

# **MINEOLA BIBLE INSTITUTE AND SEMINARY**

## **Effective Personal Bible Study**

### **Radical, Biblical, Apostolic Christianity**



**Larry L Yates, ThD, DMin**

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## Contents

Chapter One--Introduction .....	2
Chapter Two -- Observation.....	16
Chapter Three--Interpretation .....	29
Chapter Four--Application .....	38
Appendix: Six Reasons to Read the Bible Every Day .....	50

# Effective Personal Bible Study

## Chapter 1--Introduction

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When I was a young boy, I won a Bible in a Sunday School contest—inside the Pastor had written: “This book will keep you from sin, OR sin will keep you from this book!”

Wise words that ring true today! Dusty Bibles lead to dirty lives!

**The Christian has only two options—you are either in the Word and the Word is conforming you to Christ—or you are in the world and the world is pressing you into it’s mold.**

You’ll either be conformed to Christ or conformed to the world.

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There are more Bibles in Print today than at any other time in history.

Most households have at least one and often half a dozen—but, in most cases, they aren’t read—they aren’t studied—and more importantly they are not applied.

Why is that true?

I believe it is simply because the majority of people simply don’t know how.

That was my problem for a long time. I didn’t know **how** to study Scripture, so I just didn’t bother.

I’d read for Sunday School and follow along with the Preacher, even memorize key Scriptures—but study—hardly.

I didn’t know where to begin or how to go about the process.

So, in this first section of four, I want to ask three pertinent questions:

- Why Study the Bible?
- What is Personal Bible Study?
- What is the Process of Personal Bible Study?

### **I. Why Study the Bible?**

There are three reasons that conspire to build a convincing case as to why effective Personal Bible Study is not optional—it's essential.

**First**, it is important because:

Effective Personal Bible Study is essential for **Spiritual Growth**.

In I Peter 2:2 we read:

**1 Peter 2:2**

***<sup>2</sup> As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:***

There are several things I want to call your attention to in this passage:

**A. First of all** it speaks to our **attitude** toward the Word of God.

It's the attitude of a newborn baby. Just as a baby eagerly grabs for the bottle—you grab for this Book.

All of us who have had children know what it is like to hear a screaming baby in the middle of a night of sleep.

That child must be satisfied and just as soon as he gets the milk he needs—all is calm.

But **secondly**, he speaks to your **appetite**.

Just like a newborn baby—“desire,” “long for,”— develop an appetite for the Word of God.

All of us have had the experience of developing strong dislikes for certain foods and then suddenly developing a strong appetite for those same foods.

When someone tells me they are not getting much out of the Word—that’s more of a commentary on them than it is the Word—it requires the development of a spiritual appetite.

But don’t miss it! This verse sets forth the aim of the Word—“that you may grow thereby.” Notice carefully—not “Know” but “Grow”

You cannot grow without knowing but, it is possible to know and not grow.

**B. There’s a second reason** personal Bible study is important:

Effective Personal Bible Study is essential for **spiritual maturity**.

Let’s look at Hebrews 5:11 – 14

***Hebrews 5:11-14 King James Version (KJV)***

***<sup>11</sup> Of whom we have many things to say and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.***

***<sup>12</sup> For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.***

***<sup>13</sup> For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.***

***<sup>14</sup> But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.***

The writer says I have a difficulty and that is there is a deficit in hearing.

When by virtue of time—pay attention to that—it's time to go on to college but, instead we have to go back to first grade and learn our ABC's all over again.

But there's only one way according to this and that is that we discipline ourselves to develop Godliness through exposure to the word.

**C. There is a third reason** for personal Bible study:

And that is: effective personal Bible study is essential for **spiritual effectiveness**.

And the passage we want to look at is Second Timothy 3:16—17

***2 Timothy 3:16-17 King James Version (KJV)***

***<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:***

***<sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.***

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God—that means all 66 books—nothing included which should have been excluded—nothing excluded which should have been included.

And He said it's all profitable—and is profitable for four things:

- First of all it's profitable for **doctrine or teaching**
- Secondly it's profitable for **reproof**
- Thirdly it's profitable for **correction**

- Finally it's profitable for **instruction in righteous living**

It not only tells you what's right—it tells you what's wrong.

It not only tells you how to correct it—it tells you how to continue living it righteously.

My question to you is how can you afford **not** to study with such convincing reasons as this?

**And always remember—there is no growth outside of Effective Personal Bible Study.**

## **II. What is Effective Personal Bible Study**

The very first thing that you need before you perform any study is a good definition.

So let me define for us just what is effective personal Bible study.

I want to suggest first, that personal Bible study is **Methodicalness**.

That is, involves taking **certain steps** in a **certain manner** in order to guarantee a **certain result**.

Not **any** steps—not **any** order—not **any** result.

In this course we're going to concentrate on **Three basic steps in personal Bible study**.

**#1-Observation**—this is where I ask the question:

**“What do I see?”**

**#2-Interpretation**—the process of interpretation is where we ask:

“**What does it mean?**” and lastly, we have

**#3—Application**—this is where we ask the all-important question:

“**How does it work?**”

You simply cannot rearrange these steps—without finding yourself in error.

Good observation will lead to good, accurate and clear interpretation.

In fact, careless observation will lead to a faulty interpretation resulting in illegitimate application.

See, it's not simply methodicalness—is **methodicalness with a purpose**—with a view to becoming more receptive and reproductive.

So, I want you to bear the steps in mind as we continue over the next few sessions to examine in detail effective personal Bible study.

You show me a man or woman that is effective in public ministry and I'll show you someone who is also effective in personal Bible study.

In fact, **what happens in the pulpit is a direct result of what happens in the study.**

**Personal effectiveness comes from proper preparation.**

What we have to understand—absolutely **must** understand—is that if we're going to reach this generation with the Word of God—we're going to have to spend more time alone in the study—in a logical-methodical-helpful process.

There is great Joy to be found in effectively conveying the truth of God's word to another person and see that light go on.

There is simply no substitute for firsthand knowledge of and acquaintance with God's Word.

Why?

Let's talk about four reasons:

**a. It enables you to think for yourself**

See most people don't think—they simply rearrange and repeat the ideas of others.

It's Secondhand knowledge.

They're an echo not a voice.

I discovered as a freshman in college that this makes one a very mediocre student. Real conviction comes from personal Bible study, be-cause God is revealed in his word.

**b. Secondly, personal Bible study enables you to evaluate the opinions and thoughts of others.**

I pick up a commentary-- it says this—I decide maybe I'll read a second commentary—bad decision—because the second commentary contradicts what the first one said-- **now** what do I do?

Do I simply toss a coin in the air?

No, it's my personal Bible study that enables me to evaluate what I've read in **both** of these commentaries and I see that in one there is some truth, but it misses some things.

The other also has some truth.

Together they give me the full picture.

**c. The third reason for personal Bible study is that it will give you the personal joy of discovery.**

Why is it that more people don't get excited about sharing the truth with others? It's because, frankly, they get everything secondhand—they haven't seen the truth for themselves.

**d. And the fourth reason for personal Bible study is that it will enable you to fall in love with the author.**

Do you have a favorite author? A favorite Bible Teacher or writer?

How do you demonstrate that love?

You read what they have written.

See, you can't fall in love by proxy—it's a deeply personal experience.

Think about it! If someone you care about writes you a letter—do you read it?—or do you leave it sitting dusty on a shelf?

