

# GETTING COMFORTABLE WITH SCRIPTURE

## – Conversation #3

*If you tell someone you talk to God, they will think you are religious. If you tell them God talks to you, they may think you are crazy. But, if you pray, you need to **expect** God to speak to you, and one way He can do it is through Scripture. The surprise (which I hope you discover) is that He can speak to you, not in a “group e-mail” or “newspaper headline” kind of way (intended for a big group of people all at once), but He can use Scripture to speak just to *you*, in an intimate whisper straight to your heart.*

This month you are going to spend some time looking more closely at the candidate’s passage of Scripture. Most of your time will be spent in the mental exercise of “text analysis” (that sounds pretty cold and impersonal, doesn’t it?) However, if you have ever gotten a letter, card, or even an e-mail from someone you *really* wanted to hear from, telling you something you deeply care about – you know how much emotion can go into analyzing every word, and every punctuation mark, in an effort to *get more* out of the communication.



**Start Right:** Every reading of Scripture should begin with a prayer - just recognition of Who it is who is talking to you and your desire to listen well. “Come, Holy Spirit!” is brief and sufficient so long as your heart is in it.

After you pray, start by asking yourselves – what does this picture have to do with this? (More than many right answers!)

**WRITE IT OR TYPE IT!** Prepare – either by handwriting or typing, a page with the text on it that you can mark up during the session. (Candidates, feel free to use the one you did at the November session if you want to. Sponsors, you are heartily encouraged to make your own copy.)

**READ THE TEXT ALOUD** – One of you should read the text out loud so you have the chance to hear with your ears as well as read with your eyes. If you are communicating through text (chat, e-mail or whatever) read the passage aloud to yourselves.

**WORDS MATTER:** At our last session we began to look carefully at the text of the passage. Even if you began to look at your own text during the session, review will be good.

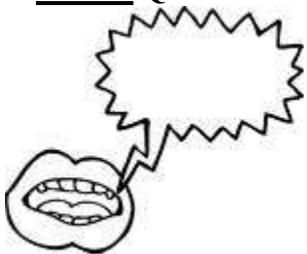
- 1) First of all, make sure you understand all the *words* in the passage; if there are *places* or *people* mentioned, make certain you know who they are. (You can probably find resources for this in your very own Bible.)
- 2) Now, look at the text itself. Start by going through the passage for *verbs*. Underline them (or highlight them)...at least the important ones. Now, mark the *nouns* in some way.

- 3) Are any of these key nouns and verbs *repeated* in the passage? Write those down in the margin somewhere (or circle them). If there are many repeated words you could also jot down how often they appear.
- 4) What words seem most *important* to you at a gut level? (Maybe they are adjectives or adverbs or another part of speech!) Write them at the top of the page or somewhere prominent.

**ANYTHING STAND OUT YET?** Do you see any *patterns* that help you get a stronger feel for this passage? Are there *contrasts* set up? *Associations* made? Anything *confusing*?

Jot them down.

**A BASIC QUESTION:** *Who* is the “narrator” of this passage? Some of you have passages from epistles, that means what is written is part of a letter from someone to someone. Who wrote it? Who was it written for? (Your Bible will give you some background. Often this is at the beginning of the Book; other times this kind of resource can be found toward the front or end of your Bible.)



If your passage is not from an Epistle, is there a distinct “author” voice? Perhaps your passage is Christ speaking? Perhaps you have a *scene* where there are several speakers. Especially if there are quotations in your piece, make sure you know who they belong to.

**LANGUAGE** – (Now, you’ll be glad you paid attention in English class!) Do you spot any *imagery* in the passage? Do any images come to life in your mind because of a particular word, or description?

What about *figurative* or colorful language? (metaphors, hyperbole, repetition, alliteration) Are there any aspects of this passage that stand out to you especially because of the language?

Is there any *symbolism* that stands out at this point? (Don’t worry about this if it isn’t obvious.)

**WHAT IS THE QUESTION FOR YOU?** Can you come up with a question (or questions) you might ask yourself based on the passage? This question is not about the *passage*, but about what God might be asking *you* to think about through this passage. (Sponsors, do this for yourself – share.) Or, if this approach doesn’t work, settle on one sentence that you can hold as the **KEY** to this passage.

**WRITE THESE THINGS DOWN. PONDER THEM THIS MONTH.**

**CONCLUDE WITH PRAYER** (Of course!) Thank God for any insights you received during this conversation. Pray that in this Advent Season your heart will be opened wide to love in whatever way God is asking of you. Spend time during this month pondering the questions and the key points from your passage – and be sure to go back and jot down anything else that comes to mind.