

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

LESSON 2: BIBLE STUDY

THE TARGET: Men's Ministries starts with the premise that the Bible is both reliable and accurate. The Bible is the best-selling book in history. But, it is more than a history book. The Bible is the story of God's redemptive work in the world. In this lesson, you will learn about the Bible and how to begin the important spiritual discipline of studying it.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

In their book, *The Faith: Given Once, For All*, Chuck Colson and Harold Fickett note that there are more ancient manuscripts of the Bible than any other book—24,947 of the New Testament and 14,000 of the Old Testament (The ancient Greek poem, Homer's *Iliad* is the next closest with only six hundred manuscripts).¹ Bible manuscripts are extremely accurate and consistent with one another. This is because, according to Hebrew practice, only eyewitness testimony was accepted; and when copying documents, the Jews would copy one letter at a time—not word by word, phrase by phrase, or sentence by sentence.

Although the Bible consists of sixty-six books written over one thousand five

¹ Colson, Charles and Harold Fickett. *The Faith Given Once for All*. Zondervan, 2008, Pages 52-53.



hundred years by forty people in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) on three different continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe), the story of Scripture exhibits amazing harmony.

If this is true, why is it that men do not read the Bible? It could be for a myriad of reasons. Here are three to consider.

First, perhaps men do not trust the purpose of the Bible. Paul helps men understand its purpose when he writes 2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”

Second, men may not read the Bible because it can be intimidating. To some men, the Bible can be overpowering and larger than life, having too many pages. It can be too difficult to follow the storyline, and the names, places and teaching are hard to pronounce or communicate. As you press towards this spiritual discipline of growing in your knowledge, understanding, and practices of Scripture, you must work toward the exposure and removal of obstacles you may face with the Bible.

Third, possibly the most common reason why men do not read the Bible is because they do not understand it. Men would rather remain silent on something they do not understand rather than engage with it and risk looking foolish. Men will use ignorance as an excuse for escape, so they do not have to show their lack of knowledge concerning Biblical comprehension.





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

As you develop deeper study habits, please note there are three words we would like you to learn to more accurately interpret God's Word and assist you in your understanding of Scripture. The first word is *exegesis*. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart have a fantastic explanation for exegesis. They say, "The first task of the interpreter is called *exegesis*. Exegesis is the careful, systemic study of the Scripture **to discover the original, intended meaning** [emphasis ours]. This is basically an historical task. It is the attempt to hear the Word as the original recipients were to have heard it, to find out what was the original intent of the words of the Bible."²

The second word is *eisegesis*. Here's how Carl Gibbs explains eisegesis: "Eisegesis usually occurs when an interpreter **ignores a rule of interpretation because it conflicts with his or her preconceived notions** [emphasis ours] . . . occurs when one approaches a text with the prejudices and twists the Bible's message to make it say what one wants it to say."³

The final word is *hermeneutics*. Gibbs states, "Hermeneutics is the study of biblical interpretation, while exegesis refers to the implementation of those rules" (Gibbs, 2004, page 21). In other words, **you cannot make a passage of Scripture say something today that it never meant to the original author and audience**. A text simply cannot mean what it never meant.

Fee stated correctly, "Hermeneutics refers to seeking the contemporary relevance of ancient texts. It asks the questions about the Bible's meaning in the 'here and now.' The reason one must not begin with the here and now is that the only proper control for hermeneutics is to be found in the **original intent** [emphasis ours] of the biblical text . . . Otherwise biblical texts can be made to mean whatever they mean to any given reader."⁴

Engaging in deep study of the Bible involves more than just reading a passage of Scripture. It takes effort, work, and time to allow this spiritual

2 Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Fourth Edition, Zondervan. 2014, Page 52-53.

3 Gibbs. *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*. Global University; Third Edition. 2004, Page 21.

4 Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Page 33.



discipline to affect the way you see Scripture. Here are some important guidelines to help you accurately apply exegesis and hermeneutics.