That's why Paul said—"***Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has a entered into of the heart of man the things that God has prepared for them—that what? Love him. (1 Cor 2:9)***

Just think of it!

God wanted to speak to you in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and he wrote his message in a book.

Read the book!

### III. What is the process of effective personal Bible study?

Finally, in this first chapter we want to try to get a handle on the process of personal Bible study.

When we go to the amusement park each year, it's often hard to find people you're looking for. But get on the Ferris wheel or better yet the Skyway real high up and you can usually spot them or find a particular ride and figure out how to get there.

It helps you see the "big picture."

So let's look quickly about how to get the big picture of Scripture.

#### Number one—Observation

The first step in personal Bible study is **observation**. Remember, this is where we ask the question—**What do I see?**

When the Psalmist said, "**Open mine eyes that I may see wondrous things out of your law or word.**" (*Ps 119:18*) He was asking for the power of observation.

He was praying for God to remove the bandages from his eyes, so that, he might see and gain spiritual understanding and insight.

Why is "He" or "She" a better Bible student than you are?

Is because they can **see** more.

**In truth, the only difference between any two individuals is what they can see in the same page of Scripture.**

It's all there!

But you need to learn how to see it for yourself.

The key—as we will discover in the next session is in knowing what to look for.

And for a student of Scripture this is crucial!

### **Number Two—Interpretation**

The second step in the process is interpretation

This is where we'll ask and answer the question: **What does it mean?**

Now, my central quest is for **meaning**.

The more you learn to see—the more you will understand.

**Seeing always precedes understanding.**

That's why we have the phrase—some people see but they do not observe!

You always have a limitation when it comes to the Bible if you do not learn how to spend quality time in learning how and what to see.

Interpretation involves learning three things:

❖ **Learning to ask the right questions.**

I find that most of my students in Bible College simply do not know how to ask penetrating questions.

Because that's what an education is all about—whether in science, biology, business, or the Word of God.

Don't ever be afraid to ask the Bible questions.

You say, but, I don't have the answers!

That's ok—nobody does when they first start out—but you will in time.

Do any of you write in your Bible?

I know I do.

You can look at one of my old Bibles from the early years and it's filled with questions!

Now I know most of the answers to those questions.

But you look at my current study Bible and it's got a whole new set of questions written in it.

Look, the best way to learn the Bible is to bombard the text with questions.

Then trust the Holy Spirit to reveal the answers to you as you devote yourself to the study of the Word at a whole new level.

So, the first step in proper interpretation is to ask the right questions.

One of the most important things I can tell you is that **You can understand the Bible for yourself.**

❖ **The second thing you need to learn is How do I Discover the Right Answers?**

You will find that, by the Holy Spirit, the right answers come from the process of right observation and learning to ask the right questions.

I know there is a lot of repetition in this section, but you will find it useful later. And you'll find that **Repetition is a major key to learning.**

Always remember that the very purpose in asking the right questions is to arrive at the right answers.

Is the answer found in this passage or do you have to cross-reference and examine other passages?

❖ **The next thing you want to ask is How do I get the big picture?**

It's like putting together a large jigsaw puzzle. Once you get enough of the pieces together you begin to get the bigger picture and the puzzle becomes obvious to you and easier to solve!

**Number Three--Application**

The third and final step in effective personal Bible study is both the most neglected and the most needed.

**Application or "How Does it Work?"**

Not simply “Does it work?” but, “**How** Does it Work?”

It works of course fundamentally because it is the Scripture and because it’s the Scripture it works—This is God’s answer to the problem.

But don’t ever forget the goal!

**The goal is not Information—it’s Transformation!**

**God’s Word was not given to make you smarter—it’s meant to make you more like Jesus!**

If you lose sight of the goal you can get bogged down in all sorts of details that are off purpose and you can forget the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:17—If any man be in Christ he is a new creation...

So then the Word of God is meant to invade every facet—every area-- of your life.

I always keep in mind one thing, mainly:

**How does it Work for Me?**

It’s not, “Oh wow my Sunday School needs this! Not my friend needs this, my husband or my wife needs this!”

I Need This!

Only when I understand how it works in my own life will I be ready and properly equipped to share it with others.

The more time I spend in the Word—*putting it to work in my own life*—the more excited I will be in sharing it with others, because I'll have proven it in my own life.

And because of that, I'll be sharing it from a place of authenticity—not as a perfect person—but as a person in process.

In the process of becoming more and more like Jesus every day.

As ministers and teachers we must be able to share out of the overflow.

And out of the overflow of God's work in my own life I am prepared to share it into the lives of others.

## Chapter Two - Observation

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People often ask me why I do what I do.

I am a Registered Nurse.

I'm a Bible College and Seminary Graduate

I have advanced graduate and post-graduate degrees in Bible and Theology.

There are many other things I could be doing.

Why then teach the Bible ?

Why spend so much time on Facebook and Skype debating with Trinitarians and other religious groups?

Why write books on the Bible?

It's because --the Bible has changed my life--and it can change yours too!

In fact, with the ever-increasing evil present in our world, this book holds mankind's only hope.

But there's a problem of grave concern in the body of Christ and that is severe Biblical illiteracy!

Christians simply don't know what is in this book and they certainly don't know how to use it.

My goal is to help change that, to the best of my ability.

**“People learn how to use the Bible mostly from their pastors and teachers in church - so preachers and teachers have a better opportunity than anyone else to teach good Biblical theology and model a hermeneutically sound use of the Bible.”**

What is “hermeneutics,” you ask?

**Hermeneutics** is a \$30.00 word that simply means how we interpret the Bible.

In these sessions we are learning how to do proper Hermeneutics; that is how to properly understand Scripture.

In our first session, we gained a general overview of how to do effective personal Bible study.

But basically, all we did was show you the car.

Today, we’re going to kick the tires and take a peek under the hood.

We learned that there are only three major steps in personal Bible study - **Observe - Interpret - Apply.**

Observation - Interpretation, and Application.

Just three simple parts.

Today, and over the next three sessions, we’re going to get more intimately involved with each of these components, beginning with observation

**Observation asks the question, “What do I see?”**

We’re asking seven key questions:

- **Who?**
- **What?**
- **When?**
- **Where?**
- **Why?**
- **How?** And lastly, and most importantly:
- **Now what?**
- 

### 1. **Who?**

Who are the people involved?

Who are they interacting with?

What else do you know about them from other stories?

If you are studying and you encounter the Apostle Peter? What can you recall about him from other parts of the Bible?

### 2. **What?**

What do you know about these people?

What are they saying?

What are they doing?

What's happening in the passage?

**Remember Bible study is a process** - it's a building process.

Understanding grows as you put the pieces together.

Is it a miracle?

What kind of Miracle?

Is it a story? Can you tell it?

**If you can't tell it, you don't know it.**

You need to go back and reread it - study it until it becomes a part of you.

I asked one of my seminary professors once, how many times they read a passage of Scripture before teaching or preaching it?

Their answer was – dozens!

What I took away from that is to **read it as often as needed to make it second nature.**

**The bottom line is: can you tell the story?!**

Is the passage a command?

I've been reading the book of James did you know there are 58 sharp commands in that book - not suggestions - commands!

So ask yourself "what does he want me to do?"

Is it an explanation?

Is it an example?

### 3. When?

What time is it? Early morning? Night time? What morning? What night?

