

RIGHT BIBLE

DAILY  
DEVOTIONS

STUDY  
METHODS

INTERPRETATION

STUDY TOOLS

COMMENTARIES

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STUDY  
PLAN

DAVID W.  
CLOUD

STUDY  
PROJECTS

UNDERSTANDING  
THE  
BIBLE  
FOR YOURSELF

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# Contents

The Author's Relationship with the Bible .....	5
Introduction.....	11
You Must Have Confidence That the Bible Is the Infallible Word of God .....	14
You Must Use the Right Bible .....	18
You Must Know Why You Need to Study the Bible .....	51
You Must Meet the Spiritual Requirements for Bible Study ....	61
You Must Have a Habit of Daily Bible Study.....	87
You Must Apply Sound Rules of Bible Interpretation .....	103
You Must Employ Sound Methods of Study.....	178
You Must Use the Best Bible Study Tools .....	225
You Must Be Wise in the Use of Bible Commentaries .....	245
You Must Aim to Obtain Extensive Knowledge of the Bible.....	264
Bible Study Software.....	274
Conclusion.....	280
Bible Study Projects.....	282
Suggested Bible Study Books .....	341
Review Questions .....	342

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# The Author's Relationship with the Bible

I have delighted in the Bible for 47 years, but for the first 23 years of my life I did not care anything about it, in spite of the fact that my parents faithfully took me to church when I was a boy. They lovingly bought me Bibles as I was growing up, but as far as I can remember I had no interest in them. I cannot recall even one time when I opened my Bible to read and study it for myself. I knew the well-known Bible stories by heart, and I knew the books of the Bible, and I even won Bible sword drills by being the first to find a certain passage, but I did not understand the meaning of the Bible and I saw no personal benefit in it for my daily life.

The reason was that I had never repented toward God and received Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior (Acts 20:21). I was baptized when I was about 11 years old and joined the church, but it was an empty thing. There was no change in my life.

The Bible says, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Co. 5:21). True salvation makes a powerful change in one's life, but there was no change in me. Though I was in church, my heart was in the world, and I sought the things of the world. When I went to church, my thoughts were not on the Bible and the things of Christ; my thoughts were on foolishness and on my worldly friends. Titus 1:16 describes my condition perfectly: *"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."*

My relationship with the Bible in those days was all "head knowledge." There was no heart relationship with Christ, and when that is the case, the Bible is a closed book. As soon as I

was old enough, I quit going to church. I was about 17 years old at the time, and I did not go back to church or have anything further to do with the Bible for several dark years.

One glorious day in late summer 1973, the Lord had mercy upon a prodigal son and sent a Christian man named Ron Walker to help me find my way back to the Bible. This man loved the Word of God so much that he had memorized large portions by heart and he could show you exactly what the Bible said about practically anything you were thinking. He was a walking Bible concordance! By the grace of God and through the prayers of my mom and dad, my godly maternal grandmother, and others, my path crossed with Ron's. He spent about four days with me, showing me what the Bible says about all of the foolish things I believed at the time.

I was a voracious reader even when I was not saved, and through foolish books and the influence of various people I met in my worldly travels, I had gotten involved in Hinduism and New Age and various other vain philosophies. I had been stationed in Vietnam with the U.S. Army for a year and a half, and I spent a lot of time reading and discussing philosophy with unsaved buddies. After I returned to the States, I became infatuated with Hindu meditation and joined the Self-Realization Fellowship Society.

Ron didn't know anything about the philosophies and religions that I was involved with, but he did know the Bible. We traveled together from near Miami, Florida, to Mexico via Brownsville, Texas, and then back to Daytona Beach, Florida. All along the way, I was trying to impress Ron with my views, attempting to convince him of the glories of New Ageism and to refute what he was teaching me from Scripture. For his part, he simply quoted the Bible.

At first, I was impressed with his Bible knowledge, very interested in what he was saying, and fascinated by our "religious discussion." But after the first day I became

# Introduction

This is a new course on practical Bible study. It has some things from our former course (*How to Study the Bible*), but everything is upgraded and there are many new things.

Our goal is that *each one of our church members* will be a serious Bible student, from the youngest to the oldest. It is the only way to have a true New Testament church in fulfillment of God's clear commands. It is the only way to obey Matthew 28:19, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." It is the only way to obey Colossians 1:28, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." It is the only way to obey Hebrews 5:12-14, that every child of God should be skillful in God's Word, able to eat the meat and exercise their spiritual senses to discern good from evil. It is the only way to obey 2 Timothy 2:15, to be "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." It is the only way to obey Romans 12:1-2, to be transformed by the renewing of the mind, which comes by an intimate relationship with God's Word.

