

STUDYING

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Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

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STUDYING

We have prepared this guide on how to approach the study of God's Word so that you may gain the maximum benefit from each study, deepen your relationship with the Lord and strengthen your walk with Him. The study of the Word requires more than just casually reading the material. We need to examine the teachings by looking into each section and challenging ourselves as to whether we have understood what we have read - firstly at an intellectual level, and then at a spiritual level with, of course, the help of the Holy Spirit.

There is no easy way (or short cut) to obtaining heart-knowledge of God's Word. Sincere, dedicated, personal study is always needed. Without it we will probably do little of any real significance for God on this earth.

Unfortunately, too many Christians, throughout their whole lives, desire to be spoon-fed the Word of God by others. Not only do they desire this, but many also want the "lumps" taken out, e.g. teachings concerning Hell, judgement, punishment, end times, bondages, commandments, personal responsibility, etc. God tells us that we are not only to hear His Word, but we should also study His Word. And this means all of God's Word, not just small portions of it which make us feel comfortable.

Also, let us not mistake activity for progress, a common mistake in Christian circles. We need to study diligently within the proper guidelines of truth and wisdom. For example, to study an untruth will reap no reward from Heaven. Even though a person may do so conscientiously, their efforts will be in vain, and in fact they will really be moving backwards. Therefore we need to make sure we are digesting good spiritual food which will build us up and equip us for service.

Similarly, if we neglect our bodies and feed ourselves rubbish, the body will eventually become ill through a lack of proper nourishment. And while people usually have no problem feeding

their body, it seems to be difficult for many Christians to feed their spirit, their inner-man. This in fact appears to be an almost universal weakness and is one reason God has commanded us to study His Word diligently: 2 Timothy.2:15; Romans.12:2; Joshua.1:7-8.

There comes a time when we must feed ourselves personally from God's Word. This does not mean we should stop hearing the preaching of the Word - God forbid! We also need, however, to put in time and effort expanding our personal study of His Word.

One of the reasons we need to grow in God's Word is so that we can become "**strong in the Lord and in the power of His might**" (Ephesians.6:10), and so able to help meet the needs of others. Indeed it is by accepting the truths contained in God's Word that people will be set free. God will give us Heavenly manna (food) to live on if we will only open our hearts to His direction - but there is no short cut to becoming a vessel of honour fit for the Master's use: 2 Timothy 2:21.

HOW TO STUDY EFFECTIVELY

To help you gain the greatest benefit from each study book, we have listed some basic techniques which you can utilize in order to study more effectively. You may not, at first, be able to apply all these techniques. However as you grow and develop spiritually, you will be able to use them in expanding your studies, more and more.

Just reading the studies over and over will not usually be enough for you to retain information in the long term. If you write notes while studying, this will enhance your ability to recall important points when needed. Tests have proven that if people who are studying write down important points as they are doing so, then revise these points at a later date, they will have far better recall of the material they have studied. You could also mark and highlight important points as you read. By doing so, you will improve your ability to remember the information you are studying.

EXPANDING THE STUDIES

The following is meant as a brief guide for expanding your studies AS TIME PERMITS.

- 1.** Before studying (or listening to teaching, etc.) be mindful of your blood-covering and thank God for it in faith. Also, if needed, bind in Jesus' Name any influence from the enemy (e.g. unbelief, confusion, etc.), and thank your Teacher, the Holy Spirit, for what He is about to reveal to you.
- 2.** If you are Baptized in the Spirit, speak in tongues for a little while before your study. This may help in furthering greater focus and aiding concentration as you prepare to study spiritual material.
- 3.** Look up the Scriptural references given in the studies for the major relevant points, and read the whole passage, not just one verse, so that you may gain a proper understanding of the context.
- 4.** Analyze the Scripture or principle you are studying. First deal with the logical side, then, if you can, move over into the spiritual side and analyze it, e.g. identify the "spirit" or fundamental principle of the Scripture.
- 5.** Are there any other Scriptural references, major or minor, to the subject you are studying? If so, list them and look them up. Find additional Scriptures which support these points. Remember: there are often Old Testament Scriptures which parallel New Testament Scriptures and vice versa.
- 6.** Look for other general points of interest. Once these points have been discerned and written down, try to expand them as time permits.

