

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

**I want to know God's Word better. Can you provide me with a plan to help me get there?**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: QA169

Here are five helpful steps to ensure you are effectively studying God's Word.

### **Step 1 -- Reading**

Begin by developing a plan on how you will approach reading through the Bible. Unlike most books, you will probably not read it straight through from cover to cover. There are many good Bible reading plans available. Here is one John recommends:

- Read through the Old Testament at least once a year. As you read, note in the margins any truths you particularly want to remember, and write down separately anything you do not immediately understand. Often as you read you will find that many questions are answered by the text itself. The questions to which you cannot find answers become the starting points for more in-depth study using commentaries or other reference tools.
- Follow a different plan for reading the New Testament. Read one book at a time repetitiously for a month or more. That will help you retain the New Testament so you will not always have to depend on a concordance to find things.

If you want to try that, begin with a short book, such as 1 John, and read it through in one sitting every day for thirty days. At the end of that time, you will know the book. Write on index cards the major theme of each chapter. By referring to the cards as you do your daily reading, you will begin to remember the content of each chapter. In fact, you will develop a perception of the book with your mind's eye.

When you come to longer books, divide them into short sections and read each section daily for thirty days. For example, the gospel of John contains twenty-one chapters. Divide it into three sections of seven chapters. At the end of ninety days, you will finish John. For variety, alternate short and long books, and in less than three years you will have finished the entire New Testament--and you will really know it!

### **Step 2 -- Interpreting**

In Acts 8:30, Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch, "Do you understand what you are reading?" Or put another way, "What does the Bible mean by what it says?" It is not enough to read the text and jump directly to the application--you must first determine what it means, otherwise the application may be incorrect.

As you read Scripture, always keep in mind one simple question: "What does this mean?" To answer

that question requires the use of the most basic principle of interpretation, called the analogy of faith, which means you should interpret the Bible with the Bible.

Letting the Holy Spirit be your teacher (1 John 2:27), search the Scripture He has authored, using cross references, comparative passages, concordances, indexes, and other helps. For passages that remain unclear, consult your pastor or godly men who have written on the issues involved.

### **Step 3 -- Evaluating**

You have been reading and asking the question, "What does the Bible say?" Then you have interpreted, asking the question, "What does the Bible mean?" Now it's time to consult others to ensure that you have the proper interpretation. Remember, the Bible will never contradict itself.

Read Bible introductions, commentaries, and background books that will enrich your thinking. In your evaluation, be a true seeker. Be one who accepts the truth of God's Word even though it may cause you to change what you have always believed, or cause you to alter your life pattern.

### **Step 4 -- Applying**

The next question is: "How does God's truth penetrate and change my life?" Studying Scripture without allowing it to penetrate to the depths of your soul would be like preparing a banquet without eating it. The bottom-line question to ask is, "How do the divine truths and principles contained in any passage apply to me in terms of my attitude and actions?"

Jesus made this promise to those who carry their personal Bible study through to this point: "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:17).

Having read and interpreted the Bible, you should have a basic understanding of what the Bible says, and what it means by what it says. But studying the Bible does not stop there. The ultimate goal should be to let it speak to you and enable you to grow spiritually. That requires personal application.

If there is a command to be obeyed, obey it. If there is a promise to be embraced, claim it. If there is a warning to be followed, heed it. This is the ultimate step: submit to Scripture and let it transform your life.

### **Step 5 -- Correlating**

This last stage connects the doctrine you have learned in a particular passage or book with divine truths and principles taught elsewhere in the Bible to form the big picture. Always keep in mind that the Bible is one book in sixty-six parts, and it contains a number of truths and principles, taught over and over again in a variety of ways and circumstances. By correlating and cross-referencing, you will begin to build a sound doctrinal foundation on which to live.

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For further study, consider the audio series [\*How to Get the Most from God's Word\*](#) where John

provides a fuller explanation of each Bible-study step outlined above.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

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