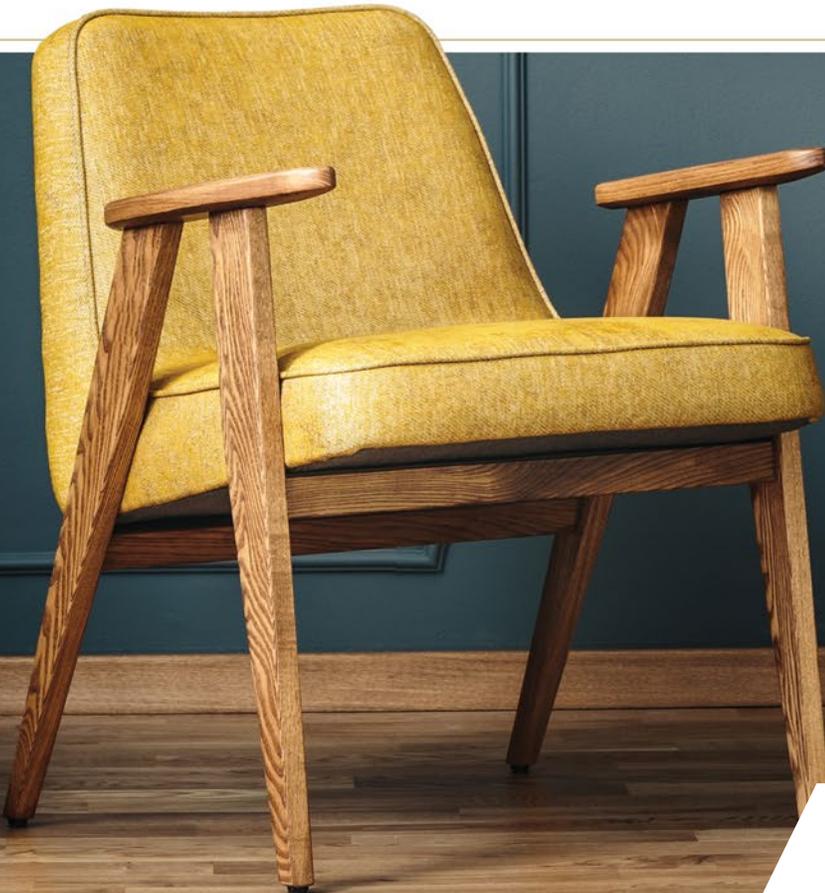


SIT WITH ME

VOL. 2

*An invitation to
meet with Jesus
in God's Word*



A FAITHPATH Resource
by Scot Pollok



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meet with Jesus
in God's Word*



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by Scot Pollok



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scot Pollok is a graduate of Texas A&M University where, as a freshman, he first understood the Gospel and trusted in Jesus Christ. He then earned his Masters of Theology degree from Dallas Theological Seminary. He has worked in the ministry since 1994. Currently, he serves as Lead Pastor of Faith Bible Church in The Woodlands, Texas. He is married to Liza and has two children, Andrew and Isabel.



I love the Church. I find great joy in both being a part of the Body of Christ as well as supporting it towards maximum impact, greatest fruitfulness, utmost joy and peak maturity.

I also love God's Word. I believe that personal time in God's Word is the heart of spiritual growth and maturity in Christ. This is why the first study in this series, *Sit With Me*, focused on building practical rhythm in the Scriptures. It works at overcoming the intimidation and misunderstanding that prevent many believers from comfortably sitting with Jesus in God's Word on their own.

But there is more work to do. Overcoming the spiritual starvation that accompanies a distance from God's Word is only the beginning. A capacity to nourish your soul, your mind, your heart and your actions by feeding on God's Word must also grow toward maturity. The feeding must become feasting. And the feasting must come with a trained palette to fully enjoy the fare, as well as a skilled mind to engage it more precisely.

In *Sit With Me: Volume 2* you will embark on a new adventure that takes you deeper into the Scriptures. You will learn how to use a magnifying glass and then a microscope on God's Word. In the process you will uncover more of God's revealed truth, direction, protection, beauty and joy. You will also experience greater maturity and greater impact. It's actually the only way.

Scot Pollok | Lead Pastor
Faith Bible Church



SIT WITH ME

A FAITHPATH Bible Study

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SIT WITH ME

An invitation to meet with Jesus in God's Word

James had been a husband for only a few months. He adored his wife but the ring on his finger still felt a bit foreign. His new family was very different from his own. James grew up on the edge of poverty, without a close relationship with a father, mother or siblings. But by God's grace he fought, survived and succeeded to change his place. Falling in love and marrying his wife was life-changing in almost every way. Her family was close-knit, loving, playful and generous. Now, just back from their honeymoon and barely settled in to their life together, James and his wife joined her family on a week-long ocean cruise.

Arriving at their cabin, complete with a gorgeous view of the ocean, James began to unpack. With some secrecy and embarrassment, he packed and unpacked almost twice the amount his wife did. No one noticed until meal time on the ship.

While the family would gather with joy and laughter, James would quietly slip back to

his room. Here, if allowed, one would see him quietly open his secret drawer and make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich out of the store he secretly and bashfully brought along: several full loaves of white bread, three large jars of grape jelly and four jars of peanut butter.

It didn't take long for James' wife to privately and politely push her way into the secret. You see, James was a simple, honest, hard-working man. He struggled even accepting the gift of the cruise, which was gifted by his new father-in-law. But he knew he could not afford the price of the restaurant, three or more times a day. He was convinced the cost would be too high. So he decided to let his lovely wife enjoy the food, while he would save money and eat scantily in his room. Once explained, James' wife was at a loss for words.

As a new member of the family, James assumed he had to make his own way. He feared the price of such luxurious meals and



did not consider such a gift to be within his reach, or for that matter, within his worth. He did not realize that within the family he was a true son, and as such the full experience of a family member was included in the price paid for his ticket. His place in the family came not only with the cruise, the bed and the scenery, but with unlimited access to the feast of his dreams and a reserved place at a regular table.

Believer, please hear me—in Jesus Christ, you are invited to the head table. Laid before you in God’s Word is the most delicious and nutritious buffet of delights you can imagine. Nothing is off limits, nothing is reserved, nothing has a price tag. While you may consider James to be slightly foolish in our imaginary scenario above, is it possible that you are imitating him in your relationship to God’s Word?

Are you enjoying unlimited access to the Word of God? Or are you barely surviving on scant scraps? Many stumble at the gate, not knowing how to proceed in God’s Word

or how to stack their plate with meaningful truth. Some continue to fill their stomachs with only things they recognize. Others have no mind for total nutrition and select only the sweetest selections. Yet as far as your eye can see, perfectly prepared morsels lay before you. You have an empty plate in your hand. How will you proceed?

In many ways, this study aims to help you eat well from the Word of God. Its distinct goal is to equip you with tested and tried techniques, all of which will allow you to engage and enjoy God’s Word like never before. At the conclusion of this adventure, you will be able to better manage the smorgasbord offered in the Scriptures, feasting with enjoyment and purpose for a lifetime.

FAITHPATH

— DISCIPLESHIP MAP —

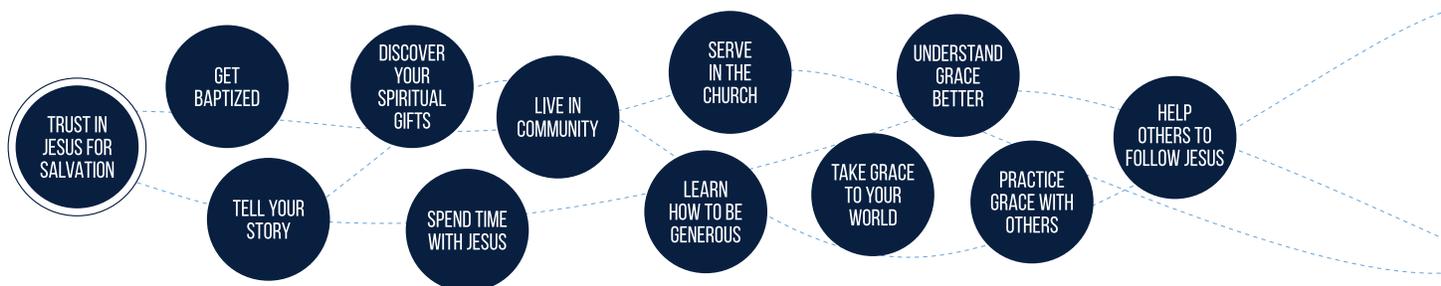
At Faith Bible Church in The Woodlands, Texas, we *build generations of Jesus followers who take grace to our world*. This is our mission and calling. The chief components of this mission statement are clearly grace, discipleship and mission.

In pursuit of this calling, we have taken the task of making disciples very seriously. Since its planting in 1979, our church family has passionately pursued making disciples that carry the clear Gospel of grace to the ends of the earth. We long to make disciples of Jesus that, in turn, make disciples. It is our commission from Christ Himself.

Several years ago, our pastoral team and I began to ask God to help us do these central vision tasks with greater purpose, power and accountability. Specifically, we began to pray and ask hard questions about how we can better make disciples. It took over four years of work, prayer, research, writing and conversation until God began to synthesize all our questions and hopes into something we got extremely excited about.

Our biggest prayers and toughest questions led to the idea of a simple discipleship map; a tool by which we organize and understand all that the New Testament says about Christian discipleship. We call it **FAITHPATH**. After years of work, and what we thought was an end to our research, what God revealed turned out to be just a beginning.

FAITHPATH is a simple collection of twelve circles, each one representing a specific aspect of Christian discipleship revealed in the New Testament. While the map is simple, it captures a lifelong adventure on multiple levels of knowledge and practice, grace and truth, being and doing. This perfectly fits how we believe the Bible defines discipleship: *the lifelong pursuit of nearness and submission to Jesus our Master, developing in ourselves Jesus' character, values and mission*.



The **FAITHPATH** map is just that, a map. As such, the full content of practices, disciplines and relationships involved in each step of discipleship cannot be fully represented. Thus, the map is only a marker, a reminder, an organizing scheme. **FAITHPATH** is both a teaching tool and a diagnostic tool. It can help determine where to go next by helping you see where you currently are.

As a teaching tool, parents and mentors can easily sit down with a disciple and walk through the map, asking if an individual understands each step and where they have and have not taken significant action. It also functions as a diagnostic tool for an individual wishing to track his own spiritual maturity in specific steps of discipleship. (See thefaithpath.org for content, studies and action steps).

There are three critical points to understand about **FAITHPATH.**

First, and this is absolutely critical, there is one and only one starting point for Christian discipleship: trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation. This is the first circle in the map, with a double border. Discipleship is all about Jesus and personal faith in Jesus is the non-negotiable starting point. Jesus, the Son of God, accomplished all that is necessary for your redemption and salvation by His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. All that is required is personal faith in Jesus. Based on your faith, God gives you salvation as a free gift of His grace. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* (**Ephesians 2:8-9**) Jesus Himself and the

Scriptures constantly represent faith as the only requirement for salvation. *“...whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”* (**John 3:16**)

This point must take a moment more of your time. Trusting in Jesus Christ for your salvation from sin is the starting point for all Christian discipleship. Without faith in Christ, the study before you will not make much of an impact on your life or heart at all. If you have not already, trust Him today. Say yes to His offer of life. Believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that His death on the cross is payment for your sin and failure. Believe that His resurrection from the dead is the promise of life. Say yes to God’s free gift. Trust in Jesus Christ.

FAITHPATH

— DISCIPLESHIP MAP —



The second major point about **FAITHPATH** is, after placing faith in Jesus, Christian discipleship is not a strict chronological or sequential journey. While the Scriptures communicate clear and consistent elements of discipleship, each individual life will follow a path as unique as the individual. While some actions may naturally come earlier than others, Jesus has invited all of His followers to discover and experience the same things. That is why the 12 circles on the map will work with any seven or 107 year old. Every follower of Jesus is invited to explore His distinct and individual invitation in each of these steps. All of them are for every disciple.

Finally, after placing faith in Jesus for salvation, the follower of Jesus will never

graduate or fully conquer most of the steps on the map. For example, you may “discover your spiritual gift” or gifts at one point in your story, but these gifts should mature and can sometimes change. Your spiritual gifts will demand regular attention and training for the rest of your life. What is more, learning how to increasingly use your spiritual gift to build and bless the church is a lifelong pursuit. Elsewhere on the map, learning how to spend time with Jesus, how to be generous and how to practice grace with others are all lifelong pursuits. Most of them are.

Take some time examining the FAITHPATH map for yourself. Become familiar with it. You will find helpful Scripture passages, descriptions and videos for each step at:

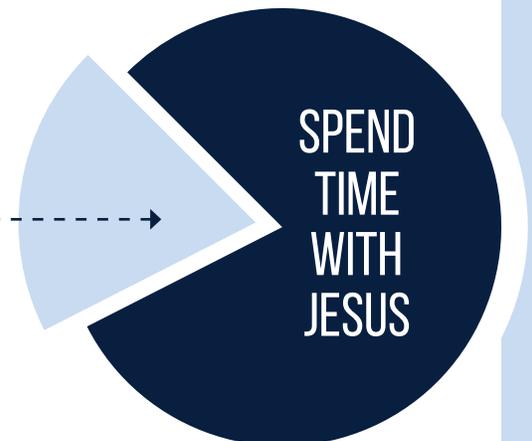


thefaithpath.org. Create your personal map by determining in which steps you've experienced significant growth and on which steps you need to focus more time, attention and maturity. Finally, become conversant enough with the map to clearly walk someone else through the steps of Christian discipleship.

The study you are reading is only one part of your journey in discipleship. More precisely, this study is one slice of one of the circles in the FAITHPATH: Spend Time with Jesus. Learning how to spend time with Jesus is perhaps the most important aspect of Christian discipleship after the

starting point of placing your faith in Jesus for salvation. This step involves specific practices and pursuits that will occupy the rest of your life such as worship, prayer, fasting, Scripture study and many other biblical disciplines. Spending unhurried time with Jesus your Master in these ways is absolutely critical to becoming like Him.

Discover the main tools of Bible Study Methods.



FAITHPATH

— DISCIPLESHIP MAP —

“Dynamic Bible study means that God’s Word must be studied systematically. A haphazard study of the Word of God is an insult to the sanctity of Scripture. It is a slap at the holiness of God, who gave us the Word. The “cafeteria style,” the “dip-or-skip” method, or the “what-are-we-going-to-find-today” approach will not produce the results God wants in our lives. What we need is a systematic, regular plan of study, whether we go through a book, study a word, analyze a person’s character, study a chapter or choose some other method.”

Rick Warren, *Rick Warren’s Bible Study Methods*

Although it can easily stand alone, this study is Volume 2 to the original *Sit With Me*. That study aimed to create, in the lives of Jesus followers, greater familiarity, rhythm and joy in the Scriptures. Volume 2 takes the goal of the original and sharpens it further by focusing on specific tools inside the art and science of intentional Bible Study. In this study you will learn a few key steps of personal Bible reading and study that will bring God’s Word to life. And when it comes to spiritual maturity and growth, there is nothing more important than this.

After God’s Holy Spirit, the Scriptures are perhaps the greatest gift God has given His children. Through the Word, God transforms your heart, teaches you how to hear His voice, instructs you, convicts you and trains you for holiness. All that your Heavenly Father wants to communicate to you, He has revealed in His Word. It is complete, powerful and available.

Dr. Howard Hendricks, in his classic text *Living By the Book*, said “the great tragedy among Christians today is that too many of us are under the Word of God, but not in it for ourselves.”¹ Did you catch the critical difference? Many of us choose to be “under the Word” in group Bible studies or in a Sunday morning worship gathering, but how many choose to be “in it” in a disciplined and joyful way?

In this volume you will explore both the art and science of Bible Study as you pursue a methodological approach to the Scriptures. This means you will learn several steps or methods that fit together, build upon each other and equip you to get the most out of your time in God’s Word. These methods will serve you, protect you and help produce maximum joy in your life. It all begins by accepting Jesus’ invitation, “*Sit with Me.*”

Essential Tools

Like blueprints and a stocked toolbox are required for a successful home renovation, this study requires six essential tools.

1. **BIBLE:** A good physical Bible is absolutely essential to this study. The translation is up to you, but for the purposes of this study choose one that is a translation (New American Standard, NIV or ESV) and not a paraphrase (The Message).
2. **PENCIL AND HIGHLIGHTER:** A sharp pencil (because you will probably want to erase at some point) is a helpful tool for navigating your Bible study. I like mechanical graphing pencils. A highlighter is also a good tool to have on hand. I prefer a good quality colored pencil. It can be erased too.
3. **JOURNAL OR NOTEBOOK:** While the margin of my Bible is the first place I go to write down something brief (whether it be a word or phrase or reference verse), there will be many times that God reveals something that demands more space. You will want to have a small journal or notebook on hand. I like one the same size as my Bible.
4. **A SCHEDULED TIME:** Sitting with God in His Word in our day and age demands thought, preparation and discipline. This means you need to schedule it. Look at your calendar and figure it out. I recommend that you choose the time of day when you are at your very best. I believe you can do most of this study in about 30 minutes, but try to set aside 45-60 minutes each day for maximum impact.
5. **A DESIGNATED SPACE:** This study cannot be done while driving a car or taking a walk. You will need to designate a space to meet with God. Ideally you will need a table, counter or desk-like space to sit, place your Bible and journal. You will need to write. You will also need to think and pray. You will want to put your phone away and unplug from all other devices. Silence is best. Space is important.
6. **A COMMUNITY GROUP AND MEETING SCHEDULE:** As noted, this study will be most influential with access to a community of fellow believers. Discussing what you have learned, being able to ask honest questions and hearing the experiences and feedback of others will greatly encourage your discipline and rhythm with God.

Study Breakdown

This study is divided into sections that will help you understand its movement and establish discipline and rhythm.

WEEK INTRODUCTION: Each week begins with a short introduction. It will set up the theme or practice of that week and will be an essential part of your growth and training. Each introduction will include a MEMORY VERSE for that week. This is a short passage that you will work to commit to memory. Don't skip or rush this section.

SIT WITH ME: SIX DAILY READINGS: This is the heart of the study. These six daily entries will help you develop regular rhythm in God's Word. It is also a reminder that God is constantly asking you to sit with Him, and this study will encourage you to sit with Jesus every day.

Each daily "sit with me" reading should begin and end with prayer. Try to linger in this time. The goal is unhurried time with God, where you have minimal outside pressures or distractions.

NOTE WELL: Things happen that are out of your control, but within your control and the rhythms of your schedule and responsibilities, work hard toward developing regular rhythm with Jesus. If you struggle or fail, feel no guilt, just jump back in. Never let yesterday's failure steal the joy of today's opportunities with God.

INSIGHTS: These brief side notes reveal specific tools and instruments to help you study God's Word for a lifetime.

MID-WEEK PRACTICE: One added feature in *Sit With Me: Volume 2* is a short mid-week training. In this section, the tool or practice of that particular week will be applied to a specific biblical text as both an example and an opportunity to practice.

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS: These closing questions will help you discuss the study within a larger group. This section will also help those that facilitate small group discussion, whether it be a family study or a diverse group within the church.

Weekly Study Overview

01 The Discipline of a Disciple

We will begin our study by centering ourselves on the regular, consistent rhythm that appropriates the maximum impact of God's Word. No disciple can make great progress in their spiritual maturity or nearness to God without the discipline of regularly sitting with Jesus in God's Word.

02 Stopping to Look

The first and most critical step in great Bible study is observation: asking the question, *What do I see?* This means training your eyes to slow down, pay attention and ask the right questions. Reading and rereading a biblical text slowly runs counter to our love of cultural "news feed" synopses or tweet-like clichés.

03 Determining Meaning

This week we move to a new question: *What does it mean?* This is where most people begin in Bible study, but it is not the first step. Interpretation of a biblical text must be built on good observation. And to get to the intended meaning of the text, you will learn how to use several simple tools and applications to make the most of your time in God's Word.

04 Connecting the Dots

As you learn how to read, observe and interpret your Bible, you will also be doing the job of constructing and clarifying a picture of God's character, discerning the shape of God's interactions with mankind as well as piecing together a basic theology of God's revelation. This is the task of correlation, an often forgotten step in Bible study.

05 Inviting the Heart

No truth is learned until it is practiced and lived out. Transformation, life change and maturity are the result of intentional application of Scripture. This step takes work and focus. No disciple is complete without it.

