

Be a Berean

Read the Manual

2 Timothy 3:14-17

December 3, 2016

Today

If you have spent any time in our service over the past 5-6 months, you will have come to see a pattern in just about everything I talk about.

I've used the word **Transform** or **Transformation** a lot.

I've stressed the importance of a **Relationship with Jesus and of the great love They have for you.**

I've talked about **Obedience** as an act of gratitude rather than as a way to earn salvation.

I have provided you with handouts for your own personal study.

These things, I believe, are vital – they are part of my “soap box” collection.

You may very well be sick to death of the whole transformation theme – I hope you are not.

The truth is, though, I can talk until I am blue in the face and I can provide you with study material, but if any of it is going to make a place in your heart, you will have to do the work to make it your own.

Some say the Bible is out of date, not relevant, boring and dry. Others claim a lack of time or shortcomings in their education as reason for not studying scripture. Those all seem like good excuses, but if we look below the surface the real reason people don't study scripture is because it requires something of them. You cannot read scripture and remain the same:

- **Hebrews 4:12** - For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
- **Ps 119:105** - Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path

Scripture will lead you to Jesus and eternal life and will transform you into His image.

Your belief system cannot be based on what I or any other preacher/teacher/pastor tells you. Your system of belief must be based on your own personal time with God. You must come to your conclusions through study and by the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Once you know what the Bible says for yourself you become accountable. You have to do something with the knowledge you have. You either reject it or you allow it to change you.

Some truths in the physical world:

- You have to eat food at least once per day to maintain physical life and health.
- You will never get in shape while sitting on your couch watching a program about how to get in shape – you will never get in shape by osmosis, wishing it were so – you have to get off the couch.

Some truths about the Spiritual world:

- You have to eat the word of God daily to maintain your spiritual life and health.
- You will never be a doer of the word while you sit on your couch watching a program on how to be a doer of the word – you will never become a doer of the word by osmosis, your understanding of truth cannot come from someone else – you have to get off the couch.
- **Jerry Vine:** An unread Bible is like food uneaten, a love letter never read, a buried sword, a road map unstudied, gold never mined.
- **Greg Laurie {Hidden Treasure}:** Ultimately, success or failure in the Christian life depends upon how much of the Bible you get into your heart and life on a regular basis and how obedient you are to it. If you are not reading the Word of God, then it is only a matter of time until you will fall apart spiritually.

Studying the Bible is worth your time.

Okay, you're right, you may be thinking, but I feel overwhelmed. I don't feel smart enough.

- **Isaiah 55:8** - For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.
- **Deuteronomy 29:29** - The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

The truth is that while God is beyond our ability to fully understand, comprehend or wrap our minds around, He is still knowable.

- **Romans 1:19, 20** - Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

He desires to be known by us. He has gone out of His way to make Himself as knowable as possible. He gave us the natural world. He gave us general revelation through the stories and prophets in scripture, but most importantly, He gave us the revelation of Himself in the person of Jesus.

- **John 1:14** - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Again, I can tell you this all day, but until you open the Bible and study for yourself, what I say will never be real to you and will likely have little impact on your life.

Act 17:11 Now the Bereans were more noble-minded than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if these teachings were true.

The goal of Bible study is not so that you know more Bible facts than anyone else and so win every game of Bible Trivial Pursuit, or so you can win an argument with your Mormon neighbor across the street. The goal of Bible Study is a transformed life—to become more like Jesus.

Let's get started:

- The Bible was written by 40 different individuals, beginning with Moses, over a period of about 1600 years ending with John before 100AD. Even though the writers did not have the ability to consult with each other, the themes of the Bible are consistent.
- **Ellen White {GC}**: The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all "given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed have themselves embodied the thought in human language....

As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind--a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life.

God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, nonetheless, from Heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth.

Resources for Bible Study (this list is not exhaustive – just examples):

Bibles – Make sure the versions you choose are easy to read and understand.

- **Literal Translation** (word for word):
 - KJV – King James Version
 - NKJV – New King James Version
 - NRSV – New Revised Standard Version
 - ASV – American Standard Version
 - NASB – New American Standard Bible*
 - ESV – English Standard Version
 - YLT – Young's Translation

- **Dynamic Translation** (thought for thought):
 - NIV – New International Version*
 - NEB – New English Bible
 - GNB – The Good News Bible
 - MSG – The Message
 - NLT – New Living Translation
 - CEV – Contemporary English Version
- **Paraphrase** (commentary):
 - LTB – The Living Bible
 - CLW – Clear Word (I would not recommend this Bible. The author takes many liberties including adding Ellen White quotes into the body of the text)

Dynamic and Paraphrase Versions are fine for general reading, but should not be used for Bible Study and should be compared to Literal Translations.

