

## A Passion for God's Word

# 7

# Becoming a Student of God's Word

The study of God's Word is the delight of a disciple of Jesus Christ. As a student of the Bible, you have declared that God's objective for your life is your own objective.

### Read again Luke 6:40

The objective of studying God's Word is to be "fully trained...like [our] teacher." Acquiring knowledge has limited value unless that knowledge impacts the real world. In fact, the Bible says that "knowledge puffs up" ([1 Corinthians 8:1](#)) and Paul speaks of "the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge" ([1 Timothy 6:20](#)).

When Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow him (see [Matthew 4:18-22](#)), he did not call them simply to be believers in him. He did not even call them to learn about God. He called them to be disciples. The word "disciple" has the meaning of "a learner, one who is trained or is apprenticed by a master." It involves not simply learning head knowledge, but learning life knowledge. A disciple's life is shaped by the master.

We need to understand that we live in slightly different circumstances to the first disciples of Jesus. During the time of Jesus' ministry on earth, they followed him, listened to him, were trained directly by him (see [1 John 1:1-2](#)).

But now the Lord Jesus has returned to his Father's side. He no longer walks with us physically and we can no longer physically follow him. Yet his words to you remain the same as to this original disciples: "Follow me."

### Read Matthew 28:19-20

These words were uttered by Jesus just prior to his return to his Father's right hand. Today, we call them the Great Commission. Note the imperative contained in this verse: "Therefore go and *make disciples* of all nations..."

How can I obey this command if I am not a disciple myself? And how can I be a disciple if I am not able to sit at Jesus' feet, as those early disciples did?

Well the wonder of our relationship with God is that we can! But the means by which this happens is by studying, absorbing and living in God's Word. The Bible is our point of contact with the Lord Jesus, our trainer. We sit at the feet of our Master as we study his Word.

## The Meaning of Study

But first we need to define what we mean by "study." We need to understand the word in its biblical, not secular, meaning. Study is not acquiring knowledge toward a degree, as it is understood in worldly circles. True study of the Bible is the absorbing of the truths of God's Word so that they shape your life. In order for this to happen, five things must take place:

### ***Searching***

Searching the Scriptures is a vital part of studying God's Word. In the Bible, every verse is interconnected with some other verse somewhere else in God's Word. To get the full meaning of a concept in the Bible, it is important to see the balance of what the rest of the Bible says – and this involves searching. Charles Spurgeon, commenting on the word for "study" in John 5:39, describes what it means to "search the Scriptures":

"The Greek word here rendered search signifies a strict, close, diligent, curious search, such as men make when they are seeking gold, or hunters when they are in earnest after game. We must not rest content with having given a superficial reading to a chapter or two, but with the candle of the Spirit we must deliberately seek out the hidden meaning of the word. Holy Scripture requires searching – much of it can only be learned by careful study."<sup>1</sup>

### ***Soaking***

#### **Read Psalm 119:15**

It is not enough just to *search* God's Word. You must also *soak* in God's Word. Soaking involves spending both quality *and* quantity time in God's Word. You cannot speed or shortcut the process. The longer you soak, the more you absorb.

Charles Swindoll declared:

"The lost art of the twentieth century is meditation. Meditation is disciplined thought, focused on a single object or scripture for a period of time."<sup>2</sup>

As William Grimshaw once said, "Meditation is the soul's chewing."<sup>3</sup> It has often been likened to a cow chewing its cud. A cow has not one stomach but four, and it regurgitates a "cud" of grass to chew again in its mouth, before passing on to the next stomach. To be effective, meditation is also like a four-stomach digestion

process. The Word of God is first focused on and meditated on, then later during the day, is refocused and remeditated, and so on.

### Read Joshua 1:8

#### ***Storing***

### Read Psalm 119:11

The Bible encourages you to store up God's Word in your heart. The discipline of memorizing the Bible helps you do just that. But memorizing Scripture is not just an intellectual exercise. What you memorize goes into the storehouse of your heart and can be later drawn upon. What is in your heart will come quickly to your mouth when it is needed.

### Read Deuteronomy 30:11-14

### Read Romans 10:6-8

God's plan is for his Word to "be near you...in your mouth and in your heart." He doesn't want his Word to remain on the printed pages of the Bible. He wants his Word enscribed on your heart and on your mind. He wants the treasures of his Word to be ready and available on your tongue for when he wants to use you to minister encouragement, comfort or instruction to another.

### Read Luke 6:45

### Read Matthew 13:52

#### ***Submitting***

It is not the Word you *know* that counts, however. It is the Word you *live*. A true student of the Bible does not hold God's Word at arm's length, viewing it through an academic lens. He embraces it, applies it and lives it.

### Read Luke 11:28

Once we acknowledge the Bible to be the Word of God, it no longer becomes an issue of how much I read the Bible, but rather how much I live the Bible. For the true follower of Jesus, reading the Bible is simply the first step in living the Bible. As Oswald Chambers put it:

"We learn more by five minutes' obedience than by ten years' study."<sup>4</sup>

#### ***Sharing***

### Read Colossians 3:16

The process of study is not complete until what is searched, soaked in, stored up and submitted to is shared with others. As Joseph Joubert put it so succinctly:

"To teach is to learn twice."<sup>5</sup>

God's Word is never stagnant. It cannot just sit in your heart. It must be shared with others or it loses its vitality. Like "streams of living water" flowing out of the

Bible student's innermost being, God's Word, empowered by the Holy Spirit, must flow out to touch the lives of others.