06 Holding the Whole

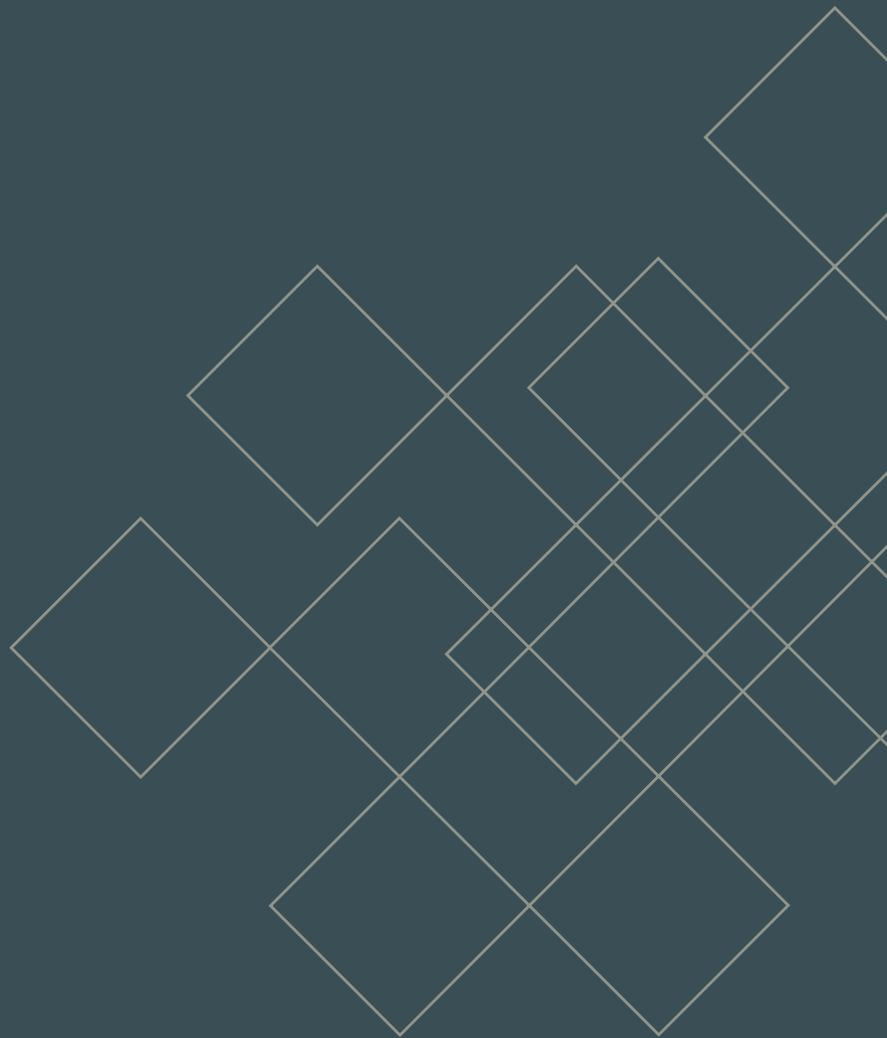
In this final week of our study we will bring all of the four steps of great Bible study methods together for some practice and exercise in some central texts of Scripture.

07 Charting Your Next Course

Sit With Me is not intended to be a six-week study that you complete, but rather an introduction to ongoing discipline and delight in God's Word. In this final week, you will choose what direction is next as you continue to sit with Jesus in God's Word.

WEEK ONE

01 | The Discipline of a Disciple



WEEK ONE



01 | The Discipline of a Disciple

In my small hometown high school, everyone had to do everything in order for anything extra-curricular to exist. So I played almost every sport (poorly) and engaged in lots of clubs like drama and debate. I was also a member of the school band, both marching band and concert band. And since I wasn't interested in learning how to read music, the drum line and percussion section was my choice. I still remember my "interview" with the band director, Mr. Fuller. He sat down across from me and tapped out a rhythm with his hands on the edge of the table and asked me to duplicate it. Then again, a different rhythm. Then a third time. I guess I did okay because I was in the drum line for four years. Then again he didn't have many other options.

In college, my relationship with percussion took an unexpected turn. After hearing the Gospel message clearly in the first few months of my freshman year, I trusted in Jesus Christ and my whole life changed. I immediately made a whole new set of friends within the family of the Church. Several of these new friends were a part of a small Christian group that gathered for mid-week worship and Bible study in a building off-campus. When the sole worship leader, who



played guitar and sang, found out that I was a “drummer,” he insisted I join him and help lead the music. I resisted for quite a while, mostly because I was uncomfortable with a leadership role in that area, but practically because we had no drums of any kind. His persistence won out eventually and I joined him the next week playing... wait for it... a large, empty Ozarka water bottle turned upside down. Just like tapping out a rhythm on a table top. Yep. You can't make this up.

That Ozarka bottle thankfully led to other proper drums and tools. Through it all I learned how to worship God while playing instruments, which was new for me. It brought me great joy as an expression of my love for God, my gratitude for Christ's sacrifice and my joy in the Holy Spirit. Essentially, I became a lover of, and a student of, rhythm. Tracking the tempo of a song, following the unspoken decisions of the worship leader, filling in spaces, leaving other spaces, adding flavor and interest to a song without creating attention became, for me, a form of art, expression and passion.

That season of my life taught me a great deal about discipline. Behind the Sunday morning worship time were hours and hours of practice. Each song had to be tuned, tried, tested and then all of these all over again. Each instrument, including my percussion equipment, had to be worked and cared for. For me it was a crash course in discipline.

Now let me be perfectly clear, I have struggled with discipline all of my life. Even in academic studies, which agreed with my temperament and passions, I struggled to study and read with discipline. Let's not even talk about matters of diet and exercise.

**Think about
discipline as
taking regular steps
toward a specific
goal. Discipline is
intentional. It is
rhythmic. It is
goal-driven.**

Discipline plays a huge role in the life of the disciple of Jesus because discipline played a huge role in the life of Jesus. We see this clearly in the Gospel accounts, the life-stories of Jesus. During His earthly ministry, Jesus was perfectly in tune with His Father's heart and will because He consistently slipped away privately to pray. His disciples noted that He did this regularly, often, with rhythm. None of Jesus' life seemed haphazard. Everything was on purpose. While Jesus maintained plenty of room for interruptions and surprises, He obviously led a life of discipline. And if Jesus was disciplined, then His followers should be disciplined. After all, we are trying to sit *with Him* so we can be *like Him*.

But what is discipline exactly? While you might think about eating less carbs or finishing all of your vegetables, I want you to see discipline in a positive way. Think about discipline as *taking regular steps toward a specific goal*. Discipline is intentional. It is rhythmic. It is goal-driven. Simple things like cooking a meal take discipline. Larger tasks such as building a house take discipline. Life-long pursuits like mastering the piano, being a competitive swimmer or completing a PhD require great discipline. Few would disagree.

But when it comes to the lifelong and critically important opportunity to study, learn and enjoy God's Word, why do we often change our tune? Many of us think that should be easy or "come naturally." Most, sadly, just give up. Discipline is hard, and discipline in life-long, heart-level, soul-practices is the hardest of all.

Although it may sound too simple or too narrow, the truth is that the heart of a disciplined life for the follower of Christ is consistent time sitting with Jesus in God's Word. It all begins here. Yes, we should probably eat more kale and watch the alkaline level of our bottled water, but no Christian disciple will enjoy maximum nearness to God and greatest usefulness in God's kingdom without consistent, disciplined time in God's Word.

Let me say clearly, in order to develop this kind of disciplined life, you must believe it is worth it. You must believe, with great conviction, that time in God's Word is valuable, effective, worthwhile, indispensable and relevant. You must place this practice as a high priority and

believe it has critical connection to your life as a follower of Jesus. Make no mistake about it, there is a large element of faith involved in discipline. But isn't God worth it? Finally consider what the prophet Isaiah reveals about the power of the Word of God.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it." — Isaiah 55:9-11

God wants to bear fruit in your life. The Father has spoken. He sent His Word to you. It is a gift. Through His Word, God reveals His character, His values, His will and His great love for you. Consider both the great power in accessing God's Word on a regular basis and the great tragedy of regularly dismissing this incredible gift.

WEEK ONE

This week, work to commit this Scripture to memory. This is a powerful way to constantly engage God's Word and recall it in times of need. Consider writing it in your journal, on a card or a sticky note and placing it somewhere prominent. Read it and work on it each day this week.

Tip: Take a photo of the verse and save it as your phone wallpaper.

MEMORY VERSE:

*"Like newborn babies,
long for the pure milk
of the word, so that by
it you may grow in
respect to salvation."*

1 Peter 2:2

DAY 1

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:18**

*"Open my eyes, that I may behold
wonderful things from Your Word."*

...

Read **1 Timothy 4:4-10**.

Read it through two more times. Read slowly. Repetition reveals new things.

What does Paul, the author, say about nourishment? (see v. 6)

What does he say about discipline? (see v. 8)

Close by praying for a greater discipline that is grounded in a "fixed hope on the living God."

DAY 2

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:35**

*“Make me walk in the path of Your Word,
for that is where my happiness is found.”*

...

Read **Hebrews 12:1-3**.

Read it through two more times. Read slowly.
Repetition reveals new things.

What specific actions are connected to “running with
endurance” in this text?

What personal example is given?

Write down two potential applications for yourself.
Close in prayer.

DAY 3

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:130; 105**

*“The unfolding of Your Word gives light. Let Your
Word be a lamp to my feet, a light to my path.”*

...

Read **2 Timothy 2:1-7**.

Read it through two more times.
Paul is writing this to Timothy, a young pastor and protégé.

What three images or illustrations does Paul use in
this text?

What is the teaching impact of each image?

What does Paul want Timothy to see?

INSIGHTS: The Organization of the Bible

The Books of the Bible were written over at least 1500 years, on at least three different continents, in three different languages, by over 40 authors. They were ordered and organized within Jewish history before Jesus' birth and in the early decades of the church after Jesus' death. The order and flow was chosen for a variety of reasons, including history and date, practical connections and teaching purposes. Familiarity of the order of biblical books will come with time. Don't ever feel badly about referring to the Table of Contents at the front of your Bible. It is there for a reason. It will help to know why each book was written and what it contains.

OLD TESTAMENT

The Historical Books or "Writings":

Genesis:	Moses wrote this account which covers creation until Israel goes into exile in Egypt
Exodus:	Moses wrote the history of the departure of Israel from Egypt, the giving of the Law, and the construction of the tabernacle
Leviticus:	Moses wrote down the ceremonial law for Israel
Numbers:	Moses wrote narratives from the wilderness wanderings of Israel
Deuteronomy:	Moses wrote the "second giving" of the Mosaic Law to Israel
Joshua:	The story of the conquest and division of Canaan under Joshua's command
Judges:	Chronicles the cycle of sin and God's rescue of Israel from Joshua to Samson
Ruth:	Two widows lose everything and find hope in God. This leads to the birth of King David
1 Samuel:	Story of the nation of Israel during the judgeship of Samuel and the reign of Saul
2 Samuel:	Story of the reign of David
1 Kings:	The peaceful kingdom of Israel under the reign of Solomon, then its split because of sin

2 Kings:	A narrative of the largely disobedient Israelite monarchy, after the reigns of Saul and David
1 & 2 Chronicles:	The official histories of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel
Ezra:	Story of the return of the Israelites from Babylonian captivity and the rebuilding of the temple
Nehemiah:	Further account of the rebuilding of the temple and the walls of Jerusalem
Esther:	Account of a Jewess, her uncle and their great faith to subvert a plot of annihilation of Jesus

The Wisdom Books:

Job:	Story of one righteous man's great suffering and God's great grace
Psalms:	A collection of worship songs and prayers that Israel sang to God and each other
Proverbs:	Wisdom sayings and life principles from Solomon and others
Ecclesiastes:	A journey of Solomon to find meaning in life
Song of Solomon:	The story of a young King Solomon, celebrating love, desire and marriage

The Prophetic Books:

Isaiah:	Prophecies concerning the Christ, His kingdom and a warning of future judgment for Israel
Jeremiah:	Prophecies of the captivity of Judah, its sufferings and the final overthrow of its enemies
Lamentations:	Collection of laments about the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple
Ezekiel:	Messages of warning and comfort to Israel in its captivity
Daniel:	Story of a high-ranking Jew in exile empires and his prophetic visions of Israel's future
Hosea:	Story of a man and his prostitute wife—a picture of God's relationship with Israel
Joel:	Prophecy of judgment on Judah through a plague of locusts

Amos:	Prophecy of Israel's invasion by conquerors and the fulfillment of Messiah's kingdom
Obadiah:	Warning to a neighboring country, Edom, predicting judgment for having plundered Jerusalem
Jonah:	A disobedient prophet reluctantly preaches God's message to the city of Nineveh
Micah:	Predictions of the invasion and captivity of disobedient Israel and Judah and their future Messiah
Nahum:	Prophecy of God's judgment on Assyria, Israel's enemy
Habakkuk:	Reminder to Judah that God will judge unrighteousness in His time and way
Zephaniah:	Prediction of the overthrow of Judah for idolatry but restoration will come
Haggai:	Prophecies urging people to resume the task of restoring the temple in Jerusalem
Zechariah:	Prophecies relating to the rebuilding of the temple and the coming Messiah
Malachi:	Prophecies regarding the calling of the Gentiles and the coming of Christ

NEW TESTAMENT

The Four Gospels:

Matthew:	A gospel to Jews, an account of Jesus' earthly life, emphasizing Him as the King of the Jews
Mark:	A gospel to Gentiles, an account of Jesus' earthly life, emphasizing Him as a Servant
Luke:	A gospel to Gentiles, an account of Jesus' earthly life, emphasizing Him as the Son of Man
John:	A gospel to unbelievers, an account of Jesus' earthly life, emphasizing Him as the Son of God

The Book of Acts:

Acts: An account of Jesus' return to the Father, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the expansion of the church as the Gospel spreads

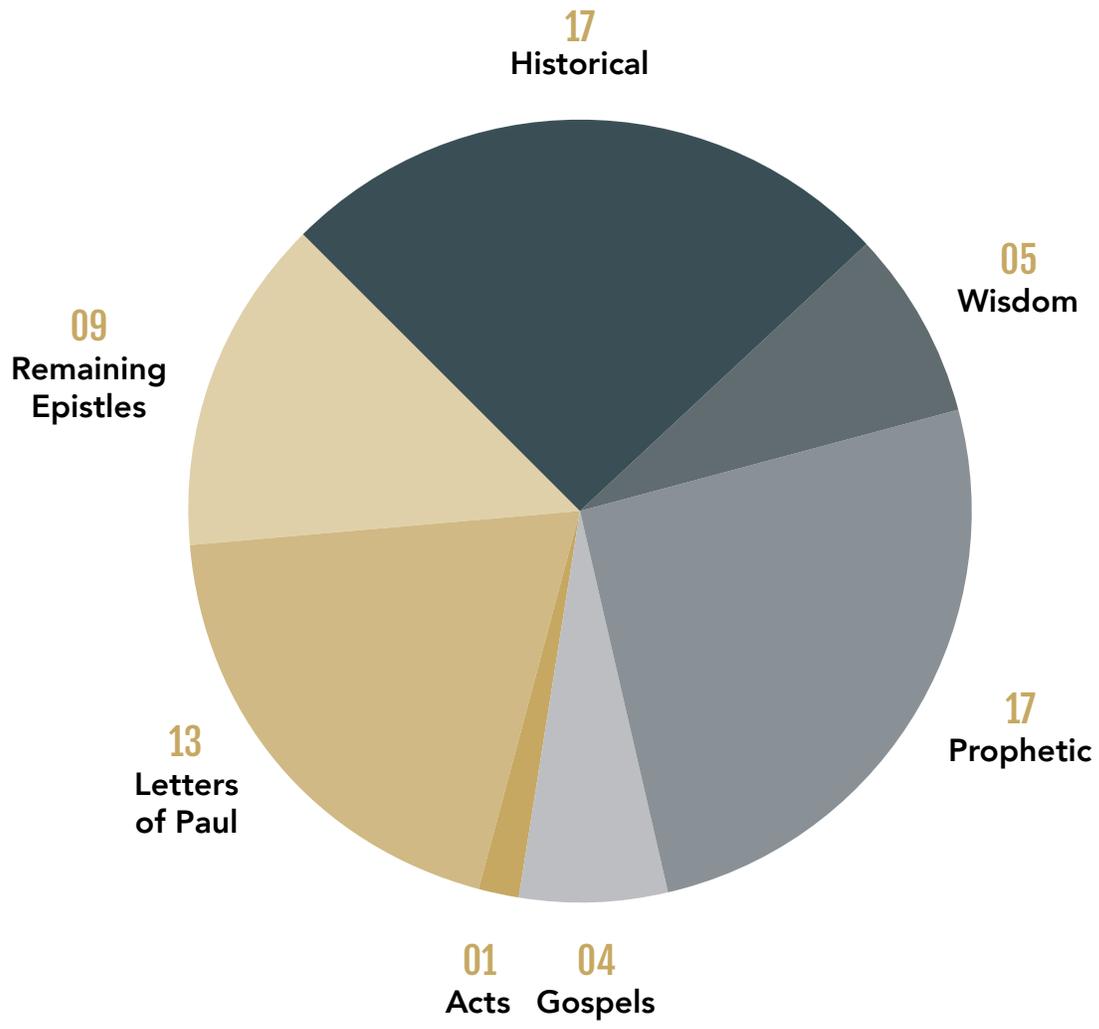
The Letters of Paul:

- Romans:** A letter to the church in Rome and a treatise on the doctrine of justification by Jesus Christ
- 1 Corinthians:** A letter to the church at Corinth, addressing how Christians should behave
- 2 Corinthians:** A letter to the church at Corinth, confirming their faith and addressing concerns
- Galatians:** A letter to the church in Galatia, maintaining they are justified by faith, not works
- Ephesians:** A letter to the church in Ephesus, addressing how to walk in grace, peace and love
- Philippians:** A letter to the church in Philippi, telling how to have joy in Christ
- Colossians:** A letter to the church of Colossae about who they are in Christ and how to walk with Him
- 1 Thessalonians:** A letter to the church at Thessaloniki, urging them to continue in their faith
- 2 Thessalonians:** A letter to the church at Thessaloniki, instructing them to stand firm until Jesus' coming
- 1 Timothy:** A letter to Paul's protégé in Ephesus, outlining the duties of a pastor and urging him to lead
- 2 Timothy:** A letter to Paul's protégé in Ephesus, encouraging him to continue preaching God's Word
- Titus:** A letter to Paul's protégé in Crete on how to lead orderly, counter-cultural churches
- Philemon:** An appeal to a converted master to receive a converted escaped slave with kindness

The Remaining Epistles:

- Hebrews:** A letter encouraging believers in Rome to cling to Jesus, His priesthood and sacrifice, despite persecution—authorship of Hebrews is debated, but Paul is a leading candidate
- James:** A letter urging Jewish Christians to live in ways that demonstrate their faith in action
- 1 Peter:** A letter to encourage Christians in Asia Minor who are being persecuted
- 2 Peter:** A letter to remind Christians about the truth of Jesus, warning them about false teachers
- 1 John:** A letter to Christians about keeping Jesus' commands and loving one another
- 2 John:** A letter to Christians about walking in truth, love, and obedience
- 3 John:** A letter to Christians about fellowship and hospitality
- Jude:** A letter to Christians encouraging them to contend for the faith against false teachers
- Revelation:** John's vision of God's sovereignty over things that have been, that are and are yet to come

66
Books of
the Bible



MIDWEEK PRACTICE

Let's look at a specific text together to witness a stunning example of discipline. It comes from the Old Testament book of Nehemiah. But first, a little context. (In the course of this study, you will learn how to provide this kind of context for yourself.)

As you read earlier in the week, the prophet Daniel was taken from Israel as a lad and lived almost all of his long life in Babylon, the center city of a cruel, pagan nation. After the prophecy that Daniel read in the scroll of Jeremiah was fulfilled and Cyrus, the King of Media-Persia, allowed all of the Israelites to return to Jerusalem, life in Israel was very hard. The whole land suffered. Jerusalem was completely destroyed. This is where the prophecies of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi fall within the greater story. They record the struggle to rebuild the altar of the temple and the temple proper. The reconstruction of the wall by Nehemiah comes almost 100 years later. All this time, finally back in the land, the bruised nation of Israel continues to struggle deeply. Enter Ezra, the main character of this episode.

