

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 2:14, Psalm 119:97-100

Dear Church Family,

Today I'm going to pull once again from a video of Sylvester D. Mitchell as we talk about reading and retaining God's Word.

How many of us try to read the Bible and feel like we have gotten nothing or very little understanding from the effort? How often have we heard people tell us they can't seem to get into the Word and therefore give up?

I do not believe it is because of lack of intelligence, discipline or spirituality. It may simply be because nobody has ever taught you how to approach and study the Bible. You can own ten Bible translations and still not understand Scripture. You can read five chapters every day and still fail to retain what you read. You can underline verses and highlight passages, purchase a concordance, download Bible apps and listen to sermons all day long. But if you do not to approach the word of God properly, you can have the information in front of you but not experience transformation inside of you. Remember, the Bible should change you!

Last week, I gave you five reasons you should read your Bible and now that you understand that, it's time to learn how to. Because studying the Bible is much more than opening a book; it is approaching the revealed mind of God.

We will be talking about five steps of studying the Bible that will aid you in understanding it, retaining it and applying it to your life. For change to happen in who you are and how you live.

Today we will focus on the very first step: approach the Bible with prayer. Before you open the Word, open your mouth. Before you start reading, begin in prayer. Prayer prepares your heart for what your eyes are about to encounter, and what your mind is about to process. The Bible is not merely an academic document, it is a spiritual book, and spiritual truth must be spiritually discerned and meditated on. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:14,

¹⁴ The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

This means intelligence alone is not enough. Although it plays a part in it, it is not the full part. Education and historical research are beneficial. Understanding grammar, culture and context is beneficial. But you can understand the history of the Bible and still miss the heart of the God who inspired it.

Prayer moves you from merely examining a biblical text to encountering its Author. Let me share a serious illustration carefully with you for a second. In human relationships, intimacy should be consensual. Whenever a person forces sexual contact upon another person and takes advantage of someone who is incapacitated, or ignores that person's refusal, that is not intimacy. It is sexual assault and abuse. True intimacy cannot be produced or forced.

In a far greater and completely holy sense, God does not force spiritual intimacy upon us. He calls us, draws us, convicts us and invites us, but He does not violate our will. Prayer is our willing response to heaven's invitation. Prayer is our spirit saying, God I am present, I am listening, I am opening my heart, I want You to speak to me. I want to understand Your Word.

Prayer does not give God permission to be God, and it does not earn us access to Scripture. But prayer consciously positions us to comprehend what God already desires to be revealed. God wants fellowship His people. God wants communication with His children; God desires His bride to know His voice. But He is not going to force intimacy upon someone who has no desire to hear Him. This is why before you begin studying, communicating with God through prayer puts you in a position to continue communicating with Him through Scripture. To hear what He wants you to hear through His Word.

It is helpful to pray one of the Psalms. Ask God for this to be you. Tell Him this is who you want to be in relation to His Word!

Psalm 119:97-100

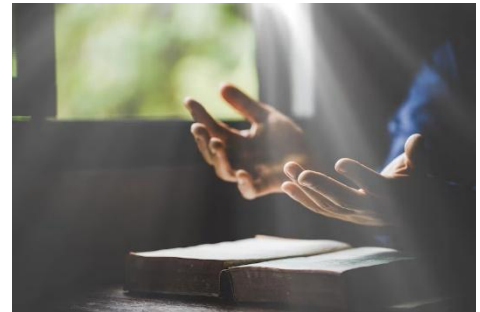
⁹⁷ Oh, how I love your law!

I meditate on it all day long.

*⁹⁸ Your commands are always with me
and make me wiser than my enemies.*

*⁹⁹ I have more insight than all my teachers,
for I meditate on your statutes.*

*¹⁰⁰ I have more understanding than the elders,
for I obey your precepts.*



This week I encourage you to look at the Word of God with fresh eyes; this starts in prayer. God desires a conversation with each individual willing to have a relationship with Him. He is calling us into relationship and shows us through His Word what walking with Him in a Kingdom-focused life looks like.

In Him,

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Call to Action: Pray and be honest with God. Tell Him whatever gets in the way of you consistently being in His Word and ask Him to remove it. Pray for being in His Word to be exciting and for a thirst to know more. Seek to discuss the Bible with other believers.