7. Always bear in mind and consider how the truths revealed in the studies can be applied today.

8. Research, as time permits, the historical context of any Scripture, e.g. time written / who wrote it? / to whom was it written? / why was it written? / does it have universal applicability? / does it still apply today and if so, which aspects?

9. Use a dictionary to check word meanings in the studies. A tool which you may be able to use to check Scriptural accuracy in a basic way is the Hebrew and Greek Interlinear Bible with Strong's Dictionary numbers accompanying each word. You can use this reference book along with other reference books to check on the proper meaning of words found in Scripture.

10. Sometimes a parallel Bible containing four or more versions can help us better understand some Scriptures as we compare them across the different versions, e.g. King James Version, New International Version, Amplified Bible, New American Standard, etc.

11. Continually ask yourself questions, then study to answer them, e.g. "Righteousness" - what can we do in this state? "Obedience" - what is the beginning of obedience? "Law of liberty" - what can we do under this law? "To be set free" - how is this realized? "Expose sin" - how can we do this? "Conviction" - what is conviction? "Breaking the law" - can a Christian be under the penalty of the law? If so, how, and what may happen to them? "Tolerance" - find examples of God's tolerance in both Old and New Testaments. "Love" - what does the Bible refer to as the "works of love"?

12. Are there other angles from which the same major principle is taught? For example, compare Romans Ch.6 and Romans Ch.7.

13. Study the Bible's history, as time permits, apart from the studies.

14. Study the Bible's characters, as time permits, apart from the studies.

15. Continue to have a daily Bible reading program apart from the studies so that you may read through the entire Bible from front to back.

While some people may enjoy studying extra-curriculum material such as Bible history and characters, your main focus and priority should always be the study material. In other words, remain balanced in the way you divide your study time. Again, expand your studies only AS TIME PERMITS: i.e. according to the time limits given.

Be careful not to spend too much or too little time on each study. Remaining within the recommended time limits will enable you to continue progressing to subsequent studies, and thus to derive the greatest overall benefit from the syllabus.

It may be difficult for some people who are studying an hour a day to find an unbroken hour each day during which they can study. Such people may need to study, for example, half an hour in the morning and half an hour at night, when the time is available. **WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND, HOWEVER, THAT PEOPLE STUDY ON A DAILY BASIS IN ORDER TO OBTAIN MAXIMUM BENEFIT.**

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT YOUR STUDIES

Deepening Your Relationship with God Through Bible Study

The journey of studying the Bible is far more than an academic pursuit; it is a spiritual expedition aimed at deepening your relationship with God. This journey involves much more than acquiring facts about Scripture. It's about transforming your heart and mind to align with God's will so that you experience His presence in a more profound and personal way. By engaging in heartfelt, Spirit-led study, you aim to develop not just your knowledge of God, but to meet with Him experientially so that you can gain greater understanding of the One Who shapes your daily life.

What is the Purpose of Bible Study?

1. From Intellectual to Relational Understanding

- Heart Knowledge vs. Head Knowledge: True Bible study seeks to move us beyond mere intellectual understanding to transformative heart knowledge. Intellectual knowledge will give us facts and figures, but heart knowledge will determine how we live out our faith. Heart knowledge is about absorbing the teachings of Scripture into the very fabric of our being so that we experience God's truth in our daily life, and walk in a closer way with the Master.

- Experiencing the Mind of Christ: The Bible invites us to have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). This means that our thoughts, attitudes and actions are increasingly influenced by Christ's perspective. Experiencing the mind of Christ involves seeing the world through His eyes and, as a result, responding as He would.

2. The Role of Divine Grace in Study

- Empowerment by Grace: Our study of the Bible is dependent on God's grace. It is this grace that provides insight and wisdom, and transforms our understanding and application of Scripture. Recognize that your ability to grasp spiritual truths and then apply them is a result of God's unmerited favour, i.e. His grace (John 15:5).
- Prayer and the Holy Spirit's Guidance: Begin your study sessions with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit for His guidance. The Holy Spirit illuminates Scripture, helps us understand its significance, and empowers us to live out its truths. Remember that He is our ultimate Teacher.

Practical Steps for Effective Study

1. Prepare Your Heart and Mind

- Seek God's Presence: Prior to studying, take time to centre yourself and invite God's presence into your study. Pray for clarity, understanding, and an openness to His leading.
- Confession and Cleansing: Confession of sin and seeking forgiveness prepares our heart to receive God's Word. A clean heart is essential for clear, spiritual understanding and growth.

