

How To Study The Bible

The Spiritual
Keys To
Understand
God's Word

By: Pastor Brandon 'b.Side' Alvillar, for
Proper Knowledge Ministries



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Hi, I'm Pastor Brandon 'b.Side' Alvillar, the lead Bible-teaching pastor for Proper Knowledge Ministries. After ten years of in-depth ministry experience, both inside and outside of a traditional church setting, I felt a strong conviction from the LORD to write a book like this. In my experience, I have found that many people – believers and non-believers, matured believers and new believers – alike, struggle to understand the Bible and its true purposes. I've also learned that, we as Bible teachers, are mostly to blame. The traditional church service is not helpful to the church body in terms of providing comprehensive instruction about what the Bible is, how to read and interpret it properly, and how to grow spiritually from it. I wrote this book with the hope of providing a launch pad to help enable your ability to “rightly divide” the Word of God, and spiritually grow in faith by the power of God as a result.

This book was inspired by a work written by Dr. David Hocking of Hope For Today ministries. In his study book for The Book of Revelation, David took time to explain how, understanding the correct interpretation of the Book of Revelation, is dependent on four spiritual principles. His presentation of this truth was brief, but extremely well-articulated, scripturally supported, and extremely true! I realized that those principles were true for ANY portion of scripture, and so decided to elaborate on the concepts that David's book introduced in order to provide an equally-comprehensive tool that helps focus our attention to the place it belongs when dealing with the Bible.

Each chapter contains simple instruction that explains how the Bible is a spiritual work that requires spiritual perspective to understand. We as human beings are carnal, and not spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:44). We aren't born with a spiritual perspective (1 Corinthians 2:14). This means that, as natural human beings we are unqualified to understand the Bible by natural instinct and intellect. We can't just pick up the Bible, start reading, and walk away understanding God, His purposes, His promises, and purposes for scriptures. This book is designed to explain how to approach the Bible with the proper spiritual perspective, so that we can gain the benefits that God intends for His people to have. The end of each chapter contains three thought-provoking questions that I suggest you consider deeply. They are open-ended questions that don't always have a right/wrong answer. However, taking the time to answer those questions honestly and candidly will enable you to receive the quality of profit this book was intended to provide.

Chapter 1:

Given By Inspiration

How To Study The Bible
- The Spiritual Keys To Understand God's Word



Chapter 1: Given By Inspiration

“All Scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

There are many people who read the Bible. There are far fewer that truly understand its contents. There are many who believe that the Bible is open to various interpretations. Is that true? How can we know if we are really reading the Bible properly, understanding what God intended for it to mean? The Bible can't be very good for us, if we don't understand its purpose. A while ago, there was a popular acronym floating around that tried to simplify the essence of the Bible. It went like this:

Basic - Instruction - Before - Leaving - Earth

Here's the problem with this idea. If the Bible is so basic, how come there are so many interpretations of it, and so much confusion about it? If the Bible is truly instruction, what are we being instructed for? What is the purpose and the end result? If the Bible is so basic in its instruction, how come there are so many people in the world that seem to struggle with doing what the Bible says? Here's another concept to think of. If the Bible is merely about instructions we follow before we leave earth, where are we going to go, and what are we going to do when we leave? Does this imply that if we do the things the Bible says, that we'll end up in heaven? More fundamentally, if the Bible is only about what we do in this life, why does the Bible emphasize eternal life so much. Why is there prophecy? Why does it discuss spiritual and eternal things so often? What about the God who wrote it? Maybe the Bible is more than the simple ideas behind a silly acronym.

Here's the problem: When you put Biblical truth in the hands of human beings, confusion is bound to take place. We're flawed. We make mistakes. There is a fundamental principle that needs to be understood when dealing with the Bible.

*“All Scripture [is] **given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable** for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

This verse teaches something extremely important, that is absolutely foundational to understanding ANY part of the Bible truthfully. The Bible is a supernatural work! According to the Bible, it is the work of God Himself. God “inspired” the writing of every book, chapter, verse, word, and grammatical element in the entire Bible. Notice how the Bible teaches that God “gave” all scripture. This means that God’s Word is a gift that He gave through certain men in human history. Since God is eternally self-existing, self-sustaining, almighty, righteous, just, sovereign, wise, and so forth, His gift will be of His essence. God in essence, is spirit (John 4:24), and so His gift spiritual in nature.

Secondly, God’s gift of the Word was given by means of “inspiration.” This is where a lot of people get messed up. They think that God gave ideas to men, who then took creative liberty to pen things that sounded good according to their experience. Hence, the Bible is susceptible to flaws. That is NOT the principle that is being taught! The New Testament, the section of the Bible where 2 Timothy 3:16-17 comes from, was originally penned in the Greek language.



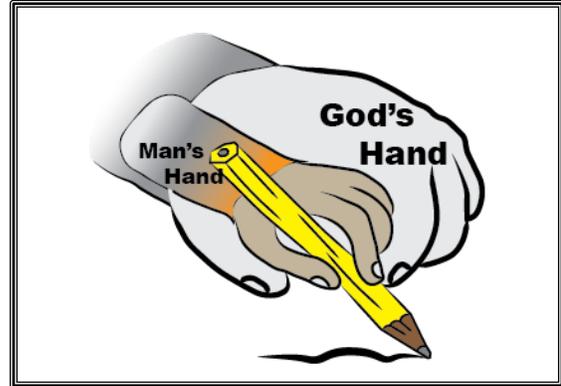
In the Greek language, the phrase “by inspiration of God” is actually one long word, made up of two principles, that are combined together by a compound word. The first word deals with the identity of God, emphasizing that the Bible is God’s book. The second word, actually better-translates into the English word “wind” or “breath.” This means that the Gift of God’s Word, came by God’s own breath. The Old Testament teaches that the breath of God is also the Spirit of God – the Holy Spirit.

*“The Spirit of God has made me, and **the breath of the Almighty gives me life.**”*

- Job 33:4

The Bible is the effects of God’s breath, which comes by the Holy Spirit. This makes sense. When people speak, we breathe. The sound of our words comes literally by the moving of air, and vibrations in it. The Bible is God’s Word that comes by the movement of His Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

This is a HUGE concept to grasp. The Bible is NOT the words or testimonies of men and women, even though the contents of the Bible involve the testimonies of men and women. The Bible is NOT the results of oral tradition. The Bible is a supernatural work, where God exercised His sovereign power and control as the Creator of all things, to provide a gift to His creation. The Bible is supernatural in essence. The Bible is God's own Word.