#### **Mark 1:35 King James Version (KJV)**

**<sup>35</sup> And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.**

What day was it? The day after the busiest day in our Lord's recorded ministry.

(By the way - did you know that there are only 52 specific days in Jesus' ministry recorded for us in Scripture).

But this particular day was so filled with miracles and ministry that it left our Lord completely drained to the point that his very first priority that morning was communion with his father.

Many of us would be tempted to sleep in.

Not only are we interested in the timing of a particular event but as well - what came before - and what after.

What produced it - what did it produce?

### 4. Where?

What's the location? Where did the events take place?

This is where you'll find a good map comes in handy.

You know-- those maps in the back of your Bible?

Have you ever looked at them for more than a minute?

Most people never use them so they have no clue where particular events happened.

I have a funny but sad story - I was teaching a class one afternoon and a lady with a PhD stuck her hand up and asked me where in South America we can find the Dead Sea?

Where did Paul's journeys take him?

There are three of them.

Where did he go and what did he do there.

Where all did Joseph travel in his journey?

Where did the Exodus take the Children of Israel?

What about the Promised Land? Where is it? How big is it? (About the size of the State of NJ)

## **5. Why?**

Why did God include this particular passage or event in the Bible?

John tells us there are many signs not included in that book so we must ask ourselves why did he include the particular seven he did mention?

He tells us!

It's because each of the signs was meant to produce faith --belief in the Son of God!

Why in Romans 13 does Paul suddenly introduce the topic of the Christian responsibility to government?

Do I have a responsibility to my Government?

Paul seems to think so!

Why is that there; in the greatest theological treatise in the New Testament?

Actually, it's because **theology impacts every area of life.**

## **6. How?**

How were things done?

How did they travel?

## **7. Now what?**

We now know the who, what, when, where, why and how. So-- now what?

What do we do with this information?

How does it affect my life?

How does it impact my behaviors,  
My marriage,  
My family,  
My job,  
My neighborhood,  
My finances.

Not only do I seek answers to the first six questions but I must discover the seventh by asking how does it apply to me?

**Only then** am I ready to move on to the next step.

#### **Example of observation**

##### ***Mark 4:35-41 King James Version (KJV)***

***35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.***

***36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.***

***37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.***

***38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?***

***39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.***

***40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?***

***41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?***

OK, now, what can we observe in this passage? What do we see?

The first question involves context:

What precedes this passage and what follows?

Well if you go back in Mark Chapter 4, you'll see the oft-repeated statement – *“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

He's giving them a lesson on listening.

We find here a series of parables - he even takes the time to explain one so that they don't miss what he is saying.

Then beginning at Mark 4:35 and continuing through Mark 5:43 we find a series of four miracles.

This is often referred to as the miracle section of the Gospel of Mark.

The first of these is the calling of the storm.

So, let's look again at our passage:

### **Who?**

Who is involved?

Well, we have Jesus and the disciples.

Jesus the world's greatest teacher has just spent the day instructing these disciples. At the end of the day, Jesus says, “Let's go to the other side.”

Then what happens?

If Jesus falls asleep and a great storm comes up?

Next,

**What?**

What does Jesus say?

Well, we've just seen that he said, "Let's go over to the other side."

Yet in the middle of the lake, the disciples are convinced they are drowning.

What are the disciples really saying? They ask: "**Jesus, don't you care!?**"

Translation - "Will you at least help us bail?"

Remember, these are professional fishermen they had seen this kind of storm before.

In the natural, they had every right to be afraid.

What does Jesus say next?

Peace! Be still!

What happens? **Immediately** there is calm.

This is clearly a miracle of the first order.

Then Jesus asks the pertinent questions:

“How is it that you have no faith?”

“Why are you of all people, so fearful?”

See faith and fear do not mix! It’s like oil and water.

What did the disciples say next?

*“Who is this that even the wind and the seas obey him?”*

### **When?**

When does this take place?

What time of day is it? Well, the text tells us it’s at night.

Scary enough, a storm like that in the daytime-- just imagine it happening at night it adds color and significance to the scene.

### **Where?**

Where did this take place?

The Sea of Galilee –

It’s a large lake--8 miles wide, 13 miles long.

Its 690 feet **below** sea level.

If you don't know where it is-- look it up? That's how we learn.

Next, ask yourself the question;

### **Why?**

Why was this written?

Well, it was written for a number of reasons: the first of which is that, it is teaching us that when Jesus Christ is in our boat – it can't sink.

The disciples are involved in a teaching moment and in order to be taught, you must be teachable.

Here Jesus uses the most desperate of situations -- life-threatening even to professionals -- to teach trust in him.

He had said, "Let's go to the other side."

He didn't say Let's go halfway across and sink.

When you and I are teachable in life's moments then, and only then-- we will be able to take the giant steps the disciples are making.

See the big lesson here is trust - Jesus is teaching his disciples-- and us --to trust in him.

It's easy to talk about. But to do? Wow!

Do we trust him in all things?

**How?**

How did Jesus do the things He did?

One view says that because He was God the Son, sometimes He acted like a man—other times He acted as God.

Does that work for you?

It doesn't work for me. How come—because Philipians Chapter 4 tells us that He did not partake of His divine attributes.

In every way, He was 100% fully human.

When Jesus rebuked His disciples for their lack of faith—the implication is that **they** could have done exactly what He did with the storm.

Or else, His rebuke was uncalled for and out of place.

We must understand that-- everything Jesus did—He did as a man anointed by the Holy Spirit.

This was a lesson in trust but it was also a lesson in acting on your faith.

And finally, the crucial question:

**Now What?**

We put this passage into application in our own lives!

How?

By trusting Jesus in the storms of life and stepping out and exercising our faith with the authority and power given us In Christ Jesus!

## Chapter Three--Interpretation

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In our last session, we looked at the first step of Bible study: observation. In this session, we will investigate the second step which is interpretation.

This is where we ask and answer the question:

### **What does it mean?**

In Acts chapter eight Phillip is told to go to the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch.

When he arrived, he found the man reading from the book of Isaiah.

Phillip asked a simple and reasonable question: “Do you understand what you are reading?:

The eunuch made a very significant statement as it regards Bible study: “How can I unless someone should guide me?”

So, I want to give you some guidance that you can use and pass on to others as to how to interpret Scripture.

As a basis for that, I want to give you five keys to help you understand Scripture.

**There are five keys to interpretation.** They are:

1. **Content**—observe the details of the passage (we noted that carefully in our last session)
2. **Context**—know what comes before and after the passage
3. **Comparison**—compare the passage to other related passages
4. **Culture**—note the cultural context of the passage
5. **Consultation**—consult what others have said about the passage only after forming your own conclusions.

### **Content**

I. The first key to a proper Biblical interpretation is **Content**

Content is always the fruit of your observation which we looked at previously.

The more time you devote to observation, the less you will have to spend on interpretation and more accurate than interpretation will be.

The less time you spend in observation—then more time you'll have to spend on interpretation and the less accurate your interpretation will be.

So, this is not a secondary issue. It is absolutely vital to a proper understanding in Bible study.

The first key to a proper interpretation is to examine the content through proper observation.

Constantly looking at and defining words, recognizing any repetition, cause/effect, contrast, questions and answers, people, places, things. The 6 W's and the H.

In other words, you just drench your mind with that passage and mine it for every detail.