That every one of our church members be a serious Bible student is the only way to have the families that please God and accomplish His will. Fathers and mothers must be serious Bible students in order to educate and evangelize and disciple their children. The children and youth must be serious Bible students, for it is by the Scripture that they are made wise unto salvation and perfected unto all good works (2 Ti. 3:15-17).

I am sure that this course will transform the life of any born again, spiritually-serious child of God who uses it properly. It is based on my own intense Bible study and ministry, which includes writing a Bible encyclopedia and verse-by-verse

Bible commentaries, and it gleans from *dozens* of the best books and courses on Bible study by other men.

This course is for brand new Bible students *and* for older Bible students. If you are a new student, you won't understand everything, but you will understand something if you try. This is a course that can grow you and that can grow with you.

**Start where you are with what you have.** Don't wait until your situation is perfect. Don't wait until you have more study tools or more time.

You *can* be an effectual Bible student if you are saved and if you have a love for Christ and truth and if you are willing to do what is required. A great many of the most effectual Bible students and teachers began with a weak education but were motivated to become serious students of the Bible because of salvation and love for God. That is my testimony. I always loved to read, but I was not a serious student. Throughout my youth, I didn't take education seriously. I did enough to get by, barely passing high school. But as soon as I was saved, I was passionate about learning the Bible and *anything* pertaining to truth and wisdom. Consider missionary Bill Hardecker, who is a very serious Bible student. He was saved as a teenager, and at the time he was a video gamer who never read books. But he became eager to study truth and became a serious reader. Consider Robert West, who has authored a book on Bible study: "Years ago, when I was a high school student, my reading skills were poor. I had difficulty understanding and retaining what I read. Later, when I realized that God communicates to us through His written Word, I concluded that if I wanted to know Him and His truth, I must give myself to studying His Word. I've studied the Bible for many years now, encouraged along the way by devoted Christians who love the Bible" (West, *How to Study the Bible*). I think of Trent Austin. He got saved in prison and



his stepdad gave him a copy of the *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity*, and he nearly wore it out before his release.

You can be an effectual Bible student if you have the heart for it, but you have to learn *how* to study the Bible. Consider the following testimony: “Not long after I became a Christian, someone encouraged me, ‘Now that you’ve come to faith, you need to get into the Word.’ ‘Wonderful,’ I said. ‘Where do I start?’ ‘Start anywhere, brother. It’s all profitable.’ So I went home and opened my Bible--and landed in Ezekiel. Right in the middle of the wheels. I struggled with that passage for a while, until I thought, This has to be an exception. So I tried the other end of the Bible--Revelation. Bowls and vials and wrath, which completely confused me. So, I’m ashamed to say, I closed the Book for one solid year” (Howard Hendricks).

At a fundamental level, studying the Bible is like any other discipline. You have to learn how to do it, and the more you learn, the more you see. It’s like looking at a tree. Anyone with eyes can look at a tree and see something, but those who have studied trees see far more, and the more expert they are in trees, the more they see. The same is true for looking at a landscape, an oriental carpet, or the stars. I have a friend who sells sapphires and other gems, and from time to time he shows me selections of them. They all look beautiful to me. They are all colorful and shiny. But he sees the details that make the difference between an expensive sapphire and a cheap one.

## **You Must Have Confidence That the Bible Is the Infallible Word of God**

It is impossible to study the Bible properly and *exactly* without confidence that it is the divinely-inspired Word of God. This matter must be settled.

The effectual Bible student must pore over the pages of Scripture looking at every word, every detail, believing that nothing in the Scripture is there by accident. He must be confident that Scripture was purified seven times by an omniscient God (Ps. 12:6), that every word of God is perfect (Ps. 19:7), sure (Ps. 19:7), right (Ps. 19:8), eternal (“enduring for ever,” Ps. 19:9), true (Ps. 19:9).

There is a fierce, widespread attack upon the divine inspiration of Scripture today. How can we know for sure that the Bible is the infallible Word of God?

It proves to be so by a great many evidences, but it is enough for me to consider what Jesus Christ and His apostles believed. I am 100% sure that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. With Peter I can say, “We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (Joh. 6:69). Christ’s testimony settles everything for me. I will not follow any man who disputes Jesus’ teaching in any point.