The Bible is a gift to the human race. The point is, we're either going to believe this, or we're not. If we do, then we can move forward through the Bible, and receive the benefits of God's gift, through patient learning. If we don't believe, we might be able to see the words written, but will NEVER gain the benefits that come with God's gift (1 Corinthians 2:14). The Bible will continue to be confusing. The Bible will continue to seem plain. The Bible will just be another book. Thankfully, subjects of truth are not dependent on the faith of people to agree. The proclamations of the Bible are true, whether we accept what they say, or not.

The passage from 2 Timothy 3:16-17 explains that there are significant benefits that come with the understanding of scripture. God gave His Word as a gift, but there is purpose for the gift. God gave this gift because it is "profitable." There are good things that happen when people receive and understand the Bible. Though the Bible is supernatural in nature, it is possible to receive the benefits that God provides through it. The Bible is profitable for doctrine, which means that the Bible has good and sound teaching. The contents of the Bible provide instruction that is advantageous to those who read and understand it. Since God is eternal in nature, the gift of scripture is eternal in nature. This means that the instruction of the Bible must also be beneficial from an eternal standpoint. When we understand that it's supernatural in nature, we can start to see how this is possible.

Consider The Word:

Defining "Profit:"

1. Valuable return or gain
2. The excess of returns over expenditure in a transaction

In Biblical context, who determines what is "valuable?" Who is spending the "cost" and what is the expectation for "return?"

The Bible is profitable for reproof. This means that the Bible will be convicting. There are things that God says in the Bible that may be offensive to us as readers. God might say things that we don't agree with. But remember, this is a gift aimed at providing profit. If we can confess that God is essentially good, then the offense His Word might bring, is worth considering and accepting, because God ultimately intends good. Here, it's important to recognize that God sets Himself apart as the authority. He determines what is right and wrong, good or bad, righteous and unrighteous. The Bible is a gift God gave us to understand these dynamics of life. So where does the conviction and reproof come from? It comes from the fact that the Bible will define God's definitions of goodness and righteousness, and it will likely contradict our personal beliefs. Still, God is right. He gave us this gift to let us know what "right" truly is.

The Bible is profitable for correction. As previously stated, the Bible will show God's perspective about what is right and wrong, and we will inevitably find that we can't know what "right" is, unless we have God explain it. When we come up with things on our own, they will always result in bad. Just look at the world around us! So, God will correct us. He uses this gift to correct our distorted worldview and unrighteousness, so that we can learn the truth about goodness and righteousness. This is truly a good gift indeed!

Lastly, the scripture promised a reward. When we receive God's gift in the Bible, read it, and seek to understand it by faith in these truths, we will be considered children of God and by extension, made complete. This means that God's gift will provide true satisfaction that lasts. This is true, in spite of the difficulties that scripture might present when we're convicted and corrected. Having knowledge and understanding of what is TRULY right and wrong is satisfying. Having wisdom to know how to do right, and how to keep from wrong is satisfying. Having confidence that we're in a good-standing with God, brings peace like no other! More importantly, because the Bible is supernatural in essence, it's effective not just for teaching, but also for equipping! Reading the Bible correctly provides power. Understanding the scriptures truly enables spiritual and supernatural functionality.

Since these things are true, we can't rely solely on the words and interpretations of men and women to explain supernatural things. By definition, something supernatural defies human explanation and intellectual understanding, right? So, we need to rely on the Bible to explain itself! We need to rely on God to explain His own Word. We need to let God present His own gift. We need to let the Holy Spirit continue the work that He started when these words were originally penned, with Him as the original Author. If the Bible is of God's essence, providing supernaturally-spiritual benefits concerning eternal things, it sounds like God Himself is the ONLY One qualified to explain these matters. Since this is true, we need to rely on Him to know what He has to say.

Reflect & Respond

Question 1: If God is able to overcome human control and influence to use flawed people to pen His Word perfectly, where is an area in your personal life that God might want to exercise His influence to pen His purposes on the tablet of your heart?

Question 2: How might your current perspective of “profit” differ from God’s perspective based on what you know of God? How do you think this differing perspective might keep you from doing what God desires for your life?

Question 3: Since the Bible is a supernatural work of God, can you identify any changes that you might need to make in your approach to the Bible? What might some of those changes be?

Chapter 2: ⁸

Chapter 2: In The Beginning...

*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”
– Genesis 1:1*

We’ve established what the Bible is. It is not that basic. It contains instruction, but the instruction is specific concerning things founded on God’s perspective and nature – the infinite Creator and Controller of all things in heaven and earth. The instruction is supernatural in nature, which means that the contents of the Bible transcend this life. Therefore, the contents of the Bible concern things for this life, as well as the next, because God is involved in this life and the next as the eternally self-existing and self-sustaining God of glory. The Bible is a gift from God, and should be handled and appreciated accordingly. No one asked for this gift. God just gave it. So, the Bible is ultimately an act of God’s grace.

What is the Bible about then? What does the Bible instruct us about? What did God package in this gift? This is easy to answer. When seeking to know the truth of any particular subject, you typically start at the beginning. You don’t try to understand the plot of a movie by jumping into the middle of the movie, making assumptions about what you think might have happened before. That would likely cause a lot of confusion. Consider how the Bible begins:

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”- Genesis 1:1

There are a lot of things to learn about the Bible in this statement. But for the sake of simplicity concerning the point of this book, we’ll focus on one thing. If you want to understand God’s point and purpose in giving the world a gift in the form of His Word, we only need to look at the first verse in the Bible to understand why. What is the Bible all about? The Bible is all about God!

Consider The Word:

Defining “God:”

1. Hebrew word “Elohim” referring to supreme majesty
2. Refers to God’s “triune” nature as one God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)

Since the Bible is about God, it is our duty to examine its contents looking for God’s majesty as Father, Son, and Spirit.

In the beginning was God. He created the heavens and the earth, which means before God, there was nothing! Even though the contents of the Bible discuss and teach many subjects that involve the effects of God's creation, the emphasis is on God Himself. The point of the Bible is that, God is the Creator of all things. He was before all things, and in Him, all things consist (Colossians 1:17). He is the Author and the Finisher of all things (Hebrews 12:2). He is the Sustainer of all things (Psalm 55:22). He is the Governor and Administrator of all things (Daniel 2:44). The rest of the Bible simply proves these claims as true. The gift of God shows how God interacts in human history to prove His nature, identity, attributes, purposes and promises.

