

CHAPTER 4

BIBLE STUDY

Let's establish the Bible study is not an exact science. You will find many different methods of study available to you and all of them have merit. There is the read through the Bible in a Year, the devotional reading of the Bible using booklets such as Daily Bread or Upper Room, reading the Bible like a book from beginning to end, as well as others. You can choose the one that works for you. There really is not one way or the other that is better. However, there are some guidelines you will want to keep in mind no matter what form of study you decide upon. We will discuss these guidelines in this chapter.

The most important thing is to read the Bible often and read it with understanding. In a survey of a church small group, the question was asked how many verses in the Bible do you read each day. Four said none at all; one said one or two verses; one said not very many; and one said seldom do I read the Bible. How would you like to set down to a two hour movie and watch the first two minutes and get up and leave? Would you be able to say what the movie was about? In like manner, you cannot do that in reading the Bible. You must put effort into reading if you want to understand it.

Some do not understand because they do not concentrate. You must go into your Bible study time with your mind prepared and concerning yourself only with time with the Lord. Then you will walk away with the time spent being a fulfilling time.

1. **BE CONSISTENT:** You need to get in a pattern and make sure you read every day. Act like your Bible reading is taking medicine, because it is your spiritual medicine. Whether morning or night, or both if possible, you should read your Bible every day. If you take one day off, the devil will soon be convincing you to take more days off. Soon, you will find yourself not reading at all. It takes discipline. Do not give him a start. Get disciplined right from the beginning of your Christian walk and read your Bible on a regular basis. If you cannot read, it is a wise investment to purchase the Bible on tape and listen to the Word. However, you must treat this just like you are reading. Go off by yourself and spend time alone with God while you are listening. There is nothing wrong with using tapes, but you cannot use them as an excuse to be lazy in your study time.

2. **QUALITY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN QUANTITY:** Do not take this statement wrong. It does not mean just slop through a verse and run out the door. However, sometimes young Christians feel they need to read five to ten chapters a day to be effective.

Unfortunately, they often give up reading. Why? Because they do not understand what they are reading. They are trying to force feed themselves instead of allowing themselves to mature into understanding the Bible. It is better to read five verses and understand all of it, than to read five chapters and understand none of it.

To start out, read five verses, but read them three or four times. Make sure you understand what they say. This will make you a much better Bible student. Then after you mature and your understanding begins to develop, you will increase the amount of your reading.

Do not just settle for five verses. Within a few weeks you should find yourself wanting to increase your time in the Word. Your hunger for the word should increase naturally, or something may be wrong in your devotional life. In that case, it is wise to seek counsel from your spiritual leader as to why the hunger for God's Word has not developed.

3. DO NOT TAKE THE LET THE BIBLE FALL OPEN ATTITUDE: Some take the attitude of haphazard study. The Bible is held up and the pages are allowed to fall open. Wherever it falls open, the reader reads thinking God will speak to them through that page. I have seen God direct people, myself included, in amazing ways. However, to assume He will bring supernatural intervention every day is childish. The Bible is a book and should be read as such.

Can you imagine buying a blockbuster novel and then just allowing it to fall open and start reading? Of course you would not do that. Then why would you try to read the Bible in that way? I usually suggest you start out reading the Gospel of St. John. There is a special reason for that. The Gospel of Matthew is a historical account of the words and ministry of Jesus. The Gospel of Mark most believe was written from Mark listening to Peter talk about Jesus. Mark was a very young man during Jesus' ministry. The Gospel of Luke is written by a doctor and therefore has a doctor's perspective. John was a very close and beloved disciple of Jesus. Therefore, John brings the Gospel in a very personal and loving light. Read John first and then go back and read the other Gospels mentioned above. After reading the Gospels, you can then move from Acts to Revelation. Then go back and read the Old Testament. Read it like a book and you will be a much better student and you will gain a much better understanding of the Word.

4. WRITE NOTES AND QUESTIONS: I am a firm believer in keeping a notebook and writing notes about what you read and what it means to you. You will find these notes to be priceless as the years go by. Put down your thoughts on the verses each day. You will be amazed as you go back and read those verses again. You will discover one of the greatest mysteries of the Bible. The words of the Bible will develop new meaning to you depending on your circumstances at the time of reading.

You may read a verse today and get one thing from it. Next month, you may read the same verse and be facing a different circumstance and God will bring a new light to you on that verse. If you keep notes, it will excite you to see how the Scriptures come to life for you. If you do not write well, then take a tape recorder and make your notes on tape.

Your notes should include topic title for each reading so it will be easy to go back through your notes and find verses of importance to you. If you do not want to develop your own note system, there are inexpensive Bible and prayer journals that you can purchase at the Christian bookstore. These journals have the note system already laid out for you.

Also, write your questions or things you do not understand. You might find the answers in later study in future verses. If you do not find the answer, writing the questions down will remind you to ask your teacher or pastor for the explanation. Never just pass it by. Get an understanding of the verses you do not understand. This will help you in not getting frustrated with your study efforts.

One more thing; do not be afraid to mark in your Bible. The best way to do this is to purchase hi-liter pens which you can mark over verses without crossing them out. This way, you are able to come back to verses that are important to you very easily. This will make your Bible Study much more effective. Some students use different colored hi-liters to mark different issues in the Bible. For example, every verse about the crucifixion may be in yellow. Every verse dealing with miracles may be in green: and so on. This makes it easy in searching for particular Scripture on particular issues.

5. USE STUDY AIDS: There are many good study aids available. Take advantage of what you can. You can get a concordance which list all words together that are mentioned in the Scripture making it easy to do word studies. In other words, it will list every time the word joy appears or the word peace. Bible dictionary will tell you the meaning of the words in their original context. Interlinear Bible will show you what the word meant in its original language of Greek or Hebrew. You can get reference Bibles which will cross reference similar verses with one another. You can also get commentaries which will give you in depth comments on each set of verses. Each of these study aids can be helpful and most are not too hard to learn how to use. Your pastor will usually be glad to help you understand how the study aids work. However, remember the Holy Spirit is the best teacher. James 1:6 "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him." You should pray before every study time and ask God to give you understanding.

6. YOUR STUDY TIME IS TIME WITH GOD: Do not take your study time lightly. Psalms 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Psalms 119:11 "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." II Timothy 3:15-17 "And that from a

child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the men of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." II Peter 1:20-21
"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

This is not just some book. It is the word of God and when you understand it, you will be furnished in all good works. Take a moment before reading to pray for understanding. Read with an open heart for God to teach you. After you finish reading, take a moment to pray and thank God for helping you. You can do all of that in twenty to thirty minutes. As you develop more spiritually, your time may increase to an hour or more. Sound like a lot? Most people spend much more time than that watching television. Study time is more important to your spiritual well being than television.

Also, get out of the hustle bustle before you read. Get away from the phone and let the answering machine answer it. If it is important, the caller will leave a message. Turn off your television and radio. Get your mind on God and allow Him to minister to you. Before long, you will find yourself reading and understanding much more than you ever did before. You'll find yourself longing to get to your study time and hating to leave from it. It is time with God and it may well be the most important time you spend all day long.

We hope these few points will help you in growing into a Bible student.