complete their assignment
5. Finally, we ask them to resume the presentation so we can review the assignment with them

The ladies have also contacted us by phone to ask questions, make suggestions, and to express their enthusiasm. While neither Penny nor Heidi reports *any* difficulty with the course material, both say they are experiencing Christ in new, more meaningful, and closer ways than before. As we *equip* them with the skills Penny talked about, we are also *empowering* them for *opportunities* with Christ.

Warren & Evvalee Rushold attended a 2006 workshop Portland, Oregon. They see the potential of BSI training:

Dear Dr. Lee,

Thanks for the newsletter we got in the mail last week. It was great to hear from you again! I was fascinated to hear about your journey - to Montana and back to Reno. Evvalee and I are looking for the door God promises to open for us also. It appears that it is time for me to move on from President of PASS [our nonprofit that serves individuals with developmental disabilities-DDJ]. 11 years is a long time and the organization seems ready to move on with new leadership.

So, what about the Biblical Counseling training through BSI? I downloaded a copy of the catalog and printed the pages for Simplified Bible Study and Biblical Counseling. What about availability? Time requirements? Class location? I would like to do as much distance learning as possible.

*Your friends from
Sunnyside, Warren &
Evvalee*

Scoring Points for Jesus

Great Un-Expectations

When the Gugliotto's began their empowering ministry, they did not anticipate the extent of resistance many Christians have toward personal Bible study. Accustomed to a lifetime of secondhand study in many forms, most of those who attended their seminars were too dependent on others to see any need for firsthand investigation of the Scriptures. Eight years, twenty-one books, and hundreds of workshops later, Dr. G and Jolynn stand amazed at how much students continue to unconsciously depend on others, even after they take a BSI Bible Study Methods course! So, they have developed a special set of guidelines to help Bible students break the codependency that prevents them from relying on the Holy Spirit to lead them to truth as he convicts them about sin, righteousness, and judgment.

**WE LOOK FORWARD
TO YOUR ONGOING,
TIMELY SUPPORT
ON APRIL 1st**

When the Gugliotto's visited Billings last summer, they rented a classroom there, from Walla Walla University, to conduct a BSI class for interested members and others. Since then, they conduct a weekly Bible study for them and other students from California via the Internet. Here is a sampling of what they say about it:

Dr. Lee:

Just a short note to tell you that I am really enjoying our Tuesday night study. Using your Quikstudy method brings a lot of depth and understanding to Bible study characters and texts. And it is always about JESUS! I keep looking forward to our next study over the Internet. See you next Tuesday.

Bill Renz

Hi Pastor Lee:

The interactive nature of the Bible study is the best of all worlds. Currently we are "color tagging" repetitive words/ideas in Psalms 23. I can see, how this technique of noticing what the writer considers important could have helped in other areas of my academic career had I known about it. Studying with you over the Internet gives me instant feedback that keeps me from heading off into a ditch and group study brings up questions that I hadn't thought of or shows a perspective on something that I hadn't seen before.

God Bless,

Don Ross

Dear Dr. Lee:

I so enjoy my weekly online Bible study! It gives me a chance not only to study the greatest book with you and friends, but I can do it from the comfort of my own home. I look forward to our Tuesdays together and think everyone should have a chance to enjoy studying and learning without having to dress up and drive across town to go to church.

Tommi Emerson

As you can see, those who "attend" our weekly study enjoy the interaction, guidance, and convenience of studying together, online; they represent the consensus of those who want training from Bible Study Institute. Feedback from them and others fueled our shift from an on-campus to online presence.

A special note: *These are hard times; the greed of a few has jeopardized the welfare of many. Some supporters, feeling the pinch, are struggling to maintain their pledges to partner with us through thick and thin. We deeply appreciate that many of you like the widow give from your means rather than your surplus!*

Connecting people with the God of the Bible—to stay connected, since 2000

On Fire for the Lord

A Lesson from the Context

Our weekly, online meetings with students from Montana and California have been studying *Psalm 23*. Last Tuesday, we probed the text for its secrets, and we all came away thrilled by what the Lord showed to us.

To probe a passage, we ask questions that attempt to tie together what we have learned about it, so far, with what we notice as we read it through. When we got to verse 5, we wanted to know: *What does David mean when he says, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies?”*

Our Bible dictionary explained that eating at a table under such conditions meant either (1) *the Lord provided for David under hostile conditions*, or (2) *the Lord allowed David to celebrate His victory over his enemies who had been defeated and no longer presented a danger to him*. Notice that we tried to understand the text in terms of David rather than ourselves, because the psalm is about him, not us. Once we understand what the text meant to David back then, then we are in a position to apply to us, today.

The psalm did not indicate conclusively, which sense fit David’s situation; but the Law of Context helped us to see how Psalm 22 led up to and prepared the way for Psalm 23. Looking for what they have in common, we noticed that in Psalm 22, David promised to celebrate his rescue from his enemies with a great banquet in the Lord’s honor for all God’s people. Psalm 22 apparently provides a historical background to Psalm 23 and suggests the second sense (celebration) best fits the context.

Guidelines

To trust the Lord more when you study a passage:

1. Do not philosophize

Instead of coming up with ideas based on what you think the text says, learn to notice what the writer says from the facts in the text. The only opinion that counts in Bible study is the Lord’s; so listen for it rather than your own

2. Do not Theorize

Instead of assuming you can explain the text based on what you know, let the Bible explain itself through careful analysis and sound research.

3. Do not Spiritualize

Instead of jumping over the literal sense of the text to make a general statement that stretches the context, stay with the literal sense of the text as long as you can to draw specific conclusions from it

4. Do not Theologize

Instead of approaching the text determined that it should fit the teachings or teachers you embrace, make understanding the writer from what he says before, in, and after the text, your goal.

April 2008

Work
Home

March 2008							April 2008							May 2008						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6					11	12
13					18	19
20					25	26
27					2	3

APPOINTMENTS

Reno (Nevada) Church (April 4-6)
Auburn Academy Week of Prayer
Auburn Academy Church (April 14-20)
Richland (Washington) Church (May 9-11)

KEEPING: 32 session-training videos for
The Quiet Hour

WRITING: “Christian All the Time” for
springtime distribution

Helping people to fall in love with Jesus—all over again