As a partner and contemporary to Nehemiah, Ezra comes from Babylon with a great burden. Much like Nehemiah's burden over a wall-less Jerusalem, Ezra's heart is ablaze with concern over a word-less nation. Much more than a rebuilt wall, or altar, or temple, Ezra wants his people to rediscover God's Word. Of all they had been given and of all they had rebuilt, they were still empty without God's Word. This is what Ezra restored.

In a wildly vivid episode, the Book of Nehemiah relates several days that changed everything for this fledgling reboot of a nation. And Ezra was at the very center of it all.

"And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had given to Israel. Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law. Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And

beside him stood [six men] on his right hand; and [seven men] on his left hand. Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also [thirteen different men from the Levites] explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place. They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading."

—**Nehemiah 8:1-8**

There are some incredible things in this account. First of all, all of the people were attentive to the reading of the Old Testament for many hours of the day. As a pastor, I must say, this is quite miraculous. But seriously, did you notice the response of the people? They stood up, they paid attention, they were asking for and receiving further explanation of the text. This is incredible.

What comes next is even more beautiful. The people all began weeping because of God's Word. They realized that they had not been living in it, they had not been obeying, they had not been dwelling on it. Nehemiah stepped in and commanded everyone to rejoice and feast that evening instead of mourning and weeping. They obeyed. The next day, the heads of the households, with the priests and Levites, all gathered around Ezra to hear more, to get more explanation and to understand.

What they discovered was that very day was supposed to be a mandatory feast day for all of Israel throughout all generations, the Feast of Tabernacles. This particular feast remembered and celebrated God's provision in the Exodus and the wanderings through the wilderness.

What happened next is extraordinary. **Nehemiah 8:17-18** records,

"The entire assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in them. The sons of Israel had indeed not done so from the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day. And there was great rejoicing. [Ezra] read from the book of the law of God daily, from the first day to the last day. And they celebrated the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly according to the ordinance."

Why was Ezra such a disciplined and influential man? The book by his name records the reason:

“Because the good hand of his God was upon him. For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.” —Ezra 7:9-10

What part of this amazing renewal story impacts you the most? Why?

What can you learn about discipline from the story of Ezra?

What can you see about the impact of discipline from this episode?





pause & pray...

Take a moment to write a prayer to God. Recall all that He has revealed to you in your study of His Word and express your gratitude. Tell Him what your hopes are for this study and ask Him to reveal Himself even more.

Be free ...

If at any point you fall behind in your daily readings, do not give in to guilt or resignation.

...

Never let yesterday's failure keep you from what God wants to reveal to you today. Just skip ahead and jump back in.

God wants to speak to you right now.

DAY 4

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:50**

“Your Word, O God, revives me. It comforts me in all my trouble.”

...

Read **John 15:1-11**.

Read it through three more times.

Jesus is speaking to his best friends, all believers in Him. Underline each time the words “fruit” and “abide” are used.

How would you summarize this entire text in one sentence of your own words?

Close by praying for a consistent and life-giving sense of nearness to God.

DAY 5

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:114; 116**

*“You are my hiding place and shield, O God.
I wait for Your Word. Sustain me according
to Your Word, that I may live.”*

...

Read **Psalm 8**.

Read it two more times. Read slowly.

What does this ancient worship song reveal about
God’s power?

What does it reveal about how God sees you?

Close in prayer and thank God for speaking and revealing
His character to you in His Word.

DAY 6

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:133**

*“Establish my footsteps in Your Word, and do
not let sin have any dominion over me.”*

...

Read **Hebrews 5:11-14**, a text about Jesus.

What does the author regret about his readers?

What is the difference between "elementary" and "mature"
in this text?

What kind of “practice” do you think is meant in the last verse?

Close in prayer and ask God to develop maturity and
discipline in your heart.

WEEK ONE: COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

1. What was the definition of discipline shared in this chapter? How would you improve upon it? How are you approaching the reality of it in your life? How do you measure up?
2. Have you used any reading plans, smart phone apps or other tools that have helped you stay disciplined in God's Word? Share these ideas with your small group and listen to what others have to say.
3. What was the most significant thing you learned or realized from the biblical texts in Week 1? Why was it impactful?
4. On Day 2 you read from **Hebrews 12**. Throughout the regular busyness and tasks of your week, how might you "fix your eyes on Jesus" with more discipline?
5. On Day 4 you read Jesus' words in **John 15**. Going forward, how can you "abide" in Jesus more consistently and with more life?
6. How was the example from Ezra in the Book of Nehemiah helpful?
7. The Memory Verse for this week is **1 Peter 2:2**. How will God's Word help you "grow in respect to salvation?" How can you "long for" God's Word more regularly?

WEEK TWO

02 | Stopping to Look (*Observation*)



WEEK TWO



02 | Stopping to Look (*Observation*)

As a man, I have inherited a long-held stereotype of being a person that dislikes following directions. While this caricature may or may not be accurate in any one case, I must admit that my gender has done much to deserve such a judgment. As for me, I have done my share to confirm the suspicion. I remember putting together a gas grill, gifted to me by my wonderful wife and kids for Father's Day. The assembled grill was almost the size of a Smart Car, yet the box it came in looked like it held a table lamp. Half of that space was a book of directions of intimidating thickness. So in a single-handed, back corner attempt to redeem my gender, I followed the directions. However, near the moment of triumphant completion, one of the final steps would not work. The discovered cause of this failure was, alas.... a failure to follow the directions *accurately!* Sigh. Twenty additional minutes were spent undoing steps in order to redo them correctly. Without the fix, the grill would have never worked properly. This story is, of course, fictional.

Whether guy or girl, learning how to best study your Bible is actually about learning a few simple directions. Once these steps are understood, they become second nature and will serve to deepen your understanding and grasp of God's Word with untold levels of meaning and joy.



But dismiss the directions and you may end up with a gas grill that is more intimidating and dangerous than helpful.

Stop right here just a moment. If you just read the previous paragraph and felt a bit of a negative twinge inside, you are not alone. Approaching the living Word of God by following directions can sound very sterile, impersonal and even disrespectful to some. *“Surely reading the Scriptures must be personal and free,”* you might say. *“It’s God’s Word... shouldn’t we just read it and let God do His thing?”* For some, to consider reading God’s Word systematically—that is with a procedure in mind—can begin to tug at the string of a little red flag. In their mind this approach transforms something holy, personal, beautiful and living into a specimen in a laboratory, a project for a classroom or a trigonometry problem to solve.

But this internal warning is based on a significant misunderstanding. God is a personal God, who reveals Himself to persons that He created to be personal. God is relational and we are relational. This could not be more true. He desires relationship and fellowship with each of us. He adopts us into His family by our faith in Jesus and treats us like daughters and sons, not slaves or machines. All true. But, relationships themselves have order and progress to them. Think about it. When you are intentionally building a relationship with a friend, you begin to learn their “language,” their sense of humor, their likes and dislikes, their story. All of this informs the way you understand them, both their words and their actions. All of this informs the depth of your relationship and friendship. In dating, courtship or marriage, this process is even more heightened and important. Friendships are built on deepening understanding and familiarity.

**Getting to know
God by reading and
studying His Word
is just the same as
the movement of
any relationship.**

Have you ever thought about getting to know God? Why is it that many of us assume that because He is God and we are human, that the development of intimacy is different? Getting to know God by reading and studying His Word is just the same as the movement of any relationship. There is a process to it. There is also a set of best practices to get the most out of the process. These best practices are revealed in the Bible itself, and they describe for us a specific approach, an approach based on a few critical steps or methods.

Think about it this way, the best kind of Bible study is both a science and an art. As an art, we are working with methods and skill, much like a painter gets better and better with a certain kind of paint and brush.

But as a science we are working with principles or “laws” that guide and govern. This is a bit like a golf coach or a laboratory technician who applies the same steps and procedure to both evaluate and improve outcomes. Bible Study involves both art and science. We want to use these principles in a skillful way. But this process must never sterilize or kill the life giving relationship. The goal of your time in God’s Word is always the same: *to deepen your intimacy with a living God; to hear God’s voice in His Word; to understand it accurately; to walk in it fully.*

The first step in a method-based Bible study is the most important. It also happens to be the most forgotten and neglected. The first step is simply stopping to look. It is *observation*. How many times in our day and age have you witnessed something amazing and forgotten to simply breathe and experience it.

I recently took my family on a whale-watching boat tour off the coast of Massachusetts. All four of us were thrilled with the prospect. Only my wife and I were timid, remembering all too clearly the dolphin “tour” in Florida several years before. For that private tour we got to see one dolphin fin—notice I said fin—from about three hundred yards away. That was it. That was as good as it got. With that massive and expensive letdown stuck in our memory, we boarded the large jet-powered boat and headed out to sea for over an hour. We saw the back of a finback whale within the first twenty minutes and I thought, “Well, there it is. Might as well head back in.”

I could not have been more wrong. Massive humpback whales came within several yards of the boat. We positively identified ten whales by name. I mean, I didn’t do that. The professional

zoologist-marine biologist-data recording folks with the microphone did. We probably saw thirty more. At the best of times, my field of view was split between two things: whales in the ocean and a sea of tiny digital screens. Everyone on deck was videoing. Everyone was taking pictures. Everyone was viewing the whales through the filter of a small digital screen. Yes, even I did it a few times. What snapped me out of it was watching my son, Andrew. He was just watching, breathing, gasping, smiling and experiencing. He was observing. He was stopping to look.

Generally, most readers of the Bible forget to stop and look and jump straight to matters of interpretation. They want to know what the text *means*. Of course this is important, but interpretation is only part of the whole story. We actually need much more than that. And in order to get more, we must begin with observation. This is the foundation of all great Bible study. It is where the reader sets the scene, takes in the details, begins to ask the right questions and does the critical work that will protect his/their heart and mind from all kinds of error.

Wait a second. I am supposed to observe the Bible? Yes. God's Word is first meant to be taken in. Seen. Heard. Absorbed with attention and focus. Observation in Bible study simply means that you pay patient attention to the details of the text. You read and reread. You look for important features like keywords, main verbs, connectors and maybe learn more about the English language in the process. Honestly, I did not understand English well until I became a serious student of my Bible.

Here is the rule: *The better you learn to see, the easier it is to make sense of what it all means.* The better your observation, the better your interpretation. The more

"I keep six honest serving men:
(They taught me all I knew)
Their names are What and
Why and When and How
and Where and Who."

Rudyard Kipling,
The Elephant's Child

you stop to look, the less work you will have to do in interpreting. The more complete your observations, the more accurate your interpretations and the more effective your applications. It all begins with observation.

Do you believe that every single word in the Scriptures is important? Do you believe that even the single-letter article “a,” as in “I saw a star” is significant? In reality, the presence of an “a” instead of “the” can be extremely important in the proper context. Picture a well-dressed crime scene investigator finding one unusual fiber on an oriental rug. It could break open the case. This scenario is no less true for reading your Bible. Every detail is significant.

Here’s our plan for this week. With a little more direction, we will relearn how to look at the biblical text on an expanding scale from single terms, to multiple word phrases, to sentences, to paragraphs and beyond. This skill in Bible study takes repetition and practice. Let’s jump in.

AN ENCOURAGEMENT to new Bible students: God’s Word is accessible and open. This means that God is not trying to hide meaning from you. He wants to reveal Himself and truth. Never assume any passage is beyond your ability to understand.

AN ENCOURAGEMENT to veteran Bible students: God’s Word is living, active and infinitely deep. This means that it always has the potential to reveal new meaning and import. Never assume you fully understand any single passage.

INSIGHTS: Seven Things to Observe

Observation always begins with a study of terms and parts of speech. These literary features are the building blocks of the paragraph, which is the most basic unit of a Bible text. Every author conveys meaning, in any language, by using these tools, so this is what you will focus on in observation. Use a good English translation such as NASB, ESV or NIV, and in each text you study try to pay attention to seven things:

1. **REPEATED WORDS:** repeated words often signal special emphasis or help identify themes
2. **MAIN VERBS:** main verbs carry the direction of communication; in the biblical text they are very important
3. **UNUSUAL OR THEOLOGICAL WORDS:** these often carry a lot of weight and should be noted with thoughtfulness and perhaps some research
4. **CONNECTING WORDS:** these terms help establish the flow of ideas
5. **WORD ORDER AND STRUCTURE:** most languages have a way of organizing a sentence to show emphasis and priority; this is especially true with biblical languages. The NASB tends to retain much of the original language word order
6. **PROPER NAMES AND GEOGRAPHY:** references to people and places must be studied and understood
7. **WORD PICTURES OR FIGURES OF SPEECH:** these add color and texture to communication and must be understood properly

If you learn how to recognize these things, your skills of observation will be well on their way. As you practice, slow down, read and reread, and these questions and observations will become second nature. Connect these insights to the Mid-week Practice later this week for more.

WEEK TWO

This week, work to commit this Scripture to memory. This is a powerful way to constantly engage God's Word and recall it in times of need. Consider writing it in your journal, on a card or a sticky note and placing it somewhere prominent. Read it and work on it each day this week.

This week's memory verse is from **Psalm 119**, a long song about the beauty of God's Word.

Tip: Take a photo of the verse and save it as your phone wallpaper.

MEMORY VERSE:

*"Deal bountifully with
Your servant, that I
may live and keep
Your Word.
Open my eyes,
that I may behold
wonderful things
from Your law."*

Psalm 119:17-18

DAY 1

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:18**

*"Open my eyes, that I may behold
wonderful things from Your Word."*

...

Read **John 5:24**.

This is Jesus speaking to an angry crowd of religious Jews. Read it a few times, lingering over each word and phrase.

Now, paying attention to the seven things you should observe, listed in the INSIGHTS (on page 41), try to simply see the text. Try to identify as many observations as possible. Write them in your journal or in a new Word document.

Example: Jesus repeats "truly." This must be something important or a way that He signals attention.

What do you see?

DAY 2

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:35**

“Make me walk in the path of Your Word, for that is where my happiness is found.”

...

Read **Acts 1:8**.

This is Jesus speaking again, but this time to his best friends and followers.

Read it a few times. You may want to read from verse 1, but focus on verse 8. Linger over each word and phrase.

Again, paying attention to the seven things you should observe, write out as many observations as possible. Write them in your journal or in a new Word document.

Example 1: Jesus begins with “but.” This must signal a contrast or a change from something before.

Example 2: Jesus says “you will receive.” This is a future tense. This hasn’t happened yet.

What do you see?

DAY 3

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:130; 105**

“The unfolding of Your Word gives light. Let Your Word be a lamp to my feet, a light to my path.”

...

Read **Psalm 51:1-3**.

Don’t forget the words before verse 1, these are a part of the Psalm and provide important context. Read these words and the first three verses a few times, lingering over each word and phrase. You may want to read the whole Psalm, but focus on verses 1-3.

What do you see? Use the same process as yesterday in your observation. Be patient. Read and reread.

Example 1: David wrote this after a great sin (seen in the subscript or opening lines before verse 1). This must have been very hard and emotional.

Example 2: He is writing (or singing) this Psalm to God. His direction is upward.

Write down your observations in your journal or in a Word document. Try to get as many as possible. Set your goal at 25 individual observations.

MIDWEEK PRACTICE

I hope you are beginning to see the great benefit in slowing down to look closely at God's Word. Too often we just rush through, like we read the news, trying to get to the point. That is not how we are to read God's Word. In Bible study, the importance of observation cannot be overstated. Let's practice together with the opening verses from the Book of Hebrews. While the authorship of this book is not explicit in the text, many believe that Apostle Paul or one of his close associates, wrote it. Here is how the whole book begins:

"God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power." —**Hebrews 1:1-3a**

What do you see? Read it again slowly. Let the text speak to you. Notice the words and phrases. Observation is all about awareness and thoroughness.

Now, together, let's start at the beginning. Notice that the author jumps right in. There is no standard introductory formula like all of the other epistles in the New Testament. (See the tiny book of Philemon just before Hebrews and the opening verses.)

God, the first word of the whole book, clearly is the main subject of the first sentence. The author is trying to say or reveal something about God. He calls him God, the most basic and simple name in the Bible. He doesn't use "God Almighty" or "God of Peace," he simply says "God." These are all basic observations. While they may sound simple, they are profoundly important to understanding the text accurately. You must learn to slow down to look.

After the first word is a comma. There is an interruption. Before the author tells us what he wants to say about "God," he wants us to know something else. The second word of the text is "after." He is going back in time now. So there may be a contrast of time periods at some point in the text. If you rephrased it "After God..." you would expect something to be said about "now" or "later." Hold that thought.

“After He spoke.” We see in these short words that God revealed Himself. God said something. God is not a God of silent removal or distant darkness. “After He spoke long ago.” Okay, now this sense of timing is confirmed and set even further back. If you rephrased it “God spoke long ago...” you might still expect a contrast in time later on in the verse.

Who did God speak to? This is observation.

How did God speak to them? What does the text say?

Is there a contrast in time, like we expected? Yes, there is. “In these last days...” This seems to complete the statement we’ve reconstructed. “After God spoke long ago...He spoke in these last days...” Is the contrast simply one of time, or is it one of method, how God spoke? It seems to be both. What is the difference? What is the point of the contrast? This is all observation.

Take a second to look in the margin or the reference section of your Bible (**Hebrews 1:2**). If you have a New American Standard Bible (NASB), you may see that the “literal” translation from the original Greek (this is what the abbreviation *Lit* stands for) reads “has spoken to us in Son.” This is different than “in His Son.” While the translation “His Son” is perfectly understood by the context, the text just reads “in Son.” What do you see in this? Is there an emphasis meant by the abrupt reading?

What does the author say about this “Son”? What did this “Son” do?

How does the Son relate to God? What does the text say?

What does the author say about the work of the Son? How does the author say it?

All of this is observation.

The quality of your interpretation will always depend on the quality of your observation.

Take some time to linger, read, reread. Write down your observations. There are literally hundreds of them in these verses. Hundreds.

This is just the very beginning of observing Hebrews. Much, much more could be said about the verses that we studied together. These are the kinds of questions and conclusions that a patient study of God's Word reveals when you begin with observation. It is not an overstatement to say that everything God wants to reveal to you through His Word begins with observation of the text. The questions and insights gained in this step lead directly to the fruit of every other step.

Dr. Howard Hendricks, admirably called "Prof" at Dallas Theological Seminary, said, *"The quality of your interpretation will always depend on the quality of your observation. It is impossible to understand what a writer means until you notice what the writer says. Therefore, to observe well is to interpret well."*¹

Sharpen your skills by continuing to practice on the texts in this week's readings. Linger in them. Labor over them. Pray through them. Be patient and you will hear God's voice.





pause & pray...

Take a moment to write a prayer to God. Recall all that He has revealed to you in your study of His Word and express your gratitude. Tell Him what your hopes are for this study and ask Him to reveal Himself even more.

Be free ...

If at any point you fall behind in your daily readings, do not give in to guilt or resignation.

...

Never let yesterday's failure keep you from what God wants to reveal to you today. Just skip ahead and jump back in.

God wants to speak to you right now.

DAY 4

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:50**

“Your Word, O God, revives me. It comforts me in all my trouble.”

...

Read **Romans 8:1**.

You may be familiar with this verse, but try to read it like you are seeing it for the first time. Read it several times.

Practicing your skills of observation, what do you see in this single verse? Try not to jump into matters of what it means, but simply focus on what you see. Write as many observations as you can in your journal or in a new Word document.

Example 1: The text begins with “therefore.” This is connected to what comes before as a continuation of an argument of some kind.

Example 2: Condemnation seems to be a big word, and probably important.

What do you see?

DAY 5

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:114; 116**

*“You are my hiding place and shield, O God.
I wait for Your Word. Sustain me according
to Your Word, that I may live.”*

...

Find **1 Samuel 5:1-5**.

This is a longer text from a narrative portion of the Old Testament. The Philistines were a pagan tribe that lived near the Israelites. They worshipped a false god named Dagon. They had recently stolen the Ark of the Covenant, a special piece of furniture that was supposed to stay in the Tabernacle/Temple of God. God's presence rested on the Ark.

Now read the text for yourself. Read it through at least three times before you begin taking notes on all of the observations you see.

Example: The Philistines took the Ark from Ebenezer (that sounds like a Hebrew word) to Ashdod (that does not sound like a typical Hebrew word).

Tip: Try to place these two cities on a map at the back of your Bible.

What else do you see?

DAY 6

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:133**

*“Establish my footsteps in Your Word, and do
not let sin have any dominion over me.”*

...

Today read **John 8:1-11**.

This longer event involves Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees (a group of religious leaders trained extensively in the Old Testament Law of Moses), and a woman caught in sin. The Old Testament book of Deuteronomy seems to be the specific point of debate behind the words of the Pharisees and scribes (referenced in verse 5).