The LORD spoke, and the things that He wanted to discuss, were things concerning Himself. He had a plan in mind, and wanted to make sure that ALL people are able to understand the One who is in charge. The LORD has good intentions, and gave us the gift of the Bible to explain those intentions. God did a supernatural work in order to reveal Himself and His intentions. When we read the Bible, if we want to understand it properly, we need to read it with this in the forefront of our minds:

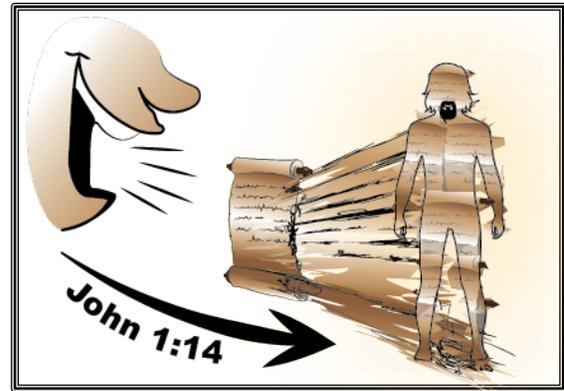
The Bible is God's gift to mankind to reveal His identity, His purposes, and His promises.

When people understand this fundamental truth, then the contents of scripture can be addressed with clearer focus. Things begin to make sense. For example, God begins the testimony of Himself "in the beginning" to explain the work He did to make the world as we know it. Why did He do that? He wants to show us things about Himself. He transcends our plane of reality. He is all powerful. Wisdom comes from Him. He has a plan and a purpose. He is in control over ALL factors of life, in heaven and earth, to ensure the success of that plan.

What about the genealogies of the Bible – the documentation of humanity's roots? The Bible has a lot of names in them, beginning with Adam. A lot of those names are really hard to read. Why are those names there? Who are those people, and why is that important? Isn't the Bible supposed to be profitable for instruction, reproof, and correction? Isn't the Bible supposed to equip us for works of righteousness? How do these genealogies do that?

Let's take the two most important genealogies in the Bible for example – the genealogies of Jesus Christ. The Bible provides a genealogy for each side of His family: His mother Mary and His step-father Joseph. These genealogies can be found in the New Testament books of Matthew Chapter 1 and Luke Chapter 3. The genealogy of Jesus Christ, given in Matthew's testimony, documents Jesus' ancestors through his step-father Joseph. The testimony of Luke documents Jesus' ancestors on Mary's side of the family.

The Bible explains that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God's Word (John 1:14). In other words, the revelation of God's identity, character, nature, purpose, and promises, took the form of flesh, and lived for a time, as a man on this earth! The genealogies of Jesus Christ provide historical documentation to prove this claim as true. So, we can look to the genealogies of Jesus Christ to trust that He is God-in-flesh when we compare those things to other portions of scripture.



Consider this: Is there a better gift, than the one God gave in His Word?

It might seem like God is the world's greatest narcissist. Well, when we read God's testimony of Himself and discover that He's the only One that is holy, righteous, just, good, fair, merciful, gracious, and is the essence of love, then it sounds like He deserves all the attention. Who is going to compete? When we read the testimony of God, and understand that He is the essence of life, it seems like God has earned the right to be the center of attention. Then, when we consider that, God took the form of flesh to make His revelation clearer, historically documenting this work along the way, this is truly the greatest gift known to mankind. This is a true supernatural work that promises the most profound, lasting blessings. What other book claims to promise such blessings and goodness?

Reflect & Respond

Question 1: The Bible begins by saying, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The Bible doesn’t mention mankind until the last day of God’s creative work. How does this truth illustrate that the emphasis of scripture is on God’s identity and purposes, and not ours?

Question 2: How might God’s focus on scripture differ from the way you might have approached the scriptures in the past? Did God’s emphasis differ from the approach you took? What are some practical changes you can make to ensure you’re studying the Word the way God intended?

Question 3: God clearly communicated in the beginning that He is 3-in-1 as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, has always been, and always will be. This shows that His essence in this form is greater than the world He created. Describe how this knowledge should influence your perspective about things concerning this life and this world.

Chapter 3:

The Foundation Of Faith

How To Study The Bible
- The Spiritual Keys To Understand God's Word



Chapter 3: The Foundation Of Faith

“Let my cry come before You, O LORD; give me understanding according to Your word.” – Psalm 119:169

“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” – Hebrews 11:3

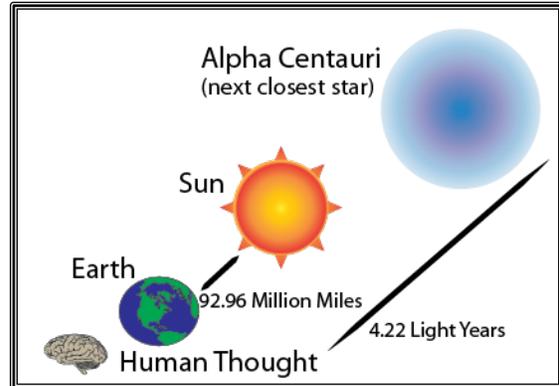
We have already established that the Bible is a supernatural work that God did to reveal Himself to a world, that would not have known Him otherwise, since we all fall short of His glory (Romans 3:23). Think about that – we struggle even though we have God’s direct revelation in plain written word. How much more would we struggle without it? Since the Bible is a supernatural work, we have to realize that, the means by which we receive its benefits will come by supernatural means. God took His eternally-supernatural essence, and gave it to us in a comprehensive and physical manner. However, we are carnal. God is spiritual. We are mortal. God is eternal. We are sinful and imperfect. God is impeccable and holy. We make mistakes, even when we have good intentions. God has never failed, and only intends to do well. Our righteousness is perverted and subjective. God’s righteousness is pure and true.

Clearly there is some contrast going on. There is an obvious disconnect between us and God. He is not like us, and we are not like Him. If we are going to understand who God is according to the revelation He provides in the Bible, we have to come to terms that, we can’t understand without some supernatural help. Consider how God described Himself through the prophets:

*“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called **Wonderful**, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

- Isaiah 9:6

The Bible teaches that the LORD's name is called "Wonderful." This means that God's essence is full of wonder. The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language. The original Hebrew meaning of the word "wonderful" translates into, "difficult to understand." In other words, the LORD is impossible to figure out. Later, the prophet Isaiah wrote that God's ways and thoughts are as far from ours, as Earth is from the heavens (Isaiah 55:8)!



