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Study God's Word

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Study God's Word

Studying God's Word will make a difference in your life! When you study God's Word you will gain insight into who God is and what He wants to do in your life. This topic is a continuation of our study on the five basic ways for you to experience God's Word: hear it, read it, study it, memorize it, and meditate on it. In this lesson, we will consider how *studying* God's Word will make a difference in your life.

Proverbs 2:1-5 instructs us: "My child, if you receive my words, and store up my commands inside yourself, by making your ear attentive to wisdom, and by turning your heart to understanding, indeed, if you call out for discernment—shout loudly for understanding—if you seek it like silver, and search for it like hidden treasure, then you will understand how to fear the Lord, and you will discover knowledge about God."

Q. What are some of the key action words in the above passage?

Q. What are some of the keywords used to describe God's Word?

Each time you approach God's Word in study, you need to pray for God's direction and then, observe, interpret, and apply what you are reading.

Q. What insight do you get from the following verse in 2 Timothy about the importance of studying God's Word?

"Make every effort to present yourself before God as a proven worker who does not need to be ashamed, teaching the message of truth accurately." —2 Timothy 2:15

Remember how in a previous lesson we talked about the importance of receptivity? Psalm 119:18 models for us our *asking* God to open us up to His Word: "Open my eyes so I can truly see the marvelous things in your law!"

Q. When are the times in your life when you are most open to God's Word?

Q. When are you not open to the truth of God's Word?

Q. Is there anything you can do to stay more open to what the Bible has to say to your life?

The reason you need to study God's Word is to gain insight into who God is and what He wants to do in your life! One way that you can achieve good results from your study time is to write down what you discover. Reading is faster than study and gives you the overall picture, but study requires that you *think* and *remember*. Yes, this is more time-consuming ... but it will be worth the effort!

Q. What are you presently learning from your study of God's Word?

"Jesus said to the people who believed in him: 'If you continue to follow my teaching, you are really my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" —John 8.31-32

Q. What do you learn from these verses?

There are actually several ways you can study the Bible:

- A word (such as grace, faith, love, sin)
- A single verse (such as Hebrews 12:1; 1 John 1.5)
- A passage or chapter (such as Ephesians 1, or Ephesians 1:15-23, Proverbs 3)
- A book (any!)

A 4-Step Process

Before you begin your study, consider this 4-step process to help you gain the most from your time in God's Word. Study is more than just reading. Reading is faster than study and gives you the overall picture, but study requires that you think and remember.

Step 1—Pray

Ask the Holy Spirit for insight and understanding! Open yourself up to what God wants you to see in His Word today.

Step 2—Observe

As you study the word, or verse, or passage, or book you've chosen, you are looking for answers to the following questions?

- What does it say?
- What does it reveal about God?
- What does it reveal about having a more intimate relationship with God?

- What does this teach me about faith, hope, and love?
- What new insights can I obtain about my new identity in Christ and how God has designed me?
- How does God want me to depend on Him for wisdom, strength, special abilities, and resources?
- What does this reveal about how God will meet my needs and accomplish His purposes?
- How can I resist Satan’s schemes and seek refuge in God from evil?
- How does God direct our steps toward the fulfillment of His specific plan for our life?

Not all of the studies that you do will answer every one of these questions, but they provide a good framework for your thought and reflection. As you study the word, or verse, or passage, or book you’ve chosen, you are looking for answers to at least one of these questions.

Step 3—Interpret

As you read and think and reflect, consider “What does this *mean*?” Here are a few other questions to help you identify the meaning of what you are studying:

- Is this passage to be interpreted literally or does it contain figurative words, phrases, or expressions?
- How does the *context* for this passage help in understanding its *meaning*?
- What other scriptures help to clarify or amplify the interpretation of this passage?
- What point is this trying to make?

Step 4—Apply

This is the most important step! Ask yourself: What am I going to do with this new insight and understanding?

Specific Suggestions for Studying a Single Word

It is actually much easier to study a *verse* when you are first starting to study the Bible. If you choose to study a single word, you can use on-line searching or you will need a good Bible concordance that contains single words and a list of the verse where that word is used. What you are looking for is the different ways that word is used and what is being communicated.

Specific Suggestions for Studying a Single Verse

Approach #1

Begin by reading the context of the verse ... what comes before it and after it.

Next, ask yourself, “Who is speaking, to whom, and what is the situation?” Visualize yourself in the situation and customs of that time and place. If possible, read several different translations of the Bible (this is easy to accomplish with online resources such as [Bible Gateway](#)). Look up keywords in the dictionary and write down their definitions. Ask questions from the “Observe” step (Step 2) described earlier in this lesson. Take notes! Continue your study through the Step 3 and Step 4 processes!

Approach #2

Another way to approach a verse study is to look at each *word* individually *within* the verse.

Here is an example using the first phrase of Psalm 118: 6: “The Lord is for me ...”

With this approach, you write the verse down the left side of your paper one word at a time. In some ways, we are crossing over into the “Meditate on It” process of experiencing God’s Word (to be discussed in a later lesson), but it is important to remember that all of these approaches interact with one another ... not one truly stands alone! As you look at the first word, write down as much as you can about that word. Then take the second word of the verse, and spend time thinking and writing about that word, and so on until you finish the verse or phrase. Then write a reflection statement summarizing your insights.

The Lord—the mighty, almighty, creator, sovereign, loving, glorious God

is—right now, presently, an absolute certainty

for—purpose, goal, God has my best interests at heart, He is on my side, He knows what is best for me

me—personally, not in general, but specifically, by name

Reflection: It is awesome and exciting to contemplate me personally having such intimacy...with God himself!!

Approach #3

Read the passage in at least two different versions of the Bible and then write what it means to you personally.

Specific Suggestions for Studying a Passage or Chapter

First, read the entire passage or chapter. Next, make an overall outline of what you have just read. Then, give it a title. Now determine which verse is most meaningful to you at this time in your life. Finally, consider what challenges you see in the passage.

Specific Suggestions for Studying a Book

In many ways, the study of a book is similar to studying a passage or chapter, there's just more of it at one time, but the process remains the same.

Another great way to study a book of the Bible is to go through a study that has already been put together! These are available at various online sites or through a Christian bookstore.

As you continue to study God's Word, assemble books and Bible resources that will help you continue to grow in your relationship with God. Bible concordances contain Biblical words listed alphabetically, with indications to enable you to find the passages of the Bible where the words occur. If you purchase a concordance it should match the translation of the Bible that you are using. A Bible commentary will have explanations of various verses.

Application

Choose one way to study the Bible and work at it diligently for the next week or two (depending on what you have chosen to study).

Q. My approach

Q. What I plan to study

Q. When I plan to study