

A Dominican-Inspired Bible Study Plan

Discovering the Truth in Sacred Scripture

by Fr. Dave Mercer

Teach me, LORD, your way that I may walk in your truth, single-hearted and revering your name.
[Psalm 86:11]

Catholic actress Patricia Heaton of *Everybody Loves Raymond* is known for her Catholic faith. When meeting with Pope Francis in Rome, she was taken by his message about beauty and truth, saying later: “We need this message of God’s love for all of us, of His beauty and His truth and the love that Christ has for all of us. We need that even more.”

We recall Saint Dominic as promoting the Rosary, but he also made God’s truth the central theme of his preaching vocation. Before the printing press, the Bible was not easily available, but he kept the Gospel of Matthew and the letters of Saint Paul with him when traveling. Then, when a famine struck his region of Spain, he sold his library to put the money toward famine relief and served among the people. Dominic understood that a life of radical love for neighbor was the best lens through which to understand the Gospel. Pope Benedict XVI would later write of him as “a man of the Gospel, in word as in deed.”

Sacred study, personal contemplative prayer, and communal liturgical prayer—Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours, but also the Rosary—are important parts of Dominican community life. Each supports a Dominican’s growth in prayer and preaching or teaching ministry.

Question. A Dominican-inspired Bible study asks: *What truth am I discovering in the Sacred Scriptures, and how might I share it with others?* Dominican sisters, brothers, or priests might ask themselves this in preparation for teaching or preaching. It’s also a good question to ask yourself for wherever God calls you to live your life’s vocation.

Suggestion. With Saint Dominic’s love for the letters of Saint Paul, consider having your Bible study address the often overlooked second readings we hear on Sunday. These readings follow a three-year cycle with the letters of Paul and other New Testament writers.

This Bible study has seven distinct steps, moving you from prayer and searching for truth, to contemplation and sharing the message with others. Our printable Dominican Worksheet, Study Questions, and Catholic Resources can help guide your group through the steps. (PDF files are below.)

Always gather the group with a simple [icebreaker](#) question.

- 1. Prayer.** Then pray for understanding as you seek God’s truth in today’s Scripture passage. [Consider these prayers](#) for students, including one by the Dominican priest, Saint Thomas Aquinas, or Saint Catherine of Siena’s [Prayer to the Holy Spirit](#).

2. **Truth.** Dominicans understand that God is *Truth*, and that everything they do flows from seeking, living, and sharing that truth. And so, read now the selected Scripture passage but with a heart open to hearing what God has to say, noting the words and phrases that raise questions for you and what the passage says, rather than what one might think it says. You might highlight them in your Bible and write them in a journal or on the worksheet. *What is the truth that God wants you to hear with your heart?*
3. **Wrestle.** Jacob wrestled with God through the night and left with a limp and a blessing [Genesis 32:22-32]. Similarly, your honest questions can be fruitful when you wrestle with Scripture and seek the Truth that is God. The study group starts with journalism's "Five Ws and an H"—who, what, when, where, why, and how—and then goes deeper with the Study Questions printable. As you do, keep before you this Bible study's focusing question: *What truth am I discovering in the Sacred Scriptures, and how might I share it with others?*

The Catholic Resources printable offers ways to find answers to questions needing more expertise. It also discusses Catholic study Bibles.

4. **Study.** The group reads sections of a commentary for the insights of a scholar. (Consider the commentaries in our Catholic Resources.) Also, Catholic study Bibles are known for footnoted insights and the cross-referenced citations to other Bible passages, both of which can assist with understanding a passage. The group can also note how their earlier questions are answered.

A Dominican approach cherishes the conversation that leads to the Truth and appreciates that *faith* and *reason* work together to know God more deeply. A good commentary is how a scholar follows the Dominican principle of "handing on to others the fruits of their contemplation." A discussion can help you "receive such fruits."

5. **Contemplation.** A Dominican knows that contemplating the Truth leads one toward God. The group can now read the Scripture passage again, having benefited from discussion and considering scholarly insights. Taking up to five minutes, members can quietly reflect on their key insights, writing in their own words what they most want to remember. They can contemplate how they can take those insights (truths) to others in the next week.
6. **Share/Preach.** Not everyone shares God's message in a classroom or at a pulpit as does a Dominican, but everyone has a God-given mission where sharing God's truth can take place. Each Bible study participant now writes down one action they can take to bring God's truth to others, and, if desired, share it with the group. Doing so, they will be offering others what actress Patricia Heaton says our world needs even more: "God's love and truth."
7. **Concluding prayer.** Each person takes a few moments to reflect on their notes and discussion and then to write a brief prayer to God, perhaps in answering the question: "What do I want to say to God in response to that truth?"

Those who wish may share their prayers aloud. The group might conclude with [this prayer](#) from Saint Dominic, or a [Psalm of Praise](#): 96, 148, 149, or 150, prayed either together or verse-by-verse by each group member. Or, you can pray a decade or two of the Rosary.