Read through the story at least three times before you begin writing down what you see. Take special care to try to feel the story. What was the tension? What was the atmosphere? Where did all of this take place? What is the interaction between the main characters? What do you see?

Example: Jesus did not answer the Pharisees the first time they asked him a question. He stooped down and did something on the ground.

Write down as many observations as you can.

WEEK TWO: COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

1. How did you struggle with observation? Share specifically with your group.
2. What was the most impactful thing you saw in **John 5:24**? Share it with your group.
3. How did **Acts 1:8** reveal Jesus' plan for reaching the world?
4. **Psalm 51** is very personal. What was the most influential observation you found there?
5. From **Romans 8:1**, what did you notice about being "in Christ"?
6. Observing narrative texts is different than observing spoken words or an argument like Romans. What did you like about observing **1 Samuel** and **John 8**?
7. What did you struggle with in exploring this step? Share with your group.

extend your study

If you would like to continue practicing your observation skills,
here are some great passages to read and study:

Genesis 3:1-7 • Genesis 3:8-13 • Ruth 1:1-5 • Ruth 1:6-13

Psalm 128 • Luke 2:26-38 • Luke 11:1-5

WEEK THREE

03 | Determining Meaning



WEEK THREE



03 | Determining Meaning (*Interpretation*)

What is your favorite television show? Come on, I know you have one. Think about watching your show in your favorite chair, nothing else to do. It's season seven and you are locked in, laser-focused. Every nuance and detail is absorbed. Nothing gets past you. As you watch, you are unconsciously engaged in a very complex science and art. You are interpreting. You interpret words, gestures, inside jokes, allusions, outside references, quotes and much more without giving it much thought. For you and your show it happens almost instantaneously. You know the background, the context, the language, the characters, the storyline and the tension. You are all-knowing and all-seeing. This is communication at its best.

Now imagine for a moment you are on a vacation or business trip in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia. You know very little about the history and culture of the city, nation or people. You do not know the language. You are not familiar with local customs, figures of speech or jokes. But you check into your hotel anyway and turn on the television. The most popular local show comes on, the Mongolian equivalent of *The Office*. This episode is in the middle of Season 5. You watch for about twenty minutes and are completely lost. Very little is getting through. You can understand handshakes and smiles, perhaps who is



married to whom, and who seem to be enemies, but not much else. You are having a very rough time interpreting anything.

Now, which scenario above more closely resembles your reading of the Book of Malachi from the Old Testament of the Bible?

The second example from the Mongolian Office is probably more relatable. This is because, like that fictional Eastern television show watched by a Westerner, the ancient text of the Bible communicates meaning to you with several large gaps in understanding. These gaps include language, history, geography, culture, relationships and more. In order to enjoy that quirky television show as much as the rest of Mongolia, you must bridge these gaps. In order to fully enjoy all of God's Word, you must also bridge these gaps. This is the job of interpretation.

"Why must we interpret Scripture? Why can't we just open the Word, read what we're supposed to do, and then do it? Why do we have to go to so much trouble to understand the text? The answer is that time and distance have thrown up barriers between us and the biblical writers, which block our understanding. We need to appreciate what those roadblocks are. They are not insurmountable, but they are substantial."¹

Interpretation is primarily concerned with meaning. What does a text mean? For many readers, interpretation is the first and last step to Bible study. All I want to know is what it means. But this one-step-only approach to Bible study is short-sighted and incomplete. Interpretation is only one of several steps. It never lives alone. But the biggest question is "how?"

You are engaged in interpretation almost every moment of the day. Whether you read a billboard or have a conversation, you are interpreting and searching for meaning. The subconscious beauty of most of your interpretation is that it goes unnoticed. The vast majority of meaning in your everyday world you easily understand. A friendly wave. A social interaction while paying for a coffee. Which mail is important and which is junk. The hardest it normally gets is a new vocabulary word or an emotionally charged conversation with your spouse or a good friend. Tread lightly on the latter.

Within this unending and unnoticed search for meaning, consider the conversation that Lewis Carroll dreamt up between Alice and Humpty Dumpty.



"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."

Alice was too much puzzled to say anything, so after a minute Humpty Dumpty began again. "They've a temper, some of them—particularly verbs: they're the proudest—adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs—however, I can manage the whole lot of them! Impenetrability! That's what I say!"

"Would you tell me, please," said Alice, "what that means?"

"Now you talk like a reasonable child," said Humpty Dumpty, looking very much pleased. "I meant by 'impenetrability' that we've had enough of that subject, and it would be just as well if you'd mention what you mean to do next, as I suppose you don't mean to stop here all the rest of your life."

"That's a great deal to make one word mean," Alice said in a thoughtful tone.

"When I make a word do a lot of work like that," said Humpty Dumpty, "I always pay it extra."

"Oh!" said Alice.

She was too much puzzled to make any other remark.²

You see, meaning is critical. And because it is so critical, there are rules that guide meaning. These rules apply to every culture and written language, which is why God saw fit to write down His Word for us. Interpretation of meaning is not at all like Humpty Dumpty's. In order

to convey something accurately authors employ words and phrases within a relatively stable framework of meaning. Even though words in every language exist in a variable-sized range of meaning, they cannot mean anything at all like Humpty Dumpty suggests. As an author, Humpty Dumpty would be impossible to interpret. Few would enjoy reading his books, and almost no one would understand what he intended. Fortunately, God's Word is composed very differently, primarily because it is composed with the explicit purpose of being interpreted accurately. This is God's desire. He is not trying to hide His character or His will.

To complete the example from above, Malachi was written in the late 6th or early 5th century B.C. to a very bruised Israel. She had just returned from exile in Babylon for 70 years and was still very unsure and tentative. The newly rebuilt temple was a shadow of its former glory under Solomon and the nation was filled with more questions than answers. Malachi wrote in Hebrew. He used images and illustrations from the Ancient Near East of his time and history. Malachi likely sang his prophetic oracles originally, writing them down later for posterity. All of these details affect our understanding of Malachi's words, and each of them takes some work to overcome.

As I've suggested, interpreting the Bible is about bridging gaps. Each of these gaps pose a significant challenge to the interpreter because they can each interrupt the communication of meaning. From original, ancient author to you, the modern reader, there is work to be done to bridge these gaps. Consider these three major gaps you must tackle in interpretation.

1. **LANGUAGE GAP:** The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. While accurate and trustworthy translations exist in thousands of languages, every translation from one language to another inevitably loses something, even if it is minuscule. The passion, emphasis and even rhythm and tone of the original language can never be perfectly transferred to another. To bridge this language gap is a big part of the job of interpretation.
2. **GEOGRAPHY GAP:** The Bible was written from the Middle East, Turkey, Greece, Italy and perhaps even north Africa. Each of these places contain geographical phenomena and landscape peculiarities that require work to understand them in the same way a native would. City names, travel routes, topography and weather would all be immediately and intuitively understood by a native. Non-natives have some work to do.

3. CULTURE GAP: Several millennia have passed since the Bible was written. Things change a lot in a time gap that large. What is more, from our vantage point in the West, we unconsciously wear glasses of a certain shade of color, seeing everything from a very Western perspective. Thus to understand an honor-shame culture, which is a major factor in the ancient near east of the Bible, takes some work. This may be the hardest gap to bridge because it is the most difficult gap to see.

As a contemporary example, consider the following sentence: *LeBron James slashes the lane like Lindsey Vonn flies downhill.*

Do you understand that statement? A vast majority of the people on the planet would not. In order to understand it, you must be aware of two different sports, two famous sports figures, one figure of speech and one literary device of comparison, at the very least.

This is an example of interpretation, and I'll bet you did very well. You do it all the time. (In case you're struggling, LeBron James is arguably the best basketball player on the planet and Lindsey Vonn is an Olympic champion downhill skier. "Slashing the lane" is a figure of speech for speed and agility on the basketball court).

"The Bible is the Word of God in such a way that when the Bible speaks, God speaks."

B.B. Warfield

Because it is a gap-bridger, the work of interpretation often requires good tools. While observation, the first step of Bible study, can be done with patience, meditation, prayer and experienced repetition, interpretation is often more complicated because the barriers to overcome are more complex. Therefore this step often employs tools like maps, dictionaries, language tools, studies on cultural backgrounds and Bible commentaries.

Let me pause here to be crystal clear about something: interpretation does not require a graduate degree from an accredited seminary or institution of higher education. Anyone that has the Holy Spirit of God

living inside them (and that is true of every believer in Jesus Christ) has all of the equipment necessary to properly interpret the Word of God. All that is required is faith and the Holy Spirit. (See **1 Corinthians 2:11-16**). Good tools simply provide good help.

Even though it may sound daunting, this means that interpretation is accessible to even young students of the Bible. Do not give way to resignation or fear. Stick with me and I hope to show you that with a little attention and work, great waves of meaning, light and joy will be freshly available in God's Word.

INSIGHTS: Four Basic Tools of Interpretation

Advanced tools of biblical interpretation were once inaccessible to the average saint, reserved in theological libraries for scholars, pastors and aspiring seminary students. Thankfully, almost all of them are now available and accessible to the masses. And with this availability has come a decline in the intimidation of such tools. Most of these can now be easily found online and accessed with a few clicks, if you know where to look.

1. **MAP OR ATLAS:** No one can fully understand the Bible without knowing the land of the Bible. The easiest way to do this is to study maps and charts of the land, taking the time to identify cities and regions mentioned in the text you study. (bibleatlas.org)
2. **CONCORDANCE:** This simple tool tells you every text where a specific word or phrase is used. In an electronic concordance, type in the word "grace" and find all 133 uses in the OT and NT in less than a second. Or do it the old-fashioned way and turn a page in a physical concordance book, which may take a little longer than a second. (biblegateway.com)
3. **BIBLE DICTIONARY OR LEXICON:** This is how you look up meanings of words used in the Bible. You can access English, Greek or Hebrew lexicons to study meaning and usage more deeply. Some Bible Dictionaries can even merge into more of an encyclopedia, with extended articles on words, characters, cities, customs, etc. (biblestudytools.com)

- 4. BIBLE COMMENTARY:** Countless books have been written to help the biblical student understand every book of the Bible, and they can be very helpful. They come in diverse levels of depth and scope, including Bible Introductions, which contain the major background elements, outlines and other critical matters to every book. I highly recommend Bible Introductions. (soniclight.com)

NOTE WELL: Commentaries are by far the most popular tool of interpretation, but they are often over-used, and over-trusted. While the other three tools above are largely objective, scholarly commentaries are all written by men and women with a specific theological perspective which is subjective. This means they contain a mixture of fact and opinion. Just because someone has an educational title or a publishing contract does not mean that everything they say about a specific Scripture is true. This includes me and every other fallen man or woman that has written a book, even a book about Jesus or the Bible. You must learn to read critically and biblically.

INSIGHTS: Knowing What Kind of Text You Are Reading

The Bible is literature. That is, the Bible is a written work of human history, penned and compiled to convey meaning. The Bible also transcends mere human literature as the inspired and inerrant Word of God; each biblical author was carried along by the Holy Spirit of God as they wrote (**2 Peter 1:20-21**). Nonetheless, the Scriptures contain different kinds of writings and knowing the type of writing (also called “genre”) is a key component to every step of good Bible study. Each different genre operates with slightly different modes and features. Identifying the kind of writing you are reading will help you observe, interpret and apply these features. The kinds of writing found in the Bible are:

NARRATIVE AND BIOGRAPHY use character interaction and events to convey meaning. Pay attention to characters, how they respond to God and God’s covenants, how they interact with others, and what they say in speeches or conversation. In many ways, narrative texts are among the hardest to interpret because their meaning is bound up in background truths and context. (Genesis, Exodus, Judges, Ruth, Esther, the Four Gospels, Acts, etc.)

EPISTLES are built conversationally using logic and argument. Pay attention to the flow and major elements of a developing argument, which may change subjects; Epistles have theme, organization and application. (Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Hebrews, etc.)

POETRY uses interactions between words and phrases, word pictures and sounds, to convey meaning with emotion and often melody. Pay attention to parallel thoughts, related words, images, metaphors and emotion. (The Book of Psalms is the best example of poetry)

WISDOM LITERATURE conveys meaning in short statements or longer discourses intended to teach practical wisdom and holy judgment. Pay attention to application of the text, word pictures, repeated words, parallel statements and figures of speech like analogy, comparison and contrast. (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, some parts of Job, etc.)

PARABLES are illustrative stories that connect to a deeper spiritual truth. Pay attention to the author or speaker of the parable, the audience and the context of the conversation; meaning is usually determined by examining the details of the parable story and its purpose. (Jesus used parables often, as did some Old Testament prophets)

PROPHETIC LITERATURE is often a mix of narrative, epistle, poetry and parable. The Old Testament prophets, and some isolated New Testament episodes, are a mixture of several other genres. (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Hosea, Malachi, etc.)

APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE is highly symbolic, dramatic and often looks to the future. Pay attention to symbols, numbers, images, emotion and connections to other Scriptures, especially the Old Testament. (Daniel, Revelation, and some parts of some prophets)

WEEK THREE

This week, work to commit this Scripture to memory. This is a powerful way to constantly engage God's Word and recall it in times of need. Consider writing it in your journal, on a card or a sticky note and placing it somewhere prominent. Read it and work on it each day this week.

Tip: Take a photo of the verse and save it as your phone wallpaper.

MEMORY VERSE:

*"I will ask the Father,
and He will give you
another Helper, that He
may be with you forever;
that is the Spirit of truth,
whom the world cannot
receive, because it does not
see Him or know Him, but
you know Him because
He abides with you and
will be in you."*

John 14:16-17

DAY 1

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalms 119:18**

*"Open my eyes, that I may behold
wonderful things from Your Word."*

...

Find and read **Proverbs 1:1-7**.

First, spend some time reading and rereading, working through the steps and points of observation. This is always where you begin. Never skip observation. Only then, using the discoveries made in observation, move to matters of meaning.

Context: You are reading Old Testament wisdom literature, which means you should pay attention to application, word pictures and contrast/comparisons. The author, Solomon, son of David, king in Israel, is given in your text. This text was written around 950 B.C. It was originally written in Hebrew. The purpose of the first nine chapters of Proverbs is practical instruction from a father, Solomon, to his son (see 1:8). You are reading just the introduction.

Read, observe and then work to uncover meaning. Your goal today is a short but complete restatement of the text in your own words. To do this well, you must see the text and bridge the gaps. Work to understand the original meaning such that you can rephrase it. Write your conclusions in your journal or in a new Word document.

DAY 2

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:35**

“Make me walk in the path of Your Word, for that is where my happiness is found.”

...

Today read **Matthew 4:1-11**.

Again, the first step is always stopping to look. Read and reread the text several times. Write down any observations you see, noting both the flow of the story and the details.

Context: You are reading New Testament narrative, which means you are dealing with characters, interactions and lots of behind-the-scenes context. This is one story from one of the biographies of Jesus, which we refer to as Gospels. The author is Matthew, one of Jesus’ close friends. Just before this episode, Jesus inaugurated His popular ministry with His baptism. Your text is the very next thing that happens.

Read, observe, gain your bearings for what is happening and then work to uncover meaning. This will involve some Old Testament reading because both Jesus and Satan refer to the Old Testament Scripture in this text. The references should be connected in your margin or below the text (just in case: **verse 4: Deuteronomy 8:3; verse 6: Psalm 91:11-12; verse 7: Deuteronomy 6:16; verse 10: Deuteronomy 6:13**). Again, your goal is a short synopsis of the text in your own words.

DAY 3

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:130; 105**

“The unfolding of Your Word gives light. Let Your Word be a lamp to my feet, a light to my path.”

...

Today read **Romans 3:21-24**.

First, stop to look. Read and reread. Observe before you interpret.

Context: You are reading a New Testament epistle, which means you are dealing primarily with logical argument. The author is Paul, the foremost missionary and evangelist in the New Testament. He wrote this letter to believers in the city of Rome (originally in Greek, written around 60 A.D.), and in it he has clearly laid out what and how he preached when he shared the good news of Jesus.

Your goal again today, is a short and complete restatement of this text in your own words. You will have to define a few terms, understand an Old Testament allusion and discern the argument. Write your observations and conclusions in your journal or a Word document.

INSIGHTS: Howard Hendricks' Five Keys to Interpretation

(*Living By The Book*, pages 227-256)

1. **CONTENT:** There is a direct cause-effect relationship between content and meaning. The content of a passage is the raw material, the database, with which you will interpret the text. Observation will help determine the content of the passage. You have looked for terms, structure, literary form, and atmosphere. You have asked the questions: who, what, where, when, why. You have looked for things that are emphasized, repeated, related, alike, unlike, and true to life. In other words, you have answered the question: do you know what the author is saying? The more time you spend in observing, the less time you will have to spend interpreting.
2. **CONTEXT:** This refers to that which goes before and that which follows after. When you study a verse, a paragraph, a section, even an entire book—always consult the neighbors of that verse, that paragraph, that section, that book. There are several kinds of context. Each one gives a different slant on whatever passage you are considering:

Literary context: The literary context of any verse is the paragraph of which it is a part, the section of which that paragraph is a part, and the book of which that section is a part. And, given the unity of Scripture, the ultimate context of any book is the entire Bible.

Historical context: When is this taking place? Where does this passage fit in history? What else was taking place in the world at this time? What were some of the social, political, and technological influences on the writer and on those to whom he was writing?

Cultural context: Culture has a powerful influence on all forms of communication, and the cultures in biblical time had a profound effect on the creation of the Bible. So the more you know about ancient times, the more insight you will have into the text.

Geographic context: Knowing geographic features of a text is incredibly relevant to interpretation of Scripture. Ask such questions as: What was the

terrain like? What topographic features made this region unique? What was the weather like? How far was this town from places mentioned in the text? What were the transportation routes for these people? What size city was this? What was the layout of the town? What was this location known for? Atlases are a great resource for this kind of information.

Theological context: The question here is, what did the author know about God? What was the relationship of his readers to God? How did people worship Him at this point? How much Scripture did the writer and his audience have access to? What other religions and worldviews were competing for influence? A central issue here is, where does this passage fit in the unfolding of Scripture? So, it is important to locate your passage in the flow of Scripture. A helpful resource here is a commentary.

- 3. COMPARISON:** In comparison, we compare Scripture with Scripture. That offers a great safety net, because the greatest interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself. Donald Grey Barnhouse put it so clearly, "You very rarely have to go outside of the Bible to explain anything in the Bible." The parts of the Bible take on meaning in light of the whole. A concordance is a valuable tool in this aspect of context in Scripture. [We will fully investigate this idea next week.]
- 4. CULTURE:** In studying the Bible, you have to see it against the right background. This involves paying attention to the cultural and historical context—to the factors that led to the writing of the passage, the influences they had on the text, and what happened as a result of the message. Try to recreate the culture. A helpful resource for this is a Bible dictionary or Bible handbook.
- 5. CONSULTATION:** This involves the use of secondary resources [such as commentaries]. They can shed light on the text that will help you make more sense out of what you are attempting to interpret.

MIDWEEK PRACTICE

As you continue, let's practice on a text together in order to improve your skills in interpretation. A short section of **Proverbs 30** has something powerful to say in a very unusual way.

*Four things are small on the earth,
But they are exceedingly wise:
The ants are not a strong people,
But they prepare their food in the summer;
The shephanim are not mighty people,
Yet they make their houses in the rocks;
The locusts have no king,
Yet all of them go out in ranks;
The lizard you may grasp with the hands,
Yet it is in kings' palaces.*
— **Proverbs 30:24-28**

Go ahead and read it again. There is very little context given in the larger chapter of Proverbs 30, which is a separate collection of wisdom sayings, warnings, encouragements and ideas given by "Agur, the son of Jakeh, the oracle." Neither of these names are used elsewhere in the Bible. We are working with Hebrew Old Testament wisdom literature again, which uses parallel statements, analogies and word pictures to convey meaning.

Am I sufficiently making my point when I repeat: *always begin with observation*. What do you see? Work to see the pictures, the flow, the images and the motion in the text. As you trek through the patient questions of observation, the opening line begins to rise up as the potential guiding principle for interpretation; the peculiar and noteworthy contrast of four things both small and wise. Let's hold and test that hypothesis by reading and studying the text more slowly.

While ants differ in size, bite and personality, these tiny insects seem to pervade in almost every corner of the world. What does the author focus on about the ant? He identifies one quality and one action. What are they? Why might he focus on these things?

