

Study Guide: Hearing and Doing God's Word

Core Message: Bible reading is not meant to end with information. God's Word is a mirror that reveals the truth about us, shows us the heart of God, and calls us to obedient response. We are not only to hear the Word—we are to do it.

Main Scriptures:

- James 1:22–25
- Philemon 8–19
- 2 Kings 5:1–15

1. Opening Reflection

Pastor Brad emphasized that Christians are “people of the book,” but many of us live in a culture where reading deeply and profitably is becoming harder. If we believe the Bible contains what we need for life, faith, parenting, marriage, work, suffering, and spiritual growth, then we need to learn not only how to read it—but how to hear God through it and obey Him.

Opening Questions

1. How would you describe your current relationship with the Bible?

- Consistent?
- Confusing?
- Dry?
- Life-giving?
- Intimidating?

- Familiar but easy to ignore?

2. When you read Scripture, what is usually your biggest challenge?

- Understanding what it means?
- Slowing down enough to listen?
- Believing it applies to you?
- Actually obeying what you read?

3. Can you think of a time when Scripture exposed something in your heart that you did not want to face?

2. Hearers and Doers of the Word

Read James 1:22–25.

> “But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

> — James 1:22

Pastor Brad warned that hearing without doing leads to self-deception. James compares God’s Word to a mirror. When we read Scripture, we see ourselves truthfully before God. But if we walk away unchanged, we are like someone who looks in a mirror and immediately forgets what he looks like.

The Bible does not merely affirm our preferred self-image. It exposes motives, reveals sin, corrects false assumptions, and shows us who God calls us to become.

Discussion Questions

1. James says that those who hear the Word but do not do it are “deceiving” themselves. What are some ways people can deceive themselves spiritually?

2. Why is it dangerous to read the Bible only for information or inspiration, but not obedience?

3. What is one area of your life where you find it easier to “hear” God’s Word than to “do” it?

4. Pastor Brad said Scripture can cut through the “sugar-coated” version of ourselves. Where are you most tempted to present yourself in a better light than is true?

- In your family?
- At church?
- At work?
- In your private thought life?
- Online?
- In your spiritual habits?

5. James also says the doer of the Word “will be blessed in what he does.” How have you seen obedience to Scripture bring blessing, even when obedience was difficult?

3. The H.E.A.R. Pattern

Pastor Brad has been teaching a Bible reading framework using the acronym H.E.A.R.

H — Highlight

Notice words, phrases, themes, repeated ideas, commands, promises, or anything that stands out.

E — Explain

Ask what the passage meant in context. Consider:

- Literary context
- Historical context
- Whole Bible context

A — Apply

Ask how the passage speaks to your life today.

R — Respond

Turn what God has shown you into prayer, repentance, worship, obedience, or action.

This study focuses especially on the A — Apply step.

4. The SPECKA Acronym for Application

Pastor Brad introduced a simple framework for applying Scripture called SPECKA.

When reading a passage, ask:

S — Is there a Sin to avoid or confess?

Look for sinful attitudes, actions, motives, patterns, or desires that Scripture exposes.

Examples:

- Pride
- Self-deception
- Fear
- Unforgiveness
- Abuse of power
- Envy
- Disobedience
- Lack of trust

Personal Questions

1. What sin does this passage expose in me?
2. Is there something I need to confess to God?
3. Is there someone I need to repent to or seek forgiveness from?
4. Am I excusing something God calls sin?

P — Is there a Promise to trust?

Look for what God promises His people. Biblical promises rest on the character and faithfulness of God.

Examples:

- “I will never leave you or forsake you.”
- God works all things together for good for those who love Him.
- God gives grace to the humble.
- God forgives those who confess their sins.
- God blesses those who hear and obey His Word.

Personal Questions

1. What promise of God do I need to believe today?
2. Where am I living as though God’s promise is not true?
3. How would trusting this promise change my fear, anxiety, grief, or decision-making?
4. What promise do I need to carry into this season of my life?

E — Is there an Example to follow or avoid?

Scripture gives us both positive and negative examples. Some people show faith, humility, courage, repentance, and obedience. Others show pride, rebellion, fear, bitterness, or unbelief.