One of the greatest Bible teachers of the last century made a statement I will never forget. He said, "When I read this passage for the one 100<sup>th</sup> time understanding came."

Wow! What a challenge and what an indictment. I thought as a kid when I first read his book if I read it five times it would border on the miraculous.

It was then I learned the importance of continued reading and perceptive meditation. I attribute my success in nursing school and seminary to that man's insight.

These two put together, will determine the impact the content will have on your interpretation: continued reading and perceptive meditation.

### **Context**

II. But there's a second key to interpretation—we call it the principle of **context**.

The easiest way to understand this is—**What goes before and what follows it?**

You know, I was privileged to spend a lot of time in Bible Conferences. And we always had a question and answer session.

I cannot tell you how many questions I could have saved if only I had read what came before and what came after.

When I read the passage "***Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,***" I remember thinking, "wait a minute, I thought I was saved by grace—through faith."

I really struggled with that passage and it was months before someone said to me, "why don't you read the next verse."

What it actually says it has, ***“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”—Phil 2:12***

See you can take any verse of Scripture—Old or New Testament—rip it out of its context and create great heresy.

Context is vital to the meaning of the passage.

Just as we saw in the passage in Mark chapter 5, it was the teaching that came before, that gave the context to the testing the disciples were about to experience on the Sea of Galilee and the lesson of faith they would learn which would come in later verses.

In every section of the passage the subject is faith—different kinds of faith—different kinds of people under different circumstances.

So, I’ve got to look at the context, so I can make sure that I can tell the differences that the Holy Spirit means to communicate.

Early in the chapter, what do we see? There were men, there were women, there was a demon-possessed/mentally disturbed man, there is a woman who had a serious illness for 12 years, and yet, in every one of these cases faith becomes the focus of what the Holy Spirit is teaching.

**Interpretation is a key to effective personal Bible study and context is a key to interpretation.**

We’ve looked at the first two steps to effective interpretation: Content and Context, now let’s go on to look at the final three: Comparison, Culture, and Consultation.

### **Comparison**

**III.** The concept of comparison underscores the importance of having a good concordance.

I know it’s the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and no one uses a concordance anymore, but, there simply is no substitute.

I know most of us have a limited concordance in the back of our Bibles, but, I encourage you to invest in a good comprehensive Analytical Concordance—such as Young’s or Strong’s.

These will allow you to locate quickly every word in the Bible.

You need to spend a lot of time with a good concordance.

The great Bible teacher G. Campbell Morgan, one of the finest examples of Biblical expositors of the previous generation, was well known for having only two books in his early library—a well-thumbed Bible and a well-used concordance.

It is that critical to the process and you'll learn for yourself just how indispensable one can be.

As you study, you will find that there are other Scriptures and passages that will add to your understanding of the passage before you.

This will give real meaning and a deeper understanding of what you're studying.

This is why when you study the most you want to see what Matthew had to say and compare it to Mark, Luke, and John, even making note of what they did **not** say.

For example—if the miracle or parable is in Matthew, Mark, and Luke—I want to compare those so that, I not only study them separately but, compositely—I want to put them together to get the big picture.

## **Culture**

**IV.** The fourth step is also one of the most fascinating.

We're in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the Internet has exploded our understanding of different cultures.

America truly is a melting pot of different cultures.

The cultures **are** different—not right and wrong—just different.

We can learn from different cultures—I regularly minister to a lot of Christians in different countries--India, Africa, Pakistan, and the Philippines for example—places with vastly different cultures than ours.

What amazes me is they often have a better understanding of Scripture than we do!

Why is that?

One reason is that their culture is closer to that of the New Testament than ours and they can relate better to what is going on, on the page.

So, this is the understanding that life doesn't exist in a vacuum, it exists in a culture, the understanding of which will teach us how they do, what they do and why they do it.

You also need a comprehensive Bible dictionary, where you can look up details about what you are reading.

What does the washing of feet mean? Why did they do that?

What is a covenant?

What was Passover? When was it celebrated? Why was it celebrated?

### **Consultation**

**V.** The fifth step and one heavy with significance is consultation with other sources.

We have a wealth of information today! More so than at any other time in history! And what's really great is:

All of this information is available readily at our fingertips.

Let me give you just a few examples:

First of all, you need a good **Bible Atlas**. This is simply a book that contains maps.

So when you want to trace a journey like Paul's or the Israelites in the wilderness you can do it using the maps.

You want to see what Nineveh looked like, Jericho, Jerusalem? It's all there.

Do you want to know what the tabernacle looked like? Just turn to it and there it is!

All of this is found in a good Bible atlas.

Next, you need a good **Bible Dictionary**. Here you can look up names, places, dates, obscure words.

A massive amount of learning can take place in a very short time

You want a good **Commentary**!

Why? Because I don't trust myself all that much. My best ideas aren't worth much.

The fact that God is teaching me about his Word—that does not exclude the fact that he has taught others; many of them far smarter than me.

When you come up with an interpretation of the passage and you want to know, "Is it reliable?" you can quickly see what others are saying. Test some of the well-known dependable sources.

A few cautions here:

Get your own interpretation first! This is vital to learning!

Next, if nobody else sees what you're seeing, the probability is you need to go back to the study board to find out what you're missing and where you're off base.

Thirdly, most commentaries are written from a particular viewpoint.

What does that mean?

To be careful and always check with your pastor before you get too far out in left field.

Stick to the basics and you'll be fine!

All right, let's do a quick exercise and see this process in action.

Let's look at the book of Romans chapter 12 verses one and two.

Let's examine these verses with our five-step process.

### **1. First, we want to examine the content.**

The first step is to relate a passage to the rest of the book. The book of Romans has the theme of The Righteousness of God.

It breaks down into three logical divisions:

Chapters 1-8 are theological, they are doctrinal. It's straight forward teaching

Chapters 9,10, and 11 are dispensational—that is, they ask the crucial question, "How does this relate to the Jewish people."

And beginning at chapter 12 and going through 16 we have the practical application part. How do I relate all of this truth to the life I now live.

But what has always intrigued me is how this practical section begin and it begins with these two verses:

#### ***Romans 12:1-2 King James Version (KJV)***

***12 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.***

***2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.***

It begins with the words, "***I beseech thee...***" why does he use that phrase? What does it mean?

It means, “I urge you.” Why doesn’t he use the word, “command”? After all, he is an Apostle.

But see he has a concern—compassion—you can feel his heart in what he says—the urgency of it—it’s not optional, it’s essential!

He then gives the interesting word “present.”

Well, if you look it up in a concordance, you will find that Mary and Joseph in Luke chapter two—“presented” the infant child Jesus in the temple-dedicating him.

In Romans 6:15 Paul says don’t “present” your bodies to sin but present them to God because you are alive in Christ Jesus

And what does he want you to present? Your bodies!

That embraces your whole being. It’s your instrument.

It’s the only thing you have that you can present to God.

So be careful what you do with it; how you treat your body.

Paul calls it a “living” sacrifice!

If it’s a sacrifice, how can it be living?

It’s a very simple distinction—and so glad you asked.

See you not presenting a dead animal—you’re presenting a living person—and we have a way of crawling off the altar.

## **2. What about context?**

Well, notice that it begins with “therefore”.

Many have heard me say this—but every time you see a “therefore” ask what it’s “there” for.

It is your connection—“by the mercies of God.”