So what did Jesus teach about Scripture?

After His resurrection, He gave a Bible study to two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus near Jerusalem, and it is summarized as follows:

“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Lu. 24:27).

Christ taught that the entire Old Testament is a unified book that points to Him as the main theme. That means that it is a supernatural book, divinely planned by God, divinely superintended in its writing and canonization.

A little later that same day, Jesus made the following statement about the Scripture to His disciples:

“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures ...” (Lu. 24:44-45).

Jesus taught that the key to a right understanding of Scripture is to receive it as a divinely inspired book, a divinely unified book, a supernatural book containing predictive prophecy that prepared the way for Christ.

That’s enough for me. A book planned and delivered by an infallible God is an infallible book.

Consider two more of Christ’s statements about the Scripture:

“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Mt. 5:18).

Here Jesus taught us to respect the authority of the Scripture in its words, even in its very letters. Jots and tittles are small parts of Hebrew letters. He taught that the Scripture is preserved and cannot possibly be corrupted.

“If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken” (Joh. 10:35).

Here Jesus taught that the Scripture is the Word of God and cannot be broken, meaning it is absolutely authoritative in all its parts and details. He made this point by quoting from a relatively obscure statement in Psalm 82:6. He taught that the

whole Scripture is the Word of God and cannot be broken. All of it is true; all of it will be fulfilled.

Christ taught His apostles the same thing.

Consider Paul's doctrine of Scripture:

"All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Words could not be clearer as to the full divine inspiration of Scripture. It is a product of God, so much so that it is as if He breathed it out, which is what the Greek says literally. It is a perfect Book that has the power to bring perfection.

Consider Peter's doctrine of Scripture:

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts; Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:19-21).

The Scripture is not the product of man's will or man's own thinking. It is a product of God's Spirit. He planned the Scripture, chose the prophets, and delivered to them the words of Scripture.

That settles the matter for me and that has settled the matter for millions of believers through the centuries, and those who trust Scripture as the infallible Word of God have never been disappointed.

"In the studies which we here commence we approach the Bible as being in its totality the Word of God; and in all our studying of it, therefore, we are seeking to learn,

under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the mind and the truth and the will of God” (J. Sidlow Baxter).

This is the greatest book on earth,  
Unparalleled it stands;  
Its author God, its truth Divine,  
Inspired in every word and line,  
Tho’ writ by human hands.  
This is the living rock of truth  
Which all assaults defies.  
O’er every stormy blast of time  
It towers with majesty sublime;  
It lives, and never dies.  
This is the volume of the Cross;  
Its saving truth is sure;  
Its doctrine pure, its history true,  
Its Gospel old, yet ever new,  
Shall evermore endure.

For more on this, see *The Bible’s Proof*, available as a free eBook from [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org), and *Give Attendance to Doctrine*, one of the *Way of Life Advanced Bible Studies Series* courses See also the expository studies of 2 Timothy 3:15-17 and 2 Peter 1:19-21 in the *Way of Life Commentary Series* on “The Pastoral Epistles” and “The General Epistles.”

## You Must Use the Right Bible

To be most effective in his work, the Bible student must have complete confidence in his Bible. It must be studied as the verbally inspired, plenary inspired, absolutely authoritative Word of God. That means that in the midst of the multiplicity of Bibles today one must know where to find the right Bible. There are dozens of different versions available in English alone.

Most Bible study courses use the smorgasbord approach to Bible versions, basically saying the student should use his own discretion in choosing a Bible. For example, Howard Hendricks, author of *Living by the Book*, advises reading the Bible in multiple versions. He specifically mentions the King James, the New King James, the Phillips, and the Cotton Patch Version. He gives no effectual warning about textual errors or faulty methods of translation.

We have observed that modern textual criticism has corrupted the authority of God's Word. Modern textual criticism replaces a clear "thus saith the Lord" with "this manuscript says, that text says, that version says." We reject this. We believe the text was settled in the Reformation era when the Scripture was brought out of the age of handwriting into the age of printing and was translated into the major languages of the world and carried to the ends of the earth. We are convinced that "the better manuscripts" are those that were used by the Reformation editors and translators. For us the text is settled, and our job is to teach it and preach it. We refuse to be textual critics. We don't try to reinvent the wheel.

This is not a "KJV Only" position. It is a "high respect for the KJV" position. We do not believe the KJV is "advanced revelation" or that its 17th century English is divinely inspired. We do not believe the KJV is "given by inspiration."

