

**Grace to You** :: *esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

**Elements of Productive Bible Study: Believe**

Scripture: John 8:44–45; 1 Corinthians 2:12–14

Code: B121008

The role of Scripture in your spiritual growth cannot be overestimated. In this short series, we've already seen the vital importance of reading it faithfully, interpreting it accurately, and even teaching it regularly.

However, no amount of reading and studying the Bible will encourage your spiritual growth if you lack the illumination of the Holy Spirit. In simple terms, for God's Word to do its work in your life, you need to *believe* it.

It is true that nonbelievers can gain knowledge from the Bible—around the globe it is studied as literature, poetry, and narrative history. To some degree, anyone can read and make sense of the basic facts, study other people's teaching, and gain something of an intellectual understanding about the meaning of Scripture.

But apart from the Holy Spirit, the Bible is a mystery to the human heart.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God. . . . But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised (1 Corinthians 2:12, 14).

With the Spirit of God comes illumination—the capacity for understanding His Word. Having directly inspired the biblical authors, the Holy Spirit gives believers unique insight into the meaning and the implications of God's Word. And without His illuminating ministry, the truth of Scripture could not penetrate our hearts and minds, or accomplish its transforming work in our lives.

Put simply, if you don't know Christ, you can't know the Bible. That's why cults that abuse and twist Scripture are so tragic. Their elaborate perversions of the Bible only compound their spiritual darkness and confusion, hardening them against the true meaning of Scripture.

Jesus' rebuke to the Pharisees in John 8 illustrates how rejecting Him is a barrier to a clear, accurate understanding of His truth.

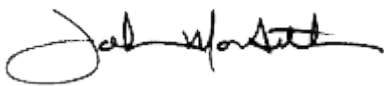
You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me (John 8:44-45).

The illuminating work of the Holy Spirit is absolutely crucial to a proper understanding of God's Word. But on its own, it's not enough for spiritual growth. It cannot replace the vital role of conscientious study in your sanctification.

Too many Christians skip over reading and interpreting God's Word, waiting instead for His Spirit to move in them, bringing direct revelation or instantaneous understanding for the needs of the moment. That is simply not how illumination works—you don't just open your Bible and wait for God to speak to you.

The Spirit's illumination works in harmony with our diligent study of Scripture—not in spite of it. We still need to be disciplined students of God's Word: reading it faithfully, interpreting it carefully, applying it consistently, teaching it accurately, and trusting the Lord to make His truth clear through the influence and insight of His Spirit.

All of those steps are key elements of productive Bible study. Leave out any one of them, and you can guarantee you won't get the most out of God's Word.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John MacArthur". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

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