That’s it—the whole first 11 chapters become the basis for what he says here.

## **3. What about comparison?**

Well, notice right in verse two there’s a negative and positive:

“Be not conformed” but “be ye transformed.”

Why does he say, “be not conformed to this world! Because if you go back to Romans Chapter 8 we are told that we have been pre-destined to be “conformed” (same word) to the image of Christ.

You will either be conformed to Christ or else you'll be conformed to the world—there are no other options—and they are diametrically opposed.

How does that play out?

The positive side!

Transformed is the same word from which we get “metamorphosis.”

By the renewing of your mind. It's the caterpillar to butterfly.

Total transformation!

#### **4. Culture?**

Not as prominent here, but you'll want to have a basic understanding of animal sacrifices.

Now, he's using this as a metaphor—just as in the Old Testament they presented an animal—Paul says we are to present our bodies/ourselves.

And finally there is:

#### **5. Consultation**

This is where you go to the library and check out a book on Romans, grab a commentary, or go online and check what others have said, only after, that is, you have formed your own conclusions.

All of this is why, if you're going to be a Minister or Bible student, you want to build the very best library you possibly can—either physical or electronic.

Buy books. Buy the software and whatever it takes to learn as best you can.

We are blessed people—we stand on the shoulders of the giants of the past and have access to all they have written.

There is simply no excuse for us as Bible students not to make every effort to learn.

The key is in the order—first the text—then the secondary material!

Always!

I have seen students work with a commentary without even having the text open in front of them!

Sad! But true!

Don't ever let it be said of us!

We need as apostolic disciples of Christ to do all we can to master the book and see to it that the book masters us.

## Chapter Four—Application

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We have looked at the first two steps in how to study the Bible: observation, and interpretation.

Here we come to the third and final step in personal Bible study.

### **Application**

This is where we ask that all-important question: “**How does it work?**”

Application involves four steps: **know, relate, meditate, and practice.**

You know, many of us Christians are like poor photographs:

**--overexposed and underdeveloped—**

This is why the step of application is so vital: God wants His truth to transform your life!

So, let’s look into four keys to application:

1. The first step in application is to **Know the truth**

**Never forget, the application is always built on the interpretation**

Therefore, if the interpretation is wrong -- the application is wrong!

Also, never forgive the principle—there is **one interpretation** with **many applications.**

So, if that’s true, I want to make sure that my interpretation is “dead on” accurate.

Otherwise, I’m going to make an incorrect and sometimes even heretical application.

Let me give you an example: snake handling Pentecostals misinterpret Mark Chapter 16 and end up in heresy.

2. The second key is to **relate the truth to life.**

We all know the verse in 2 Corinthians 5:17: “therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creation, old things have passed away, behold, all things are become new.”

So, I want to ask—how do I relate this truth to my marriage, to my family?

I had one Minister tell me he had completely stopped sinning!!

I wanted to say, “I’d sure like 5 minutes with your wife and kids.”

My friend, if your Christianity doesn't work in your home—it doesn't work!

That's the ultimate testing place- where I can tell whether or not I have the real deal.

What about my work?

We probably spend more time at work than we do with our families.

Many times here, Christians are totally silent.

What they fail to understand is that **your work is part of your ministry!**

God wants us to be salt and light—invading the marketplace and effectively representing Jesus Christ.

How does this relate to my life in the church?

How does this relate to my own personal life?

But then don't forget, there is a third key:

you not only need to know the truth;

you not only need to relate the truth to your personal life, but,

3. You also need to **meditate on the truth.**

That's why our foundation verse in Joshua 1:8 was given:

Let's read it again:

Joshua 1:8 King James Version (KJV)

<sup>8</sup> This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Do you want prosperity?

Do you want significance?

Do you want meaning and purpose in your life?

Joshua said that the key is mastery of the Word of God, and it comes by meditating on the Word of God.

Psalm 1:1-3 King James Version (KJV)

**1** Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the unGodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

<sup>2</sup> But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

<sup>3</sup> And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The Psalmist said:

Psalm 119:97 King James Version (KJV)

<sup>97</sup> O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

These passages are filled with the command to meditate on the word of God day and night.

( Oh, by the way, that's one reason you want to memorize Scripture, so that you may have it readily available to you to think about and meditate on.)

When you need it in the time of crisis or in the time of temptation—it will be there for you--you've got it!

And let me remind you, that when massively tempted by the devil, Jesus said what? "It is written."

He went straight to the Word!

Where did every one of His statements come from? From the Book of Deuteronomy.

Let me ask you something: if your spiritual life depended on your knowledge of the book of Deuteronomy—how well would you do?

Meditation—memory!

#### 4. The last key and the most transforming one is **practice the truth**

Ask God to help you apply these truths today!

But like the old warning—don't ask God for patience, unless you are prepared for what's coming! Because He'll take you very seriously.

I sometimes have people ask me, "Why did this happen to me?"

And I'll simply ask one question: "How are you praying?"

"Well, I prayed, Lord, use my life and everything in it."

Well, that's exactly what He's doing and when He begins to work—we wonder what in the world He's doing!

God will give you opportunities. That's why it's so exciting to live in this day and age—

For never before in history has this world, our country needed what we have more.

We have innumerable opportunity's to put to use what we're learning in the society in which we live.

So, we've learned the importance of application and we've learned four keys—

- We want to **know the truth**,
- We want to **relate the truth**,
- We want to **meditate the truth**, until
- We begin to **practice the truth**.

Now with that as a backdrop—let me give you some important questions to ask that will help you in the process of application.

### 1. Is there an example to follow?

Jot down 1 Corinthians 11:1—where Paul tells us, ***“Follow me, as I follow Christ.”***

The first time I saw that I thought “Yeah, right.”

“Nobody needs to follow **my** example.”

Folks, whether you know it or not, understand it or not, they are following you—your mate, your children, the people in your church, the people at your work, they are **all** watching **your** example.

So, when you come to a passage-ask yourself—is this an example for me—positive or negative?

There's a second one:

### 2. Is there a sin to avoid?

In Ephesians 5, Paul tells me to love my wife as Christ loved the church. Every single day I have to ask, “am I doing that?”

See, this word, all of it, needs to be the primary motivation of my life.

### 3. Is there a promise to claim?

See the thrill in following the lord is that what he promises—he provides!

- ***“I will never leave you, nor forsake you”***
- ***“I can do all things through Christ”***
- ***“My God shall supply all my needs”***

As we claim these promises—God proves himself faithful.

#### **4. Is there a prayer to repeat?**

I’m not talking here about “vain repetition”—but taking the prayers of Scripture and making them yours.

Much as we did with the disciple's prayer in Matthew 6.

The other I like is the true Lord’s Prayer which is found in John 17.

Another prayer many have prayed—the Prayer of Jabez in I Chronicles 4:10.

In each of these cases, I am learning what he tells me to pray, but also, listening to Christ as he prays to the Father.

What an opportunity!

#### **5. Fifthly, Is there a command to obey?**

The Bible is full of commands and when you come to the application sections in the word, such as Romans 12-16, and Galatians 5-6, Ephesians 4-6, or Colossians 3-4?

Study those! Take your pen and underline each command given to you.

#### **6. The sixth question is this—Is there a condition to meet?**

For example, in **John 15:7** it says:

*7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

That word “if” is so important. God has a condition, doesn’t He?

Then you have to ask yourself, what does it mean to abide?—it simply means to obey!