Exhaustive Concordances:

- Strong's
- Young's

Bible Commentaries (Use discernment – these are author interpretations of the verse)

Bible Dictionaries:

- Greek Dictionary
- Vine's Expository Dictionary

Reference Books:

- Josephus – Jewish Historian
- People of the Old Testament World
- Exploring the Old Testament
- Bible Manners and Customs
- Old Testament Ethics
- Interlinear Bibles / Parallel Bibles in English and Greek or Hebrew
- Ellen White

Atlas or Bible Geography

Methods of Bible Study

Select a **Literal or Dynamic Bible Translation** that is faithful to the meaning contained in the original languages

Choose a **Plan for Study** – Read thoughtfully:

- **Hebrews 4:12** - For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.
- Book by book – start at the beginning and read the whole book in one sitting, if possible.
- Chapter by chapter
- Verse by verse
- Biblical solutions to a specific life problem
- Topical study (faith, love, death, 2nd Coming, etc.)
- Word study – note meaning in original language and all the verses the word is used.
- Biographical studies – choose a person and discover all you can about them.

- **Use Multiple Translations.**

WORD for WORD:

- **ESV – English Standard Version** - For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
- **NASB – New American Standard Bible** - For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
- **KJV – King James Version** - For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
- **ASV – American Standard Version** - For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.
- **YLT – Young’s Literal Translation** - for the reckoning of God is living, and working, and sharp above every two-edged sword, and piercing unto the dividing asunder both of soul and spirit, of joints also and marrow, and a discerner of thoughts and intents of the heart;

THOUGHT for THOUGHT

- **NIV – New International Version** - For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.
 - **NLT – New Living Translation** - For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.
 - **MSG – The Message** - God means what he says. What he says goes. His powerful Word is sharp as a surgeon’s scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, laying us open to listen and obey. Nothing and no one is impervious to God’s Word. We can’t get away from it—no matter what.
 - **GNB – Good News Bible** - The word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It cuts all the way through, to where soul and spirit meet, to where joints and marrow come together. It judges the desires and thoughts of the heart.
- Listen to the Bible on CD

Look for the most Obvious or Simple Meaning of the passage:

“The aim of good interpretation is not uniqueness. One is not trying to discover what no one else has seen before. The aim of good interpretation is simple: to get at the plain meaning of the text.”

- **STORY:** A young couple from another church came to one of our assistant pastors for counseling about marital problems they started to have soon after getting married. After just a few minutes the pastor could see that this couple was far a part in just about every aspect of life. “what made the two of you get married, he asked”
 “A sermon our pastor preached on Joshua conquering Jericho”
 “What did that have to do with getting married?”
 “Well”, explained the husband, “Joshua and his army claimed Jericho, marched around it seven times, and the walls fell down. Our pastor told us that if we trusted God, claimed a certain young woman and marched around her seven times, the walls of her heart would collapse, and she would be willing to marry. So, I did and we got married.”
 Our assistant pastor stared in disbelief. Was this really true? Yes, in fact, several couples in that church had gotten married on the same basis after hearing the same sermon.

Interpretation and application of scripture is crucial.

What are the Underlying Major Themes of scripture, as found in the **text, passage** and entire **book**.

General Strategies & Guidelines:

Have a proper perspective / humble attitude:

- Pray – a sincere reader of scripture will ask for divine guidance to understand it.
- Recognize the authority of the Bible as the Word of God.
- Submit personal preferences and desires to the teaching of the Word.
- Be willing to learn and not just look for ways to reinforce preconceptions or tightly held beliefs.
- Focus on what you do understand and don’t worry about what you don’t understand.
- Read Expectantly:
- **Dietrich Bonhoeffer:** When you read the Bible, you must think that here and now God is speaking with me.
- **J.C. Ryle:** Read the Bible with CHRIST constantly in view. The whole book is about Him. Look for Him on every page. He is there. If you fail to see Him there, you need to read that page again.

Literary Context:

- What is the material surrounding the statement – **Read the whole chapter** – the original writings did not contain the punctuation we use today, so a single verse you read may actually be part of an entire thought or statement. **Context, context, context!**
- Consider the general purpose of the entire book.
- Refer to other books written by the same author:
 - Moses wrote the first 5 books of the Bible and possibly Job,
 - Paul wrote 13 books in the New Testament,
 - John wrote John, 1,2,3 John and Revelation,
 - Luke wrote Luke and Acts, etc.
- Determine the kind of literature represented:
 - Narrative (story or history),
 - Prophetic prediction or vision, sermon,
 - Sermon, letter, poem or parables.
- Consider the original language, i.e. Daniel is written in both Hebrew and Aramaic.