Shephanim is a Hebrew term that is left untranslated in our English text because there is no easy equivalent. The margin of the NASB Bible says: "Small, shy, furry animals (Hyrax syriacus) found in the peninsula of the Sinai, northern Israel, and the region round the Dead Sea; King James Version coney, original NASB badgers." So we are talking about very shy mammals, a little larger than a squirrel but smaller than a beaver. The author again identifies a quality and an action. What are they? Is there a contrast or comparison involved?

Locusts are large flying grasshoppers that devastate crops still today in the Middle East. They almost always had a very negative context. The author, once again, notes a quality first. It is in the negative. Are the previous ones also in the negative? Again, secondly, he notes an action.

What is the connection?

Finally, the lizards of the Middle East are not large. These would likely be small geckos or desert lizards. The author first mentions a quality, yet again, but this time it is not in the negative. And secondly, where you would expect an action, you find instead a simple location. Is there a connection? What might the author want you to focus on?

Notice this is the end of this contained proverb. The next verse begins a new one, itself also self-contained. The author wrote to teach something, but he does not say it explicitly. Since he is not trying to hide meaning or confuse his reader, the interpretation must be accessible. You just need to work to bridge the gaps.

What does the first verse reveal about the focus of the illustrations that follow?

How do folks typically regard small animals?

What are the implications of practical wisdom in this text?

**Work to see
the pictures,
the flow, the
images and
the motion in
the text.**

The author seems to write like a painter with ample color choices but only large brushes. There is a whimsy to the text that leaves a lot of thought in the mind of the reader. The text has a way of sticking with you.

One of my favorite commentators says this in his typical brevity: *"Four things little and wise. The four counterpoises to weakness are (a) provision; (b) sanctuary; (c) order; (d) audacity."*³ Does this help you? Why or why not?

In the end, we want to be familiar enough with the text (observation) to read it accurately, understand it in context (interpretation) and then restate it in our own words. Let's try this restatement on for size:

Great wisdom can even be found in tiny, overlooked things: Ants aren't strong but work a strong plan. Badgers aren't secure but make secure homes. Locusts don't have a leader but move under leadership. Lizards are common but live with royalty.

How would you change and improve this restatement?

All of this is the work of interpretation. In doing so, you are gaining the skills necessary to consistently feast on the infinite richness of God's Word.





pause & pray...

Take a moment to write a prayer to God. Recall all that He has revealed to you in your study of His Word and express your gratitude. Tell Him what your hopes are for this study and ask Him to reveal Himself even more.

Be free ...

If at any point you fall behind in your daily readings, do not give in to guilt or resignation.

...

Never let yesterday's failure keep you from what God wants to reveal to you today. Just skip ahead and jump back in.

God wants to speak to you right now.

DAY 4

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:50**

“Your Word, O God, revives me. It comforts me in all my trouble.”

...

Today, let's go to **Luke 15**.

This text is most likely very familiar to you. Sometimes this makes the task of observation and interpretation a little harder. This is also a longer text, but functions as a unit. Take time to read it twice through.

Context: Jesus is the main speaker, as this episode is recorded in one of the biographies of Jesus. This gospel was written by Luke, a physician that produced this narrative based on interviews with eyewitnesses, investigation and research (see **Luke 1:1-4**). Thus this text is narrative, so you will need to pay attention to characters, interactions and background context. The details of the stories are very Middle Eastern in nature. Jesus does not waste any of them.

Today, I want you to focus on the movement of the text and the details of the three stories (sheep, coin, sons). They build on each other (hint: work to connect the details of verses 1-2 with verse 11), and the story of the two sons is obviously the main point, as seen in the length and depth of detail. Your goal is to identify five specific things you haven't seen before in the final story (verses 11-32) and write a short teaching statement of that section, answering *what does this story mean?*

DAY 5

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:114; 116**

*“You are my hiding place and shield, O God.
I wait for Your Word. Sustain me according
to Your Word, that I may live.”*

...

Read **Galatians 1**.

This text is beautifully simple and rich. Try to read it through twice. Using all of the tools you’ve gained thus far, work to see the text. Observe. Be patient. Then begin asking interpretive questions and determine what the text means.

Context: This text is both narrative and epistle. Paul is writing to a group of believers and he has a specific theme and argument in mind, but his writing contains a lot of story and narrative. His readers started with the good news of grace in Jesus but then somehow regressed to legalism, fear and judgment. Thus the truth of the gospel is a major focus.

Your goal in **Galatians 1** is to spend enough time observing and interpreting to be able to write a short summary paragraph of the chapter in your own words. Aim for 5-7 sentences, which works out to about one sentence per paragraph.

DAY 6

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:133**

*“Establish my footsteps in Your Word, and do
not let sin have any dominion over me.”*

...

Read **Galatians 2**.

Continuing from yesterday, you get to pick up where you left off with the exact same goal in mind. Do not give in to the temptation to jump to matters of meaning and interpretation. Remember to stop to look. Observe. Think. Write down what you see and be patient.

Context: After what was shared yesterday, the text in chapter 2 continues from chapter 1 without so much as a breath. There is a lot of narrative which leads up to Paul’s explanation of a conflict he had with Peter. This leads to his first great expansion of the gospel message at the end of chapter 2.

Your goal in **Galatians 2** is to spend enough time observing and interpreting to be able to write a short summary paragraph of the chapter in your own words. Aim for about 5-6 sentences.

WEEK THREE: COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

1. What is the step of interpretation primarily concerned with? How do you proceed through the step of interpretation? What are some key tools?
2. What did Solomon say in **Proverbs 1:1-7**? How is this a fitting introduction to the first section of the book? Share with your group.
3. What did you learn about studying the episode of Jesus' temptation in **Matthew 4**? Share two insights you had with your group.
4. What did **Romans 3** reveal to you about the heart of the gospel message?
5. What was most useful about the mid-week practice in **Proverbs 30**? Share with your group your successes and struggles as you practice interpretation.
6. Within your group, share the five insights you gained from Jesus' parable of the prodigal son and your summary statement.
7. Galatians contains a mixture of narrative and epistle. What was most challenging about studying the first two chapters? What major insights did you gain? Share with your group.

extend your study

If you would like to extend your experience and practice in interpretation, here are some excellent texts to study:

Finish Galatians (*one chapter at a time*) • Psalm 4 • Psalm 13
The Book of Titus (*one chapter at a time*) • The Book of Philemon

WEEK FOUR

04 | Connecting the Dots



WEEK FOUR

04 | Connecting the Dots *(Correlation)*

Who is your best or closest friend? Perhaps your friendship is young. You met just last year and your mutual affection skyrocketed. Maybe you were born on the same street and struggle to remember a time when you didn't know each other. However the relationship began and however long it has existed, your friendship has a lot to do with connection. You have similar interests, backgrounds, stories, past experiences or future trajectories. Perhaps you share the same passions, a larger circle of friends or even the same DNA, as in the case of identical twin siblings. If you have a best friend, then you likely have a large area of common stories, loves and laughs. Connection is the heart of all great relationships.

My younger and only brother Travis is a great example. We grew up together in the same home, in the same small town, with the same parents, and later in life we still like and love many of the same things. When we get together, outside observers might think we are speaking a different language of half-statements and smirks. Our conversation is typically a tapestry of inside jokes, movie quotes, references no one else would get and the kind of welcome interruptions that only friends enjoy. My only brother and I are deeply connected and it shows.





Actually, connection is part of the image of God in all of us. We're all born with the longing for Eden, walking with God and another person in deep relationship and connection. Remember it was "not good" for man to be alone. God made us this way. We were created for connection. God Himself is this way, as He has eternally existed as a Trinity of persons. God is a God of connection and story. This is also the way He relates to us, the pinnacle of His creation. He relates personally. He reveals story and writes our lives into a story. He connects us to each other in story. And what is more, this beautiful love of connection is beautifully reflected in His Word. That's what this week is all about.

As you continue to engage God's Word more deeply, your next step is developing skill in discovering its deep connectedness. Once you spend ample time looking at the text and working to interpret it correctly, you must become acquainted with building a bigger picture and expanding the borders of your knowledge and familiarity. Some call this task "correlation," but it is really all about uncovering the connections of Scripture, drawing lines from one text and one idea to another in an attempt to understand God more fully.

This kind of connection serves at least three big purposes. First, it serves to deepen what you are learning and experiencing in God's Word. An isolated event, no matter how beautiful it is, can fade in glory over time, be explained away and often lost. But when you continue to have the same experience and see the same beauty in multiple places, this is powerfully transformative. So it is when you begin to connect God's Word to God's Word.

Second, the work of correlation serves to confirm and clarify your conclusions in interpretation. Scripture is by far the best interpreter of Scripture. In fact, this is one of the premier principles

of Bible study: *allow the clear parts of Scripture to interpret the less clear parts of Scripture.* Since God does not change and His character is not capricious or unpredictable, what God reveals about Himself in one text will be confirmed, clarified and expanded by what He reveals in another. We are to always interpret and understand the difficult and unclear parts of the Bible with the exceptionally good help of the clear parts. This is part of the work of correlation.

Finally, this work of connection will help you construct a fuller understanding of God the Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, sin, salvation, the church, and many other topics. These are all aspects of theology, which simply means the study of God. When you organize, connect and collect what the Holy Spirit reveals in Bible study you are doing the work of theology. As you persist, God reveals Himself even more, your knowledge of Him grows, your understanding of His character deepens and your picture of His grace sharpens.

Once on a tour through the biblical sites of Israel and Jordan, one of the members of our group had an app on his phone that tracked our location and movement on an interactive map. Every road we traveled on turned black, and each time we stopped at a location, that specific spot on the map became active, with the ability to add pictures and notes. It was terrifically exciting to see the full map at the end of our long tour. The spider's web of roads traveled and sites visited became a connected whole. All of the hours of information, jaw-dropping sites and reflection became one story.

Can you imagine doing the same with your study of God's Word? What if, over time, you became so familiar with God's character and actions that you began to notice the connections and similarities throughout the many books and time periods? This is the work of connection and correlation. More than any other step, this skill in Bible study drives God's Word deep into your heart because what you discover is repeatedly emphasized, stressed and accented. Now let's get to the doing.

Connecting the specific text you are studying to the larger story of the Bible is done in at least three ways, each more expansive than the previous.

1. **CONNECTING WORDS AND PHRASES:** Correlation can be as simple as connecting the word "grace" across passages in order to form a larger picture. Tracking the phrase "grace and truth" through the Old and New Testament will yield a gorgeous

image, for example. Tracking the word “believe” in the Gospel of John provides powerful insight into the theme and force of the entire book. Electronic tools found online make this step lightning fast and brilliantly easy.

2. **CONNECTING THEMES AND REFERENCES:** Connecting subjects and themes, such as the role of women in the church or what makes a great marriage, begins with words and phrases but often expands beyond what a simple word search can reveal. This takes more time and focus. Tracing references or allusions to other Bible passages, such as the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament, is often made easier by a good reference Bible (a good study Bible will have some; the NASB has a center column of references), but even they don’t include every reference.
3. **CONNECTING THEOLOGY:** Organizing what God reveals in your study of His Word into a few major theological subjects is the broadest scope of connection. Building, informing and continually clarifying a biblical theology of salvation, for example, is among the most important applications for a Bible student. This work will yield fruit for a lifetime.

The texts you will read and study this week will give you an opportunity to practice and track these points of connection. You’ve already come so far. You are more than half way through the critical steps of great Bible study. Keep at it.

As a final point of relevance, consider Jesus. In a post-resurrection appearance to two men in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus Himself spoke, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (**Luke 24:27**). Jesus is the Creator. “For by Him all things were created, in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible...” (**Colossians 1:16**). And Jesus is the

Jesus speaking to angry religious leaders who wanted to kill Him: “*You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. ...Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.*”
– John 5:39-46

Redeemer. He was the perfect sacrificial lamb “foreknown before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:20). All of history itself centers on Jesus. So it should come as no surprise that God’s Word centers on Christ. In fact, it can be correctly said that no Scripture has been fully understood until Jesus is seen in it. This means that Jesus, Himself, unifies all of the Bible. Its fullest connection is found in Him.

INSIGHTS: Using Your Reference Bible

Many Bibles, even electronic Bibles, offer a feature that helps you begin the work of connection and correlation. This feature can be seen in the small notations within the biblical text and the corresponding notes or reference passages in the center column, the margin or below the text at the bottom of the page.

For example, in the New American Standard Bible, this is what is shown in the text at **Romans 5:12**:

12 *Therefore, just as through ^aone man sin entered the world, and ^bdeath through sin, and ^cso death spread to all men, because all sinned —*

Notice first the bold verse number. This typically means that the translators see here the beginning of a new paragraph. So a new paragraph, or section of the argument, begins in verse 12. Non-bold numbers continue throughout the rest of the paragraph.

Next, notice the small superscript letters ^a, ^b and ^c before the words “one,” “death” and “so,” respectively. Do you see them? These are helpful connections that are revealed in the margin, center column or below the text. In my Bible, there is a center column. I first find the bold **12**, which corresponds to the verse I’m reading. This is what I find written there:

12 ^aGe 2:17; 3:6,19; Ro 5:15-17; 1 Co 15:21f ^bRo 6:23; 1 Co 15:56; Jas 1:15
^cRo 5:14,19,21; 1 Co 15:22

This is a ton of information, all written as small and succinctly as possible, in abbreviations (These abbreviations are always listed in the front few pages of your Bible). All of these are helpful connections.

Notice that you see the same ^a, ^b and ^c that are in the full verse 12. In the information recorded here you will find just some of the passages that help connect and explain Romans 5:12. To discover how, you must track down these verses. So the superscript a is found in verse 12 next to "one man." The reference in the column reveals: ^aGe 2:17; 3:6,19; Ro 5:15-17; 1 Co 15:21f. This means that "one man" has some connection to Genesis 2:7, Genesis 3:6, Genesis 3:19, Romans 5:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:21 and the following verses (signaled by the f). Looking up those verses will help you understand what Paul means by "one man" in Romans 5:12. Furthermore, each of these passages likely has references of its own. The possibilities of discovery are amazing!

INSIGHTS: Building a Theology

As you do the work of correlation you are also building a systematic theology of God's revelation in Scripture. You are linking related things and organizing these links in meaningful ways. You are developing and focusing the larger picture of God revealed in part by all the smaller pictures.

Below are ten foundational subjects within biblical theology. As you study and read God's Word, continually connect texts to one or more of these subjects, building an ongoing perspective on the whole through the lens of these theological markers.

1. **GOD THE FATHER:** Consider the character, attributes, will and words of the Father
2. **JESUS THE SON OF GOD:** Consider the character, attributes and sacrifice of Jesus
3. **THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD:** Consider the character, attributes, gifts, fruit and power of the Spirit
4. **THE TRINITY:** Consider the nature of God as three persons in one essence
5. **MAN:** Consider the nature of man, the image of God in man, and man's purpose
6. **SIN:** Consider the birth of sin, its effects, its wages and its consequences

7. **SALVATION** (*Justification*): Consider God's free gift, its conditions, its cost and its reception
8. **DISCIPLESHIP** (*Sanctification*): Consider this progressive growth in Christ-likeness, its power, its plan, its fruit
9. **THE CHURCH**: Consider the Body of Christ on the earth, its make up, its mission, its beauty
10. **THE FUTURE** (*End Times*): Consider what God reveals about the culmination of this world in Jesus

On the next page is an empty chart for each of the ten theological subjects above. Over the course of this week, write specific biblical truths of each subject in the space provided. For example, in "God the Father" you may write: There is one God. He exists in a Trinity of persons. He is love, etc. In the section on "Sin" you may write: Every person since Adam and Eve is born under sin, etc.

After you compile a good amount of statements, work to ground each in at least one biblical verse. This may take a while but is a powerful exercise to establish and clarify what you believe, why you believe it and if it is biblically true. You may need to adjust the statement based on what you discover, or conversely, delete it altogether if the Scriptures reveal something different.

10

Biblical Truths

God the Father:	
Jesus the Son of God:	
The Holy Spirit of God:	
The Trinity:	
Man:	
Sin:	
Salvation:	
Discipleship:	
The Church:	
The Future:	

WEEK FOUR

This week, work to commit this Scripture to memory. This is a powerful way to constantly engage God's Word and recall it in times of need. Consider writing it in your journal, on a card or a sticky note and placing it somewhere prominent. Read it and work on it each day this week.

Tip: Take a photo of the verse and save it as your phone wallpaper.

MEMORY VERSE:

*"The Lord is gracious
and merciful; slow
to anger and great
in lovingkindness.*

*The Lord is good to all,
and His mercies are
over all His works."*

Psalm 145:8-9

DAY 1

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:18**

*"Open my eyes, that I may behold
wonderful things from Your Word."*

...

Read **Genesis 3:20-24**.

This is the end of the episode about The Fall, the entrance of sin into the world and the curse that accompanied it. The devil has just tempted Adam and Eve and they chose rebellion instead of faith. God enters the scene and punishes them both, describing the consequences of sin. This text is next.

Next, read **Exodus 25:10-22**.

These are God's instructions to Moses for the construction of the Ark of the Covenant. Read the instructions and see if anything relates to the text in Genesis 3. For more, read **Exodus 26:31-34**, the instructions about the curtain that separates the most holy part of the Tabernacle, where God's presence rests, from the section where the priests work.

Finally, read **Hebrews 9:11-14** and **verse 22**. What connections do you see between these three passages? Pay particular attention to blood, sacrifice, garden imagery and angels.

These three texts and what they reveal are deeply connected. The later texts are built upon the earlier ones such that Exodus has Genesis in mind. Hebrews has them both in mind. What do you see? What does this say about God and His plan? What is God revealing through these texts? Draw as many connections and conclusions as you can.

DAY 2

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:35**

*“Make me walk in the path of Your Word,
for that is where my happiness is found.”*

...

Read **Exodus 6:1-13**.

This occurs when the nation of Israel is in slavery in Egypt under Pharaoh. God called Moses to deliver them.

Next read **Exodus 12:1-13**.

These are the instructions for the Passover Lamb on the very first Passover, many days after **Exodus 6**.

Finally, read **John 19:13-30**, the account of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

These three texts are deeply related. What do you see? What connections do you notice? Pay close attention to descriptions of slavery and redemption, blood and sacrifice, even specific kinds of plants. God is trying to reveal something beautiful as He connects the story. Draw as many connections and conclusions as you can.

DAY 3

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:130; 105**

*“The unfolding of Your Word gives light. Let Your
Word be a lamp to my feet, a light to my path.”*

...

Remembering what you have read the past two days, today read **Isaiah 52:13** through **53:12**.

This prophecy was written by Isaiah a full 700 years before Jesus' birth.

Then, as a reminder, read **Matthew 27:11-60**.

These two texts have one of the most powerful connections in the whole Bible. What connections do you see? What is God trying to reveal through these connections? Remember, most of what you read in Matthew was out of Jesus' personal control. These things happened to Him, as He willingly laid down His life in fulfillment of ancient prophecy.

Draw as many connections and conclusions as you can.

MID-WEEK PRACTICE

You are currently living in a corrupt world. You are trapped in a fallen body. Now you may think your body is fallen a bit more than others, but the truth remains: this world is not as it should be. It is not the perfect Eden of creation, nor is it yet the perfect New Jerusalem of Revelation. This is all because of sin. The devil is ruling this fallen world. He is “*the god of this world*” or “*age*” (2 Corinthians 4:4). But not for long.

Have you ever wondered where the Bible speaks about Satan, his rebellion, his abilities, his pride? The average churchman or woman seems to know a bit about Satan, but where does the Bible reveal these truths? Do we understand the truth, or are we believing myth, legend or exaggerated tales? The answers to these questions are the fruit of the study of correlation and biblical connection. Let’s look at this text written by the prophet Ezekiel, in Chapter 28.

The word of the Lord came again to me, saying, ² “Son of man, say to the leader [or ruler/prince] of Tyre, ‘Thus says the Lord God,

“Because your heart is lifted up and you have said, ‘I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, in the heart of the seas’;

Yet you are a man and not God, although you make your heart like the heart of God—

³ Behold, you are wiser than Daniel; There is no secret that is a match for you.

⁴ “By your wisdom and understanding you have acquired riches for yourself and have acquired gold and silver for your treasures.

⁵ “By your great wisdom, by your trade you have increased your riches and your heart is lifted up because of your riches—

⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord God, ‘Because you have made your heart like the heart of God,

⁷ Therefore, behold, I will bring strangers upon you, the most ruthless of the nations. And they will draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom and defile your splendor.

⁸ ‘They will bring you down to the pit, and you will die the death of those who are slain in the heart of the seas.

