



How Do You Study the Bible?

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right.” (2 Timothy 3:16, NLT)

What is your most valuable possession? Is it clothes, jewelry, an ipod, computer, cell phone, car or a special gift someone gave you? In Bible times, gold surpassed all other valuables. When King Solomon built the Temple, he covered the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, the walls with the cherubim, the palm trees, flowers and even the floors with gold. Nothing but the best for God’s Temple! Therefore, when the psalmist attempted to compare God’s Word to something valuable, he chose gold. *“The Word of God is more desirable than gold, even the finest gold.”* (Psalm 19:19 NIV) Think how rich you can become by learning God’s Word!

The key to success

When God prepared the military leader Joshua to lead the Israelites into the land of Canaan (the Promised Land) and conquer it, what do you think he told him to do? Get your battle equipment in order? Organize your soldiers? Surely that was important. But none of the above is the key to success and victory. Instead, God instructed him to *“Study this Book of the Law continually. Meditate on it day and night so you may be sure to obey all that is written in it. Only then will you succeed.”* (Joshua 1:9, NIV) Joshua obeyed, and God gave him great success. In the first battle, he followed God’s strange orders and marched around the city of Jericho six days. As they marched on the seventh day, the people gave a shout of victory, and the walls tumbled down. Is that radical or what?

Your key to success

If that is Joshua’s key to success, it is also yours. Jesus said a true disciple is “one who continues in my word.” “Continue” means, not only to study regularly, but also to practice and to obey God’s word. Ask yourself, “Do you want to know right from wrong? Do you want guidance to make the right choices? Do you want to be successful in life? Do you want to be equipped to be used by God and to become more like Jesus? Then spend time studying, meditating and obeying God’s love letter to you. What else could bring such fantastic benefits?

The method

Studying Scripture is quite different from reading it. When you study, you are digging for “nuggets of gold” that will transform your thinking and actions. It takes time!

Following, is an example of how to study the book of John. If possible, read the entire book through first. Then choose the first section of verses in chapter one to study. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you “mine” those verses for every “gold nugget”! Begin with John 1:1-14. After you have read it several times, combine the verses in your own words (see example below), and simply write down what the passage says. It is an easy way to gather the facts, and it will come easily after you have completed a few chapters. For example:

1. **Observe – What does this passage say? (Facts)**
 - a. Verses 1-3 The Word (Jesus) is God and created all things.
 - b. Verses 4-5 His life gave light to everyone.
 - c. Verses 6-9 John the Baptist came to announce Jesus’ coming
 - d. Verses 10-11 Neither the world nor his people accepted him.
 - e. Verses 12-13 Everyone who believed in him became a child of God.
 - f. Verse 14 Jesus became human and lived among you.

2. **Ask, what is God saying in this passage to me?**
 - a. Study the passage asking the questions – who, where, what, why, when and how. For example, “Who is this passage about? What does John tell me about Jesus? (Verse one states clearly that Jesus is God.) What does it say about why Jesus came to earth? Who is truth? Who am I?”

3. **Ask, how does God want me to apply this to my life?** Why does God want me to know this? The following questions will help.
 - a. Is there an example for me to follow?
 - b. Are there commands to obey, a decision to make?
 - c. Is there a sin to confess and quit?
 - d. Is there a warning for me to apply to my life?
 - e. Is there something new to learn about Jesus or God?
 - f. What challenges or inspires me?
 - g. What words comforted or encouraged me?
 - h. Is there something I don’t understand? If so, you might want to get a Bible dictionary or a concordance.

4. **Write in your journal** (a disciple always keeps notes!)
 - a. State in your own words the truths that God spoke to you.
 - b. Write what you learned about Jesus and his ways.
 - c. Record and commit to any changes you need to make in your life.

Do you find this a challenge? Do not give up! Continue your study by taking the next group of verses (19-28), etc. Approach each study time with excitement as you seek what the Spirit wants to teach you. When you discover a “gold nugget”, you can know that God has spoken

to you. How real God will be to you when you ask for guidance and he answers in Scripture! Awesome!

Another way to study the Bible is in small groups with question and answer studies. Usually in youth groups there will be Bible studies of this kind with a leader to guide you. This is good because each of you can share with each other what you have learned. It also gives you an opportunity to ask questions.

Remember, a disciple not only reads, hears and studies the word of God, but also obeys and lets God change his/her life. *“It is a message to obey, not just to listen to. If you don’t obey, you are only fooling yourself.”* (James 1:22, NLT) When you obey, you will have God’s stamp of approval and never be ashamed. Paul wrote to Timothy: *“Work [study] hard so God can approve you. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.”* (2 Timothy 2:15, NLT) As the leaders in the Old Testament carefully covered their Temple interior with gold, fill your mind with the “gold nuggets” of his Word!

Attitude:

- What changes in your attitude would you have to make to desire the success God has planned for you?

Explore:

- Read “How to Study the Bible” in the front of your New Testament and “Studying the Bible is Necessary for Our Spiritual Growth.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- As you study John, carefully record all the things you learn about Jesus, the Father and Holy Spirit.

Talking with God:

- Heavenly Father, thank you for your Word. Give me a deep desire to study your Word and obey it. May my study time be a sweet time of fellowship with you.