



DISCIPLINE & DELIGHT OF BIBLE STUDY

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

Romans 15:4

...that the gift, after many transgressions, brought acquittal. For if, by the transgression of the one, death came to many, through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification also receive it like through the one Jesus Christ. In conclusion, just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so through one righteous act acquittal and life came to all. The act, through the disobedience of the one man, the many were made sinners, so, through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous.

ROMANS 5:18-19

...that, when he was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil, he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The devil tempted him and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread of meat."

MATTHEW 4:1-3

...and it is written: "The devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

THE INVITATION

IF YOU HAVE put your faith in Jesus, the Spirit of God has come to live inside of you, and you have been awakened. You are now conscious of the fact that there is more to life than what you can see with your eyes. And you have a deep longing for more of God in your real life. This desire has been put inside of you by God Himself because He loves you. He knows you will be most fulfilled when you are walking intimately with Him.

God has given us His Word as a pathway to know Him and experience His presence. This experience is crucial, because everything flows from the presence of the Lord. "If you have Him, you have everything that matters and lasts. Without Him, you have nothing of value." (Bill Elliff)

Have you ever received a love letter from someone special? Chances are, you read that letter many times over. You probably poured over every line and did your best to read between them too. Why? Because every word offered you a glimpse into their heart. The more you studied the letter, the more you knew and understood the person who wrote it.

Studying God's Word is similar. Each line of the Bible is filled with meaning. Each reading uncovers something new about who He is. This is a distinction of Christianity—that our God communicates with us and reveals Himself to us.

The pages of the Bible are an open invitation for us to come to know and love the God of the Bible. It's Him we're after!

THE GOAL

We might be tempted to think that the Bible is a book about us. But the Bible is primarily a book about God. We get this backwards sometimes, don't we?

We tend to approach the Word asking questions like, "Who am I?" or "What am I to do?" We want to move straight to application. There's nothing wrong with these questions. In fact, we must ask them. And thankfully, the Bible does provide answers again and again. But it answers those questions decidedly through the framework of God Himself. He is the subject of the narrative. He is the history-maker, the world-changer, the Savior. It's His name in lights!

So, we must come to the Bible first looking for Him. Ironically, we'll understand ourselves better when we see ourselves in view of God. When He is the reference point—the lens through which we examine everything else—we will be able to see our sin, our identity and our next steps rightly.

LORD, WOULD
YOU SHOW
ME MORE OF
YOU TODAY?

THE NEED

Genesis 1:1 opens like this: “In the beginning, God.” We don’t have to look further than the first four words of the Bible to understand something foundational: God is primary. He is first. He has always existed. Therefore, He is the source and sustainer of all things. He is the authority on the creation He has made. His insight is necessary for our flourishing.

By submitting to God’s Word, we are acknowledging...

- That in and of ourselves, we don’t have what it takes to live in a way that pleases God.
- That the moral compass inside of us is flawed.
- That we need an outside source to direct us, correct us and nourish us so that we can live as our Creator designed.

This is not a popular thought in our follow-your-heart, morally relativistic world. Culture claims that ultimate freedom and flourishing is found in unlimited liberties, no restrictions. Society insists that the Bible is outdated, and that Christians should adjust and align their beliefs with the progressive culture or risk being viewed as hateful or intolerant.

But when we study His Word, we are rejecting that lie. We are standing in faith on something else:

- That the God who created the world determines what is best for it.
- That He purposefully designed it to function in a certain way.
- That He has lovingly given us guardrails for our good.

He’s not holding out on us or trying to keep us from our best life. Instead, He’s reminding us all throughout His book that true human flourishing will be ours when we submit to His way.

THE PATH

It is simply impossible to grow as a disciple of Jesus without being a student of God's Word. In fact, the word disciple means "learner". As disciples, we are learning the way of Jesus, primarily through His Word.

Since many Christians have rarely or never studied the Bible for themselves, where should they start?

PRE-STUDY >> Before you begin, consider these few steps to help you make the most out of your study time

1. PICK A PASSAGE. It could be a short chapter like Psalm 23, or a longer section like The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, or an entire book of the Bible.

You may be familiar with a One-Year-Bible type reading plan, which often moves quickly through individual chapters in order to comprehend the whole. But studying the Bible encourages lingering in smaller segments of the Bible in order to understand the meaning behind the individual chapters and verses.

2. POSITION YOURSELF to receive the Word. In the distracting world we live in, this requires discipline. Open your Bible and commit to sit under His teaching and His leadership. Open your eyes and expect to see Him in a new way. Open your heart to take hold of whatever it is that He knows you need.

3. PREDETERMINE that you will believe and obey Him, no matter what. He has your best interest at heart, and He can be trusted. He will help you with whatever

He's calling you to do. So, before you even open His Word, put your "yes" on the table and decide that you will, by the grace of God, receive and act on His word to you.

4. PRAY ALONG THE WAY. Our ultimate goal is to know and experience Christ. Have a running conversation with Him as you go. If you have questions, ask Him. If you get stuck, tell Him. If something wows you, worship Him.

Don't hesitate to pray the words you read back to God. Every word of Scripture is meant to shape our prayers, and to shape our hearts as we pray.

STUDY >> Use the following guide to begin your study. You'll notice a purposeful sequence:

- What does the passage say? (comprehension)
- What does the passage mean? (interpretation)
- What does this passage require of me? (application)

Learning anything new takes time, so give yourself permission to go slow and find your personal rhythm. Grab your Bible, along with a notebook and pen, and jump in. Recording what God is saying to you will dramatically increase your retention and provide a way for you to reference it later.

