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Ministry Resources Hub

4. The Bible - God's Love Letter to You!

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Free media and discipleship resources for pastors, leaders, and growing disciples.

4. The Bible – God’s Love Letter to You!

If you received a special letter or email from Jesus ... telling you how much He loves you ... and giving you the guidance and direction you need for your daily issues ... would you read it? Would you keep it, cherish it, memorize it, and continually think about it?

That’s exactly what the Bible is ... it’s God’s love letter to you! God’s Word is as important to your Christian growth as milk is to a new baby.

Before You Start

Begin by obtaining a Bible with good references and helps. You may find a modern translation easier to understand. Several websites, such as Biblegateway.com, offers online Bibles for free in different languages.

The Bible is God’s “Road Map” for Your Life

If you were trying to drive to a distant small town you had never been to before ... would you drive by your emotions and instincts ... or would you look at a GPS or road map?

While the road map won’t tell you what’s just around the curve, or how bumpy the road is ... it will keep you from heading in the wrong direction, giving you guidance for your trip.

The Bible provides the “road map” for your journey with God. It gives you God’s wonderful promises for each step of the way. As you read through the next few pages, you will learn how to use this map to help you grow and become more mature in Christ.

Changing Habits

Every day you do things out of habit. You get up, eat breakfast, shower, get dressed, go to school, go to work, etc.

In order to make God's Word part of your life—you need to make it one of your daily habits. Pick a time, (mornings work best for many people), then pick a quiet spot and spend time reading the Bible and thinking about how it applies to your life. Once you have done it for thirty days, you will have established a habit that will change your life!

God's Viewpoint

The Bible gives you God's answers to all of life's most important questions:

- God's Nature
- Your Purpose
- How To Grow In Christ
- Moral Decisions
- Relationships / Sex
- Emotions / Comfort
- Trials / Death

“For the Word of God is full of living power...It exposes us for what we really are”
(Hebrews 4:12).

Your Mind...A "Vat"



Every moment of every day, your mind is flooded with information ... most of it from the world's viewpoint.

Your life and the decisions you make are greatly influenced by what goes into your "Vat"!

In order for God's viewpoint to prevail in your life, you must get a good "dose" of God's Word ... not just a few minutes each day.

Matthew Henry once said: "If you want to get close to God, you must study His Word."

Q. How does Colossians 3:16 apply to you personally?

There are five basic ways for you to get fed on God's Word:

- ① HEAR IT TAUGHT
- ② READ IT
- ③ STUDY IT
- ④ MEMORIZE KEY VERSES
- ⑤ MEDITATION ON ITS PROMISES

Getting Fed

All of these ways to make God's Word a bigger part of your life are important. Let's look at each of them.

1. How to Hear God's Word

There are several ways to hear God's Word taught:

- At Church
- Bible Teachers/Schools
- Christian Seminars
- Bible Web Pages
- Bible Studies
- Bible Tapes CDs/DVDs
- Christian Radio
- Christian Books/Audio Books

Q. How are you hearing God's Word taught, and what can you do to hear it more often?

Q. Hearing God's Word should make you want to read and study it for yourself. What does Acts 17:11 say?

Whenever you hear God's Word taught, attempt to learn what the Holy Spirit is trying to teach you personally, taking good notes, and writing down your thoughts.

2. How to Read God's Word

When reading the Bible, it's best to read it slowly and thoughtfully. Have a good pen or marking pencil handy to write down your thoughts and underline key verses.

Make it fun. Go on a "hunt" to find insights God has for you. Then write down the references so you can locate them later.

If this is your first adventure in reading the Bible, it's best to start in the New Testament, reading at least one of the four Gospels. Many teachers recommend starting with John.

The book of Acts tells about the actions of the early Christians. Acts is a "must-read" for all Christians.

After Acts, you'll find the letters to the first Christian churches, which give instructions and guidance for daily living.

And finally, in the book of Revelation, you will see how Christ is going to end all things in this world and begin ruling as "King of kings and Lord of lords." It's amazing!

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipping for every good thing God wants us to do" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Q. What book in the Bible are you currently reading? What are you learning?