If we rely on our own understanding, experience, and expertise to understand God's revelation according to the Word, we're going to be lost and confused. This is why we need faith in order to understand. Don't take my word for it. Remember, we're supposed to rely on the Bible to explain itself. So here you go:

*"Let my cry come before You, O LORD; **give me understanding** according to Your word."*

- Psalm 119:169

Notice that the author of this psalm sought understanding from the LORD Himself. To understand God's word, we first need to have faith that the Bible is supernatural in essence.

We need to trust that God is different than us, and we cannot even begin to know Him, without His help.

We have to believe that the Bible is the means by which God primarily reveals Himself to us.

We need to trust in the holiness of God, and that He has no flaws of any kind.

We need to trust in the righteousness of God, and that He is ONLY One, that is right and true.

We need to trust in the wisdom of God, and believe that the LORD can't be understood any other way, except by the understanding that He provides, Himself.

Consider The Word:

Defining "Faith:"

1. Allegiance to duty or a person
2. Something that is believed, especially with strong conviction

In Biblical context, faith demands a Biblical focus. If we have faith, who do we have allegiance to and how is that expressed through personal conviction?

The psalmist desired to know God according to His Word. Notice how emphatically the psalmist desired understanding. Not only did the psalmist inquire of the LORD to understand His Word, but also “cried out” to Him. This shows that faith comes on the premise of humility and dependency. We need to trust that, without God’s help, we can’t know Him, nor receive the benefits that come exclusively from Him. Faith involves our trust that, the Word of God is spiritual in nature, and that ONLY the One True Living God can be a qualified interpreter of such information. Equally as important, we need to trust that, when we seek God to know Him by His Word, He is faithful to respond.

*“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the **things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.**”*

- Hebrews 11:3

According to the Bible, faith involves our trust and understanding that, the things we see around us, were not made by things we can see. Everything we see around us was made by God. Remember what it said in Genesis 1:1? Who better to testify of God’s work than God Himself? Who better to explain who God is, than God Himself? Since the Bible begins at the beginning of time as we know it, we have to trust that God is the Creator. Faith involves our trust in the power of God’s Word and revelation, since it was sufficient to bring ALL THINGS into existence. If we can’t grasp the truth of God as Creator, where He made all things by the power of His Word, how then can we trust that His Word brings power to our lives? If we don’t believe what it says “in the beginning,” how will we trust in the truths that God reveals Himself later in scripture?

The creation of the universe as we see it, is a feat that only God can accomplish. The theories of evolution are NOT Biblical, and acceptance of those lies, is contrary to Biblical faith. Faith involves our dependency on God alone, to know His wonderful and unique purposes for the things He made in the universe. If we can’t accept His authorship of the universe, we won’t submit to His authority within it. If we don’t submit to His authority, we won’t enjoy the benefits that come to those who serve Him.

Reflect & Respond

Question 1: Since “faith” demands an object, what should the object of Biblical faith be, and how can that faith be developed?

Question 2: The Bible explains that we believe “by faith” that the invisible God made all that we can see (and even what we can’t see). Does that mean that our faith is “blind” just because we can’t see God? How does our understanding of God according to scripture, add substance to our faith?

Question 3: Understanding that even those who were used to pen the Bible were dependent on God to understand the things they were writing; do you suppose that your approach to the Bible in the past has reflected dependency? What kind of practical changes can you make to encourage dependency on the LORD, to understand the testimony He provided of Himself?

Chapter 4:

Keeping Clean

How To Study The Bible
- The Spiritual Keys To Understand God's Word



Chapter 4: Keeping Clean

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.”
– Psalm 66:18

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.”
– James 3:17

First, let’s make things clear. The concept of purification, sanctification, holiness, and all-around “cleanliness” is a work that ONLY God is qualified to do. If we could spiritually-cleanse ourselves, then God wouldn’t have had to provide the gift of the Word to reprove and correct us. He gave us this gift because we need reproof and correction. Apart from the Bible, we would be totally lost! Without the revelation of who God is, we would have no idea about what clean, holy, sanctified, or pure is. So, when we talk about the issue of “sanctification,” we need to understand that this is a work God does through the Word. Purification is the effect that takes place when we understand the Bible. Remember how we said it was “supernatural” in nature. One of the supernatural facets of the Bible is that, it is powerful to purify, sanctify, and make holy. This happens quite simply actually. When we read the Word to know who God is, and believe in His testimony as documented in the scriptures, we learn about the goodness of God’s holiness, and desire it in our lives. God then takes that desire, and makes it functional through a process called “sanctification.”

The Bible teaches that “sanctification” is synonymous with separation. Those who are made pure, and holy by God, are also sanctified. This means that we are “separated” from the ways of the world, the flesh, and all other influences and substances that are contrary to God’s perfect nature. This is a LOADED concept that the Bible spends a great deal of time discussing. The aim here isn’t to define that concept. The aim here is to explain that, sanctification is required in order to understand the Bible properly and truthfully. If we don’t allow God to perform His sanctification in our lives, we will be severely hindered and crippled in understanding the Bible, and receiving the benefits that understanding provides.

*“If I regard **iniquity in my heart**, the Lord will not hear.”*
- Psalm 66:18

This point is made quite clear in this verse. When there is “iniquity” in our hearts, God won’t hear us. This means that, while we might ask Him to show us things, explain things, and enlighten our lives with understanding concerning His purposes and promises, He won’t respond in favor. The Bible defines “iniquity” in a very broad sense. The Bible contextually defines “iniquity” as, the effort put forth to exert one’s self, but in vain, producing no profitable effect. It basically refers to the effects of self-righteousness. Righteousness apart from God, is not righteousness at all. So, when people try to produce righteousness and goodness WITHOUT consideration of God and His essence, it is done in vain. It is not good in the eyes of God, so it’s not good at all. This is why iniquity is equal to wickedness, evil, and trouble. The Bible explains that the LORD is God and there is no other. He’s right. We’re not.

Consider The Word:

Defining “Sanctified:”

1. To separate for sacred purpose
2. To make productive of holiness

Since sanctification is the act of separation “for a sacred purpose,” it is important to study the Bible to know what God separates from, how He does it, and what purpose He ultimately wants to achieve.

