

## Interview with Dr. John Street

**(John)** Hello, my name is Dr John Street. I have a great passion for biblical counseling. And I have a great passion to see people become very familiar with using the Word of God on a daily basis in terms of practical living. I have the opportunity today to be here with Mike Riggs.

Mike, and his wife, Carolyn, are both responsible for a ministry called **Lamp & Quill Bible Curriculum**. I'm very excited about this curriculum because it is something that is designed to help parents, children, churches, across the board, really integrate the Word of God into daily life.

I want to ask Mike several questions that I think are really critical questions about their particular ministry. Mike, welcome to our conversation.

**(Mike)** Thanks, John.

### 1.) **(John) First, tell me a little bit about Lamp & Quill Bible Curriculum.**

**(Mike)**

- **Lamp & Quill Bible Curriculum** has six years of studies through most books of the Bible. Individuals can select any year in their choice of NASB, KJV, NKJV or ESV. Support materials include such things as toddler activities, verse tracing, verse focused crafts, memory cards, maps, and more.
- There are 10 student levels and 6 leader levels plus a Family Leader's Guide and a Parent Study Guide.
- All ages can study the same passage at the same time at their appropriate skill level.
- The weekly lessons have a 5-day format. Each lesson starts with observation questions and then moves to application questions.
- At **lampquill.com** studies can be purchased individually, as downloads, or as annual CDs.

**(John)** Well, a lot of work has gone into this with your Family Leader Guide, your Parent Study Guide, this weekly six-year study. I know a lot of biblical work, a lot of research and background has gone into it.

### 2.) **So, how do you see material like this especially being used by biblical counselors, people who have to routinely work with serious soul problems?**

**(Mike)** I've often wondered what happens to counselees a year, 2 years, 5 years, 10 years following a successful counseling. Is the issue resolved for good, or does it come back? And how are counselees doing spiritually later on? Obviously, helping them get into a good church where the truth of God's Word is preached every Sunday, and where they have opportunity to serve is important.

- Lamp & Quill studies can help secure the progress being made in counseling and boost follow-up after the counseling sessions. What I see being most helpful is to use the studies as a means of both preserving and advancing the progress made during counseling by developing a regular habit of spending personal study time in the Scripture.
- I recommend starting counselees in the latter part of the counseling sessions to get them started and plan on following up with them later on to check progress.
- For families Lamp & Quill lessons facilitate parents and children learning and growing spiritually as they interact with the Scripture individually and together throughout the week.
- Many families have seen amazing growth in a variety of ways. As Scripture exposes sin, and it's handled correctly, lives are drawn closer together.

**(John)** That's exciting to hear. I am impressed with what you have done because I know there's a lot of material out there that is written for Christian parents and families that are very behaviorally oriented, and I know that that's not the Lamp & Quill philosophy.

### 3.) **I know that you've spent a long time getting at heart issues, so tell me: how does the material get at a child's heart issues not just changing their behavior but changing their hearts?**

**(Mike)**

- Well, the first heart issue we all have at any age is salvation, and there is no better material than the Bible to aim at the heart issue of salvation. The need and call for salvation is throughout Scripture.
- So, as we developed the lessons, we asked ourselves what really needs to happen for an individual to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and grow spiritually. We did not want a preaching session or a doctrinal lesson without a proper spiritual heart foundation. We were aiming at the heart with interactive lessons to get them personally involved in God's Word.
- Children interact with the truths of Scripture, compare their lives with those truths and are challenged to respond appropriately to what the Scripture calls them to do.
- And frankly, it doesn't matter if the issue is salvation or any other issue of obedience to God's Word.
- The Scripture itself tells us it is alive and changes lives. We just have to go to the Scripture because it speaks to all our spiritual issues.
- In Proverbs 2 Solomon challenges his son to search the Scriptures because the Lord will honor his search since the Lord is eager to give wisdom and teach us about Himself.
- Lamp & Quill study questions help individuals make observations, evaluations, and applications.
- Individuals write answers in their own hand which helps them stop and think about Scripture and ask how it relates to their personal lives and walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.
- This process reduces the chances of glossing over the truths of Scripture so that fewer slip through the cracks, especially when leaders can review their answers.
- We have been accused of challenging individuals to think, and that is exactly what we want to do. So much changes inside us when we stop and think and meditate on God's Word. It changes our hearts.
- And as the heart changes in response to God and His Word, outward behavior changes and overall direction follows.

**(John)** Wow, that's encouraging for me to hear that. You really go after the heart, and you're helping both the child as well as the parent to really think about how that material interacts with their daily life.

**4.) Now (if a person is a parent), how do we help the parents who are really unskilled or don't know how to train their children biblically? How do we do that?**

**(Mike)**

- Well, since I did not attend church while growing up, I missed some of the watered down, psychologized Sunday School material we saw when we started looking at material for our own children a long time ago.
- Our research helped us discover that even though the curriculum's doctrinal statement was written by the theologian, the material itself was written by educational specialists and psychologists who believed we need to teach children self-worth, self-esteem, and God loves and accepts everyone without condition.
- Two generations have been raised with this philosophy.
- In contrast, I became a Christian in college and was taught by campus and military ministries that after repenting from my sin and trusting Jesus, Christians are to be devoted to serving and knowing Christ. They read their Bibles regularly, they had quiet times, memorized Scripture, and shared Christ with others. They did Bible studies, and they made application and prayed often.
- That was my view of real Christians; I didn't know any better. :-)
- Our discipleship training along with our young children motivated us to develop material that helps both parents and children learn how to interact with Scripture and grow spiritually.
- Parents go through their own lesson to prepare for interacting with their children on the levels the children can handle from toddler all the way through college/adult.