#### **7. Number 7 - Is there a condition to meet?**

Is there a passage to memorize? We all know Acts 2: 38, but what about Joshua 1: 8? What about Psalm 1, or Isaiah 53, or John 14?

I have to tell you, having been in Church all my life and a Christian for 25 years now, one of my deepest regrets is that I haven't memorized more Scripture.

Some of the greatest victories in your life will come from Scripture you have memorized.

When the crisis comes, it will be those passages that carry you through.

They become working capital exactly because you have them memorized.

But, we can't use them if they aren't there; if we haven't memorized them.

I'll also tell you, do it now!

Parents?

Drill this into your kids.

Not only will it carry them through life, but, as we get older, it becomes harder.

Things you learn leak out faster than before.

8. And the last question I want to give you, as regards Application is this: **Is there a challenge to follow?**

Let's look at a challenge.

***Ezra 7:10 King James Version (KJV)***

***<sup>10</sup> For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.***

Let's begin by getting the big picture of Ezra.

It falls into two divisions: Ezra 1-6 and Ezra 7-11.

In between is a 58-year time gap. What happened?

Well, what was happening were some of the most important events in Greek history; the Battle of Salamis, the Battle of Thermopylae that determined the entire future of the Greek Empire.

All of this is passed over in silence in Ezra. Why?

Why is it missing?

Because the most important thing happening during those 58 years was that God was preparing a man—that man was Ezra!

Ezra became one of the most important men in the history of Israel!

In the first 6 chapters, we have the **re-building of the Temple** under Zerubbabel.

But, in Chapters 7-11 we have the **re-building of the people**, and it took a real man of God with clear-cut objectives to pull that off.

This is why Ezra 7:10 begins with the little connective “For.”

*“For Ezra had prepared his heart”*—this is the explanation. **This is the secret of his success.**

But, what does it mean to “prepare” one’s heart?

I’m sure many of you have been asked—particularly if you are in the ministry—**“Are you prepared for this?”**

And, many would say: “Well, I went to Bible college.”

“I read a book. I was mentored by someone.”

Whatever it may be.

But, let’s look at the preparation God gave to Ezra—which I believe He wants to give to us.

***Ezra 7:10 King James Version (KJV)***

***<sup>10</sup> For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments***

If you look in the text, you’ll find that there are three main verbs: **Seek, Do, and Teach.**

Let’s put those together.

First, Ezra prepared his heart to **Seek** the Law, that is to study the Scriptures. See, that was his preparation.

He’s doing what we are talking about in this series—he’s studying the Scriptures.

All he had was a portion of the Old Testament—but, what he had, he studied!

We must always keep in mind: You cannot impart what you do not possess. If you don’t have it, you can’t give it!

And it takes time—it takes work—it takes discipline!

And that’s what the Spirit of God is teaching us, is that Ezra was a man willing to pay the price.

See, it’s not available in a bargain basement sale.

It will cost you if you really want a ministry that has impact.

But, notice, he doesn't stop with simply knowing something.

Because the second verse tells us he not only prepared his heart to see the Word of God—But also to **DO** the Word of God.

**His PREPARATION is followed by his PRACTICE.**

Many Christians, oftentimes, know a great deal about the Bible.

So what?

That's all well and good.

But, the real question is: do you live it? Do you practice it?

Because you and I live in a day where people are not so much asking: "is this true?" but rather, "**Does this work?**"

"What difference does this make in your life?"

"I hear what you're saying—it sounds good—but, does it work?"

And that's why Scripture was given—not to satisfy our intellect—but, to transform our lives!

But, don't miss the next verb—That's why many of you are listening –you've got that passion.

Ezra prepared his heart—not only to **SEEK** the Law of God—not only to **DO** the Law of God—but, also to **TEACH** the Law of God.

His **Preparation** was clear!

His **Practice** was consistent!

But, his **Passion** was to communicate that truth to others!

After all, if you know the Word of God and it is transforming your life, it's too good to keep; you want to share it with every person you know so that they too can enjoy these fabulous truths.

So! Put these three together and you get the whole picture.

You show me someone who knows the Word and who is doing the Word and I'll show you a person imminently capable of communicating the Word of God to others.

The ultimate test of your communication is not simply the impartation of facts but, rather the transformation of lives.

So, we apply it to ourselves first and then to others!

## Implementing Personal Bible Study

The final question we want to ask in this series on Personal Bible study is:

“Now what?” or “Where do we go from here?”

I’m sure at this stage you have a lot of good intentions, a lot of hopes; but, ultimately, it all boils down to this: “What are you going to do about it?”

So, I want to leave you with three practical steps to help you implement what we have learned together in these sessions.

#1—First of all, make a quality decision to establish a regular program of personal Bible study.

I made that decision in my second year of Bible College.

Dr. Donald Vestal, Founder of the Bible College of which I am part told me—“**Don’t study for a course, a paper or a message—study for a lifetime of ministry.**”

I have never recovered from that admonition.

You have to make a quality decision! It’s a choice! Because

**Your objective always determines your outcomes.**

**You achieve that for which you aim.**

What you have got to do is set aside some time specifically dedicated to study—and keep it!

Oh, and by the way—don’t bite off more than you can chew! Take a small bite until you are capable of handling more.

**Start small**—I ask new believers this:

“Will you give me just 15 minutes every morning to study the Word and to pray?”

See, they’ve never done this before. They need to start small.

I know a lot of people who get motivated to study the Bible—so they come up with this grand program: “I’m going to study the Bible an hour a day!” and after two days—it’s gone!

An hour a day of Bible study is easy, and hardly enough—but, you don’t start there—start small with what you can handle and build up over time.

#2—Another suggestion I would like to make to you is this: **Make a personal plan.**

If you have decided to spend, say, 30 minutes a day with the Lord—how are you going to spend it?

I would suggest that you spend the first 20 minutes in Bible reading and study and the final 10 minutes in prayer.

And, do it regularly!

It's better to have a shorter program of Bible study and be consistent with it.

If you miss it, you don't get all stressed out—you haven't lost your salvation!

Did you miss a day? It's simply, "Sorry Lord, I'll be back tomorrow," And, you do it! Stay consistent.

Eventually, you come to a point where to miss out on your time with God is its own penalty—too much a penalty to pay!

You'll miss it too much!

Your salvation doesn't depend on it, but, your anointing and sanctification sure do!

**You absolutely must have regular, dedicated time in the Word and in Prayer.**

It's a choice you make!

If it's a question of discipline? The answer is simple: if you do it once, you can do it twice.

If you can do it twice, you can do it three times.

If you can do it three times, you can do it all week, and if you can do it a week—you can make it a habit.

Once you form a habit, it becomes permanent –something that will stay with you the rest of your life—it becomes a lifestyle.

#3—Here's a third suggestion I'd like to give you.,

Human beings are social creatures—we crave companionship.

We meet for coffee.

We talk on the phone, chat, text, you name it.

**Why not form a Bible study group?**

Why not gather with your husband or wife or fellow brothers or sisters, people who share a similar passion for God and begin to meet together—once a week, once a month, whatever, for Bible study.

See, when you meet together as a team of two or three or more—you motivate each other and keep each other accountable.

God will meet you there and show you wondrous things out of His Word.

One of the greatest weaknesses in many Christian lives is an absolute lack of accountability. No one they are submitted to; No one that loves them enough to ask them the hard questions.