*“For thus says the LORD, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited: **‘I [am] the LORD, and [there is] no other. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I did not say to the seed of Jacob, ‘Seek Me in vain’; I, the LORD, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.’**”*

- Isaiah 45:18-19

According to God’s declaration, He alone, is God. He alone, is Creator. He alone, has the authority to determine what is right and wrong since He is the Creator and has charge over His creation. Those who feel they can define their own sense of righteousness apart from God, ultimately contend with God, as enemies of God, rebelling against His declarations and revelations. In other words, when we feel like we can live life our own way, making up righteousness as we go along, without considering God and His righteous standards, God WILL NOT consider our works, prayers, or inquiries to Him!



God resists the proud (James 4:6). The Bible teaches that “the proud,” are those who feel that they can live by personal standards without God, and without consequence. God distances Himself from those people so that the benefits of His goodness become elusive. To understand the Bible, we MUST repent DAILY from this natural-human tendency, and be separated from self-righteousness and worldly influences that are contrary to God’s holiness and righteousness. If we expect to hear God, understand Him, and receive the benefits that come from Him, we can’t live pridefully and self-righteously, with iniquity in our hearts. God will do the work required to separate us to Himself, but we need to let Him do that work by confessing in our souls, that we DESPERATELY need Him, and can’t match Him in glory, goodness, or righteousness. The less sin we have in our lives, the less distance we have from God. The closer we are to Him, the clearer His voice and His presence becomes! All good things here, right?

*“But **the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.**”*
- James 3:17

The Apostle James explained that wisdom comes from above. Notice that James referred to wisdom as “THE wisdom,” which means the most superior and truest form of wisdom. It’s the only authentic and proven wisdom, and it comes exclusively from “above.” Wisdom only comes from God. If we want to know the difference between what is TRULY right and wrong, we need to seek God in His Word. However, since wisdom is “first pure,” we can’t bring sin with us in our pursuit of God’s goodness. God’s wisdom doesn’t come with sin or corruption of any kind. If we expect to understand God’s Word in truth, we need to turn from the things that God says are impure, as His Word teaches us the proper way. And believe me, the LORD knows when we begin our pursuit of Him with good intentions to obey, or selfish intentions to gratify ourselves.

We can’t expect to know the One True Living God who is holy and pure, if we bring a cloud of dirt with us to see Him. That cloud of dirt (sinful habits that we REFUSE to give up), will skew our perspective and understanding of God so that we don’t see His true essence. This doesn’t suggest that we need to perfect ourselves before we pick up the Bible. Once more, God is faithful to provide the power required to die to “self.” God simply requires us to **believe** in the truth of His purity, the reality of His holiness, the intensity of His righteousness, and fear the consequence of offending Him by continuing in sin as a habit of life. Biblical faith will cause us to approach God in humility and meekness. When we approach the Bible with this attitude and understanding, expect the LORD to speak clearly through it!

Reflect & Respond

Question 1: If the Bible identifies all of mankind as unrighteous, unholy, and unable, how do you think we come to know the holiness, righteousness, and purity of God? How should we examine the testimonies of people in the Bible? How do we come to know God’s purity in the Bible?

Question 2: In Hebrews 4:12 the Bible says that “the Word is sharper than any two-edged sword” so as to surgically perform required-restoration on our hearts, teaching us what the difference is between right and wrong, pure and impure, dark and light. Since the Bible alone is qualified to do this, describe what changes you might need to make regarding your own perception of right/wrong, pure/impure, dark/light.

Question 3: If “iniquity” keeps us from understanding God, His purposes, His promises, and the truth of His declarations, describe some areas where self-righteousness and pride might be keeping you from knowing God’s true intentions for your life.

Chapter 5:

Learning On The Job

How To Study The Bible
- The Spiritual Keys To Understand God's Word



Chapter 5: Learning On The Job

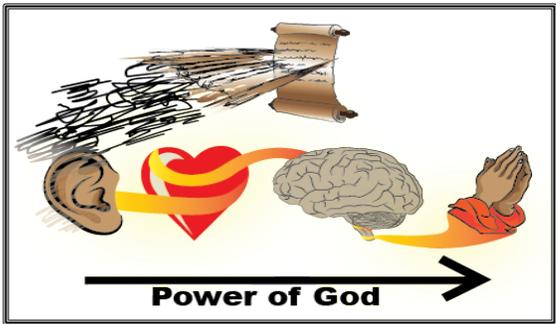
*"I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts."
– Psalm 119:100*

*"If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine,
whether it is from God or [whether] I speak on My own [authority]."
– John 7:17*

The Bible explains that we need to obey God’s Word if we expect to understand God’s Word. By extension, we gain understanding of God Himself. Since the Bible is a supernatural and spiritual entity, we need to rely on God to understand His revelation. When God reveals the truth of His essence to us, we are expected to respond appropriately to that revelation. If we are approaching the Word by faith, and seeking God to sanctify us, then the next and obvious step would be to do what God says. Here is how Jesus (God in flesh) explained it:

*"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? **Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: "He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock."**
- Luke 6:46-48*

Jesus spoke as the physical revelation of God’s essence. Jesus taught, as the Word of God incarnate. Jesus proclaimed the truth about God, as God, in flesh. When He did so, He expected people to believe in the claims that He was proving true through His works. Since He proved that He was God, He proved He is the LORD – The Master.



Jesus is the Creator of all things (Colossians 1:15-18), which means that He has the power of God, the authority of God, the sovereign control of God, the holiness of God, the impeccability of God, and the righteousness of God. He is the KING of kings and LORD of lords. When the KING gives an order, the subjects of His kingdom are expected to obey. Jesus is the Commander of the armies of the LORD of Hosts (Joshua 5:14). When the Commander speaks, the soldiers of that army are expected to respond in obedience. Why proclaim that God is LORD, but ignore His commands? Is He really our “Master” if we rebel against His proclamations?

Jesus promised that if we hear His Words AND do them, He considers us to be wise. Obedience here, is a sign of submission to His authority, which is ultimately proof of the faith we’re supposed to start with. We do what God says, because we trust in who He is as “The LORD.” We obey the commands of Jesus, because we believe in the Bible’s testimony of His identity, purpose, and promise. God considers obedient people to be wise people, because they build their trust on His revelation in the Bible, as one would build a house on a solid foundation. If a storm is coming, the wise builder is the one that builds the house in a manner that is designed to last. God is everlasting as the eternally self-existing and self-sustaining God. When we trust God as true according to the testimony of His Word, by DOING what He says, that is the same as building our lives on “the Rock.” The results of that work are pretty beneficial too! Even though storms will come, those who do what God says is right, by faith, will overcome the storms, while those who don’t will be leveled into nothing, referring to our eternal condition.