First, you must avoid the temptation to apply eisegesis rather than exegesis. You may have a natural inclination to use a specific passage of the Bible to prove your convictions and beliefs. However, when you do this, the passage is taken out of context, and the true meaning of the Scripture often becomes distorted.

Second, you need to discover the original intent of the author.

Third, to become proficient in Bible study, you need to study the culture of the author's time in which he wrote. The authors of the Bible assume you know the land, language, and culture of the time in which they wrote.





BULLSEYE: Hit Your Target

To hit the bullseye in Bible study we suggest the following.

One, pick a translation you can understand. In **Appendix A**, there is a Bible Translation Tool to assist you. Remember, all translations are just that—a translation.

However, depending on where you are in your spiritual journey, make sure you pick a translation that will best help you engage with the text.

Two, as you begin to study the Bible, ask the Holy Spirit to assist you in your understanding of what you are reading. While the writers wrote for a specific time and place, you need the Holy Spirit to help you extrapolate the meaning for your life today.

Three, to better engage in the spiritual discipline of Bible study, avoid skipping around to different chapters and verses. Bible study is more effective when you select a systematic verse-by-verse study pattern to follow.

Four, consider journaling as you read, using the S.O.A.P. method of studying Scripture. You can find the S.O.A.P. method in **Appendix D**.

Five, consistency is key to the discipline of Bible study. For the greatest spiritual benefit, Men's Ministries recommends engaging in Bible study a minimum of five out of seven days a week. When you take the time to put in the work to develop a good Bible study habit, you are on a solid pathway for growth and development. For accountability and support, talk with your pastor about your study patterns and reading schedule.

The following exercises will help you begin the spiritual discipline of Bible study.

- Read through the types of Bible translations in **Appendix A**. Select a translation at a level that you believe will help you begin and remain consistent in this spiritual discipline. Which version did you choose? Men's Ministries recommends you purchase a *FireBible*. This Bible is filled with study notes and is the number one Pentecostal Study Bible worldwide and is available in several versions.



- Before you purchase a Bible, read Psalm 139:23–24 in three different translations. What are the similarities? What are the differences?
- Look at a sample reading plan in **Appendix E**. Select a reading plan at a pace where you can remain consistent in your reading for a minimum of five out of seven days.
- Before you read a book of the Bible, read its overview in **Appendix C**. If you have a *FireBible*, information is provided at the beginning of each book that describes the author, theme, date of the writing, background, purpose, survey, and special features. Take the time to read this introduction to familiarize yourself with what you are about to read. Make sure you have a journal and you are writing down things that stand out to you.
- Look back at the three words listed in the Crosshair Section. Write down in your own words what the words *exegesis*, *eisegesis*, and *hermeneutics* mean. Why is this important to know?



- Write out 2 Timothy 3:16 in your own words. From this verse, what is the purpose of the Bible?

- Read Romans 6:1-15 and practice the S.O.A.P. method of journaling found in **Appendix D**. What were your thoughts through this process?

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?

- Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate what you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Next Step:

- ❑ **Courage:** Select a Bible reading plan and begin your spiritual formation journey. Remember consistency is key and if you get off track just pick up where you left off. Do not become burdened trying to “catch up.”
- ❑ **Strength:** Commit to faithfully reading the Bible for the next ninety days for *five out of seven days*. Then, after ninety days, *recommit*.
- ❑ **Endurance:** Commit to reading the Gospel of Mark. Daily, read the Scripture until you learn something (it could be one verse or an entire chapter). Write in your journal what you have learned, and then pick up the next day where you left off in your reading, repeating the system until you finish Mark. What were your impressions of this method of Bible study?

FireBible:

- Read the *FireBible* article, “Bible Training for Christians.”
 - » Summarize in your own words the seven reasons for biblical and theological training under point one. Write out three steps you can take to improve your biblical and theological training over the next ninety days.



- » Why is it important for your Bible study to be more than intellectual?

- Read the *FireBible* article, “The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture.”
 - » Summarize in your own words the fourteen thoughts about the inspiration and authority of Scripture. What can you glean from these thoughts? How can you apply them to your life today?

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