How to Study the Bible

As believers, most of us have probably heard over and over how important it is for us to study the Word of God. But all too often we don't really understand why and consequently have a difficult time really getting started. So before we get into the how-tos of Bible study, let's look at why studying the Word is vital to our Christian growth and maturity.

What a majority of Christians don't realize is that the Word of God is alive! The Word can really affect and have a life-changing impact on your day-to-day living. God reveals Himself through His Word.

As He reveals Himself to you, you can expect your life to change because you are getting to know God Himself, not just *about Him*. The reason we study the Bible is that we may know God, know His ways and walk in them. Then we can truly live a successful Christian life.

The Bible is a personal message from Almighty God Himself—straight from heaven—to you. The main theme of this message is Jesus—even in the Old Testament. Jesus is the living Word, the message of God to all mankind.

Ever since the Fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden, God was unwilling to leave us in our sin and live without us. So He had a plan—the plan of redemption—when He gave His Son to pay the price for our sin on the Cross and thereby bring us back into fellowship with Him. Glory to God! So look for Jesus in every book of the Bible. All scriptures either point to the Cross or look back on it.

Settle in your mind that, while the Bible is God's inspired Word, it was also meant to be down-to-earth. Don't just reverently give it a place of honor on a bookshelf, but treat the Word as your personal hands-on reference book on life—a how-to book for everyday living. Get rid of the negative idea that it is just a set of rules.

God's Word is our very source of liberty. God sent His Word to set us free, not to bind us up and load us down. So read the Word with a positive attitude, approaching it as an open door to freedom, not as a list of dos and don'ts.

Knowing why studying the Bible is important will hopefully make it easier for you to make that quality decision followed by pure and simple grit-your-teeth determination. We suggest treating this period of study as an appointment that you're required to attend. Then, every day, follow through by building your schedule around this appointment—and not the other way around. Soon, you'll develop a *desire* to attend your study and it will become easier and easier. And if you miss an appointment once in a while, don't worry, just get back in the flow.

As you get started studying, it is wise to use a Bible you feel free to write in and take notes. Start underlining scriptures that have significance and special meaning to you. This will help personalize the Word for you. Marking these scriptures will also help you find them more readily when you need them.

At your appointment, one of the best ways to "dig" into the Word is to find a subject or certain scriptures you need to understand. Pray for understanding and discernment of the scriptures. Allow the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Word of God, to reveal it to you. Read and think about each word in each scripture. You can check meanings, too, by using a concordance to study the Greek or Hebrew root words and their meanings.

An important part of your study of the Word is meditation. To meditate means to think deeply and continuously, ponder or reflect. It also means to murmur, to mutter and to converse with oneself. This takes some time. Read the scripture over and over again as you pray in the spirit. Meditation brings your spirit and your mind together and builds a capacity for your faith to be released (Romans 10:17). Ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your understanding so you can comprehend the deep things of God. Then expect the Lord to do it. Expect Him to meet you on the level of your need and

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reveal His Word to you.

When starting out, spend the majority of your time in the New Testament (primarily in the letters the Apostle Paul wrote to the early churches). In light of this, we suggest you look for and underline phrases such as “in Him,” “in whom” and “in Christ.” These phrases are found 134 times in the New Testament from Acts to Revelation. Every one of them has something to offer you personally because according to Ephesians 2:6, you are in Christ!

Make what God says the authority in your life. That means we shouldn’t just believe what God says

to us in His Word, but we should also act on it. Acting on it is what produces results (Matthew

7:24-27). Part of acting on the Word includes speaking it. You will find that what you really believe in

your heart is what you speak all the time—and what you speak determines what happens in your life (Mark 11:23).

Once you start speaking God’s Word about your needs, do not speak anything contrary to it. For example, if you need healing, do not let the focus of your words be about your sickness. Rather,

confess what the Word says about it: “By His stripes I am healed according to Isaiah 53:4-5.”

Like a sponge, soak in as much Word as possible. Then, when you are faced with a situation that requires the wisdom of God, the life of God will flow from you—through your words—to meet any man’s need on any level. And that’s the best way to study the Word—with the intent of helping and loving others as well as

yourself.

To help in your study, we recommend the following:

1. ***Young's Analytical Concordance***—a great help in finding verses that pertain to specific situations or needs. It contains the Hebrew and Greek word translations

2. ***Strong's Exhaustive Concordance***—a dictionary of the Hebrew, Chaldee and Greek words.

3. ***Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words***—a dictionary for scriptural words and meanings.

4. ***Expositions of Holy Scripture by Alexander Maclaren***—a 17-volume series that includes sermons and expositions from almost every book of the Bible, and the most comprehensive index of any major expositional work.

You can also use many different translations of the Bible during your study time. To start out, you may want to use the *King James Version* and *The Amplified Bible*. Brother Copeland does the majority of his studying in these two versions. He also recommends the *Worrell*, *Goodspeed* and *Wuest's Expanded Translation*. All of these helps and versions of the Bible can be found in almost any local Christian bookstore.

You can use the books and tapes of other ministers; however, do not allow them to take the place of your personal study time. Take what they have learned and allow the Holy Spirit to add to it. And, of course, no matter what material you study, be sure it lines up with God's Word.

Here are some steps to follow in studying the Word:

Apply the Word to yourself personally.

Allow the Holy Spirit to make the Word a reality in your heart.

Carefully ponder how the Word applies to your everyday life.

Dwell on how the Word changes your situation.

See yourself as God sees you.

Realize the integrity of God's Word.

Here is a prayer to pray with confidence as you sit down to study and meditate on His Word:

"Father, in the Name of Jesus I come before You today. I take authority over Satan and bind his

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operation in my life. I pray the eyes of my understanding are enlightened that I may know how rich is Your inheritance in the saints, that I may be filled with the knowledge of Your will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, walking fully pleasing to You, increasing in the knowledge of God.

"Father, I pray I will be rooted and built up in Jesus, established in the faith. I am confident that He who began a good work in me will continue it until the day of Jesus Christ.

"I know You have heard my prayer, so I know I have the petitions that I asked. Thank You in Jesus'

Name."

Prayer References: Ephesians 1:16-18; Colossians 1:9-12, 2:6-10; Philippians 1:6; I John 5:14-15.

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