But the scriptures are much simpler in this principle. Look at this verse:

“I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.”
- Psalm 119:100

Here, the psalmist wrote that they understood the Word of God, because of obedience. Obedience enabled and facilitated understanding of the scriptures. The psalmist heard what God said, and then desired to do what God said. That desire, provoked God to provide the ability required to obey. The obedience that took place, resulted in understanding God. In fact, it’s through the experience of obedience, that the LORD teaches the bulk of His lessons. We don’t really learn by seeing, but by experiencing the revelation of God, when we do what He says. The more we do the things God says are good, the more we’ll understand God’s goodness. The more we disobey God’s Word, the less understanding of God we’ll have.

Consider The Word:

Defining “Understanding:”

1. The power to make experience intelligible by applying concepts

Understanding is considered to be a form of “power” and ability. God provides this power and ability when we trust we need it and He’s the only place to get it. That power then answers the question, “How do I apply the Bible to my life?”

*“If anyone **wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or [whether] I speak on My own [authority].**”*

- John 7:17

Jesus proclaimed that He was the Son of God (God in flesh), and the fulfillment of the Father’s eternally unconditional promises (the Messiah/Christ). Are we just supposed to accept that as true? Actually, no, we’re not. God doesn’t just make statements without providing substantial and tangible proof of His claims being true. In fact, if God were to do such a thing, He would be in violation of His own Law. The Law of God states that, a matter of truth must be verified by two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15). Therefore, Jesus offered publicly-validated, historically-documented proof of His claims. In John 5:31-47 Jesus provided four witnesses that validate His claims and teachings. In John 7:17, Jesus said that we could verify whether or not His teaching is truly that of God, if we desire to do as He says. Those who desire to do the will of God, according to His Word, will be granted discernment to know the truth regarding the revelation of Jesus. Since Jesus is the Word of God in flesh, when we know Jesus, we know the Word. When we know the Word, we know Jesus. When we know Jesus, we know God!

On the contrary, indifference to obedience will restrict the understanding of God. God actually teaches us who He is, through the obedience that He enables. We know that if we want to know someone better, we need to spend time with them. Jesus is the Word of God in flesh. If we want to spend time with Him, we have to be in the Bible with faith, desiring sanctification, and obedience. Jesus explained that to be with Him, we must follow Him like this:

*“Then He said to [them] all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him **deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.** For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?’”*

– Luke 9:23-25

If we want to know the Word, we must follow Jesus. If we want to follow Jesus, we need to deny ourselves, which means that we need to do what God says is right, NOT what appeals to us and our selfish ambitions. This isn’t easy. Jesus told us it would be hard. He likened the difficulty of obedience, to picking up the cross of crucifixion, unto death. If we want to know God by His Word, we have to obey this fundamental command:

Forsake our personal desires, dreams, aspirations, and ambitions that are contrary to God, in order that we can live according to the likeness of Jesus Christ as God in flesh.

God will provide the power and enduring-strength to do this, but we need to trust that this manner of humble living is true, and supremely good. We need to trust that we, of ourselves, in our natural condition, cannot dwell with God, know Him, or please Him, which results in TERRIBLE eternal consequences - hellfire. If we desire to be with God, know Him, and please Him, we must do what He says, trusting that the claims of His essence are true. We must also trust that Jesus is God-in-flesh. We need to trust where Jesus showed us that, the difficulty experienced in “dying to self” actually produces the profit we’re hoping for, which separates us from hell, satisfies our souls, and makes us whole, having purpose in life.

These lessons can’t be learned or appreciated though until we get up and do the things that God says. The lessons of the Bible are matured into understanding through the actions we take. Those actions are specific to show we agree with God, by offering our lives to Him as servants, trusting that He’s worth serving, no matter how hard or inconvenient it might seem.

Reflect & Respond

Question 1: Reflect on a situation where you were able to gain greater understanding of something by “learning on the job.” Describe how that situation proves that obedience to the Bible’s principles, can benefit you with the same understanding.

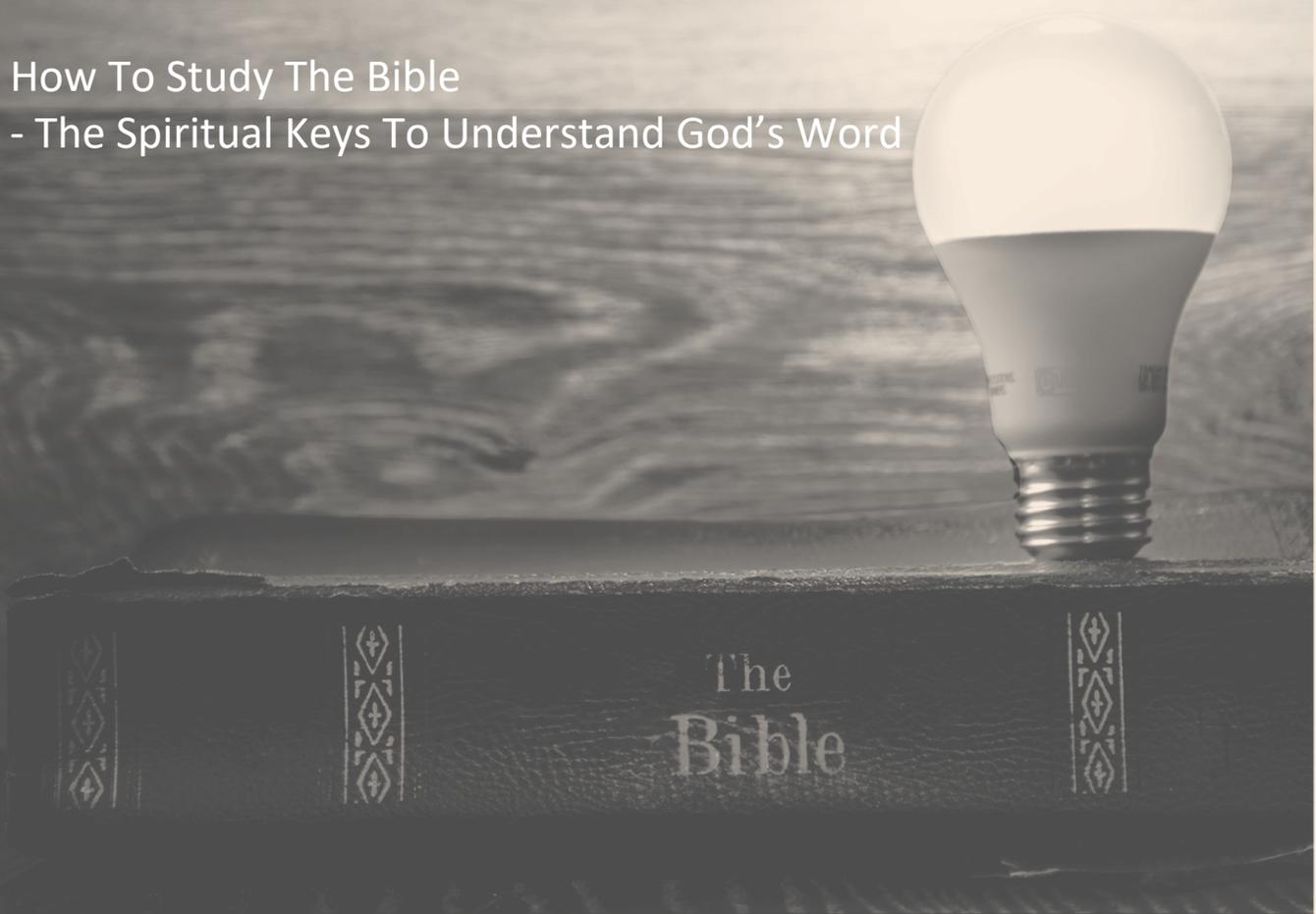
Question 2: Being a “doer” of the Word doesn’t refer to the amount of ability, talent, or knowledge we have. Find an example in scripture where God used a person that lacked ability, talent, or knowledge to do something great in God’s eyes. Explain how the testimony of that person enabled them to learn about who God is. Explain how this applies to your own life.