3. How to Study God's Word

There are several ways you can study the Bible:

- Study an Individual Book (e.g. Acts)
- Study a Passage or Chapter (e.g. 2 Corinthians 5)
- Study a Biblical Theme (e.g. Love)
- Study a Verse (e.g. 2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Study a Biblical Doctrine (e.g. Redemption)

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.

Here is one example of how you can read and think about God's Word (from Bert Harned):

A Study of "Discouragement"

"Do you get 'discouraged, depressed'? I have found an instant cure for it! YES! It is in Psalm 118:6-8. The NLT says, 'The Lord is for me so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? Yes, the Lord is for me. He will help me.'"

It was a beautiful cloudless morning when I noticed these verses, and took the time to think about them. I wrote one word at a time down on the left margin and took time to think as deeply as I could about each word, making notes as I went. Start like this:

The Lord: the mighty, almighty, creator, sovereign, loving, glorious God. That's who is for me!

Is: means right now...presently, an absolute certainty!

For: means He knows me, has my best interests at heart, is not against me, He is on my side, and 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!!

"Now it's your turn; find a quiet place and mentally chew your way through these verses for yourself."

Here is another way you can study God's Word on a daily basis (with a scripture passage included for you to use as well).

Q. Read 2 Corinthians chapter five, in at least two versions of the Bible if possible, and write what 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 means to you personally

4. How to Memorize God's Word

The "Topical Memory System" is a proven way to memorize God's promises. You can start with the "Beginning with Christ" packet of five key verses produced by The Navigators (www.navigators.org). We also recommend you select some key verses in

this Bible study to memorize. You might want to write them down on small cards that you can take with you and review daily.

One reason to memorize Scripture is that our memories are short.

After 24 hours, you may accurately remember:

- 5% of what you hear
- 15% of what you read
- 35% of what you study
- 57% of what you see and hear
- 100% of what you memorize

Noted author and counselor, Henry Brandt, in his book, *The Heart of the Problem*, says: "I still consider Bible memorization the single most important aid in my Christian life and in my counseling."

It's actually easy to memorize verses:

- Start with one verse.
- Repeat it several times.
- Explain it in your own words.
- Say it to a friend.
- Test and challenge each other to apply it.

Once memorized, review it without looking for 30 days. It will be yours to take with you wherever you go!

"How can a young person stay pure? By obeying Your Word and following its rules ... I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You." (Psalm 119:9, 11)

5. How to Meditate on God's Word

Meditating on God's promises throughout the day will help you walk in the Spirit. Whenever something stressful happens (and it will), think about a verse that applies to your situation.

Q. What does Philippians 4:6-7 say?

Power over Bondage

In 1977, New York City was in turmoil because a troubled twenty-four-year-old man, David Berkowitz, whom the media labeled, “Son of Sam,” went on a killing spree. His target was young women, and before he was finally caught, five young women and one man were dead.

During his time in prison, he was approached by a young prisoner named Ricky Lopez, who told David that regardless of what he had done, Jesus loved him and died for him.

Ricky gave David a Bible. As David Berkowitz read the Bible, God’s power began breaking him of his addiction and bondage. In time, the Word of God brought him to a point of complete repentance—and the “Son of Sam” surrendered his life completely to Christ.

Today, David Berkowitz is the Chaplain’s Assistant at Sullivan Correctional Facility. (Read this, and other stories of God’s transforming power in *Fresh Power* by Jim Cymbala.)

David Berkowitz was transformed because he replaced man’s viewpoint with God’s viewpoint. And, He believed God’s viewpoint! He put the right “stuff ” in his VAT.

Getting rid of the “junk” in your VAT, and replacing it with God’s Word takes time. The amount of time you commit to the Bible is probably the single best indicator of your walk with Christ and the best predictor of your future growth in Christ.

“Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts, and make you wise. Use His words to teach and counsel each other” (Colossians 3:16).

Q. Read Psalm 1:1-3, and write your thoughts

As you run the race God has set ahead of you, make sure your roots are deeply planted in God’s Word.