Historical/Cultural Context:

- **PAST** Meaning – What the text **MEANT**. We can accomplish that by answering the following questions.
 - **Who**
 - The author
 - The audience
 - **When** was the book written?
 - **Where** was the book written?
 - **Why** was the book written – what were the problems and reasons for writing?
 - **What** were the cultural, political, economic, religious beliefs and practices, social customs, and ethical standards of the time?
- **PRESENT** Meaning – what the text **MEANS** now – do the same principles, which the author made to the original readers THEN, apply NOW?

Compare Scripture with Scripture:

- Base doctrines on the broad themes of scripture and not on isolated statements or obscure texts.
- Revelation is progressive and biblical statements may reflect a developing understanding of truth.
 - Seek to harmonize biblical writings – apparent contradictions can be resolved by looking for the underlying convictions of different authors.
 - Let the Bible be its own interpreter – Nothing else has authority over the Bible, including Ellen White, church council, etc. The Bible must be allowed to speak for itself - base every interpretation of scripture on the direct testimony of scripture and not on the statements of another source.

Look for the underlying principles within the details:

- What does this Scripture teach me:
 - About the nature of God?
 - About the nature of man?
 - Is there a promise to claim?
 - Is there a commandment to obey?

Read Patiently:

- You may have to read a section of scripture two or three or fifty or one hundred times before God opens it up to you.

Strategies for Understanding Prophecy:

- Prophecy has a moral purpose: to strengthen faith, promote holy living and readiness for the 2nd Coming. It is not written to satisfy our curiosity about the future.
- Much of prophecy is focused on Christ, the church and the end-time.
- Interpretation of prophecy is found within the Bible itself.
- **Non-Apocalyptic** Prophecy (Isaiah and Jeremiah):
 - Addresses God's people
 - Conditional – setting forth alternative blessings/curses

- Often leaps from local crisis to end-time events
- Time prophecies are generally long:
 - 400 years of Israel's servitude
 - 70-year captivity
- **Apocalyptic** Prophecy (Daniel and Revelation):
 - Universal in scope
 - Highly symbolic
 - Emphasizes the sovereignty of God
 - Presents the course of history from the time of the prophet to the end of the world
 - Time prophecies are generally phrased in short terms and stand symbolically for longer periods of actual time.
 - 2300 days = 2300 years
 - 1260 days = 1260 years
 - 42 months = 1260 days = 1260 years

Useful Facts to Answer Who, What, When, Why and Where:

Structure of the Old Testament

- **The Law** (Torah / Pentateuch):
 - Genesis
 - Exodus
 - Leviticus
 - Numbers
 - Deuteronomy
- **Prophets:**
 - Former Prophets – Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings,
 - Latter Prophets –
 - (Major) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel;
 - (Minor) Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi
 - **Northern** – Amos, Hosea, Jonah
 - **Southern** – Isaiah, Jeremiah
 - **Pre-Exile** – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea, Jonah, Micah
 - **Exile** – Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel
 - **Post Exile** - Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi,
- **Writings:**
 - Psalms, Job, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
 - Books of Wisdom: Daniel, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, Song of Songs

Structure of the New Testament

- **The Gospels:**
 - Synoptic – **Matthew, Mark, Luke**
 - **John**
- **Acts of the Apostles**
- **Pauline Epistles** (Letters):
 - Prison Letters - Philippians, Ephesians, Philemon, Colossians
 - Pastoral Letters – 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus
 - Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Hebrews, 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- **General Epistles** - James; 1 & 2nd Peter; 1,2,3 John; Jude
- **Revelation**

Dates to Remember

- 953 BC Temple built by Solomon
- 722 BC Assyrian Deportation of 10 tribes by Shalmaneser
- Babylon Captivity – remaining tribes
 - 605 BC – 1st Daniel
 - 597 BC – 2nd Ezekiel
 - 587/586 – Temple Destruction (Zedekiah [2 Kings 24])
- Returns to Judah / Jerusalem
 - 538 BC – 1st Decree of Cyrus
 - 458 BC – 2nd return decree by Artaxerxes (Ezra)
 - 444 BC – 3rd return decree by Artaxerxes (Nehemiah)
- 516 BC Second Temple Completed/ Rededicated
- 4 BCE – Herod the Great’s death (Joseph Returns from Egypt, goes to Nazareth)
- 27 AD Jesus baptized
- 31 AD Crucifixion and death of Jesus
- 34 AD Stoning of Stephen
- 66 AD Jewish Revolt
- 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem

CONCLUSION:

When we truly grasp God’s Word, we go beyond a series of steps to a dynamic interaction with the Spirit of God. We listen more intently.

We throw off pride and laziness and study diligently and submissively, not because we love study for study’s sake but because we love God.

Rather than being a burden, studying God’s Word becomes an act of joyful worship.

I hope the above information will be helpful as you go on your journey through Scripture.