Question 3: Since Jesus is the Word-in-flesh, His identity, purpose, and promises are especially important to understand. Since Jesus is God-in-flesh also, He is eternal also. Explain how this understanding should affect your approach to all portions of scripture – Old Testament and New Testament.

Chapter 6:

Diligent Study

How To Study The Bible
- The Spiritual Keys To Understand God's Word



Chapter 6: Diligent Study

“Blessed [is] the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight [is] in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” – Psalm 1:1-3

“Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily [to find out] whether these things were so.” – Acts 17:10-11

How can you know God, unless you examine His revelation?

How can you know who God is, unless you read His autobiography?

How can we know what is true of God, unless we pursue Him for truth, trusting He is true?

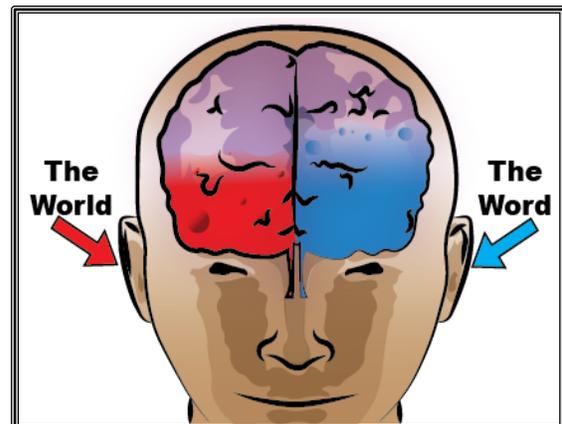
God made it simple. There is one Holy Bible. It’s true that there are several English translations of the Bible. That can make things confusing in, and of itself. Nevertheless, the original ancient manuscripts of the Bible have been sufficiently translated to explain the core and fundamental truths of God’s original points concerning Himself, regardless of the translation. Some translations are more helpful than others, but the point is, we only have to go to the Bible to know the LORD God Almighty. We don’t need to go to other sources of influence and knowledge. In fact, it is unwise to rely on worldly and secular resources to understand the Bible, since the Bible is spiritual and supernatural in nature. Remember, God will provide understanding when we humbly and faithfully seek Him for it. However, that doesn’t mean that God is going to give us full understanding immediately, the first time we crack open His book.

“Blessed [is] the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight [is] in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.”

- Psalm 1:1-3

Notice that those who benefit from the goodness of God, are those who meditate on His law “day and night.” God surely wants to provide satisfaction, joy, and peace like a tree planted by rivers of water that bears fruit. God certainly wants His people to prosper, in the likeness of a tree that’s able to endure varying seasons and conditions. These benefits only come to those who are considered “blessed.” According to the Bible, the “blessed” person is one that abstains from relying on worldly wisdom. According to the Bible, “blessed” people, are those who do what God says, not what ungodly people say. As previously explained, we need to be faithful, sanctified, and obedient to God in order to receive the benefits that come with understanding God’s Word. Here, God is stating that truth again.

Additionally, we need to meditate on God’s Word. We need to keep God’s Word on our minds. We need to reflect on God’s Word at all times. If the benefits of God’s Word come by spiritual and supernatural things, we can’t let our minds dwell on carnal and temporary things. If we really crave the eternal goodness of God, our minds need to be fixed on His eternal goodness. We can’t just passively let the Word play in our minds or around our ears, like background music. The Bible is not a soundtrack that plays behind our actions to support our movements, and add drama. The Bible is the script, not the soundtrack.



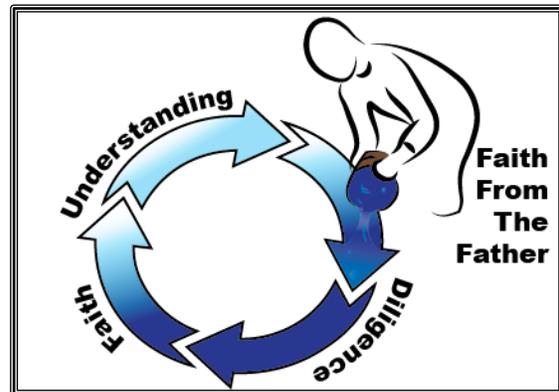
How can we know our role if we don’t read it, study it, and understand it? How can we understand who God is, if we don’t think about Him? If He is eternal in nature, do we really think that we can consider Him on Sundays for an hour only? How much understanding do you think will come with that kind of discipline (or lack thereof)? SINCE God is eternal, we should meditate on His revelation “night and day.” Yes, there is THAT MUCH to consider, and we’ll never get bored, or finish the exercise, if we truly believe what we’re learning about God. When we desire to know God to that degree, He will show us more. The more we consider Him, the more He’ll reveal His essence. The more He reveals, the more we get. The more we get, the more we benefit. The more we benefit, the better things are, regardless of our circumstances.

