

KEYS FOR YOUR BIBLICAL JOURNEY – STUDY & MEDITATION AIDS

WHY READ AND STUDY THE BIBLE?

We should read and study the Bible because all of Scripture is literally "God-breathed" (*2 Timothy 3:16*), God's very words to us. The Bible, a book not only for reading, is for learning how much God loves us, and who God is. Reading, studying, meditating on and applying God's Word in our lives grows our faith, hope, love, and ability to live in this world and stand firm as His disciples as we do so.

Time spent in God's Word is part of our worship, its literally time with the Lord to grow our personal relationship with Him, to come to understand who He is as we learn about His omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. Through Scripture reading and meditating on it we learn why the Father sent His only begotten Son to be the unblemished sacrificial Lamb who took our sins upon Himself that we may be raised up to eternal life with Him; we come to know whose we are as His children. God's Word expresses the depth of His love for us (*Romans 5:6-8; John 3:16*), a radiant love that draws us to love Him more each day (*1 John 4:19*).

It is hoped that through the Holy Spirit you may find the following sections lay out a number of aspects to provide guidance to enhance your time in the Word that you are drawn into a closer relationship with Christ. May you discover His truths, His eternal love already given, love awakening you to a deeper sense of His grace, peace, and joy, prepare for the glory of eternal life, and draw others to know Him too.

SIMPLE GUIDELINES TO STUDY THE BIBLE...STOP, LOOK, LISTEN AND RESPOND.

Select a reading plan, perhaps alternately focus on a book in the Old Testament then the New, or plans listed in your Bible, or search your web browser, or ask your Pastor. Keep it simple so you'll stay with it. Spend independent daily time in the Word *and* join a Bible study group to grow more. Prayer is a key component. Remember the Bible is intended to be taken as a whole, and there are cultural differences between ourselves and the people in Bible times. Also you'll find different types of literature: history, law, poetry, songs, wisdom literature, prophecy, personal letters, and apocalyptic literature. Books preceding the four Gospels are anticipatory; the books that follow are explanatory. When you find Scripture perplexing pray to understand, use a commentary, other resource, and/or ask your Pastor to provide clarity. By using a hard copy of the Bible, you can underline key thoughts and passages for future reference during your Biblical journey through the years. You may want to add notes in the margins, and even date the notes.

STOP...

1. First, find a quiet place free from distraction.
2. Pray before beginning. A prayer can be simple: "Lord, allow your Holy Spirit to open my eyes and speak to my heart that I may be fed with Your Word. Nourished me as Your child for my faith in You to grow. Help me share what I learn with others, to put into action what You teach me and to grow in living a godly life."
3. If you are new to Bible Study or reading the Bible, try not to be frustrated. Initially it may be a bit difficult, but the Lord rewards diligence. As you progress you'll see how Bible study relates to present day life, and when applications are applied, your life will be transformed.

LOOK...

1. Read the text. While not a requirement, it has been suggested reading out loud has the advantage of absorbing the words by reading and hearing; the mind grasps more of what the text is saying as you read aloud. However, try it. Experience the difference by doing so.
2. Read through the text a second time. Ask some of the basic questions listed below. A simply way is to remember the basic five: *who, what, when, where, and why*. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Who is speaking *and* who is being spoken to — who is the audience and/or the hearers?

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- Who are the various characters?
- What is the context...what is it about; the subject/topic; what is the point?
- What are the repeated words or phrases? Repetition points to an emphasizing factor.
- Observe words like “therefore,” “if,” and “and.”
 - The word *therefore* sums up what came before and points to a result.
 - *If* generally indicates a condition related to a consequence, warning, command, or even a question.
 - *And* almost always indicates there is more to the point being made; something additional
- What is happening and why is it happening? What is the result of what is happening?
- Where is all taking place? Look at the setting/context.
- Is there an event or occasion; an element of timing? (e.g., Before Christ? During opposition?)
- Why was this message written—the reason for the message? What does God want you to know?

Note: As previously mentioned, you’ll not always understand perplexing Bible passages. After reading the text, meditate on the questions above, seek understanding by reading the Bible’s study notes, or use an English “lexicon” (see Biblehub.com) to look up the meaning of words in the Biblical setting. Ask your pastor for help understanding, and/or read commentary notes, or search resources noted at the end of this page.

LISTEN...

- What is this text telling or teaching you? Is the Word showing you something to confess or apply?
- Are there any aspects of the law present (e.g., a command, aspect of evil to confront, or sin to reveal)?
- Are there aspects of the Gospel revealed (e.g., God’s love, His forgiveness, a promise, or is there emphasis related to a command, or Jesus [Gospel] being revealed in the OT)? Are you noting your insights?
- Be it Old Testament or New Testament, where is Christ in the text, either implied or revealed?

RESPOND...

- How are you connecting to this passage in your own life?
- What are you being taught?
- Does the passage cause you to confess sin in your life and ask for forgiveness?
- How does this passage lead you to repentance?
- What in this passage will you apply that will transform your life in Christ?
- Important! Meditate on your reading. Use scripture as prayer, include yourself and others in response to the message God provided through His Word. If new, remember to move ahead slowly...you will grow!
- Are you finding joy and peace as you spend time in the Word?

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS...

- From the Biblical text what does God want you to learn, apply, and share from what you have read and studied? Though repetitious, it is about absorbing, applying, praying about, meditating on, and sharing?
- How has the knowledge you have gained helped you to understand what it is to be Christ’s disciple?
- How is this helping you draw others to Christ and/or build intentional relationships?
- As the Holy Spirit speaks to you, are you growing your relationship with Christ to lead others to Him?
- Are you growing relationships with persons with whom:
 - 1) you can share the Gospel so they may come to know and believe in Christ, or
 - 2) share with those who already believe to deepen their relationship with Him?

A FEW HELPFUL RESOURCES...

www.biblegateway.com; www.biblehub.com; www.bibletools.org; www.thebibleproject.com;
www.biblica.com/bible.