2. Engage with the Text

- Read with Purpose: Approach the Scriptures with the intention of seeking to both understand and also to encounter God. Engage with each passage actively, asking how it reveals God's character and will.
- Contextual Understanding: Study each passage within its broader context. Understanding the historical, cultural, and literary background of Scripture will enhance your comprehension and guard against misinterpretation.

- Reflect and Meditate: Spend time meditating on the passages you read. Reflect on the personal implications of each text and how these may speak to your current circumstances.

3. Apply the Truths

- Personal Application: Convert the truths you uncover into practical actions, then ask yourself how these truths could be applied to your behaviour, decisions and relationships.
- Prayerful Response: Seek God's guidance on how to apply what you've learned. Pray for the strength and wisdom to embody these truths in your daily life.

4. Expand Your Understanding

- Systematic Study: Engage in systematic study using commentaries, theological dictionaries and concordances. These tools will aid your understanding of complex passages and doctrines.
- Cross-Referencing: Examine the way in which different parts of Scripture address the same themes. Cross-referencing can help us build a more comprehensive understanding, and connect related teachings.
- Community Engagement: Share your insights with others and discuss your findings. Engaging with a community of Believers can offer additional perspectives and reinforce our understanding of spiritual matters.

5. Cultivate a Lifestyle of Study

- Daily Discipline: Incorporate Bible study into your daily routine. Consistency is a key to spiritual growth, and will help us build a solid foundation in God's Word.

- Integration into Life: Apply what you learn in your daily activities. Allow your study to shape your decisions, interactions and overall lifestyle.
- Ongoing Growth: View Bible study as a lifelong journey. Continually seek to grow in your understanding of God, and your relationship with Him, adapting and deepening your study practices over time.

Expanding Your Study

1. Preparation for Study

- Prayer and Spiritual Readiness: Before you start, take time to seek God's guidance through prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you open your heart and mind so that you may both understand and then apply His Word.
- Spiritual Warfare: If you sense resistance or are prone to distractions, address these in prayer. Bind any negative influences and affirm your commitment to focusing on God's Word.

2. Deepening Engagement

- Scriptural References: Look up and study all relevant Scriptural references. Read entire passages rather than isolated verses in order to understand the broader context and its implications.
- Analytical Approach: Analyze passages both logically and spiritually. Identify key principles and how they reflect God's character and purpose.
- Historical and Cultural Context: Research the historical and cultural backdrop of passages. Understanding the original context can provide valuable insights into the meaning and application of Scripture.

3. Research and Resources

- Use of Dictionaries and Concordances: Employ Bible dictionaries and concordances to explore word meanings and Scriptural cross-references. These tools can help clarify concepts and thus enhance our understanding.

- Comparison of Translations: Utilize different Bible translations to assist in gaining varied perspectives. Comparing translations can help us understand nuances and enrich our study.

4. Critical Thinking and Questions

- Continual Inquiry: Constantly ask questions about the text and seek answers. Questions such as “What does this passage reveal about God?” or “How does this principle apply today?” encourage deeper exploration and will enhance personal application.

- Multiple Perspectives: Consider different angles and interpretations. Compare how various passages and doctrines intersect and contribute to a holistic understanding of Biblical concepts and teaching.

5. Broader Study

- Biblical History and Characters: Explore the history and biographies of Biblical characters. Understanding their lives and the context in which they lived can enrich our study and provide practical applications.

- Daily Bible Reading: Maintain a regular Bible reading plan. Reading through the Bible helps us understand the overarching narrative and deepens our engagement with God’s Word.

Conclusion

Studying the Bible is a transformative journey towards knowing God more deeply and experiencing His truths in a more profound way. By approaching your study with a focus on relational understanding, reliance on grace, and practical application, you are aligning yourself with the mind of Christ and are seeking to live out His teachings. This approach fosters a dynamic relationship with God, where His Word becomes a living reality in our life, guiding and transforming us to reflect His character and will. Remember, the goal is not just to know what God thinks, but to live in His truths and experience His presence daily.

May you have the victory in Christ. Amen!

For further information or teaching material to help you grow in the Christian faith, please visit:

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*"We have a vision
to see people living
in abundant life
by the power of God
through Jesus Christ"*



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