Personal Questions

1. Who in this passage shows faithfulness?
2. Who serves as a warning?
3. What character trait should I imitate?
4. What pattern should I avoid?
5. Who does this person remind me of—including myself?

C — Is there a Command to obey?

Some passages include clear commands from God. These may be direct instructions that apply universally to God's people.

Examples:

- Love the Lord your God.
- Do not be anxious.
- Forgive one another.
- Preach the Word.
- Do not provoke your children to anger.
- Be holy.
- Love your enemies.

Personal Questions

1. Is there a clear command in this passage?

2. Have I delayed obeying something God has already made clear?
3. What would obedience look like today, not someday?
4. Is this command universal, or was it given to a specific person in a specific situation?

K — How does this shape my Knowledge of God?

Pastor Brad emphasized that this may be the most important question. The more we know God, the more equipped we are to live for God.

Ask what the passage reveals about:

- God's character
- God's holiness
- God's mercy
- God's justice
- God's patience
- God's sovereignty
- God's compassion
- God's power
- God's purposes

Personal Questions

1. What does this passage teach me about who God is?
2. What false view of God does this passage correct?

3. How does seeing God more clearly help me obey Him more faithfully?
4. How does this passage point me to Jesus?

A — What is the Application to my everyday life?

This is where the passage moves from ancient text to present obedience. Ask how God's Word speaks into your real relationships, responsibilities, fears, temptations, and decisions.

Personal Questions

1. What needs to change in my everyday life because of this passage?
2. How does this speak to my marriage, parenting, friendships, work, church life, or private habits?
3. What is one specific act of obedience I can take this week?
4. How should I pray in response?

5. Practice Passage One: Philemon 8–19

Background

Paul writes from prison to Philemon, a wealthy believer whose house likely hosted a church. Onesimus, a slave belonging to Philemon, had run away and ended up with Paul.

Paul sends Onesimus back with a letter, appealing to Philemon not merely to receive him as a slave, but as a beloved brother in Christ.

Pastor Brad summarized the passage this way:

Paul appeals to Philemon on the basis of the gospel to overlook Onesimus' status as a fugitive slave and welcome him home as a brother in Christ.

Key Themes

- Gospel-shaped relationships
- Forgiveness
- Power and authority used in love
- Seeing people through the lens of Christ
- Welcoming others as brothers and sisters
- Laying down personal rights for the good of another

SPECKA Through Philemon 8–19

S — Sin to avoid or confess

Possible sins:

- Judgmentalism
- Refusing to forgive
- Seeing people only by their past

- Using power selfishly
- Treating others according to status rather than gospel identity

Questions:

1. Is there someone you continue to define by their worst mistake?
2. Do you tend to see people by their usefulness, status, past, or by their identity in Christ?
3. Where are you tempted to “throw your weight around” instead of appealing in love?
4. Is there someone you need to welcome, forgive, or restore?

P — Promise to trust

This passage does not contain an obvious universal promise, but it rests on gospel realities:

- God receives sinners through Christ.
- God reconciles people to Himself and to one another.
- In Christ, former divisions do not define our deepest identity.

Questions:

1. Do you believe God can truly change people?
2. Do you believe God can change how you see someone who has hurt or disappointed you?
3. Where do you need to trust the reconciling power of the gospel?

E — Example to follow or avoid

Paul is an example of using authority lovingly.

He could command Philemon, but instead he appeals on the basis of love.

Philemon is faced with a choice: demand his rights or receive Onesimus as a brother.

Onesimus reminds us that people can be more than their past.

Questions:

1. How does Paul model Christlike leadership?
2. In what relationships do you have authority or influence?
 - Parent?
 - Employer?
 - Spouse?
 - Ministry leader?
 - Older believer?
3. Do you use that influence to serve others or control them?
4. Are you more likely to demand your rights or lay them down in love?

C — Command to obey

There may not be a direct universal command in the passage, but the gospel principle is clear:

Receive brothers and sisters in Christ with love, mercy, and dignity.

Questions:

1. What would it look like to treat fellow believers primarily as family in Christ?
2. Is there someone you need to approach not as an enemy, inconvenience, or problem—but but as a brother or sister?
3. What would obedience look like in that relationship this week?

K — Knowledge of God

This passage shows us that God sees people differently than the world does. Roman law saw Onesimus as property and a runaway slave. The gospel sees him as a brother in Christ.

