

## The Ten Basic Steps: Step #5: The Christian and the Bible

### Lesson 7- Private Bible Study Methods

**Objective: To establish good habits of regular systematic study of the Bible.**

Read: Acts 27 & 28

Memorize: Colossians 3:16-17

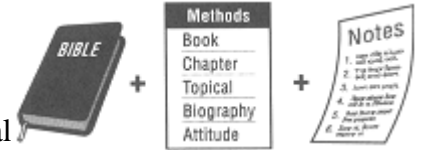
1. Proper Attitude for Bible Study
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Martin Luther said he studied his Bible in the same way he gathered apples. He encourages us to:

Search the Bible as a whole, shaking the whole tree. Read it rapidly, as you would any other book. Then shake every limb -- study book after book. Then shake every branch, giving attention to the chapters when they do not break the tense. Then shake each twig by a careful study of the paragraphs and sentences. And you will be rewarded if you will look under each leaf by searching the meaning of the words.

The Thompson Chain Reference Bible gives this suggestion:

Study the Bible as a traveler who seeks to obtain a thorough and experimental knowledge of a new country. God over its vast fields to truth; descend into its valleys; climb its mountains of vision, follow its streams of inspiration; enter its halls of instruction; visit its wondrous portrait galleries.



Remember that many doctrinal errors have grown out of a lack of spiritual perspective, or a narrow view of scriptural truth. The Savior says, "You err not knowing the Scriptures, or the power of God."

Seek to understand the deep things of God. Study the Word as a miner digs for gold, or as a diver plunges into the depths of the sea for pearls.

Most great truths do not lie upon the surface. They must be brought into the light by patient toil.

Every time you and I read and study God's Word carefully, we are building up our storehouse of faith. When we memorize the Word, our faith is being increased.

Reading the Bible is vital for every Christian. How can we learn about God or grow spiritually if we do not spend time studying the Book in which He has made Himself known to us?

Taking a few minutes each day to read a chapter is a good way to start. But we should also block out extended periods of time for exploring God's Word and reflecting on what He is saying to us.

## **Proper Attitude for Bible Study**

When you personally received Christ as your Savior and Lord, you began a great adventure. That great adventure is mapped out in the pages of the Holy Scriptures. As you read and study the Bible in the power of the Holy Spirit, you will receive meaning, strength, direction, and power for your life. You will learn and claim the many great promises God has reserved for His own.

Approach the Bible in prayer, with reverence, awe, and expectancy; with a willing mind; and with a thirst for truth, righteousness, and fullness in the Lord Jesus Christ. When you come with a humble and contrite heart, you can trust God the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to you, and you will experience the cleansing power of His eternal Word.

Above all, as you study God's Word, be eager to obey all that He commands, and rejoice in the knowledge that you are an ambassador for Christ, seeking men in His name to be reconciled to God.

How do you feel about Bible study?

What do you see at this point as your main purpose in studying God's Word?

Have you established a definite goal regarding Bible study?

## **Tools Needed**

First, obtain at least two translations of the Bible. If you don't have access to printed Bibles in your country, you can use this web site to access multiple languages and translations of the Bible: [www.biblegateway.org](http://www.biblegateway.org).

Study the various translations. You would not expect to learn much about the physical laws of our universe without diligent and persistent study. Should you expect to acquire much knowledge of God and the unsearchable riches of His Word without studying with equal diligence and persistence?

As funds are available, you will want to secure a topical Bible, a concordance, and a Bible dictionary. Additional Bible study books are helpful and can be added as convenient. However, always remember, Bible study involves just that -- studying the Bible. The other items are merely tools to assist you in getting the rich truths God has for you in His Word.

As you consider each study of the Scriptures, may I suggest you record God's Word to you in a journal. This will not only result in a deeper, more serious study, it will give you a written record of how God speaks to you and of your response to Him.

List the tools you have now.

List the additional tools you desire in the order in which you plan to obtain them.

## Suggested Methods

Book study. The Bible contains many books. Yet the divine plan of God to redeem men in Christ Jesus runs through the whole of it. Be careful to consider each book as a part of the whole. Read it through. Following these suggestions will help make your study more meaningful:

- Mark and underline as God speaks to you through His Word.
- Outline it.
- List the names of the principal characters; tell who they are and their significance.
- Select from each chapter key verses to memorize and copy them on a card to carry with you.
- List teachings to obey and promises to claim.
- Consider the characteristics revealed of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Which book would you particularly like to study using this method? (It is best to start with one of the shorter ones.)

Chapter study. To get a grasp of the chapter, answer the following questions:

- What is the principal subject of the chapter?
- What is the leading lesson?
- What is the key verse? (Memorize it.)
- Who are the principal characters?
- What does it teach about God the Father?
- What does it teach about Jesus Christ?
- What does it teach about the Holy Spirit?
- Is there any example for me to follow?
- Is there any error for me to avoid?
- Is there any duty for me to perform?
- Is there any promise for me to claim?
- Is there any prayer for me to echo?

Choose a chapter from the book, and apply these questions.

Topical study. Take an important subject - such as grace, truth, prayer, faith, assurance, justification, regeneration, or peace - and, using a topical Bible and a concordance, study the scope of the topic throughout the Bible.

You will find it necessary to divide each topic into sub-topics as you accumulate material; for example, forms of prayer, prayer promises, examples of prayer in Scripture, Christ's teaching on prayer, Christ's ministry as we pray, the ministry of the Holy Spirit in prayer.

What topic do you plan to study first? How much time have you scheduled for it?

Biographical study. There are 2,930 people mentioned in the Bible. The lives of many of these make extremely interesting biographical studies. Why is it important to study the characters of the Bible ( I Corinthians 10:11, Romans 15:4 )?

Using a concordance, topical Bible, or the proper name index in your Bible, look up every reference in the Bible of someone you would like to study.

Name the person you would like to study. State your reason for choosing that particular person. Answer the following questions:

- What was the social and political atmosphere in which he (or she) lived?
- How did that affect his life?
- What do we know of his family?
- What kind of training did he have in his youth?
- What was accomplished by him during his life?
- Was there a great crisis in his life? If so, how did he face it?
- What were his outstanding character traits?
- Who were his friends? What kind of people were they?
- What influence did they have on him?
- What influence did he have on them?
- Does his life show any development of character?
- What was his experience with God?
- Notice his prayer life, faith, service to God, knowledge of God's Word, courage in witnessing, and attitude toward the worship of God.
- Were any particular faults evident in his life?
- Was there any outstanding sin in his life?
- Under what circumstances did he commit this sin?
- What was its nature and its effect on his future life?
- What were his children like?
- Was there some lesson in this person's life that will help to enrich your life?

By the time you complete the studies outlined in this series, you will have been introduced to each of these four methods. You've already have taken the first step in the book study method by reading the Book of Acts. *Lessons 2 and 4 of Steps 2: The Christian and the Abundant Life* were chapter studies. You will soon be ready to apply these as well as the other two methods to more advanced work in your own individual Bible study.

## Life Application

What method interest you the most now?

How do you expect to benefit from serious study of the Bible?

Select one method and use it over the next week. Use the other methods the following weeks. Remember, always study the Bible with the following on hand: pencil, notebook, prayer, purpose.

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