⁹ *'Will you still say, "I am a god," In the presence of your slayer, though you are a man and not God, in the hands of those who wound you?*

¹⁰ *'You will die the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers, for I have spoken!' declares the Lord God!'" —Ezekiel 28:1-10*

You may want to read this passage again. Notice who is speaking to whom. God spoke to Ezekiel the prophet. The message was directed at a man, the prince or leader of Tyre. Tyre was a major city on the Mediterranean coast north of Israel. But what does God say? What can you see? Do not forget to simply observe.

The text clearly suggests that this leader or prince is a man. God says so at the end of verse 2 (again in verse 9), as a contrast to this man's pride, which seems to be on a divine level (see verse 9). You'll also notice he is very rich and successful in his dealings. Thus God speaks a word of prophetic punishment or consequence beginning in verse 6.

But if you continue reading in Ezekiel, the following passage, another prophetic oracle to the same king or prince of Tyre, seems to reveal a whole new level of ideas and truths. Let's continue.

Again the word of the Lord came to me saying, ¹² "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God, "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

¹³ *"You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared.*

¹⁴ *"You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire.*

¹⁵ *"You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you.*

¹⁶ *"By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.*

¹⁷ *"Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you.*

¹⁸ *"By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; it has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you.*

¹⁹ *"All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have become terrified and you will cease to be forever."'" —Ezekiel 28:11-19*

Pay close attention to how the wording changes from the previous passage. Read it again. How does God describe this leader or prince now? What does God say about him? Are these descriptions possible for a human? Or do you think they are to be taken symbolically or metaphorically?

What do you think? Now this leader is described as being in Eden. He was an anointed cherub (a type of angel). He walked among the stones of fire, on the holy mountain of God. To be clear, not every biblical scholar or believer sees this passage as descriptive of Satan and his fall. And it would be foolish to be dogmatic about it. But I see many good reasons to see this prophetic passage as a look into the details of the fall of Satan. If you connect it to other passages, the truth seems to come out clearly.

Take a look at **Isaiah 14:12-19**. This is where we get the name Lucifer from, which is the Latin translation of "star of the morning." This too is a prophetic oracle given as a "taunt against the King of Babylon." But, as in Ezekiel, does the specific subject change in verse 12? Again, not everyone sees this passage as pertaining to Satan, and it would be foolish to be overly dogmatic. But what connections do you see? What do you notice about similar pride and power and beauty?

There are ample texts that refer to Satan, the devil, or one of his many other names or descriptions. But there is not one central place that takes up the teaching of Satan's specifics anywhere in the Scripture. The fruit is thus the work of correlation. For example, Jesus, a

perfectly trustworthy source, may provide some insight when He speaks of Satan's fall in **Luke 10:18**. See also **2 Corinthians 2:11**, **1 Peter 5:8-9**, **Ephesians 6:10-18** and finally **Revelation 12:3-17** (recall that Revelation is apocalyptic literature, which is highly picturesque, emotive and at times symbolic). Read these passages and note as many connections and conclusions as you can. Can you find any other passages that will help continue your study?

Can you see the importance of correlation?

Can you see how the Bible clarifies and confirms itself through correlation?

This is the glorious work of discovering connections. Personally, it is my favorite step in Bible study.

Be free ...

If at any point you fall behind in your daily readings, do not give in to guilt or resignation.

...

Never let yesterday's failure keep you from what God wants to reveal to you today. Just skip ahead and jump back in.

God wants to speak to you right now.

DAY 4

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:50**

“Your Word, O God, revives me. It comforts me in all my trouble.”

...

Today, read **Matthew 1:1-25**.

There are obviously a lot of names in the beginning of this text. You do not have to know each of them (or be able to accurately pronounce them). But read it carefully. While this text is often skipped by readers of the Bible, it is rich with connection. Try to read it a few times, focusing primarily on observation.

What does the first verse provide by way of goal or focus? What names in the list stick out to you? Do you notice any female names among the full list of males? There are four females listed before we get to Mary. Why would Matthew highlight these women? What is connected to their story? Use your reference Bible to track down the stories if you are unfamiliar (see INSIGHTS on how to do that).

What connections are there to be made in the story of Jesus' conception and birth? Note that the name Jesus in Hebrew is similar to Joshua, both of which carry as its root meaning the idea of "rescue" and "salvation." How does Matthew refer to **Isaiah 7**, **Isaiah 8** and **Isaiah 9** (see **Matthew 1:23**), and in what way? Identify as many connections and conclusions as you can.

DAY 5

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:114; 116**

*“You are my hiding place and shield, O God.
I wait for Your Word. Sustain me according
to Your Word, that I may live.”*

...

Let's continue today by reading Jesus' words in
John 5:15-47.

This small speech of Jesus was prompted by a miraculous healing of a lame man on the Sabbath (Saturday for the Jews; a day in which all work was strictly forbidden).

The response, from the religious Jewish leaders, was to plot to kill Jesus. Do not neglect the irony: Jesus healed a man and the response from the leadership was to plot to kill Jesus for doing so. Recall that these Jewish leaders spent most of their time reading, discussing, debating and applying the Old Testament, specifically the first five books of the Old Testament, written by Moses.

What connections can you see in Jesus' response? How does His speech connect to itself in word, phrase or imagery? How do Jesus' words relate to the healing of the man? What does Jesus say about Moses and the Scriptures? Draw as many connections and conclusions as you can.

DAY 6

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:133**

*“Establish my footsteps in Your Word, and do
not let sin have any dominion over me.”*

...

Today, read Peter's speech on the day of Pentecost in
Acts 2:14-36.

By way of context, this was on a special feast day in Jerusalem, so tens of thousands of people would be in the city from all around the country and Middle East, if not more. All of this happened only fifty days after Jesus' crucifixion.

Peter quotes a good amount of the Old Testament in his speech, which would have only lasted a few minutes, spoken as written. How does he use these texts? (See specifically **Joel 2** and **Psalm 16**; use your reference Bible to find specific verses)

What are the original contexts of these Old Testament texts?

How does this help you more fully understand Peter's speech and message? Draw as many connections and conclusions as you can.

WEEK FOUR: COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

1. Share with your group your success and/or frustrations in this Bible study step of connection. What has God shown you this week?
2. What were the major insights you gained as you studied **Genesis 3** and the **Exodus** passages on day 1?
3. As you read the texts from Exodus on the Passover lamb and then the crucifixion of Jesus in John, how did that study help you worship Christ Jesus a bit more for all He has done for you?
4. **Isaiah 52-53** is one of the most powerful Jesus-centered prophecies of the Old Testament. What was the most powerful connection you made there to Jesus' sacrifice?
5. How did this week stretch you in regards to theology? What are the three areas of theology (*out of the 10 discussed in the INSIGHTS section*) that you most struggle with?
6. As you read the genealogy and the words of Jesus in Matthew and John, what connections did you make to the very rich Old Testament context to Jesus' life and ministry? How does this change the way you view Jesus and the Gospels?
7. Peter's speech on Pentecost in **Acts 2** resulted in 3000 people putting their faith in Jesus and being baptized. What was the most surprising connection Peter made in his speech? Share with your group what impacted you the most.

extend your study

If you would like to extend your experience and practice in correlation, here are some excellent texts to study:

Matthew 24-25 • Ephesians • Colossians

Draw connections between Ephesians and Colossians, which were written by Paul about the same time, follow a very similar outline, and have similar content.

WEEK FIVE

05 | Inviting the Heart



WEEK FIVE



05 | Inviting the Heart (*Application*)

My maternal grandfather's name is Michael Swierc. Great Polish last name for a great man. In November 2019, as I write this, he celebrated his 98th birthday. It was only recently that he began sharing stories of his past, specifically stories about his service in the Coast Guard in World War II. His heroism and courage on D-Day, in the waters off of Omaha beach, earned him a Bronze Star for bravery.

When he enlisted for the Coast Guard after Pearl Harbor, he went to basic training and then shipped off to Wisconsin for diesel engine training. He would be a diesel mechanic onboard a seaworthy vessel of sort. I don't believe he had ever left Texas up to that point. After that training he was sent to New York City for even more diesel engine training. I cannot imagine what New York was like for a young Texan in the 1940's. After that it was a big boat to cross the Atlantic.

In England he was assigned to his ship, a small, wooden-hulled boat called a Cutter. They had wooden hulls to keep from setting off the German water mines, which detonated upon contact with a metal hull. This boat was light, fast and maneuverable, perfect for rescue operations and delivery of goods. My grandfather would



be an engine mechanic, hence all the training, and a gunner's mate, when needed. There was only one small problem. After all that diesel engine training, Michael Swierc discovered that the Cutter's engine was powered by gasoline. Totally different. Military operation.

When he tells the story today, he smiles large and laughs from his belly. "*All that training, and all that government money spent training me... all for nothing. Ha.*" It ended up not mattering much. He learned the gasoline engine and the Cutter quickly. He did his job with excellence, survived the war, married his sweetheart, and their second child, a miraculous birth story in itself, is my mother.

Of all my grandfather's many war stories, this one sticks out to me because it is sadly repeated so often in my life still. Probably yours too. We read, study, learn and are trained in Scripture, because that's what good Christians do. But how is it applied?

If you've been in church for a significant amount of time, you've heard more sermons than you can remember. You've heard more truth and biblical exposition than you can recall. The question is how does all of this training, all of these sermons, all the books and all of the podcasts truly change your practical life? What difference does it all make? Is there a separation between knowing and doing? Are you in diesel school but driving a gas-guzzler?

This week we will begin practicing our fourth and final step in good Bible study methods: *application*. Yes, this is actually part of the process. Just like observation, this step is sadly underappreciated and overlooked. Application is the difficult and convicting work of "putting feet" to the Scriptures. After all of your hard work and training in Bible study methods, God

wants the information to make it all the way down into transformation. God created you with both mind and heart. You are soul and hands. You think and you act. God reveals Himself to you in the Word so that you will learn to live more freely, with more holiness, more joy and more impact. God is never satisfied with simple knowledge.

Arriving here in application actually helps you make sense of where you have been in the previous many weeks. Observation really allows the text to speak to you. It curbs your sometimes capricious and unconscious way of interfering with the truth of Scripture. Interpretation furthers this process by using methods and tools that help you to determine the meaning of the text. Correlation further clarifies this process of determining meaning as well as paints a larger picture of theology as you see the character and will of God. Application then translates all of these principles into practice. And, take careful note, no study of the Bible is complete without application.

Consider the earthly ministry of Jesus. While He moved and operated in Israel as a rabbi (Jewish teacher) and with His disciples, His most repeated and abrasive encounters were always with a group of religious leaders called the Pharisees. These men lived their entire life around the Word of God. Every second of the day, and every action of the day, they claimed, was informed directly by the Law of Moses. Yet, Jesus repeatedly said they missed the point. They read the Law, but failed to see the truth. They applied it all wrong. Our application? The Word of God can be applied in many ways, and many of these ways can totally miss the truth of what God intends. Our application of God's Word must not simply be, it must be right. It must be true. It must be what God intends.

The New Testament Book of James, perhaps the earliest book of the New Testament, written by Jesus' earthly half-brother, says something powerful about application:

"This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately

forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world." —**James 1:19-27**

How much application is in this text? How much does this text say about application itself? By the Holy Spirit of God, James says that we are to be true "doers of the Word" and not "merely hearers." He continues to say that this is the road to great blessing and protection. Applying the Scripture is how you live the greatest life this side of heaven.

My friend, let me pause to make one thing very clear. As you work in application, you will be tempted to generalize. It is much more comfortable to "apply" God's Word to life in general or an average person or even a specific person in your life than it is to apply the Word to your heart. You must be aware of this temptation and fight it. Application must always focus on your life first. God wants to talk to you about you. Don't miss that. If you do, you might end up like a Pharisee.

One of my good friends developed the habit of studying his Bible with a journal and two different color pens, one red and one blue. The blue pen is used for the first three steps of Bible study methods. His seminary training and immense ministry experience has helped him excel in these areas. He records a lot in his journal in blue. The red pen is used to record and work on application. At the end of his study time, the page or pages before him can be easily discerned. Was he focused entirely on meaning in blue ink? If there is too little red ink, he sits back down to meditate further and prayerfully work out true application. His goal is life change, not simply knowledge. Perhaps you know where to find two different color pens.

INSIGHTS: What to Look For in Application

In *Sit With Me Volume 1*, we integrated Rick Warren's memorably silly acronym S.P.A.C.E.P.E.T.S. as an application help.⁴ Each letter reminds us of a question to ask ourselves as we study God's Word. Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An attitude to change? A command to obey? An example to follow? Is there a prayer to pray? Is there an error to avoid? Is there a truth to believe? Is there something to praise God for?

While these are excellent questions, let me probe deeper by offering several more questions to ask as you work through the steps of Bible study on a section in God's Word. Remember, no text of Scripture is fully studied until it connects to Jesus and affects your practical life. Think about these seven things in application:

1. **YOUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST:** Only Your Heavenly Father gets to say who you are, even though the world and the devil are also claiming to inform your identity. What does this text of Scripture say about who you are in Jesus Christ? How does this change your perspective?
2. **YOUR RELATIONSHIPS:** What is the current state of your key, close relationships (think parents, kids, spouse, best friends, co-workers, etc.)? Is this text of Scripture asking or commanding you to operate differently in these relationships?
3. **YOUR WORSHIP:** What might this text of Scripture reveal about your heart for God, your worship of God, your obedience to God, your consistency and rhythm in God's Word, etc.? The Scriptures constantly take up the subject of worship.
4. **YOUR THOUGHT LIFE:** What are you thinking about? How does this Scripture challenge your thought life when it comes to jealousy, distraction, pride, lust, greed, anger, depression, loneliness, bitterness or other emotions or decisions that largely begin in our mind and heart?
5. **YOUR ACTIONS AND WORDS:** This is what we think about most when it comes to application. What does this Scripture passage reveal about God's will for your actions (think the things you do and the things you don't do) and your words?

6. **YOUR RESPONSES:** This one is a closer look at relationships and actions/words. How do you respond to the people around you, even strangers? What does this Scripture ask of you when it comes to your responses, reactions, answers and retaliations?

7. **YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND CALLING:** God has given you at least one special gift through the work of His Holy Spirit, possibly several. In these gifts He has prepared a special way for you to bless the church and bring light to a dark world. How does this Scripture clarify or reinforce these gifts and calling?

These seven realms of application questions will help you focus your study and meditation on Scripture to maximum impact on your life. Remember, you are sitting with Jesus in order to be like Jesus. This is the goal. Application is the way.

**No text of Scripture
is fully studied
until it connects
to Jesus and
affects your
practical life.**

WEEK FIVE

This week, work to commit this Scripture to memory. This is a powerful way to constantly engage God's Word and recall it in times of need. Consider writing it in your journal, on a card or a sticky note and placing it somewhere prominent. Read it and work on it each day this week.

Tip: Take a photo of the verse and save it as your phone wallpaper.

MEMORY VERSE:

*"Teach me Your way,
O Lord;
I will walk in
Your truth;
Unite my heart to
fear Your name."*

Psalm 86:11

DAY 1

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:18**

*"Open my eyes, that I may behold
wonderful things from Your Word."*

...

Today, you will return to a passage you studied a couple of weeks ago: **Proverbs 1:1-7**.

Take time to read this passage again slowly, referring to any notes you took in observation and interpretation.

Your task today is to tune your eyes and heart to read this text with application in mind. You have already done the first couple of steps. Now try to lay this text over your life, as it were. What do you see that is in alignment? What do you notice that sticks out?

This is a private study, so it does not help you to be self-protective, justifying, excusing or even optimistic about your thoughts and actions. You must be honest. You must be vulnerable. And you must ask God for spiritual insight into your own heart.

Once you've read through **Proverbs 1:1-7**, work to write down any and all personal applications you can see. It doesn't matter how small or how large they are, collect as many as you can. The questions above in INSIGHTS will help. After you've made it through these verses, continue in **verses 8-19**.

Example: I would be a fool if I disregard the instruction of the Lord. How might I be acting or living foolishly?

DAY 2

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:35**

*“Make me walk in the path of Your Word,
for that is where my happiness is found.”*

...

As you did yesterday, today you will return to a passage you have previously studied: **Matthew 4:1-11**.

Take time to read this passage again slowly, referring to any notes you took in observation and interpretation.

Continue to tune your eyes and heart to personal application. This is, as you know, an incredible story of Jesus. There is much to learn and much to apply in this text. You’ve already done much of the hard work in the first two steps. Look up any references you feel are necessary to connect the text, but work hard on application. Again, the questions above in INSIGHTS will help.

In your journal or in a new Word document, write down as many applications for yourself as you can see.

Example: Temptation by the devil will come to me as well, as a follower of Jesus. What can I learn from Jesus about how to respond?

DAY 3

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:130; 105**

*“The unfolding of Your Word gives light. Let Your
Word be a lamp to my feet, a light to my path.”*

...

Today, you will revisit **Luke 15**, a text you studied earlier. Take time to reread the whole chapter, recalling the three parables, the context and all of the notes you took in observation and interpretation.

When it comes to application of this narrative text, it will greatly help if you place yourself in the shoes of several characters. Consider Jesus, the tax collectors and sinners, and even the Pharisees. Consider also the shepherd and the lost sheep, the woman, the Father, the younger son and the older son. There is great truth and application to be found in each angle, and there is even more than that.

Open your journal or a Word document and organize your application by character. Remembering all the work you did in observation and interpretation, remembering Jesus’ point and lesson, what might you learn from each individual aspect of these parables? Write down as many as you can. This will take some time.

Think. Pray. Consider.

MIDWEEK PRACTICE

Let's look at a familiar text together. **Ephesians 5:15** and following says this:

"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

And **masters**, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

—Ephesians 5:15-6:9

First, by way of context, Ephesians is an epistle of Paul, which means that it is based largely in argument and it has a specific point in mind. The first three chapters of Ephesians focus on salvation (justification by faith). The second half, chapters four through six, focus on sanctification (discipleship and spiritual growth). This is signaled by use of the word “walk,” as seen in the transition verse, **4:1**: “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called...”

The text above is squarely in the second half of the book; therefore, it is focused primarily on application. This section of Scripture is called a *haustafel* in German, which means “household code.” It obviously applies to members of the home, husbands, wives, parents, children, and slaves and masters, which were common in the Roman Empire of this time and were considerably different than what we experienced in England and America’s more recent past.

As you look at the text, do not forget the order of the steps of good Bible study. You must always first stop to look (observation). Only then

**As you look at
the text, do
not forget the
order of the
steps of good
Bible study.**

do you move to matters of meaning (interpretation). Consider connection and theology (correlation), and then move to application. If you do the first steps thoroughly, discerning application will be much easier.

Look at the text again. What does the introductory paragraph provide to prepare us for application in home roles? This section sets up what comes after. Notice there are reasons and specific actions given. Note these well and think about them. Take any notes necessary on these verses.

Wives are then mentioned first. Whether you are a woman or not, married or not, these verses are still powerfully relevant. Can you see why? There is great application here. What you will see, as you linger and labor, is that the marriage role—one husband plus one wife for one lifetime—is the primary image of the Gospel and God’s committed love for you. Notice how Paul relates the wife’s response to Christ and the church. What is the comparison? Why?

Next are husbands. Notice how much real estate the husbands get here compared to wives. Whether you are a man or not, a husband or not, there is great application here. First, identify the verbs and action words. Next, see the continuing comparison between a husband’s actions and the action of Christ for the church. **Genesis 2:24** is quoted. Make sure you understand why Paul does so and what his point is. There is great responsibility for godly husbands because they represent Christ’s love for the church as they love their wives.

Next are children. One of the ten commandments is quoted here from **Exodus 20:12**. Make sure you understand Paul’s point in this reference, as it is critical for his application to children.

Fathers get one verse, but it is loaded with application. Do not rush it here, parents.

Then we get to slaves and masters. In our culture this can be transferred to boss and employee or work team rather easily. Note that slaves get much more space than masters, as the focus here is on their heart and its connection to Jesus. For any employee anywhere, there is a gold mine of hard application here.

Working through a text in this manner, slowly and methodically, with patience and prayer, with a commitment to the chronological steps of Bible study, will release waves and waves of grace, glory and purpose into your life. This is the fruit of Bible study. Sit with Jesus and feast.



pause & pray...

Take a moment to write a prayer to God. Recall all that He has revealed to you in your study of His Word and express your gratitude. Tell Him what your hopes are for this study and ask Him to reveal Himself even more.

Be free ...

If at any point you fall behind in your daily readings, do not give in to guilt or resignation.

...