The term “given by inspiration” in 2 Timothy 3:16 refers to the Hebrew and Aramaic and Greek that was written by the holy men of old as they were moved by the Spirit. We believe that the KJV is an accurate, lovely, and God-superintended translation of the divinely-inspired Scripture, and we give priority to it.

### **Some foundational facts about the Bible version issue:**

A foundational fact about Bible versions is this: All of the versions of the Protestant Reformation (English King James, German Luther, French Olivetan, Spanish Enzinas, etc.) were based on the same Greek text whereas all of the modern versions (except the New King James) are based on a different Greek text.

Generally speaking, the KJV Greek text was the text commonly used among God’s people through the centuries. It is called the “majority text” because it represents the vast majority of existing Greek manuscripts. It is called the “received text” because it was received from previous generations.

The modern Greek text is called the Egyptian text or the Alexandrian text, because it came from Egypt and the Egyptian city of Alexandria, which was a center of learning during the early centuries of the church age. The article “Textual Criticism and the Alexandrian Text” at the [www.earlham.edu](http://www.earlham.edu) web site summarizes the standard view of textual criticism as follows: “This text arose in Egypt and is generally conceded to be the most important one. Westcott and Hort, who named this the Neutral Text, thought that Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus had preserved a pure form of the Alexandrian type of text.” Jacobus Petzer says, “... the vast majority of textual scholars today agrees that the Alexandrian text is most probably the closest representative of the original text available today” (Petzer, “The History of the New Testament Text,” *New Testament Textual Criticism*,

*Exegesis and Church History*, edited by B. Aland and J. Delobel, 1994, p. 25). Peter van Minnen, in *Dating the Oldest New Testament Manuscripts*, concludes, “It is to be noticed that all the manuscripts listed above come from Egypt. The papyri ... Sinaiticus ... B [Vaticanus] ... We owe the early Egyptian Christians an immense debt” (<http://www.clt.astate.edu/wnarey/Bible%20as%20Literature%20documents/content2.htm>). But Egypt is not the place where the Spirit of God gave the New Testament Scriptures. God chose to deliver the Scriptures to churches in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, and Europe. Not one book of the New Testament is associated with Egypt.

The modern Greek text is called the “critical text,” because it is the product of “modern textual criticism.” This was invented in 19th century (largely) by theological modernists and Unitarians. It was not based on the belief that the Scripture is the infallible Word of God and that God has preserved the Scripture. Modern textual criticism treats the Bible as just another book and uses naturalistic tools to determine its text. We will say more about textual criticism and the textual critics.

The modern Greek text favors two Greek manuscripts above all others, and those are the Sinaiticus (Aleph) and Vaticanus (B), which are the two oldest nearly complete Greek New Testaments, dating to the 4th century. Sinaiticus was discovered in 1844 by Constantine von Tischendorf in St. Catherine’s monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Vaticanus was discovered in the Vatican Library in 1475. Its history is unknown. The translators of the New International Version, for example, call the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus “the two most reliable early manuscripts” (footnote to Mark 16:9-20).

The first popular edition of the modern Greek New Testament was that of Westcott and Hort (1881). The Westcott-Hort was largely the basis for the Nestles’ Greek



New Testament and the United Bible Societies Greek New Testament. The Nestles and the United Bible Societies Greek New Testaments are almost identical to the W-H text of 1881 *in significant departures from the Received Text and in passages that have extensive doctrinal significance*. Jack Moorman counted only 216 instances in which the Nestle-Aland 26th edition apparatus departs from the Vaticanus and Aleph. The W-H and the UBS delete or question almost the same number of verses (WH--48, UBS--45), the same number of significant portions of verses (WH--193, UBS 185), and the same number of names and titles of the Lord (WH--221, UBS--212).

The different Greek text accounts for thousands of changes in the modern versions. It is shorter than the Reformation Greek text by 2,886 words, which is the equivalent of the omission of the entire books of 1 and 2 Peter. We will say more about this.

On the Old Testament side, changes began to be introduced from the Septuagint (Greek translations), the Talmud, and other sources.

The first prominent modern English version based on the modern Greek text was the English Revised Version of 1881, but it never threatened the popularity of the King James Bible. The same was true for the American Standard Version of 1901, the Revised Standard Version of 1952, and the New American Standard Bible of 1960. It was not until the publication of the New International Version in the 1970s that a modern version began to be widely used outside of theologically liberal circles.