I remember mentors in the past, who would corner me and say: “What are you studying? Are you in the Word?” and I would be forced to admit “No I am not.” or “Not nearly enough.” And I was ashamed to admit that!

Some would often say, “Why don’t we meet together and we can help each other stay on track.” A group or a buddy system really helps make a difference.

Those who have college experience already know the power and benefits of a study group!

Finally, one of the things you need to do occasionally is evaluate the process.

Three things I like to ask in any evaluation is:

- What are the strengths in what I am doing?
- What are the weaknesses? And
- What do I need to change?

Don’t forget Church! Be there every time the doors are open.

Maybe with your spouse.

A small group of friends.

A fellow minister.

Whatever the constituency of your group—you have a small group of people who share a passion for the things of God and who are seeking to be changed by the Word.

I cannot think of anything I would encourage you more than this: Don’t just get in the Word—Let the Word get into you!

And get ready to watch the transformation of your life through that Word by the power of the Spirit!



## Appendix: Six Reasons to Read the Bible Every Day

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I want to ask you a question: why the bible?

Why care so much about this book?

I have developed a six point Outline I'd like to share with you.

### Six Reasons to Read the Bible Everyday

#### **1. God's Call on Every Human Being is that we Glorify Him**

How do we do that?

- By **knowing** him **accurately** in our thoughts
- By **enjoying** him **intensely** in our emotions
- By **showing** him **consistently** in our actions

That is God's call on our lives!

I know why I exist -I know why you exist!

We exist to glorify God by:

Knowing - Enjoying - Showing

God is calling each of us to show his supreme greatness

- By using our **minds** to grasp **is truth**
- By using our **hearts** to feel his **beauty**
- By using our **bodies** to put that truth and beauty on **display** in life

So that's why you exist.

You have a mind in the image of God

The emotion/will in the image of God

And you have a body to act that out in the world.

We are called to make God look great:

By knowing him - enjoying him- and showing him in this way.

We're talking about the Word of so let's look together at some verses:

Point-- we exist for God's Glory!

**Isaiah 43:6-7 King James Version (KJV)**

***<sup>6</sup> I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;***

***<sup>7</sup> Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.***

**1 Corinthians 10:31 King James Version (KJV)**

***<sup>31</sup> Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.***

I said, we do it by knowing, enjoying and showing

**By Knowing God:**

Read

**Romans 1:21 King James Version (KJV)**

***<sup>21</sup> Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.***

How did they fail to Glorify God?

***<sup>25</sup> Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.***

What is the result?

***<sup>28</sup> And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;***

I think that text proves we have two choices in life--we can glorify God or we can throw the truth away. And if you throw the truth the way you can't glorify God. They did not glorify God but exchanged the truth of God for a lie.

We glorify God by using our **minds** not to believe lies, but to believe truth.

God is honored when we **believe truth** about God **not error** about God.

**God's word is that truth.**

We need to know the truth about God in order to glorify him as God.

What about?

**Enjoying God:**

***Psalm 149:5 King James Version (KJV)***

***<sup>5</sup> Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.***

We are joyful in Glory!

I think that the implication is that if you're bored with Glory you make God look bad. If you are thrilled with Glory you make God look Good.

There is a correlation between how you react to Glory and how God looks as reflected by your life.

## **2. Seeing God's Glory is Essential to Knowing it and Enjoying it**

- Jesus said in:

**Matthew 13:13 King James Version (KJV)**

<sup>13</sup> Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they **seeing see not**; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

- What does it mean to see and see not?
- It means that we have two eyes: these (head) and these (hearts).
- I get that from the next verse:

Paul prayed in:

**Ephesians 1:18**

***18 The eyes of your understanding (The Greek says 'of the Heart') being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,***

So Jesus said there are **two kinds of seeing** and Paul tells us that one of those kinds of seeing is of the heart--the Understanding.

The devil and the unbelievers can "See" with these [head].

Judas **saw** him for three years and never prized and what he saw--he prized money - he loved the money and we all know what a snare that becomes.

He saw Jesus more closely than most, but he didn't truly "see" him

Read:

**2 Corinthians 4:4**

***4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.***

The reason people hear and don't believe the gospel is because they don't see the Glory.

**Blinded the minds** to keep them from seeing what?

The "light of the gospel", The **Glory** of the Gospel!

They see the **facts!**

They see **a man!**

"He's a good teacher."

But they never see the Glory of Christ: nothing compellingly glorious.

No more glorious than their **sports.**

No more glorious than their favorite **video.**

No more glorious than their **food**, or their **job**, or their **family.**

He's just nice! He's just OK! **Not Glorious!**

And so therefore, they don't believe. They may go to church, may have been **raised** in church -- but they don't believe.

#2—So, you've got to **see** the Glory to know it and enjoy it!

**3. The first key to seeing God's Glory is internal: the miracle of the new birth!**

Paul said in: **2 Cor 4:6**

***6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.***

**That's the new birth** - it doesn't use that language - but that's the same reality.

**First creation** - "let there be light" and darkness vanished

**Second creation** --Dark, dead heart and “let there be light” and that light is the light of Christ.

Jesus said to Nicodemus

**John 3:3**

***<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.***

***<sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.***

That means is spiritually alive!

Right now, if you're not born again, **your spirit is dead**--your spiritual capacity to discern Glory in the Word as more compelling than anything else --your spiritual capacity to see Christ as supremely glorious is **nonexistent!**

Until the new birth! And at the New Birth, your spirit comes alive!

**You're alive**--you're not dead anymore--you are spiritual--the Holy Spirit has moved in--you have been reborn with a new and living spirit--that's the new birth.

So step number three if we're going to glorify God by knowing him and enjoying him - - we have to see him - -if we're going to see him, something internal has to happen, namely, we've got to be born again.

And then something external has to happen:

**4. The second key to seeing God's Glory is external: we must hear and understand the Word of God--the Gospel.**

**1 Peter 1:23**

***<sup>23</sup> Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.***

So the new birth that doesn't happen in the abstract - - disconnected from the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit doesn't simply move throughout the world where the gospel is not preached and cause people to be born again and there's a reason why he doesn't do that.

It's because he means for the new birth to bring an ability to see Christ in the Word.

That's the point of the new birth to open our eyes to have eyes to see the Glory of Christ.

The Holy Spirit was sent to glorify the Son of God

**John 16:14**

***14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.***

But you can't glorify God if you open your eyes and see **nothing** (pause) but trees (pause) in the middle of Africa! "There are trees, there's water, there are people..."

Christ gets no Glory in that moment - -He doesn't do it that way!

It's like the **Blue Angels** flying team. They fly super close together. Wherever that lead plane goes - - the others go!

The Holy Spirit is like that with the word - - where the Word goes the Spirit goes.

If the Word stops, the spirit stops. He doesn't keep flying around doing his own thing, "Hey I can get people born again by myself."

Oh, he **could** do it all right, but he hasn't set it up that way.

As we see in First Peter, you're born again through the living and abiding Word of God. That some people are born again

You can't make anyone be born again, but you **can** share the Word of God, so that it is now an occasion the Holy Spirit can use so he can open their eyes to see the beauty and Glory of it.