### Read John 7:38-39

This process of searching, soaking in, storing up, submitting to and sharing the Word of God is a never-ending, on-going cycle. We are always learning. No one graduates from the school of God's Word until they go to meet its Author face to face.

So what is true study of God's Word? The best summary of what it really means to study God's Word can be found in this prayer of Paul's to the Philippian church:

### Read Philippians 1:9-11

## The Results of Study

The diligent study of God's Word will result in several things:

### ***Consistency in lifestyle***

#### Read Philippians 3:16-17

Consistent study of God's Word results in a consistent lifestyle of obedience to God. We are encouraged to "hold onto the teachings" (**2 Thessalonians 2:15**) and to "hold out the word of life" (**Philippians 2:16**).

#### Read Psalm 119:1-11

### ***Effectiveness in prayer***

God's Word vitalizes our prayer life, for the biblical concept of prayer involves the echoing of God's Word back to God.

#### Read Daniel 9:1-19

#### Read Acts 4:23-31

To pray effectively, our hearts need to be saturated in God's Word. Edward Bounds, in his book *The Necessity of Prayer*, makes this comment:

"The absence of vital force in praying, can be traced to the absence of a constant supply of God's Word...He who would learn to pray well, must first study God's Word, and store it in his memory and thought."<sup>6</sup>

The Word of God invested in our hearts becomes a deposit we draw upon in prayer. It gives us an authority to ask in the name of Jesus himself, because our prayer is identified with his Word.

#### Read John 15:7-8

### ***Competency to teach***

#### Read Romans 15:14

God is seeking to equip you to be a competent minister of the New Covenant (see **2 Corinthians 3:6**). Every believer is called to teach the Word of God – not necessarily from the pulpit, but definitely one-on-one. But you can only teach what you yourself have searched, soaked in, stored up and submitted to.

## **Milk and Meat**

### **Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-2**

The Bible often likens the teaching of God’s Word to spiritual nourishment and describes this nourishment in two ways:

- Spiritual milk
- Spiritual meat

The Word of God can be ministered on either of these two levels, depending on the spiritual growth and receptivity of those receiving it. Paul illustrates this by using the picture of the difference between feeding infants and adults.

### ***Spiritual milk***

We give a baby milk because an infant has no ability to chew or digest meat. Milk is pre-digested. It is easily absorbed and it brings rapid growth. In the same way, when you were first “born again” into the family of God (**John 3:3-8**) you had, like a newborn baby, a tremendous hunger for the spiritual milk of the Word.

### **Read 1 Peter 2:2-3**

As you grow in the Lord, however, just as with a natural child, “milk” can no longer sustain or satisfy you. As adults we may still enjoy a glass of milk, but we cannot survive on it. It is not sufficient to nourish us. We need solid food. So it is with God’s Word.

### ***Spiritual meat***

Milk depicts total dependence on someone else (a baby being totally dependent on its mother for survival). Meat, though it may be served to us by another, very much depicts our own involvement in the process of eating. We have to take the food ourselves, chew it, swallow it and digest it. In the same way, the Word of God, when prayerfully absorbed, meditated on (“chewed over”) and received in faith, becomes part of our very being. Jesus was the Word become flesh (**John 1:14**). His desire is now that his Word become flesh in you too.

### **Read Hebrews 5:11-14**

Christians have often thought of spiritual meat as “the deep truths of the Word,” but this is not the meaning of this scripture. The writer states that the “solid food” of the Word is “training in righteousness.” It is the Word exercised and converted into spiritual muscle.

**Read 1 Peter 1:15-16****Read 2 Timothy 3:16**

What the writer to the Hebrews calls “solid food” is for “the mature.” As you consistently study and apply God’s Word, you will find that your capacity for the deep truths of God’s Word will expand. You will be able to put your own spiritual discernment into practice, based on the principles of God’s Word. And as you exercise your spiritual muscles, you will be trained in righteousness and your hunger for the Word of God will sharpen.

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**The Most Important Ingredient**

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There is one last important ingredient that must be mixed into the study of God’s Word for it to be truly effective in your life. And that ingredient is *faith*.

**Read Hebrews 4:2**

This is an astounding verse. It says that the Gospel (the good news of God’s plan of salvation) was preached through Moses to the people of Israel in the wilderness, but it was “of no value to them, because those who heard it did not combine it with faith.”

Unless the Bible student’s study is mixed with faith, the Bible says that study is “of no value.” So let’s mix into our study diligence, consistency and a hunger for God’s Word. But, most importantly, let’s mix in faith. Faith is the attribute without which God shows no pleasure in our study of his Word (see **Hebrews 11:6**). For faith is what makes the Bible a personal encounter with God.

**Read Romans 10:17**

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<sup>1</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening Daily Readings*, June 9, Evening, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.0.

<sup>2</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, quoted from *Draper’s Quotations for the Christian World*, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.0.

<sup>3</sup> William Grimshaw (1708-1763), quoted from *Draper’s Quotations for the Christian World*, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.0.

<sup>4</sup> Oswald Chambers (1874-1917), quoted from *Draper’s Quotations for the Christian World*, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.0.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Joubert (1754-1824), quoted from *Draper’s Quotations for the Christian World*, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.0.

<sup>6</sup> Edward M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, “XII - Prayer and the Word of God,” excerpted from QuickVerse 5.0.