**There are two fundamental principles in choosing the right Bible translation. It must be based on the right Hebrew and Greek texts, and it must use the right translation methodology.**

The following is a summary of the book *Why We Hold to the King James Bible*, available from Way of Life Literature:

The KJV is superior in its Hebrew and Greek texts

The KJV is superior in its history and process of translation

The KJV is superior in its purity of translation

The KJV is superior in its English

The KJV is superior as the basis for serious study tools

The KJV is superior in its influence

The KJV is superior in its convicting, life-changing power

### **I. The King James Bible is superior in its Hebrew and Greek texts.**

It is based on the Hebrew Masoretic and the Greek Received Text.

We aren't going to give the evidence for this here, but having looked at the evidence, we are convinced that the Masoretic Hebrew and the Greek Received Text was the text given by divine inspiration and preserved through the centuries. It was published at the advent of printing, translated into the major languages, and sent to the ends of the earth during the Reformation and the modern missionary era.

Consider the witness of John Burgon, one of the greatest biblical scholars of the 19th century. After devoting much of his life to investigating the history of the Bible with the objective of determining what biblical text has come down through the centuries, John Burgon concluded:

“Call this text Erasmusian or Complutensian,--the text of Stephens, or of Beza, or of the Elzevirs,--call it the ‘Received,’ or the *Traditional Greek Text*, or whatever name you please;--the fact remains, that a text *has* come down to us which is attested by a general consensus of ancient Copies, ancient Fathers, ancient Versions” (*The Revision Revised*, p. 269).

This testimony cannot be taken lightly. Burgon was a truly eminent textual scholar. Called “that grand old scholar,” by Frederick Scrivener, Burgon was a brilliant man, fluent in many languages, and he traveled throughout Europe and parts of the Middle East collating ancient manuscripts. He personally examined the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. He did probably the most extensive personal textual research into the biblical quotations of “church fathers” that has ever been accomplished.

John Burgon was not only a great scholar, he believed in the absolute infallibility of biblical inspiration.

In my estimation, no man has come up to Burgon’s standard since his day. I am not in a position to reproduce Burgon’s textual researches. I don’t have the skills or the opportunity that Burgon had. I have done my best to test the conclusions of the textual scholars using the resources at hand, but at the end of the day I must lean upon the research of other men. I accept Burgon’s conclusion that the Traditional Text has come down to us attested by a general consensus of ancient Copies, ancient Fathers, and ancient Versions. When the strange theories of modern textual criticism are rejected, it is evident that the Traditional Reformation Text has far more historic authority than the modern critical text.

Consider the witness of Edward F. Hills, who had a Ph.D. in textual criticism from Harvard: “The God who brought the New Testament text safely through the ancient and medieval manuscript period did not fumble when it came time to transfer this text to the modern printed page. This is the conviction which guides the believing Bible student as he considers the relationship of the printed Textus Receptus to the Traditional New Testament text found in the majority of the Greek New Testament manuscripts. ... It is inconceivable that the divine providence which had preserved the New Testament text during the long ages of the manuscript period

should blunder when at last this text was committed to the printing press” (*The King James Version Defended*, 4th edition, pp. 199, 200).

The Masoretic Hebrew and Greek Received Text were unrivaled from the dawn of printing until the late 19th century. Then it was challenged by a text that is the product of modern textual criticism, which was deeply influenced by theological modernism and unitarianism. It is a naturalistic principle that is not founded on faith in the divine preservation of Scripture. Modern textual criticism is clearly the product of end-time apostasy. We have documented this extensively in books such as *The Modern Version Hall of Shame*, available from Way of Life Literature.

Consider the example of the editors of the United Bible Societies Greek New Testament: Bruce Metzger, Matthew Black, Allen Wikgren, Carlo Martini, Kurt Aland, Barbara Aland, and Johannes Karavidopoulos. Martini was a liberal Roman Catholic cardinal and the others (excepting one) were theological modernists. Consider Bruce Metzger. His 1997 autobiography, *The Reminiscences of an Octogenarian*, omitted any reference to a personal salvation experience. He said the O.T. contains “a matrix of myth, legend, and history,” denied the worldwide flood, called Job an “ancient folktale,” claimed there are two authors of Isaiah, called Jonah a “popular legend,” and in a great many other ways attacked the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture. (See *The Modern Version Hall of Shame*.)

Men like this have no spiritual discernment and no business handling the Word of God.