**Acts 26:17-18**

***17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,***

***18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.***

Jesus is speaking to Paul. This is so remarkable. He says:

"I am sending you to open their eyes." You-finite-fallible-non - supernatural human being-**open their eyes...**"

Go do that Paul! To which Paul would say, "**I can't do that.**"

And Jesus knows that and therefore the point of this is God's supernatural, regenerating work that is always done through human agencies.

**Always!**

You have to hear or read the Word of God in order to be born of God. Because God without the word won't open the eyes of any one to see anything!

He opens the eyes to see Christ - -he said, "let there be light" in your heart and you saw the light of the gospel of the Glory of God in the face of Christ.

And so the second thing that has to happen if we're going to find God is that we have to **look at the book.**

Not just go and pray for elimination!

"Oh Holy Spirit - - tell me what I need to know about God."

I heard a Pastor say, "that's an insult to the Holy Spirit."

**His response is going to be, "I wrote a book!"**

**"Read my book!"**

Don't try to do it another way. Don't take shortcuts

He didn't preserve this book through the lives of so many martyrs so that we could go out in the woods in search of the spiritual experience with him apart from his word.

He says:

**"Get on your face before my book and pray."**

So yes, you have to be born of God you have to have an internal experience and you have to have somebody or some book show the Word to you.

**5. When we internally awake to the Glory of God and and or externally focused on the word of God, We meet God and see him in his Glory.**

**1 Samuel 3:21**

***21 And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.***

There is nothing in this world I want more than to **meet** God, **deal** with God, **see** God, **feel** God, **experience** the presence and power of God.

I want to **be near** God and **know** him **without being consumed**.

And that verse says the Lord **revealed himself** to Samuel **through His Word**.

You want to meet God? **Here (bible) is where you meet him!**

Or more specifically - - lest we found two bookish and studious - - this word in-you - - lived and applied everywhere you go.

Everyone talks about a **Rhema** word from God.

Everyone wants to receive Rhema word from God.

A Rhema Word is the **Logos** lived out in-you.

More often than not you will meet God in speaking and living out the word of God.

**You teachers know what I mean.**

If you feel like you didn't get something out of the Word during a service and then-you deliver that same word to someone else - - **in the delivery of that - - God shows up.**

So God reveals himself by the word.

One last step

**6. Therefore, we give ourselves too careful, thoughtful, reading of God's inspired spokesman - - the apostles and prophets**

**1 Corinthians 2:12-13**

***<sup>12</sup> Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.***

***<sup>13</sup> Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.***

That means:

**Interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual**

Paul claims as a teacher of the risen Christ - - to teach in words taught by the Spirit of Christ himself.

I believe that the words that we look at every week are precisely those words - - they are taught by the Holy Spirit.

**So let me sum up the six steps for you.**

Every one of us is called --and this is to answer the question **why do we, at this church, focus so much on the bible.**

A little anecdote here:

I'm 56 years old - - I'm retired and while we're hardly wealthy, our needs are met and I don't work.

I have no commitments - no responsibilities - beyond loving my wife and raising Kimmie.

So what do I do - how do I use my time.

I'm giving myself to the Word of God more than I ever have.

I read. I study.

I teach this on Sunday mornings

We teach Bible Studies at Morning Pointe on Mondays and Tuesdays

I teach this in Bible College and Seminary

I write books and papers

I take courses in Biblical studies

### **Why do I do all that?**

The answer is -- **I love this Book** - - I'm closer now to meeting the Lord than ever before in my life and I want to know him -- and what better way than reading what he said!

And go **so deep** with what he said - - that when we meet there won't be any surprises. I don't want to be surprised

**"Oh, I did know you were like that!"**

I don't want to be ashamed when I see him!

Seriously I've thought a lot about this. Especially in light of my former life - - "What are you going to do?" - - I mean, I'm not like some - I didn't spend much time in the word only for Sunday school and when I felt guilty.

Who can relate?

So why look at this book so much? I'm old -- I could be doing anything else. Besides the fact that I love this book -- I want to be ready to meet him.

**So**, Summarizing the six steps: this is the big picture

**Number One:** We're all called to glorify God by **knowing** him, **enjoying** him and **showing** him

**Number Two:** we must **see** him in order to do that

**Number three:** we are able to see him **internally** through the new birth

**Number four:** we are able to see him **externally** - - by seeing and hearing the Word of God

**Number five:** we meet God himself -- glorious-- in his word - no other place reliable and can we meet God like that

**Number six:** and finally therefore we're devoting detailed attention to read this book

### **Ephesians 3:4**

<sup>4</sup>Whereby, when ye **read**, ye may **understand** my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

Isn't that amazing?

### **"When you read this"**

Not when you **pray for understanding without reading**, but **as you read**, the understanding **will** come.

And then, this is one of my favorite verses as to why I am a part of a Bible College and Seminary which encourages students to think about the bible.

### **2 Timothy 2:7**

<sup>7</sup>***Consider what I say; and the Lord (will) give thee understanding in all things.***

**Think! "For the Lord will give"**

Many of you may have felt at some point in your life like you were in one camp or the other:

"I'm the kind of depends on the Lord to give me insight" or

"I'm the kind that thinks!"

### **Thinkers think! Waiters wait!**

Often Waiters believe themselves to be spiritual and that the thinkers aren't because, after all, everyone knows thinking is what gets you in trouble."

Well, Paul says to Timothy, "think over what I say." Think!

Not think so you can figure it out for yourself - -but, **think because the Lord will give!**

Its through the thinking that the understanding comes

God answers this prayer

When you think and pray, God **will**, not maybe, perhaps, sometimes or when it gets 70°!

**God will give understanding to his Godly ones!**

So the six points are my response to why focus on the bible.

Why you should read the bible every day

Because in the Bible - - **God is speaking** - - he is revealing his thoughts and his Glory to be enjoyed and **that is our very reason for existing!**

Doctors study continually after graduating from Medical School in order to better save lives.

Shouldn't we, in order to better saves lives from hell, continually be in study, continually be advancing our knowledge of the Kingdom of God.

I know my Pastor does that, I know I do that, and I'm sure many of you do that as well.

But shouldn't we strengthen our efforts to get to know the Word of God better. I believe we should!

**About the Author**

Dr. Larry L Yates is a Minister, Author and Bible Teacher. He is President and Co-founder, with his wife Shelia of Miracles in Action, an Apostolic teaching ministry dedicated to sharing the Apostolic Faith, the revelation of our Full Salvation and the realities of the New Creation to lost and hurting humanity through a basic understanding

of the truth and reality of God's Word.

Larry holds a Master's Degree in Theology from Apostolic Theological Bible College in Tampa, Florida and graduated *summa cum laude* with a Doctorate in Theology from Calvary Bible College and Seminary in Southbend, Indiana and his PhD in Religion from MINEOLA Bible Institute. He completed his Doctor of Ministry at Great Commission Bible College in Kiefer, OK.

He is Vice-President of MINEOLA Bible Institute in Van, TX as well as a member of the Board of Regents of the International Apostolic University, in the UK. Additionally, he is affiliated with the International Apostolic Council, in Dallas, TX.

He is author of:

- *"The Divided God: Apostolic Theology and the Biblical Challenge to Contemporary Trinitarianism"*
- *"The Fifth Gospel: Handbook to the Book of Acts"*
- *"Releasing the Anointing: How to Pray an Hour without Repeating Yourself"*
- *"Biblical Foundations for divine Healing"*

**Dr. Yates may be contacted for ministry or information at:**

**drlarryyates@gmail.com**