• **READ AND REREAD**

You may be tempted to move past this simple step, but repetitive reading is an effective place to start. Similar to meditation, it gives the Word time to sink

deep into our minds and hearts.

Some versions of the Bible are word for word translations (ESV and NASB), some are thought for thought translations (NLT and NCV), and some are a combination of the two (NIV and HCSB). Reading multiple versions expands understanding.

Initially, read through the whole passage (ie: the whole book of James) to comprehend the author's big ideas. Then you might zero in on one chapter a week as you move on to the next steps.

• REFLECT

Take time to think about what you just read. Pause and ponder. Notice repeated words. Ask yourself questions about the text. Jot down plain observations. The goal is to absorb what is clearly written on the page.

• RESEARCH

definitions of unfamiliar or overly familiar words. Some of the most common words can be lost on us. Use an English dictionary to deepen the meaning of words and verses you may have read hundreds of times.

• REWRITE

verses in your own words. Paraphrasing a passage can help clarify and anchor understanding. Try writing a summary statement of each chapter you study. Or reword a group of verses that stand out to you during your reading.

• REMEMBER

where this passage fits inside the bigger story. All of the individual passages we read in the Bible fit into one big story called the *metanarrative*, connecting

Genesis to Revelation.

The Bible was inspired by God and written over 1500 years by forty different authors in three different languages on three different continents. And yet, one cohesive story echoes throughout all sixty-six books. Amazing!

See the Christ-centered progression:

o **ANTICIPATION** - The Old Testament
(Someone's coming!)

o **MANIFESTATION** - The Gospels
(He's here!)

o **PROCLAMATION** - Acts
(Let's tell everyone!)

o **EXPLANATION** - The Epistles
(How do we follow Him?)

o **CONSUMMATION** - Revelation
(Where are we going?)

(From Mitch Maher's Clarifying the Bible)

• REFERENCE

other parts of Scripture that correlate to your text. Because the Bible is one connected story, it often comments on itself. New Testament passages refer back to Old Testament ones and Old Testament passages often foreshadow New Testament realities. Check footnotes and cross references in your Bible for related passages, and let Scripture interpret Scripture.

• REGARD

how the passage reveals God and describes humanity. Answer "What does this text say about God?" and then,

“What does this text say about me?”
Remember the Bible is a book about God.
And knowledge of God leads to true
knowledge of self.

POST-STUDY >> Prayerfully, at this point you have a greater understanding of your text. But it doesn't end there. Bible study is never just about gaining information but about life transformation. At the end of your study:

1. PRACTICE what you read. Whether in belief, repentance or action, you are invited to join God in His work. It's easy to give mental ascent to a truth without actually following through with what it requires.

James 1:22 says, “But don't just listen to God's Word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.” Instead, proactively cooperate with God's instruction.

- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a truth to believe?
- Is there sin to confess?
- Is there direction to follow?
- Is there a command to obey?

As we act, we are transformed from one degree of glory to the next. This is our sanctification.

2. PASS ON what you learned to a friend or family member. Communicating our takeaways to others helps seal truth in our minds and hold us accountable to obedience.

THE LIE

You might be thinking, “I can’t study the Bible,” or “I’m not qualified,” or “It doesn’t really matter.” But these are lies from our enemy, Satan. He wants to demoralize and discourage us and diminish our interest in God and His word. He’s dead set on our demise and he will stop at nothing.

But Satan’s accusations only have power as we agree with them. In order to defuse their control over us, we must break agreement with these lies by replacing them with the truth.

This could be as simple as agreeing with the words of Psalm 119:18 as you believe God to help you comprehend His Word. It says,

“Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things from your law.”

By the power of the Spirit, we do have what it takes to approach and understand His Word. And He has given us all the grace we need to walk in step with its teachings.

Whether we know it or not, we have great need of the wisdom, instruction and insight found in the Bible. So, we must reject the lies and cling to the truth. This is no small thing. Life and death hang in the balance.

THE DECLINE

Statistically, Bible reading has declined significantly in recent decades. As a result, most Christians don't have a firm grasp of what the Bible teaches. Many Christians have only a secondhand understanding of the text, since most of their Scripture intake comes through devotional material, podcasts and sermons, or supplemental Christian resources.

Consequently, many are confused as to what they believe and not sure of what is absolutely true. This gives Satan opportunity to interject his leading line: "Did God really say...?" (Gen. 3)

He wants us to question God's goodness and intent because if he can cause us to doubt, he can convince us to disobey.

Many have been persuaded away from the truth, which has led to extreme moral decline as our nation drifts further away from God's original design.

Followers of Jesus must recover a deep commitment to studying and submitting to Word of God. We must pursue firsthand knowledge of and personal experience in the Scriptures, so that we are not easily deceived by the enemy.

THE POWER

Not every day of Bible study will feel remarkable. But if we stick with it, the cumulative effect of being in the Word day after day and year after year WILL have a profound impact on us.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16-17

"For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Hebrews 4:12

"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater. So is My Word that goes out from My mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

Isaiah 55:13-14

As with any spiritual discipline, the power is not in legalistic compliance but rather in its connection to the living God. In fact, it is the connection to God that makes the invitation to study the Bible so compelling!

It has been said that "We become what we behold." So, come behold God on the pages of Scripture, and in time, you will become all that He has created you to be.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

ESV Study Bible

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth

by Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart

Living by the Book

by Howard Hendricks

Women of the Word

by Jen Wilkin

Clarifying the Bible

by Mitch Maher

Bible Hub App

Rick Warren's Bible Study Methods

by Rick Warren