The Greek Testament produced by modern textual criticism is shorter by 2,886 words. This is equivalent to removing the entire books of 1 and 2 Peter from the Bible (Jack Moorman, *Missing in Modern Bibles: Is the full Story Being Told*, Bible for Today, 1981).

# **You Must Know Why You Need to Study the Bible**

## **Outline**

- To be saved
- To know God
- To understand every important thing in life
- To fulfill your purpose in life
- To know God's will
- To grow spiritually
- To have a prophetic mindset
- To get practical wisdom for every part of life
- To be qualified for church leadership
- To know the truth; to have a testing mindset
- To disciple your family
- To be a teacher
- To learn how to think

To study God's Word is the most fundamental and important and valuable thing in life. It is far above all other things in importance. All other things flow from a right knowledge of God's Word. God Himself must be the center of our lives, but everything we know for sure about God we learn from the Bible.

If you don't set aside time to study the Bible as a serious priority, you are an idolator; your whole life is out of order.

Being a serious Bible student is at the very heart of knowing God, being a real disciple of Jesus Christ, true Christianity, living wisely, finding God's will. God has revealed Himself and His truth and wisdom in a Book. It is not a simple book. It is not a comic book or a children's story book. The newest part is 2,000 years old. The historical and cultural context is foreign to our lives today. It contains the deepest truths that

man is capable of comprehending. It is solemn, substantive, intense. It has to be read and studied and interpreted and meditated upon and applied and obeyed. To be a serious Bible student is a whole-heart and a whole-life project.

### **To be saved (2 Ti. 3:15)**

- “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Ti. 3:15). The Bible is able to make man wise unto salvation.

- This is why children need to read the Bible. This is why we have unsaved people read the Bible. Even if they don’t believe it, it has the power to bring conviction of sin and repentance and faith.

- This is why we have unsaved people read the Bible and hear the Bible. Even if they don’t believe it, it has the power to bring conviction of sin and repentance and faith. To get people saved we need to get them in the Word. The man that led me to Christ spent four days with me, teaching me the Bible. Our *Seeker’s Bible Study* course is designed to get a lost person into the Word for several weeks under the guidance of a soul winner. (It can be found at [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).)

### **To know God**

- This is the first purpose of Scripture. God wrote a book! The Bible is the revelation of God. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (Joh. 17:3). “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is none else*” (Isa. 45:22). Nothing is more important than studying God’s Book to know the God of the Book.

**To understand every important thing in life, to answer every important question. To give the right worldview.**

- Who is God? What is He like? How does He relate to man? What is man? Is he an animal? Where did he come from? What is his purpose? What is woman's purpose? Are there absolute laws by which man must live? What is death? What happens at death? Does man cease to exist? Does he go somewhere? Why is the world filled with trouble? What is wrong with man? Why does he seem to be a mixture of good and evil? Are there angels? Is Satan a real being? How did human institutions such as marriage and government arise and what is their purpose? Do the stars affect man's destiny? Every big question of life is answered plainly in the Bible.

### **To fulfill your purpose in life (Ec. 12:13)**

- "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole *duty* of man" (Ec. 12:13). To fear God and keep His commandments requires the study of God's Word. This is the first purpose of man's mind, eyes, and ears.

### **To know God's will**

- The Bible is the will of God. It is the ways of God. In the Bible I find the "mind of Christ" (1 Co. 2:16). Trying to know God's will apart from the Bible is blind mysticism. It is deception. Knowing God's will requires leaning not to my own understanding (Pr. 3:5-6).

### **To grow spiritually**

- The Bible is a spiritually living book. It is "able to build you up" (Ac. 20:32). By it the believer can grow (1 Pe. 2:1-2). Spiritual transformation requires renewing the mind, and this comes by God's Word (Ro. 12:1-2). A daily Bible study time and daily meditation in God's Word is the path of continual spiritual revival. Neglect of the Bible is the path of backsliding.

**To be prepared for the ministry**

- Every believer is a priest (1 Pe. 2:5), an ambassador (2 Co. 5:20), a minister in the body (Eph. 4:16), and has spiritual gifts (Ro. 12:3-8). These ministries require serious education, and that education is found in the Bible.

**To have a prophetic mindset.**

- Prophecy forms a large part of the Bible and a good understanding of prophecy is necessary for a proper Christian worldview. This begins with knowing that the next major event on God's prophetic calendar is the Rapture of New Testament saints, which is imminent and must be expected at any time.