Never let yesterday's failure keep you from what God wants to reveal to you today. Just skip ahead and jump back in.

God wants to speak to you right now.

DAY 4

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:50**

“Your Word, O God, revives me. It comforts me in all my trouble.”

...

Today, you will go to a new text in the Old Testament. **Job 40:1-14.**

This book is both narrative and wisdom literature. It is ancient. The story is of a real man from history, Job. God allowed Satan to cause great suffering in Job's life, and the main part of the book relates Job's difficulty understanding why. In the course of many speeches, Job finally accuses God of wrong and demands a meeting with God to plead his case. God responds in frightful power in Chapter 38. This text is also God's response. Read it through twice.

Work through observation, interpretation and connection first. Do not rush it. Sit with God in unhurried time. Ask Him to reveal truth. When it comes to application, what do you see? What intersects and impacts you personally? What do you see in God's speech? What do you see in Job's response?

Finally, read **Job 42:1-6**. This is Job's final speech to God. It is short, blunt and humble. It comes after God demonstrates his supreme power in a way Job can see and understand; in powerful animals. If God wisely manages these creatures, He suggests by comparison, that righteous management of Job's life is also available to Him.

What application do you see in this text? Write down as many as you can.

DAY 5

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:114; 116**

*“You are my hiding place and shield, O God.
I wait for Your Word. Sustain me according
to Your Word, that I may live.”*

...

Find and read **Romans 14:1-15:7**.

This is a long text with a simple and powerful point. It is all about relationships within the Body of Christ, the church.

Pay close attention to the “weaker” brother and the “stronger” brother.

What is Paul’s point?

How might you apply it in relationships?

Write down as many applications for yourself as possible.
Remember to be personal, not general.

DAY 6

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:133**

*“Establish my footsteps in Your Word, and do
not let sin have any dominion over me.”*

...

Today, read **2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15**.

This is another long text but the first part (**8:1-9:5**) is largely narrative. In it Paul is relaying to the young and troubled church in Corinth how he has treated, responded and handled financial needs and gifts. It gives background insight to much of what is recorded in the Book of Acts. Work to see this text and interpret it. It sets up the portion that is densely concerned with application.

Now focus on **9:6-15**. How does this text intersect the way you spend your money?

How does it impact the way you worry about money?

What other biblical truths about finances are found here?

This text is a wealth (pun intended) of applied truth. Record as many as you can.

Take your time. Pray. Think.

INSIGHTS: Five Bad Trades in Application

(Hendricks, *Living By the Book*)

1 We substitute interpretation for application.

It is easy to settle for knowledge rather than experience. That's an outrage because according to the Bible, to know and not to do is not to know at all. From cover to cover the Bible teaches that the moment you know God's truth, the ball is in your court; you are responsible for putting it into action. That is why Jesus said that to whom much has been given, much will be required (**Matthew 13:12; Luke 12:48**). James expresses it this way, "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and does not do it, sins." In God's mind, knowledge without obedience is sin.

2 We substitute superficial obedience for substantive life change.

We have a tendency to apply biblical truth to areas where we are already applying it, not to new areas where we are not applying it. The result is no noticeable change in our lives.

3 We substitute rationalization for repentance.

Most of us have a built-in early-warning system against spiritual change. The moment that truth gets too close, too convicting, an alarm goes off, and we start to defend ourselves. Our favorite strategy is to rationalize sin instead of repenting of it.

4 We substitute an emotional experience for a volitional decision.

When we study God's Word, we emote under impact but we make no real change. There is nothing wrong with responding emotionally to spiritual truth, but if that is our only response and we go on our way without altering our behavior in the slightest, then our spirituality boils down to nothing more than a vapid emotional experience. We must make a volitional decision in response to what we hear God saying - that is where real life change begins in the will.

5

We substitute communication for transformation.

We talk the talk, but we do not walk the walk. We think that if we can speak eloquently or convincingly about a point of Scripture, we are covered. We are off the hook. We have caused others to believe that we have got that biblical truth down, but God is not fooled. He knows our hearts. Moreover, He knows our true behavior. That is why He told Samuel, “God sees not as man sees, for man looks at (and listens to) the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at (and listens to) the heart” (1 **Samuel 16:7**). The author of Hebrews likens the Word to a razor-sharp sword that can pierce deep inside of us, where “it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (**Hebrews 4:12**). That is the level at which transformation takes place. Transformation cannot take place if we evade the convicting stab of Scripture by hiding behind our speech.

05

Bad Trades in Application

WEEK FIVE: COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

1. Why would the Psalmist, in the memory verse for this week, ask God to “unite my heart”? What does this imply? What might this imply for your heart?
2. What did you see or consider about the role of humility in your life from your study of **Proverbs 1**?
3. What impacted you most about Jesus’ response to Satan’s temptation? What was your most insightful personal application? Share with your group.
4. Based on your previous work in **Luke 15**, what specific personal applications did you uncover? Do you relate more to the older brother or the younger brother in the last parable? Why?
5. How did our work in **Ephesians 5** help you in the specific roles of your life? Share these with your group.
6. Identify the top three things you discovered about inter-church relationships from **Romans 14** and share them with your group.
7. Finances and spending are not easy topics for most people. But God’s Word has a lot to say on the subject. What was the most challenging application point you discovered in **2 Corinthians**? Share it with your group.

extend your study

If you would like to extend your experience and practice in application,
here are some excellent texts to study:

Proverbs 1-9 • Matthew 23:1-39 • Luke 10:1-24 • John 21 • 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
Romans 12:9-21 • Galatians 5:13-15, 5:25-6:6 • Ephesians 4:1-6, 4:25-32
Colossians 3:12-17 • 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 • James 5:7-20

WEEK SIX

06 | Holding the Whole



WEEK SIX



06 | Holding the Whole (*Synthesis*)

I grew up in love with LEGO. Back in the 1970's, the designs and motifs were limited, but that did not stop me. I was constantly chasing the perfect starship, symmetrical, sleek and awesome. When my son, Andrew, was born I began the indoctrination process as soon as possible. DUPLO LEGO are safe and easy. Set the hook. Once he graduated to "normal" LEGO I was probably more excited than he was. Every chance we got, for every birthday and Christmas or special surprise, he would get LEGO as a gift. He loved it. Still does. His room is filled with pristine models and amazingly intricate LEGO machines, miles better than even the best I ever made as a kid.

Besides the design and practically infinite array of possibilities from the toy itself, what fascinates me about LEGO, which has won "toy of the year" a crazy number of times, is the instructions that accompany each boxed set. They, too, have evolved over the years. As they are now, LEGO instructions are a marvel. Yes, I'm talking about the instructions. For large scale, technical builds, these instructions manage to describe each step in a dizzying process without using a single word.

Did you hear that? No words. LEGO instructions rely on simple symbols and numbers, that is it. Mammoth



machines can be built with tiny parts from an instruction manual the size of a phone book, but through every page you will find only simple numbers and symbols. In all my years of participation, I have yet to find a set with a single piece missing, an instruction manual with a mistake, or a single instruction that was difficult to interpret.

But nobody buys a LEGO set for the instructions. In fact, the genius behind the toy are the two stages of the LEGO set: *construction* and *play*. In fact, the word LEGO is a derivation of the Danish phrase “play well.” But in order to actually “play” with your LEGO Millennium Falcon, you first have to construct it, which is, of course, part of the fun. Some kids take the model apart again just so they can rebuild it. My son has never been that kid.

In a strange way, methodical Bible study is like LEGO. You first learn the “steps” or “instructions” involved in building your framework of understanding, which themselves are a major part of the fun and experience. Then you are set free to enjoy the playful process of reading God’s Word for maximum effect and impact. In fact, just like with LEGO, the marvel and joy of the end result is magnified by the enjoyment of the process. It is a magnificent and unexpected gift: God reveals Himself in the meaning of the text, and He reveals Himself in the journey to discover that meaning.

I can easily recall the drastic change in my attitude and enjoyment of God’s Word while I was in college. Before I had a relationship with Jesus, the Bible was interesting but in a remote way. It was both dull and sharp, in all the wrong ways. But immediately after I trusted in Jesus, because I had the Holy Spirit then living inside of me, God’s Word was wholly new. It leapt off the page. It connected to my heart, my situation, my question, my need. In turn

it would bring tears to my eyes and a deep smile to my soul. In those early days, I would find that sometimes three hours would go by as I poured over the Scripture, addicted to the joy and light I found there.

In the more than 25 years since then, I have gone through seasons of richness and dryness. I have both struggled with discipline and deeply enjoyed the fruit of it. But there has been no other resource or relationship more consistent, more life-giving and more protectively revelational than sitting with Jesus in God's Word. This is my prayer for you. That through this study, you gain experience in the tools that help you fully enjoy all of the glory and truth God wants to give you.

This week you will work on employing all of the steps you've learned: observation, interpretation, correlation and application on some key biblical texts. You will bring them all together, enjoy their interplay and marvel at what God reveals. Hopefully, this will be the course of the rest of your life.



pause & pray...

Take a moment to write a prayer to God. Recall all that He has revealed to you in your study of His Word and express your gratitude. Tell Him what your hopes are for this study and ask Him to reveal Himself even more.

WEEK SIX

This week, work to commit this Scripture to memory. This is a powerful way to constantly engage God's Word and recall it in times of need. Consider writing it in your journal, on a card or a sticky note and placing it somewhere prominent. Read it and work on it each day this week.

Tip: Take a photo of the verse and save it as your phone wallpaper.

MEMORY VERSE:

*"The word
of the LORD
is tested;
He is a shield to all
who take refuge in Him."*

2 Samuel 22:31

DAY 1

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:18**

*"Open my eyes, that I may behold
wonderful things from Your Word."*

...

Today you will begin reading the first part of Jesus' most famous sermon, what is called the Sermon on the Mount.

Read **Matthew 5**.

Take the necessary time to read these 48 verses through, then through again. The first question is, what do you see? Take time to observe. Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 2.

Only then do you ask the second question, what does it mean? This will take some time and may require some helpful tools. Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 3.

Is there anything to connect or correlate? What is revealed about the ten aspects of theology? Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 4.

Finally, you will recall that no study of God's Word is complete without application. You are seeking revelation and transformation. Revisit the notes and questions in Chapter 5.

Now, dive in. Enjoy. Sit with Jesus.

Pray and ask God to reveal Himself.

DAY 2

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:35**

*“Make me walk in the path of Your Word,
for that is where my happiness is found.”*

...

Today, continue what you began yesterday by reading
Matthew 6.

Take the necessary time to read these 34 verses through, then
through again. The first question is, what do you see? Take
time to observe. Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 2.

Only then do you ask the second question, what does it mean?
This will take some time and may require some helpful tools.
Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 3.

Is there anything to connect or correlate? What is revealed
about the ten aspects of theology? Revisit the questions and
notes in Chapter 4.

Finally, you will recall that no study of God's Word is com-
plete without application. You are seeking revelation and
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Now, dive in. Enjoy. Sit with Jesus.

Pray and ask God to reveal Himself.

DAY 3

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:130; 105**

*“The unfolding of Your Word gives light. Let Your
Word be a lamp to my feet, a light to my path.”*

...

Today, continue what you've started by finishing Jesus'
sermon in **Matthew 7**.

Take the necessary time to read these 29 verses through,
then through again. The first question is, what do you see?
Take time to observe. Revisit the questions and notes in
Chapter 2.

Only then do you ask the second question, what does it
mean? This will take some time and may require some
helpful tools. Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 3.

Is there anything to connect or correlate? What is revealed
about the ten aspects of theology? Revisit the questions
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transformation. Revisit the notes and questions in Chapter 5.

Now, dive in. Enjoy. Sit with Jesus.

Pray and ask God to reveal Himself.

Be free ...

If at any point you fall behind in your daily readings, do not give in to guilt or resignation.

...

Never let yesterday's failure keep you from what God wants to reveal to you today. Just skip ahead and jump back in.

God wants to speak to you right now.

DAY 4

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:50**

“Your Word, O God, revives me. It comforts me in all my trouble.”

...

For the next few days you will read perhaps the very last letter that the Apostle Paul wrote. Today read **2 Timothy 1 and 2**.

Take the necessary time to read these verses through, then through again. The first question is, what do you see? Take time to observe. Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 2.

Only then do you ask the second question, what does it mean? This will take some time and may require some helpful tools. Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 3.

Is there anything to connect or correlate? What is revealed about the ten aspects of theology? Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 4.

Finally, you will recall that no study of God's Word is complete without application. You are seeking revelation and transformation. Revisit the notes and questions in Chapter 5.

Now, dive in. Enjoy. Sit with Jesus.

Pray and ask God to reveal Himself.

DAY 5

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:114; 116**

*“You are my hiding place and shield, O God.
I wait for Your Word. Sustain me according
to Your Word, that I may live.”*

...

Today, continue by reading **2 Timothy 3**.

Take the necessary time to read these verses through, then through again. The first question is, what do you see? Take time to observe. Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 2.

Only then do you ask the second question, what does it mean? This will take some time and may require some helpful tools. Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 3.

Is there anything to connect or correlate? What is revealed about the ten aspects of theology? Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 4.

Finally, you will recall that no study of God’s Word is complete without application. You are seeking revelation and transformation. Revisit the notes and questions in Chapter 5.

Now, dive in. Enjoy. Sit with Jesus.

Pray and ask God to reveal Himself.

DAY 6

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:133**

*“Establish my footsteps in Your Word, and do
not let sin have any dominion over me.”*

...

Finish this week strongly by reading the powerful message of **2 Timothy 4**.

Take the necessary time to read these verses through, then through again. The first question, is what do you see? Take time to observe. Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 2.

Only then do you ask the second question, what does it mean? This will take some time and may require some helpful tools. Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 3.

Is there anything to connect or correlate? What is revealed about the ten aspects of theology? Revisit the questions and notes in Chapter 4.

Finally, you will recall that no study of God’s Word is complete without application. You are seeking revelation and transformation. Revisit the notes and questions in Chapter 5.

Now, dive in. Enjoy. Sit with Jesus.

Pray and ask God to reveal Himself.

WEEK SIX: COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

1. What was the most enjoyable element of your study and reading this week? Share with your group.
2. What was the hardest part about bringing all of the four steps you've learned together? Share with your group.
3. When you read and studied Jesus' sermon, what were the critical aspects of the context of the passage?
4. How would you restate the full sermon (chapters 5-7) in just a few sentences of your own words? Discuss it through with your group and come to some conclusions together.
5. Share three of the key applications of Jesus' message that God impressed upon your heart.
6. Second Timothy is perhaps the "last will and testament" of the Apostle Paul, or at least the closest to it that we have. Did you discern a certain emotion or passion that fit this context? How and where?
7. What were the critical aspects of theology that you discovered in this letter? What did God reveal to you about Himself as you studied **2 Timothy**?

WEEK SEVEN

07 | Charting the Next Course



WEEK SEVEN

07 | Charting the Next Course

For several weeks now you have been pursuing an incredible goal. Whether you realized it or not, you have been learning some of the key practices of spiritual thriving. You are no longer scantily nourished on sporadic, regurgitated meals. You are foraging and hunting for yourself, out of the bountiful field God has supplied in His Word. You are discerning between the most delicate, delicious and flavorful of morsels. You are feasting yourself and you've begun to realize how you can better share this incredible food with others. Hopefully, your heart is alive. Your soul is both fully satisfied and hungry for more. You feel close to Your Father in Heaven. You are beginning to hear His voice.

I pray you continue. God wants you to continue. The way has been made. There is a road before you. How will you proceed?

Allow me to describe several good options for charting your next course. But before I do so, remember that God's Word is living and active. There is no part of it, not a line or word, that is shallow in meaning or power. Anywhere and everywhere you go in the Scripture God will fulfill His promise to *"grant to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence"* (**2 Peter 1:3**).



The first option, always a winner, is to linger in the life of Jesus. Any of the first four books of the New Testament, the gospels, would be a great choice. But I would call your attention to **the Gospel of Mark**, the second gospel. There are many that think it was the first gospel penned. It is the eyewitness account of Peter, one of Jesus' best friends, written down by a man named John Mark, hence the title. It has a great pace, excitement and life to it. Take your time and enjoy. Work the four steps of Bible study methods on one paragraph at a time.

Another option is the very first book of the entire Bible, **Genesis**. This, of course, is God's record, revealed to and written by Moses, of the beginning of all things: the world, people, marriage, sin, sacrifice, death, civilization, faith and the nation of Israel. Work the steps of Bible study methods one episode at a time. Linger in it. God wants to speak to you.

Consider also, perhaps Paul's greatest work, **the Book of Romans**. This epistle is argument based and contains some of the clearest, most profound theological significance in all of the New Testament. Recall all of the four steps you've learned and bring them to bear one paragraph at a time.

Finally, attached at the end of this book is a plan to read through all of God's Word in one year. This plan takes you on a chronological path, reading in just one place at a time. It is a powerful practice, especially if you want to gain or regain a grasp of the breadth and depth of God's Word as a whole. You can start at any time. The chart will help you set your course.

Before you choose, consider spending a moment in prayer. Ask God to direct your steps. Take inventory of your heart and current life situation. What do you need? What are you struggling with in particular? What do you want to investigate? All of these prayers and questions are important.

As a father of two young adults, I can say unequivocally, I don't particularly care why my kids want to be close to me. I just want them close. It can be to just sit with me. I may be asked to rub some aching shoulders. It can be to ask me a question. It can be to tell me a story. They may draw near because they need or want something. Whatever the reason, in my heart of hearts, I simply enjoy being near. I deeply enjoy that they want to be near to me.

Your Heavenly Father has a far greater, more powerful love than even the best human father. He wants to be near you. He wants you to be near Him. All of this and more is true because of God's great grace towards you. God's grace is that indescribable gift made fully possible by the finished work of Jesus your Savior. And the life-giving floodgates of grace are ready to be opened in your life. God asks, "Will you sit with Me?"

Linger over the beautiful words penned by John Lynch, Bill Thrall and Bruce McNicol in *Trust For Today*.⁵ They write as if God Himself is speaking and writing directly to you.



Dear Reader,

It's me, God. Before this world began, this moment with you was planned - by Me, God. I saw it and created it. Everything. That is unless you're sitting in a motel. I lay no claim to that fake oil painting and its frame.

Anyway, here we are. Eternity comes into real time in a page from a devotional book. I am now inhabiting this moment as you are reading these words. I am right here—Me, God.

And so before you do what you do, I want you to know this: I am delighted with you. I am fully invested in and working in your life every single moment. I've been up ahead and I see what we will get to do and who you will mature into. And I am smiling. That's all. I just wanted you to know. I love you.

Sincerely, God



pause & pray...

Take a moment to write a prayer to God. Recall all that He has revealed to you in your study of His Word and express your gratitude. Tell Him what your hopes are for this study and ask Him to reveal Himself even more.

WEEK SEVEN

This week, work to commit this Scripture to memory. This is a powerful way to constantly engage God's Word and recall it in times of need. Consider writing it in your journal, on a card or a sticky note and placing it somewhere prominent. Read it and work on it each day this week.

Tip: Take a photo of the verse and save it as your phone wallpaper.

MEMORY VERSE:

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16-17

DAY 1

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:18**

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your Word."

...

What is your plan for today and tomorrow?

What will you read?

What do you see?

What does it mean?

What are the connections?

How does it affect your heart?

God is inviting you to *Sit With Him*.

DAY 2

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:35**

*“Make me walk in the path of Your Word,
for that is where my happiness is found.”*

...

What is your plan for today and tomorrow?

What will you read?

What do you see?

What does it mean?

What are the connections?

How does it affect your heart?

God is inviting you to *Sit With Him*.

DAY 3

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:130; 105**

*“The unfolding of Your Word gives light. Let Your
Word be a lamp to my feet, a light to my path.”*

...

What is your plan for today and tomorrow?

What will you read?

What do you see?

What does it mean?

What are the connections?

How does it affect your heart?

God is inviting you to *Sit With Him*.

Be free ...

If at any point you fall behind in your daily readings, do not give in to guilt or resignation.

...

Never let yesterday's failure keep you from what God wants to reveal to you today. Just skip ahead and jump back in.

God wants to speak to you right now.

DAY 4

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God. Include this prayer from **Psalms 119:50**

“Your Word, O God, revives me. It comforts me in all my trouble.”

...

What is your plan for today and tomorrow?

What will you read?

What do you see?

What does it mean?

What are the connections?

How does it affect your heart?

God is inviting you to *Sit With Him*.

DAY 5

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:114; 116**

*“You are my hiding place and shield, O God.
I wait for Your Word. Sustain me according
to Your Word, that I may live.”*

...