The benefits of God only come by the effects of His Word. The benefits of God are often described as “fruit” (Galatians 5:22-23). We know that fruit comes from trees, and trees come from seeds that are planted. This is why Jesus described the Word of God as a “seed” (Luke 8:11). The more “seeds” we sow, the more trees are planted, and by extension, the more fruit we will see. The more focused we are on the spiritually-supernatural and eternal things of God by faith, the more God will enable understanding of His essence, His purposes, His promises, and also our position in His plans. Clarity!

*“Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. **These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily [to find out] whether these things were so.**” – Acts 17:10-11*

The Bible explains that the Bereans were more “fair-minded.” This is a compliment. Remembering that the Bible is God’s revelation of Himself according to His own supernatural declarations, it is a good thing to be complimented in the Bible! Where we see God give compliments, we want to follow that example. Why were the Bereans referred to in this way? They were diligent to pursue understanding of the scriptures.

Notice first that they “received the Word with all readiness.” The original Greek language uses the word “alacrity” to describe the attitudes of the Bereans concerning the Word. Alacrity is defined as: promptness in response; cheerful readiness. The Bereans were well-equipped to do the work of God because of their understanding of His purposes. They knew God’s purposes because they knew God. They knew God because they were diligent to pursue Him through the Word.



The Bible explains that they searched the scriptures “daily” to find out whether the statements of them were true. They didn’t just read the scriptures for entertainment. Their “devotionals” weren’t merely morning tasks done out of mindless habit. The Bereans pursued truth, and looked to the scriptures to explain themselves. They wanted to know the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and looked to the scriptures to support the claims of His testimony. They wanted to know God, and so examined how the scriptures lined up with the events of real life. This was not a passive approach to the Word. The Bereans were determined, with resolve, to know God by the scriptures, and labored in their pursuit of Him, to understand the depths of the Word.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

- 2 Timothy 2:15

We began this exercise in 2 Timothy, so it is fitting that we end our exercise in the same place of scripture. Before the Apostle Paul explained the essence of the Word to Timothy, he encouraged Timothy to approach the Word with diligence. The King James Version of the Bible translates this verse by saying, “Study to show thyself approved.” Reading the Bible should come with the attitude and determination of studying with diligence. The English dictionary defines “diligence” as: exerting one’s self; endeavoring, and earnestly pursuing.

To understand the Bible, we need to “exert” ourselves by faith. This means that we need to put tireless-action into our quest to know God by the Word, in depth! This requires time and energy. When we learn something, we learn more. If we can’t understand something, we don’t give up. We pray and humbly ask the LORD for understanding, then get back to work in the Word to know what’s true. We find the people that God has spiritually- gifted as teachers, to ask them for help and guidance. We find the people that God has spiritually-gifted as encouragers, to reassure our hearts when we’re frustrated or stuck. We find the people that God has spiritually-gifted as exhorters and comforters, to help us remain patient and pure while God takes His time to accomplish His will in our lives. This can be exhausting, but that’s the point. This is how we come to understand the Word. We don’t succumb to laziness or willful ignorance.

Consider The Word:

Defining “Meditation:”

1. To engage in mental exercise

Psalms 1 taught that we should “meditate” on the Word “day and night.” Meditation is defined as “mental exercise” when we take effort to process thoughts we receive. The “diligence” Paul wrote of is the practical way to mediate on the Word.

We are also called to “endeavor” in the Word. This means that we need to strive to reach understanding, and pursue the LORD’s revelation through the Word, with seriousness. Remember, the Bible is a gift. We should approach it seriously. We should be thankful to receive it. We shouldn’t treat the Word as a joke, or with indifference. Remember that the Bible is supernatural and spiritual in nature. We need to trust that irreverence and foolishness of various kinds, will keep us from receiving that which is very important to God, and of His own nature. This means that, like Jesus said, we must die to self, striving to let God transform us into His own image by His supernatural work, so that we can understand His supernatural essence.

If we expect to understand, and properly interpret God’s original purpose for the Bible, this is the means by which we must come to Him. The Apostle Paul wrote this concerning the truth of the essence of scripture:

*“But we speak **the wisdom of God** in a mystery, **the hidden [wisdom]** which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”*

- 1 Corinthians 2:7-8

The wisdom of God is a mystery. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ proves this as true. If the world had known God, they would not have crucified Him when He showed up. If the world could just understand the truth of God’s revelation, Jesus would never have died.

Since the scriptures are a supernatural and spiritual mystery, we CANNOT – I repeat – CANNOT rely on our own understanding, experience, or education to understand God’s true purposes (Proverbs 3:5-7).

A lot of people can read the Bible, but because they approach the Bible without faith, without sanctification, without obedience, and without diligence, they never know the Author. What good is the revelation of God, if the revelation can’t be seen? Since God looks at our hearts (1 Samuel 16:7), and understands our true intentions when we handle the Bible, He will ultimately determine whether or not He makes His mysteries known to us, or keeps them mysterious, based on what He sees (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

According to God’s own Word, He WILL restrict the understanding of His revelation. He WILL keep His Word a mystery, if we don’t come to Him in the manner described here. The Bible is clear to show how we need to approach the LORD through His Word. If we really desire to know what it says, we need to know the God who wrote the book that we call “The Holy Bible.” If we want to know the God who wrote it, we must believe, be pure, be obedient, and be diligent. God will make these desires functional in our lives, so long as we surrender our lives to Him, in order that we might know HIS life and the benefits He brings through it.

Reflect & Respond

Question 1: The Bible commands God’s people to “meditate” on His Word “day and night.” This is not just a poetic statement, but a command we need to follow in order to receive His “blessing.” Consider this thought and describe any changes you can practically make to ensure your mind is thinking about the things of God in the Word, instead of other things that aren’t spiritually or eternally fruitful.

Question 2: Since the Word of God is supernatural in essence, we need to recognize the tools God has provided to help us understand. God has provided certain specially-equipped people, filled with His Spirit, that are ordained to help others understand the Word. Describe who some of those people in your life. If you can’t think of any, consider what kinds of changes you can make to invite those types of people into your life. Does your church help in this manner?

Question 3: What are some practical changes you can make to your daily schedule to ensure that your approach to the Word is done with “diligence” like the Bereans.