- The Bible expands one's horizon. By means of Bible prophecy, the student can look beyond today, beyond this short life, and this enables him to weigh things properly. For example, Paul described the present troubles as a "light affliction, which is but for a moment" and the future blessing as "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Co. 4:17). Only the Bible can give such a perspective to life.

**To get practical wisdom for every part of life**

- The Bible is "for instruction in righteousness" (2 Ti. 3:16-17). The Bible is the handbook for human life. God has designed the Bible to meet the needs of every part of man's life. It has wisdom for children, for youth, for old age, for the married, for the single, for husbands, for wives, for fathers, for mothers, for government, for the church, for servants, for workers, for bosses, for commerce and business, for times of work and times of leisure, for times of persecution and times of liberty, for times of prosperity and times of lack, for times of sickness and times of health, for times of joy and times of depression, for times of war and times of peace. The Bible has practical wisdom on how to use money, how to make wise decisions, how to choose friends, how to choose a life mate,



# **You Must Meet the Spiritual Requirements for Bible Study**

The Bible is a spiritual book and spiritual requirements are necessary to understand it. This section must not be skipped over or taken lightly. It is fundamental. Even if you have been saved for some time, you should pay attention to these things and be reminded of what is necessary to be an effectual Bible student. Being put in remembrance of things is an essential part of spiritual growth (2 Ti. 1:6; 2:14; 2 Pe.1:12-13, 15; 3:1; Jude 1:5). The Lord's Supper, for example, is sanctification through remembrance (1 Co. 11:24-25).

## **Outline**

- Spiritual life
- Reverence
- The right objective
- Obedience
- Hunger for God and His truth
- The right priority
- Prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit
- Meditation
- Patience and persistence
- Concentration
- Holy attention to details
- Humility
- A good church
- Starting where you are

## **1. Understanding the Bible requires SPIRITUAL LIFE (1 Co. 2:14 - 3:3).**

The first and foremost requirement for fruitful Bible study is a saved, Spirit-led life. Unlike other books, the Bible is a spiritual book and can only be understood by people with spiritual discernment. This is so basic but so important.

There are three types of people described in 1 Corinthians chapters two and three: the *natural* man, the *spiritual* man, and the *carnal* man.

**The natural man** is the unsaved person who is spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-3). His mind is blinded (2 Co. 4:4). He does not have spiritual eyes. He cannot understand the things of God. When the heart turns to the Lord, though, and receives Jesus Christ, the blindness is lifted (2 Co. 3:14-17). When I was growing up in a Baptist church, I had a Bible and I studied the Bible in Sunday School and knew it well enough to win sword drills, but the Bible didn't become a living Book for me until I was converted. In Bible study, spiritual life is at least as important as technical skills. R.A. Torrey, a graduate of Yale Divinity School who did postgraduate studies in Germany, said, "A person who understands the language of the Holy Spirit, but who does not understand a word of Greek or Hebrew or Aramaic, will get more out of the Bible than one who knows all about Greek and Hebrew but is not born again. It is a well-demonstrated fact that many plain men and women who possess no knowledge of the original languages in which the Bible was written have knowledge of the real contents of the Bible. Their understanding of its actual teaching and its depth, fullness, and beauty far surpasses that of many learned professors in theological faculties." "The deepest biblical scholar, if he fails to find Christ, knows less of the real meaning of the Gospel than the humblest Christian who is living in the faith of the Son of God" (*Pulpit Commentary*).

**The spiritual man** is the believer who lives for Christ (1 Co. 2:15-16). The believer is either spiritual or carnal depending on his walk with Christ, depending on whether he is walking in the flesh or the Spirit (Ga. 5:16-25). The spiritual man has the Spirit (Ro. 8:9) and walks in the Spirit (Ga. 5:16). He is filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18) and prays in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18).

***The carnal man*** is the believer who walks after the flesh rather than the Spirit (1 Co. 3:1-4). Because he is not walking in the Spirit, he cannot understand the difficult things of Scripture. He can take milk but not meat. See also Hebrews 5:12-14. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus warned that the Word of God can be “choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Lu. 8:14).

Since salvation is so essential in effective Bible study and since there are so many nominal Christians in churches, let's consider some biblical evidences of salvation.

