



The law & Gospel method of Bible study is the Church's traditional way to study the Bible, which was popularized by Martin Luther. Law & Gospel Bible study makes a distinction between God's two main Biblical themes: law & Gospel. God's law theme identifies our sin, by revealing what God wants us to do that we don't do. God's Gospel theme identifies our need for Jesus the Savior, and reveals how God's love offers us salvation through Christ.

**STEP ONE PRAY FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT TO REVEAL GOD'S VOICE THROUGH THE TEXT:**

*"Father, let your law and Gospel voice renew our love, faith, and hope."*

**STEP TWO READ THE TEXT REPEATEDLY UNTIL YOU CAN TELL IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS:**

**Matthew 25:31-46** (See the reverse side of the worksheet for the printed Gospel text)

**STEP THREE REVIEW A STUDY BIBLE TO DETERMINE THE TEXT'S THEOLOGICAL MEANING:**

The Gospel begins with apocalyptic (endtime) images that convey Christ's kingship. The image of the Son of Man coming in glory reflects imagery from Daniel 7:13-14 and recalls other places in Matthew's Gospel where Jesus foretells the coming judgment (24:30-31; 26:64). The portrait of Christ as King is a fearsome one in this text. All the nations of the world have gathered before him and behold his majesty. From the throne, the king uses his authority to separate the people. To illustrate the separation of one individual from another, Jesus likens himself to a shepherd who separates his flock of sheep from the goats who are grazing in the same pasture. The sheep receive the place of honor and inherit God's kingdom (25:34). Jesus calls the sheep those who are "Blessed by my Father" (25:34). Who are the blessed ones? In Christ's kingdom, the blessed ones are those who do not retaliate with violence, but bear witness to a new reign of God by serving others (25:31-46). The blessed ones have demonstrated their faithfulness by performing acts of loving-kindness. The charge to care for the poor and the disadvantaged can be found throughout Scripture, but it is especially exhibited in the ministry of Jesus. In this Gospel, Christ has announced the arrival of God's kingdom while he cures the sick, welcomes the despised, and provides food for the hungry. He orders his disciples to carry on his ministry by doing likewise. Throughout the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus' teaching has announced and illustrated the kingdom of God. God's kingdom does not function like a typical kingdom. This divine reign has invaded the world and is good news--especially to those on the fringes of society. This rule welcomes those who have no status and seeks to serve others rather than exploit them. Those who have experienced God's kingdom cannot go back to life as it once was. The difference between followers of Jesus and those who do not know Jesus is that those who have seen Jesus no longer have any excuse to avoid the "least of these." The blessed ones are those who have seen a King who is not like the kings of this world. They are blessed because they know a King who brings real peace, who sees the needy, and who hears the cries of the oppressed. In God's kingdom, no one is hungry, naked, sick, or alone. To bear witness to Christ as King is to be a messenger of this kingdom--to serve others and thereby profess the invasion of God's glorious empire.



**Matthew 25:31-46** <sup>31</sup>When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. <sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, <sup>33</sup>and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup>Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; <sup>35</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' <sup>37</sup>Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? <sup>38</sup>And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup>And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' <sup>40</sup>And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' <sup>41</sup>Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; <sup>42</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup>I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' <sup>44</sup>Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' <sup>45</sup>Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' <sup>46</sup>And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

**STEP FOUR** COMPLETE A LAW & GOSPEL BIBLE STUDY TO *Restore Hope in the Savior*

**Law Question:** *How does this text reveal our sin (self-centeredness) and how we do not live as God desires?*

Answer.....  
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 .....

**Gospel Question:** *How does this text reveal God's gift of Jesus as the Savior who freely offers us salvation?*

Answer.....  
 .....  
 .....

Please send your "answers" to Pastor Bob: [Schmalzle@yahoo.com](mailto:Schmalzle@yahoo.com) which he likes to incorporate into the sermon.

**STEP FIVE** PRAYERFULLY MEDITATE UPON GOD'S GOSPEL VOICE: *Restoring Our Hope*

**A. Quieting Our Inner Sanctuary:** *We quiet our hearts (souls) by focusing on our breathing. Breathe in slowly to the count of five (J-E-S-U-S)...hold your breath to a count of six (C-H-R-I-S-T)...exhale to a count of seven (T-H-E-L-O-R-D). Repeat this pattern of breathing until you are relaxed.*

**B. Dwelling within Our Inner Sanctuary:** *We meet the Lord Jesus in the sanctuary of our hearts (souls), which is a place created within our mind's eye for us to be with the Lord. Using our favorite sights, sounds, smells and feelings, we visualize our inner sanctuary as a place of peace where the Lord Jesus meets us.*

**C. Listening to God's Voice in Scripture Speak to Us through Jesus:** *As Jesus meets us in our inner sanctuary, he lovingly shares God's Gospel message of hope from the Scripture text we have just studied. Listening to God's Gospel voice restores our trust and hope that Jesus' death and resurrection freely offers us eternal Salvation. When Jesus speaks to us, our souls are nourished and refreshed.*

**STEP SIX** SHARE THIS LAW & GOSPEL BIBLE STUDY WITH A FRIEND:

*Forward this via email, give a printed copy, or post on social media*