**(John)** So, you're not just aiming at children, you're helping parents develop this in their own life and then turning around in their relationship to their children and helping them.

**5.) So, what do you think are the significant factors then that influence the lack of parent-child discipleship in the home?**

(Mike) You would think that of all the people anyone would want to disciple, it would be their own children, but so often it just doesn't happen.

- I think the **main reason** is that most parents were **never trained or disciplined** like we were.
- I have often told the story about what I learned after being disciplined in a military ministry and then moving to a college ministry.
- I saw so many young men leave the faith when left to themselves. Even those I recruited to a Bible study surprised me.
- Young men who had grown up in a church and Christian families had never actually studied the Bible, and their answers to questions with the Scripture right in front of them were canned answers.
- I saw the Lord work in their lives through the wonders in His Word.
- But the question that went through my head and heart was, what happened to the 18 years Christian parents and churches had these men? They should be teaching me; I shouldn't be teaching them.
- So, the first answer is: parents have no clue about how to disciple their children because they have never seen it done. And that generation of students I ministered to are now grandparents.
- Once you get past this major roadblock to discipleship, it comes down to the priority you put on your Christian faith.

(John) Now that's really good to hear. And it's very difficult to find ministries that are really interested in going to that depth in working with parents and children.

**6.) What are some of the other contributing factors for the lack of parent-child discipleship?**

(Mike) Some of them are fairly obvious:

- Like both parents working: It's easy to see how the parent's time and energy depletion can compromise what they have left for the children.
- Obviously, divorce: and all the fallout that comes from before and after divorce.
- Delegating to the church: When parents delegate discipleship to the church and the church considers parents to be ultimately responsible, children tend to fall through the cracks.
- Extensive use of technology: While technology has opened the door for many educational opportunities, it also offers an avenue of dangerous aspects where parents need to provide protection and guidance. This includes making sure children take the time and learn how to personally interact with the Scripture on a regular basis.
- Extracurricular activities: These may include sports, hunting, fishing, music, clubs, etc. that consume time, energy, and thoughts. These, in and of themselves, may not be bad, but we must beware of what they may be replacing. There are a multitude of time-consuming options to be conscious of and to learn to manage so we don't neglect the one thing that is needful – their relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Home Schooling: We actually homeschooled our children and still think it is best for many families. But today many parents are so stressed and focused on the academics of homeschooling that they don't have time or take time for spiritual training even though Deuteronomy 6:4-7 says Scripture is a priority.
- A priesthood mentality: Basically, it's a dependence on the preacher/teacher/leader for spiritual maintenance and growth. In other words, their spiritual life is borrowed from the leader rather than being an outgrowth of their personal time and walk with the Lord. Their spiritual faith is not owned by them, and it does not own them. It is borrowed from someone else, and it's not secure. So, they really don't have a personal relationship with the Lord to pass on to their children. And that's what I saw in the college freshmen, many of whom left the church.

- And most importantly: if we present Scripture to children without practicing what we are learning, it influences their outlook even if they cannot articulate the disconnect. We can't give what we don't have. So, we've got to practice what we are learning.

**(John)** Boy, that's really good insight. You listed several very important things that in a sense influence parents not really being good disciplers of their children. And one of the things you mentioned there was the pastor/priest mentality. There are an awful lot of homes and families that sort of look at it that way. It's the job of the church, the job of the pastor to be able to really bring up our families biblically, when in reality the Bible says the parents are the main ones responsible for doing that.

And this is what we call the priesthood of the believer. And if you really believe in the priesthood of the believer, then it's material like this that becomes an asset to parents actually helping their children personally in their personal growth.

So, I know that this material has had a major impact in a lot of families, a lot of churches.

**7.) So, can you briefly describe for me how you have seen these materials be so effective in people's lives, it's influence in terms of God's Word in their lives?**

**(Mike)**

- Parents who see the way it's put together find hope to start leading the family in devotional studies. As they get into the studies, they gain confidence in leading their families spiritually, especially when they see how God's Word works in their lives.
- Parents have been brought back to church by preschoolers who are sharing what they were learning.
- Families have found the activities for the little children helped incorporate Scripture into their daily lives.
- A kindergarten child reminded her mom that it was time for her to do her Bible lesson.
- Junior students commented that the word searches helped them focus on the truths to look for in the passages.
- A junior high teacher said she received a whole different group of students in the fall after the junior department had the students doing these lessons throughout the previous year. They were ready to learn and grow.
- One family's house burned down, and all they had left were these lessons. They said that doing these lessons together was the glue that held the family together.
- A family changed churches after using these materials and seeing the difference between what they were being taught and what the Scripture actually said.
- Another family met together to see what to do about a child who said she did not need to do the lesson that week. As it turns out she had done 2 lessons the week before. So, it wasn't so bad.
- These are a few of the many stories we have heard.

**(John)** Well, Mike, I know that you and Carolyn have a wonderful heart for parents, for children. You want to see them live out Scriptures in their daily life. I know that personally by knowing you and having you as good friends. It's exciting for me to hear these stories on how **Lamp & Quill Bible Curriculum** has been so helpful in equipping the Christian home to be able to disciple their children and to not just deal with their children on a behavioral level but to address substantive issues that get right at the heart of that child. Those are the things that child is going to remember for the rest of their lives. And that's what's so exciting to me about the **Lamp & Quill Bible Curriculum**. So, I want to thank you for taking time for talking about what's going on with your curriculum.

**(Mike)** Thank you, John. We are hoping and praying that as parents, children, individuals, and churches develop a lifestyle of studying and incorporating Scripture into their daily lives, they will more likely be counselors rather than counselees.

**(John)** That's great. That's the way it should be.