*A conversion experience and new spiritual life and direction* (Joh. 3:3; Mt. 18:3; 2 Co. 5:17). The testimonies we find in the Bible emphasize this experience (e.g., Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10; the woman at the well in John 4:4-42; the Jews converted on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:37-42; the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-39; the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:23-34; and the idolaters at Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 1:9. Biblical salvation is not a process; it is a conversion experience!

*A personal relationship with Christ* (Joh. 17:3; Mt. 7:21-23). Biblical salvation is not changing religions; it is knowing Christ personally as one's Lord and Saviour.

*Knowing God as Abba, Father* (Ro. 8:15).

*The witness of the Spirit* (Ro. 8:16).

*Love of God's Word* (Joh. 8:31-32, 47; 10:27-28). One of the greatest evidences of salvation is one's attitude toward the Bible.

*Continuing in God's Word* (Joh. 8:31-32).

*Following Christ* (Joh. 10:27).

*Love of righteousness* (1 Jo. 2:3-4). The true believer can sin, because the “old man” still resides in him, but he has an

# **You Must Have a Habit of Daily Bible Study**

## **Outline**

- Establish a time
- Establish a place
- Have some basic study tools
- Have a notebook and pen
- Have a pencil for marking your Bible
- Have a reading plan
- Study with prayer
- Try to get something practical each day
- Maintain a prayer diary

It is important to develop godly habits in the Christian life. Jesus had “the custom” of attending the synagogue services (Lu. 4:16). This was His habit. Likewise the believer must have habits of church attendance and daily Bible study.

Jesus likened the Word of God to one’s daily food (Mt. 4:4). As food is necessary for physical growth and health, so the Word of God is necessary for spiritual growth and health. As food must be eaten daily, so the Word of God must be consumed daily. When the Israelites were in the wilderness, God gave them manna to eat, and it had to be gathered and eaten every day. It could not be left over for the next day. Likewise, the believer must have a habit of consistent, daily Bible study if he wants to grow strong and develop in God’s will.

The habit of daily Bible study needs to be like the law of the Medes and Persians, which could not be changed even by the king (Est. 1:9; Da. 6:8).

Following are some tips for daily Bible reading.

### **1. Establish a time.**

Understanding the Bible for yourself requires a serious commitment of time.

It requires carving out an amount of time and keeping that time as your Bible time with God. If you do not develop a habit of daily Bible reading at a certain time each day, you will probably only read and study it hit and miss.

Look at your schedule and decide what time would be best for your situation. At different periods in my life I have had different times for my devotions, depending on the situation. Usually first thing in the morning is best, before your mind becomes filled with the business of the day. But other times of the day might work better for you. It is something to pray about.

### **2. Establish a place**

A quiet, private place is necessary, if at all possible.

I have seen Christians trying to study the Bible in a room where other people are talking and a radio is playing, etc. That might be necessary on some occasions, but as an ongoing practice it is not wise and it is not honoring to the Lord who deserves our undivided attention. The Bible is the very Word of God. Would it be proper to invite God over for a visit and then have many other things going on at the same time as He was talking to us?

### **3. Have some basic study tools.**

Every workman needs the right tools.

We will discuss these later in this course.

### **4. Have a notebook and pen.**

Effectual Bible study requires writing things down, capturing things.

In the first year that I was saved, I filled up several notebooks. For example, I designated a large notebook for studying the topics of the Bible by dividing it into multiple categories, such as salvation, sin, comfort, Christ's deity, Satan, hell, angels, and various other subjects that interested me at the time. As I found verses dealing with those subjects I wrote them out under the proper category. I was reading the Bible through multiple times a year so I was able to gather together what the Bible says on various topics pretty quickly and do my own doctrinal studies.

### **5. Have a pencil for marking your Bible.**

A pencil doesn't bleed through the page like ink, and it can be erased. A mechanical pencil is ideal, because it doesn't have to be sharpened.

Use the margins of your Bible to add cross-references, word definitions, and brief notes. This is why a wide margin Bible is useful.

Following are some suggestions for marking your Bible:

***Underline judiciously.*** It is your Bible and you can do as you please, but let me recommend that you not just underline anything and everything indiscriminately. If you do that, your Bible will soon be a bewildering and almost indecipherable hodgepodge of underlines and marks. It is better to use some careful thought in underlining. Let me make some suggestions from Genesis 1:

*Underline things that will help you see at a glance the divisions of a passage.* In Genesis 1, I have underlined "the evening and the morning" because this phrase marks the days of creation. (In Revelation 2-3 I have marked the names of the seven churches, thus I can see at a glance the division of that section.)