God is a reconciling God. He welcomes sinners, restores the broken, and creates a new family in Christ.

Questions:

1. How does God's treatment of you shape the way you treat others?

2. How does the gospel challenge worldly categories of status, power, usefulness, or worth?
3. Where do you need to see someone with “new eyes”?

A — Application to everyday life

Pastor Brad applied this passage to his own life by saying that his most fundamental relationship with others is that they are brothers and sisters in Christ. Even where he has authority, he is called to love as God has loved him.

Personal Application Questions:

1. In your family, workplace, church, or friendships, where do you need to lead with love instead of control?
2. Who needs your mercy more than your judgment?
3. Who needs advocacy, like Onesimus received from Paul?
4. What is one practical way you can lay down your rights for someone else’s good?

Sample Prayer Response

“Lord, when I am tempted to use my authority selfishly, help me lay it down in love. Teach me to see people the way You see them. Make me quick to forgive, slow to judge, and eager to welcome others as family in Christ.”

6. Practice Passage Two: 2 Kings 5:1–15

Background

Naaman was a powerful military commander from Aram, a Gentile nation and political enemy of Israel. He was successful, honored, and feared—but he had leprosy. A young Israelite slave girl told Naaman’s household about the prophet in Israel who could heal him.

Naaman eventually came to Elisha, expecting a dramatic healing. Instead, Elisha told him to wash seven times in the Jordan River. At first, Naaman was angry and offended. But when he humbled himself and obeyed, God healed him.

Pastor Brad summarized the passage this way:

God healed Naaman when he humbled himself to wash in the muddy Jordan River, proving that He alone is powerful and sovereign.

Key Themes

- Pride and humility
- Simple obedience
- God’s mercy toward outsiders
- God’s power over disease and brokenness
- The witness of an ordinary servant girl
- Trusting God even when His instructions seem unimpressive

SPECKA Through 2 Kings 5:1–15

S — Sin to avoid or confess

Possible sins:

- Pride
- Self-importance
- Anger when God's ways do not match our expectations
- Looking down on simple obedience
- Refusing to listen to humble voices
- Trusting status, wealth, or power more than God

Questions:

1. Where are you tempted to think, "I deserve better than this"?
2. Has God ever called you to obey in a way that felt too simple, humbling, or unimpressive?
3. Are you resisting obedience because it does not fit your expectations?
4. What "muddy Jordan River" might God be asking you to step into?

P — Promise to trust

The passage shows that God is able to heal, cleanse, and restore. It also points toward a larger biblical truth:

God gives grace to the humble.

Questions:

1. Where do you need God's cleansing or restoration?
2. Do you believe God can meet you in humble obedience?
3. Are you willing to trust God's way even if it is not the way you would have chosen?
4. How does this passage encourage you if you feel like an outsider?

E — Example to follow or avoid

The slave girl is an example of courageous witness. Though young, displaced, and powerless, she points Naaman toward hope.

Naaman is both a negative and positive example. At first, he is proud and angry. Later, he humbles himself and obeys.

The king of Israel is an example to avoid. He panics instead of trusting that God is able to work.

Naaman's servants are examples of wise counsel. They help him reconsider his pride.

Questions:

1. Who do you identify with most in this story?

- The powerful but needy Naaman?
- The overlooked servant girl?
- The fearful king?
- The wise servants?

2. Is there someone in your life who needs you to point them toward hope in God?

3. Are you willing to receive correction from people you might otherwise overlook?

4. Who has God used to talk sense into you?

C — Command to obey

Elisha's command to Naaman—"Go wash seven times in the Jordan"—was specific to Naaman. Pastor Brad warned that not every command in Scripture applies to us in the same direct way. We should not assume that every instruction to an individual is a universal command for all people.

However, the broader principle is clear:

Humble yourself before God and obey what He says.

Questions:

1. What has God clearly commanded that you already know you need to obey?

2. Are you waiting for something dramatic when God has already given you a simple next step?

3. Are you more interested in an impressive spiritual experience or humble obedience?
4. How can you practice discernment when applying Scripture to your life?

K — Knowledge of God

This passage shows that God is not impressed by human power, status, military success, or wealth. Naaman had almost everything the world values, but he still needed cleansing only God could give.