What is your plan for today and tomorrow?

What will you read?

What do you see?

What does it mean?

What are the connections?

How does it affect your heart?

God is inviting you to *Sit With Him*.

DAY 6

Begin with an honest and unhurried time in prayer to God.
Include this prayer from **Psalm 119:133**

*“Establish my footsteps in Your Word, and do
not let sin have any dominion over me.”*

...

What is your plan for today and tomorrow?

What will you read?

What do you see?

What does it mean?

What are the connections?

How does it affect your heart?

God is inviting you to *Sit With Him*.

One more thing...

No journey of faith in Jesus Christ should be solitary. God designed you to live in community and He has built His church on the earth to provide that life-giving community. The church is a family of believers, followers of Jesus, who walk together in unity, support, service and worship.

Sit With Me Volume 2 was written out of the family life of Faith Bible Church in The Woodlands, Texas. If you are in this area of Texas and do not have a church home, consider joining our family. We would love to have you. Wherever you are, please follow God's design and become an engaged member of a local church that honors Jesus Christ in grace and truth, teaches God's Word and lives out the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:18-20**).

You can find out more about Faith Bible Church, its ministries and resources at: faithbibleonline.org

*ONE-YEAR
CHRONOLOGICAL*
Bible Reading Plan



ONE-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL Bible Reading Plan

One of the best ways to become more familiar with the Bible as a whole is to commit to read it through in one year. This simple plan follows the timeline of the Bible chronologically and does so in only six days a week. Start at any time and keep your progress on the chart below. You will not regret it.

WEEK 1

- DAY 1:** Genesis 1-2
- DAY 2:** John 1:1-3, Psalms 8; 104
- DAY 3:** Genesis 3-5
- DAY 4:** Genesis 6-7
- DAY 5:** Genesis 8-9, Psalm 12
- DAY 6:** Genesis 10-11

WEEK 2

- DAY 1:** Genesis 12-13
- DAY 2:** Genesis 14-16
- DAY 3:** Genesis 17-19
- DAY 4:** Genesis 20-23
- DAY 5:** Genesis 24-26
- DAY 6:** Genesis 27-29

WEEK 3

- DAY 1:** Genesis 30-33
- DAY 2:** Genesis 34-37
- DAY 3:** Genesis 38-40
- DAY 4:** Genesis 41-43
- DAY 5:** Genesis 44-46
- DAY 6:** Genesis 47-50

WEEK 4

- DAY 1:** Job 1-5
- DAY 2:** Job 6-9
- DAY 3:** Job 10-13
- DAY 4:** Job 14-17
- DAY 5:** Job 18-21
- DAY 6:** Job 22-24

WEEK 5

- DAY 1:** Job 25-28
- DAY 2:** Job 29-32
- DAY 3:** Job 33-36
- DAY 4:** Job 37:1–40:5, Psalm 19
- DAY 5:** 40:6–42:17, Psalm 29
- DAY 6:** Exodus 1-4

WEEK 6

- DAY 1:** Exodus 5-9
- DAY 2:** Exodus 10-13
- DAY 3:** Exodus 14-18
- DAY 4:** Exodus 19-21
- DAY 5:** Exodus 22-24
- DAY 6:** Exodus 25-28

WEEK 7

- DAY 1:** Exodus 29-32
- DAY 2:** Exodus 33-36
- DAY 3:** Exodus 37-40
- DAY 4:** Leviticus 1-4
- DAY 5:** Leviticus 5-7
- DAY 6:** Leviticus 8-10

WEEK 8

- DAY 1:** Leviticus 11-14
- DAY 2:** Leviticus 15-18
- DAY 3:** Leviticus 19-22
- DAY 4:** Leviticus 23-25
- DAY 5:** Leviticus 26-27, Numbers 1-2
- DAY 6:** Numbers 3-5

WEEK 9

- **DAY 1:** Numbers 6-9
- **DAY 2:** Numbers 10-13, Psalm 90
- **DAY 3:** Numbers 14-16, Psalm 95
- **DAY 4:** Numbers 17-20
- **DAY 5:** Numbers 21-24
- **DAY 6:** Numbers 25-28

WEEK 10

- **DAY 1:** Numbers 29-32
- **DAY 2:** Numbers 33-36
- **DAY 3:** Deuteronomy 1-3
- **DAY 4:** Deuteronomy 4-7
- **DAY 5:** Deuteronomy 8-11
- **DAY 6:** Deuteronomy 12-15

WEEK 11

- **DAY 1:** Deuteronomy 16-19
- **DAY 2:** Deuteronomy 20-23
- **DAY 3:** Deuteronomy 24-27
- **DAY 4:** Deuteronomy 28-30
- **DAY 5:** Deuteronomy 31-34
- **DAY 6:** Joshua 1-2, Psalm 105

WEEK 12

- **DAY 1:** Joshua 3-6
- **DAY 2:** Joshua 7-10
- **DAY 3:** Joshua 11-14
- **DAY 4:** Joshua 15-18
- **DAY 5:** Joshua 19-22
- **DAY 6:** Joshua 23-24, Judges 1

WEEK 13

- **DAY 1:** Judges 2-5
- **DAY 2:** Judges 6-9
- **DAY 3:** Judges 10-13
- **DAY 4:** Judges 14-18
- **DAY 5:** Judges 19-21
- **DAY 6:** Ruth 1-4

WEEK 14

- **DAY 1:** 1 Samuel 1-3
- **DAY 2:** 1 Samuel 4-8
- **DAY 3:** 1 Samuel 9-12
- **DAY 4:** 1 Samuel 13-16
- **DAY 5:** 1 Samuel 17-20, Psalm 59
- **DAY 6:** 1 Samuel 21-24, Psalm 91

WEEK 15

- **DAY 1:** Psalms 7; 27; 31; 34; 52
- **DAY 2:** Psalms 56; 120; 140-142
- **DAY 3:** 1 Samuel 25-27, Psalms 17; 73
- **DAY 4:** Psalms 18; 35; 54; 63
- **DAY 5:** 1 Samuel 28-31, 1 Chronicles 10
- **DAY 6:** Psalms 121; 123-125; 128-130

WEEK 16

- **DAY 1:** 2 Samuel 1-4
- **DAY 2:** Psalms 6; 9; 10; 14; 16; 21
- **DAY 3:** 1 Chronicles 1-2, Psalms 43; 44
- **DAY 4:** Psalms 49; 84; 85; 87
- **DAY 5:** 1 Chronicles 3-5
- **DAY 6:** 1 Chronicles 6, Psalms 36; 39; 77; 78

WEEK 17

- **DAY 1:** Psalms 81; 88; 92; 93
- **DAY 2:** 1 Chronicles 7-9
- **DAY 3:** 2 Samuel 5:1-10, 1 Chronicles 11; 12, Psalm 133
- **DAY 4:** 2 Samuel 5:11-6:23, 1 Chronicles 13-16
- **DAY 5:** Psalms 15; 23-25; 47
- **DAY 6:** Psalms 89; 96; 100; 101; 107

WEEK 18

- **DAY 1:** 2 Samuel 7, 1 Chronicles 17, Psalms 1-2; 33; 127, 132
- **DAY 2:** 2 Samuel 8-9, 1 Chronicles 18
- **DAY 3:** 2 Samuel 10, 1 Chronicles 19, Psalms 20; 53; 60; 75
- **DAY 4:** Psalms 65-67; 69; 70
- **DAY 5:** 2 Samuel 11-12, 1 Chronicles 20, Psalm 51
- **DAY 6:** Psalms 32; 86; 102; 103; 122

WEEK 19

- **DAY 1:** 2 Samuel 13-15
- **DAY 2:** Psalms 3; 4; 13; 28; 55
- **DAY 3:** 2 Samuel 16-18
- **DAY 4:** Psalms 26; 40; 41; 58; 61; 62; 64
- **DAY 5:** 2 Samuel 19-21; Psalms 5; 38; 42
- **DAY 6:** 2 Samuel 22-23, Psalm 57

WEEK 20

- **DAY 1:** Psalms 97-99
- **DAY 2:** 2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21; 22, Psalm 30
- **DAY 3:** Psalms 108; 109
- **DAY 4:** 1 Chronicles 23-26
- **DAY 5:** Psalms 131; 138; 139; 143-145
- **DAY 6:** 1 Chronicles 27-29, Psalm 68

WEEK 21

- **DAY 1:** Psalms 111-118
- **DAY 2:** 1 Kings 1-2, Psalms 37; 71; 94
- **DAY 3:** Psalm 119:1-88
- **DAY 4:** 1 Kings 3-4, 2 Chronicles 1, Psalm 72
- **DAY 5:** Psalm 119:89-176
- **DAY 6:** Song of Solomon 1:1-5:1

WEEK 22

- **DAY 1:** Song of Solomon 5:2-8:14; Psalm 45
- **DAY 2:** Proverbs 1-4
- **DAY 3:** Proverbs 5-8
- **DAY 4:** Proverbs 9-12
- **DAY 5:** Proverbs 13-16
- **DAY 6:** Proverbs 17-20

WEEK 23

- **DAY 1:** Proverbs 21-24
- **DAY 2:** 1 Kings 5-6, 2 Chronicles 2-3
- **DAY 3:** 1 Kings 7-8, Psalm 11
- **DAY 4:** 2 Chronicles 4-7, Psalms 134; 136
- **DAY 5:** Psalms 146-150
- **DAY 6:** 1 Kings 9, 2 Chronicles 8, Proverbs 25-26

WEEK 24

- **DAY 1:** Proverbs 27-29
- **DAY 2:** Ecclesiastes 1-6
- **DAY 3:** Ecclesiastes 7-12
- **DAY 4:** 1 Kings 10-11, 2 Chronicles 9, Proverbs 30; 31
- **DAY 5:** 1 Kings 12, 2 Chronicles 10
- **DAY 6:** 1 Kings 13-14, 2 Chronicles 11-12

WEEK 25

- **DAY 1:** 1 Kings 15:1-24, 2 Chronicles 13-16
- **DAY 2:** 1 Kings 15:25-16:34, 2 Chronicles 17
- **DAY 3:** 1 Kings 17-19
- **DAY 4:** 1 Kings 20-21
- **DAY 5:** 1 Kings 22, 2 Chronicles 18-20
- **DAY 6:** 2 Kings 1-4

WEEK 26

- **DAY 1:** 2 Kings 5:1-8:15
- **DAY 2:** 2 Kings 8:16-29, 2 Chronicles 21:1-22:9
- **DAY 3:** 2 Kings 9-11, 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:21
- **DAY 4:** 2 Kings 12-13, 2 Chronicles 24
- **DAY 5:** 2 Kings 14-15, 2 Chronicles 25-27
- **DAY 6:** Jonah 1-4

WEEK 27

- **DAY 1:** Amos 1-5
- **DAY 2:** Amos 6-9
- **DAY 3:** Hosea 1-5
- **DAY 4:** Hosea 6-9
- **DAY 5:** Hosea 10-14
- **DAY 6:** Isaiah 1-4

WEEK 28

- **DAY 1:** Isaiah 5-8
- **DAY 2:** Isaiah 9-12
- **DAY 3:** Micah 1-4
- **DAY 4:** Micah 5-7
- **DAY 5:** 2 Kings 16-17, 2 Chronicles 28
- **DAY 6:** Isaiah 13-17

WEEK 29

- **DAY 1:** Isaiah 18-22
- **DAY 2:** Isaiah 23-26
- **DAY 3:** 2 Kings 18:1-8, 2 Chronicles 29-31, Psalm 48
- **DAY 4:** Isaiah 27-30
- **DAY 5:** Isaiah 31-35
- **DAY 6:** Isaiah 36; 37, 2 Kings 18:9–19:37, 2 Chronicles 32:1-23, Psalm 76

WEEK 30

- **DAY 1:** Isaiah 38-39, 2 Kings 20, 2 Chronicles 32:24-33
- **DAY 2:** Isaiah 40-42, Psalm 46
- **DAY 3:** Isaiah 43-45, Psalm 80
- **DAY 4:** Isaiah 46-49, Psalm 135
- **DAY 5:** Isaiah 50-53
- **DAY 6:** Isaiah 54-58

WEEK 31

- **DAY 1:** Isaiah 59-63
- **DAY 2:** Isaiah 64-66
- **DAY 3:** 2 Kings 21, 2 Chronicles 33
- **DAY 4:** Nahum 1-2
- **DAY 5:** Zephaniah 1-3
- **DAY 6:** 2 Kings 22-23, 2 Chronicles 34-35

WEEK 32

- **DAY 1:** Habakkuk 1-3
- **DAY 2:** Joel 1-3
- **DAY 3:** Jeremiah 1-4
- **DAY 4:** Jeremiah 5-8
- **DAY 5:** Jeremiah 9-12
- **DAY 6:** Jeremiah 13-16

WEEK 33

- **DAY 1:** Jeremiah 17-20
- **DAY 2:** Jeremiah 21-24
- **DAY 3:** Jeremiah 25-28
- **DAY 4:** Jeremiah 29-32
- **DAY 5:** Jeremiah 33-37
- **DAY 6:** Jeremiah 38-40, Psalms 74; 79

WEEK 34

- **DAY 1:** 2 Kings 24-25, 2 Chronicles 36:1-21, Jeremiah 52
- **DAY 2:** Jeremiah 41-44
- **DAY 3:** Obadiah, Psalms 82; 83
- **DAY 4:** Jeremiah 45-48
- **DAY 5:** Jeremiah 49-50
- **DAY 6:** Jeremiah 51, Psalm 137

WEEK 35

- **DAY 1:** Lamentations 1:1–3:36
- **DAY 2:** Lamentations 3:37–5:22
- **DAY 3:** Ezekiel 1-4
- **DAY 4:** Ezekiel 5-8
- **DAY 5:** Ezekiel 9-12
- **DAY 6:** Ezekiel 13-16

WEEK 36

- **DAY 1:** Ezekiel 17-20
- **DAY 2:** Ezekiel 21-24
- **DAY 3:** Ezekiel 25-28
- **DAY 4:** Ezekiel 29-32
- **DAY 5:** Ezekiel 33-36
- **DAY 6:** Ezekiel 37-40

WEEK 37

- **DAY 1:** Ezekiel 41-44
- **DAY 2:** Ezekiel 45-48
- **DAY 3:** Daniel 1-3
- **DAY 4:** Daniel 4-6
- **DAY 5:** Daniel 7-9
- **DAY 6:** Daniel 10-12

WEEK 38

- **DAY 1:** 2 Chronicles 36:22; 23, Ezra 1-3
- **DAY 2:** Ezra 4-6
- **DAY 3:** Haggai 1-2
- **DAY 4:** Zechariah 1-7
- **DAY 5:** Zechariah 8-14
- **DAY 6:** Esther 1-5

WEEK 39

- **DAY 1:** Esther 6-10
- **DAY 2:** Malachi 1-4, Psalm 50
- **DAY 3:** Ezra 7-10
- **DAY 4:** Nehemiah 1-4
- **DAY 5:** Nehemiah 5-7
- **DAY 6:** Nehemiah 8-10

WEEK 40

- **DAY 1:** Nehemiah 11-13, Psalm 126
- **DAY 2:** Psalm 106, John 1:4-14
- **DAY 3:** Matthew 1, Luke 1:1-2:38
- **DAY 4:** Matthew 2, Luke 2:39-52
- **DAY 5:** Matthew 3, Mark 1:1-11, Luke 3, John 1:15-34
- **DAY 6:** Matthew 4:1-22; 13:54-58, Mark 1:12-20; 6:1-6, Luke 4:1-30; 5:1-11, John 1:35-2:12

WEEK 41

- **DAY 1:** Matthew 4:23-25; 8:14-17, Mark 1:21-39, Luke 4:31-44
- **DAY 2:** John 3-5
- **DAY 3:** Matthew 8:1-4; 9:1-17; 12:1-21, Mark 1:40-3:21, Luke 5:12-6:19
- **DAY 4:** Matthew 5-7, Luke 6:20-49; 11:1-13
- **DAY 5:** Matthew 8:5-13; 11:1-31, Luke 7
- **DAY 6:** Matthew 12:22-50, Mark 3:32-35, Luke 18:19-21; 11:14-54

WEEK 42

- **DAY 1:** Matthew 13:1-53, Mark 4:1-34, Luke 8:1-18
- **DAY 2:** Matthew 8:18-34; 9:18-38, Mark 4:35-5:43, Luke 8:22-56; 9:57-62
- **DAY 3:** Matthew 10; 14, Mark 6:7-56, Luke 9:1-17, John 6
- **DAY 4:** Matthew 15, Mark 7:1-8:10
- **DAY 5:** Matthew 16; Mark 8:11-9:1, Luke 9:18-27
- **DAY 6:** Matthew 17-18, Mark 9:2-50, Luke 9:28-56

WEEK 43

- **DAY 1:** John 7-9
- **DAY 2:** Luke 10, John 10:1-11:54
- **DAY 3:** Luke 12:1-13:30
- **DAY 4:** Luke 14-15
- **DAY 5:** Matthew 19, Mark 10:1-31, Luke 16:1-18:30
- **DAY 6:** Matthew 20, Mark 10:32-52, Luke 18:31-19:27

WEEK 44

- **DAY 1:** Matthew 21:1-22; 26:6-13, Mark 11:1-26; 14:3-9, Luke 19:28-48; John 2:13-25; 11:55-12:36
- **DAY 2:** Matthew 21:23-22:14, Mark 11:27-12:12, Luke 20:1-18, John 12:37-50
- **DAY 3:** Matthew 22:15-23:39, Mark 12:13-44, Luke 20:19-21:4, 13:31-35
- **DAY 4:** Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, Luke 21:5-38
- **DAY 5:** Matthew 26:1-5; 26:14-35, Mark 14:1-2; 10-31, Luke 22:1-38, John 13
- **DAY 6:** John 14-17

WEEK 45

- **DAY 1:** Matthew 26:36-75, Mark 14:32-72, Luke 22:39-71, John 18:1-27
- **DAY 2:** Matthew 27:1-31, Mark 15:1-20; Luke 23:1-25, John 18:28–19:16
- **DAY 3:** Matthew 27:32-66, Mark 15:21-47, Luke 23:26-56, John 19:17-42; Psalm 22
- **DAY 4:** Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20-21
- **DAY 5:** Acts 1-4, Psalm 110
- **DAY 6:** Acts 5-8

WEEK 46

- **DAY 1:** Acts 9-11
- **DAY 2:** Acts 12-14
- **DAY 3:** James 1-5
- **DAY 4:** Galatians 1-3
- **DAY 5:** Galatians 4-6
- **DAY 6:** Acts 15-16

WEEK 47

- **DAY 1:** Acts 17:1–18:18
- **DAY 2:** 1 Thessalonians 1-5
- **DAY 3:** 2 Thessalonians 1-3
- **DAY 4:** Acts 18:19–19:41
- **DAY 5:** 1 Corinthians 1-4
- **DAY 6:** 1 Corinthians 5-8

WEEK 48

- **DAY 1:** 1 Corinthians 9-11
- **DAY 2:** 1 Corinthians 12-14
- **DAY 3:** 1 Corinthians 15-16
- **DAY 4:** 2 Corinthians 1-4
- **DAY 5:** 2 Corinthians 5-9
- **DAY 6:** 2 Corinthians 10-13

WEEK 49

- **DAY 1:** Acts 20:1-3, Romans 1-4
- **DAY 2:** Romans 5-8
- **DAY 3:** Romans 9-12
- **DAY 4:** Romans 13-16
- **DAY 5:** Acts 20:4–23:35
- **DAY 6:** Acts 24-26

WEEK 50

- **DAY 1:** Acts 27-28
- **DAY 2:** Phillipians 1-4
- **DAY 3:** Philemon; Colossians 1-4
- **DAY 4:** Ephesians 1-4
- **DAY 5:** Ephesians 5-6, Titus 1-3
- **DAY 6:** 1 Timothy 1-6

WEEK 51

- **DAY 1:** 1 Peter 1-5
- **DAY 2:** Hebrews 1-4
- **DAY 3:** Hebrews 5-8
- **DAY 4:** Hebrews 9-13
- **DAY 5:** 2 Timothy 1-4
- **DAY 6:** 2 Peter 1-3, Jude

WEEK 52

- **DAY 1:** 1 John 1-5, 2 John, 3 John
- **DAY 2:** Revelation 1-5
- **DAY 3:** Revelation 6-10
- **DAY 4:** Revelation 11-13
- **DAY 5:** Revelation 14-18
- **DAY 6:** Revelation 19-22

Endnote References

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