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Ministry Resources Hub

Studying God's Word

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Studying God's Word

Studying God's Word can make a difference in your life! When you study God's Word you will gain deeper insight into who God is and what He wants to do in your life. 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.

“Good friend, take to heart what I'm telling you; collect my counsels and guard them with your life. Tune your ears to the world of Wisdom; set your heart on a life of Understanding. That's right—if you make Insight your priority, and won't take no for an answer, Searching for it like a prospector panning for gold, like an adventurer on a treasure hunt, Believe me, before you know it Fear-of-God will be yours; you'll have come upon the Knowledge of God.” —Proverbs 2:1-5, The Message

The reason you need to study God's Word is to gain deeper insight into who God is and what He wants to do in your life!

Study is more than just reading. Just as reading the Bible involves more intentionality and thought than hearing it, so studying it requires more intentionality and thought than reading it.

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!

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 of 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament!)

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.

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 study that you do will answer every one of these questions, but they provide a good framework for your thought and reflection.

Step 3. Interpret

As you read and think and reflect, consider "What does this *mean*?" Here 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

Here is the bottom line: What am I going to do with this new insight and understanding?

Specific Suggestions

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 online searching or you will need a good Bible concordance which 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.

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 in several different translations of the Bible (this is easy to accomplish with on-line resources such as BibleHub.com).

Look up key words in the dictionary and write down their definitions. Ask questions from the "Observe" step described earlier in this lesson. Make notes! Take 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 with me.*" With this approach you write down the left side of your paper one word at a time. In some ways we are crossing over into the "Meditate" process of experiencing God's Word, but it is important to remember that all of these approaches interact with one another ... not one truly stand 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.

The Lord the mighty, almighty, creator, sovereign, loving, glorious God. He is for me!
“Is” — means right now, presently, an absolute certainty

“For” — purpose, goal, God knows me!, god has my best interests at heart, He is on my side, He knows what is best for me

“Me” — means personally, not in general, but specifically, by name.

It is awesome and exciting to contemplate “me” 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.

Studying a Passage or Chapter

First, read the entire 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 challenge you see in the overall passage.

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 book store.