God is sovereign, merciful, powerful, and gracious. He saves and heals people we might not expect. No one is too far from God's reach.

Questions:

1. What does this passage teach you about God's mercy toward outsiders?
2. How does Naaman's story challenge the idea that successful people do not need God?
3. How does this passage expose the limits of power, money, reputation, or achievement?
4. How does this story point us toward Jesus, who cleanses what we cannot cleanse ourselves?

A — Application to everyday life

Naaman's story invites us to humble ourselves before God. We come to Him not with impressive resumes, but with open hands.

Personal Application Questions:

1. Where do you need to stop trying to impress God and simply come to Him honestly?
2. What area of your life needs humble obedience?
3. Where are you resisting God because His way feels beneath you?
4. Who in your life seems unlikely to respond to God, but needs your faithful witness anyway?

Sample Prayer Response

"Lord, I confess my pride. I often want Your help, but I want it on my terms. Teach me to humble myself before You. Give me faith to obey even when Your way feels simple, strange, or uncomfortable. Cleanse me and make me whole."

7. Questions for Different Life Experiences and Spiritual Journeys

For New Believers

1. What part of Bible reading feels most intimidating to you?
2. How does it encourage you to know that God wants to speak to you through His Word?
3. What is one simple step of obedience you can take this week?
4. Who can help you learn to read and apply Scripture?

For Longtime Christians

1. Are you in danger of hearing familiar truths without obeying them?
2. What passage of Scripture do you know well but struggle to live out?
3. Where has Bible reading become routine rather than transformational?
4. What would renewed obedience look like in this season?

For Those in Leadership

1. How do you use authority—in love or control?
2. Are you more like Paul, appealing in love, or more like someone demanding rights?
3. Who under your care needs advocacy, patience, or restoration?
4. Where do you need to lay down power for the good of others?

For Parents

1. How does James 1 challenge the difference between teaching the Bible and modeling obedience?
2. Are there ways you provoke anger rather than nurture faith?
3. How can you help your children not only hear Scripture but practice it?
4. What would humble repentance look like in your home?

For Those Who Feel Wounded or Wronged

1. How does Philemon challenge your understanding of forgiveness and restoration?

2. Is there someone God is asking you to see through the lens of Christ?
3. What boundaries may still be wise, while also refusing bitterness?
4. How has God shown mercy to you?

For Those Who Feel Like Outsiders

1. How does Naaman's story encourage you?
2. Do you believe God sees and welcomes people who feel far away?
3. What keeps you from coming to God with open hands?
4. How does Jesus offer the cleansing and belonging you need?

For Those in a Season of Success

1. What does Naaman teach about the limits of success and reputation?
2. Are you tempted to believe your accomplishments make you less dependent on God?
3. Where do you need humility?
4. What weakness reminds you that you still need grace?

For Those in a Season of Suffering

1. How does Scripture function as a mirror in your suffering?
2. What promise of God do you need to cling to?
3. Where might God be inviting you to trust Him without fully understanding?
4. Who can help you listen and obey when you feel overwhelmed?

8. Personal Bible Study Template Using SPECKA

Use this when reading any Bible passage.

Passage:

Write the Scripture reference here.

Highlight:

What words, phrases, commands, promises, or themes stand out?

Explain:

What does this passage mean in context?

- Literary context:

- Historical context:

- Whole Bible context:

Apply Using SPECKA

S — Sin to avoid or confess

What sin is exposed?

P — Promise to trust

What promise of God should I believe?

E — Example to follow or avoid

Who should I imitate or avoid becoming like?

C — Command to obey

What does God command?

K — Knowledge of God

What does this passage teach me about God?

A — Application to everyday life

What specific response is God calling me to?

Respond in Prayer:

Write a short prayer of confession, trust, obedience, or worship.

9. Closing Challenge

Do not settle for being a hearer only.

This week, when you read Scripture, ask God to show you the truth about Himself and the truth about you. Then respond with obedience.

A helpful prayer before reading:

“Lord, open Your Word to me. Show me who You are. Show me where I need to change. Give me grace not only to hear You, but to obey You.”

Final Reflection

1. What is one truth from this study you need to act on?
2. What is one specific obedience step you will take this week?
3. Who can you share that step with for encouragement and accountability?