

The Discipline of Bible Study”
Trinity Baptist Church Discipleship Training
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Introduction:

The importance of the Bible cannot be overstressed in the life of the Christian.

- ∴ The Word of God is the means through which we were saved.
Romans 10:17 – “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
- ∴ The Bible is one of the chief means of sanctification.
 - Our Lord prayed,
John 17:17 – “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
 - Paul stated the importance of the Bible in equipping the saints:
2 Timothy 3:16-17 – “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”
 - The Bible is God’s revelation of Himself. We grow in our knowledge of God through His Word.
2 Peter 3:18 – “But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever.”
- ∴ The proper application of the Word of God is the chief work of the pastoral ministry.
 - The first deacons were ordained so that the Apostles could give themselves to laboring in the Word of God.
Acts 6:4 – “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”
 - Paul taught Timothy of this important work.
2 Timothy 4:2 – “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

Because of the great importance of the Bible in the life of the believer it is essential that much time be spent feeding on its richness. Americans have been blessed with an amazing availability of Bibles. Sadly, many professing Christians do not take advantage of this rich blessing. Bible ignorance plagues modern Christianity. The purpose of this study is to stress the importance of Bible study and encourage Christians to give themselves to this discipline.

- I. We must distinguish between the work and leisure of Bible intake
 - A. The Study of the Word of God can be hard work
 1. It takes great effort to carefully divide and interpret the truths of Scripture
 2. Teachers particularly may spend long hours drawing out the meat of God’s Word – this can be grueling work.
 3. The Bible gives a special recognition to pastors who give themselves to this labor.
1 Timothy 5:17 – “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”
 4. Every Christian must discipline himself to labor in the Word of God

- B. We must also give ourselves to the Word of God in our leisure
1. We should provide ourselves with time for devotional reading – times when we simply read a passage with no other agenda than allowing God to speak to us through His Word.
 2. It is excellent to incorporate the Word of God in our prayer life – praying through a passage of Scripture. The Psalms particularly lend themselves to this.
 3. Devotional reading of Scripture is particularly important for pastors and teachers.
 - a. The danger is to limit one’s Bible intake to sermon prep or preparing to teach a Bible study.
 - b. Time should be set aside for devotional Bible intake. We should make Bible reading an important part of our leisure.
 4. Devotional reading of Scripture will help you to develop the ability to meditate upon God’s Word. It also has the fruit of kindling a love for God’s Word
Psalm 1:2 – “But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”
Psalm 119:97 – “O how love I thy law! it *is* my meditation all the day.”
 5. Our intake of the Bible must not be limited to devotional reading alone but must also include times of hard labor as students of the Word of God.

II. The Discipline of Bible Study

- A. There must be a desire
1. If you do not have a desire for Bible study search your heart before God
 - a. Is it from years of neglect that has left your soul dull?
 - b. Is it from unhealthy distractions caused by the cares of this world?
 - c. Is it because you are lazy and are not willing to expend the energy necessary for a concentrated study of the Word of God.
 - d. Is it simply because you don’t care for the things of God; you are not truly interested in growing in your knowledge of Him. This is the heart of a lost person.
 2. Much prayer must be given with regard to the discipline of Bible study.
 - a. Pray that God will increase your desire - We tend to give ourselves to those activities and pursuits that we enjoy and bring us the most pleasure.
Psalm 119:103 – “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth!”
 - b. Repent for past failures to give yourself fully to the study of God’s Word.
 3. Even when the desire is weak we must press on out of duty.
 R.C. Sproul – “I could plead with you to study the Bible for personal edification; I could try the art of persuasion to stimulate your quest for happiness. I could say that the study of the Bible would probably be the most fulfilling and rewarding educational experience of your life. I could cite numerous reasons why you would benefit from a serious study of Scripture. But ultimately the main reason why we should study the Bible

is because it is our duty. If the Bible were the most boring book in the world, dull, uninteresting and seemingly irrelevant, it would still be our duty to study it. If its literary style were awkward and confusing, the duty would remain. We live as human beings under an obligation by divine mandate to study diligently God's Word. He is our Sovereign, it is his Word and he commands that we study it. A duty is not an option. If you have not yet begun to respond to that duty, then you need to ask God to forgive you and to resolve to do your duty from this day forth.

(Sproul, R.C., *Knowing Scripture*, Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1977 – Page 31.)

B. Essentials in the discipline of Bible Study

1. Make time

- a. This is the beginning, the starting point. It will require an examination of your life.
- b. Each day has a finite amount of time
 - 24 hours
 - 1440 minutes
 - 86,400 seconds
- c. The issue is what you do with your time – Christians are to arrange their lives to maintain a wise expenditure of their time.
Ephesians 5:16 – “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”
 - (1) How much time do you spend watching TV?
 - (2) How do you spend your lunch time? You can eat while you study.
 - (3) Rearrange your schedule to give yourself an extra hour each day. For mothers develop a rule that the children play quietly in their rooms until 7:00 a.m. or plan to study during naptime. For the older children, plan a time for their own Bible study.
- d. Once a time is set maintain a discipline to keep it from being consumed by other things. Keep it high on your list of priorities.

2. Develop a plan

- a. You may select a book for study or you might do a topical study to increase your knowledge on a particular point of doctrine.
- b. Begin with a basic overview and then increase the depth of your study. The Bible is simple enough for even the babe in Christ to grow, yet complex enough to amaze us for a lifetime.

3. Gather some tools for study

- Use several literal translations. Remember, the Bible was not written in English. Several different translations will sometimes give clarity to the text.
Examples of literal translations would be the KJV and NKJV, NAS and NASB, ESV
- A concordance – excellent for word studies. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance also has some language tools for word studies in the original languages.
- A good commentary or two

- A Bible dictionary
- Advanced: A systematic theology (Calvin, Hodge, Berkhoff, etc?)
- A means for taking good notes (a notebook or even better, a computer)

III. Procedure for Bible Study

- A. Select and examine a particular text
1. It is good to choose particular book and work through the text
 2. Begin by reading through the entire book. During this phase don't stop to study particular verses you may not understand but you may make note of them.
 3. Research the author, date, and setting of the book
 4. Examine the who, what, when, where, and why of the passage
 5. What is the literary type of the passage: poetry, proverb, narrative, historical, apocalyptic, parable, prophecy, epistle, etc.
- B. Examine the context of the passage
1. Examine the particular verse with regards to the verses immediately before and after
 2. How does the verse fit within the context of the entire book? When verses are read out of context the unity of the book is lost.
 3. How does the verse fit within the context of the whole Bible.
 4. The best rule is to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. The Bible will never contradict itself.
- C. Application
1. How does the book apply to our current culture?
 2. How does the book apply to your life? What is this passage saying to you?
 3. Are their commands in the passage? We must approach Scripture with an attitude of obedience.

IV. Our Goals for Bible Study

- A. To know God more
1. Again, the Bible is God's revelation of Himself
 2. The Christian should develop a great passion for Christ and His Kingdom. We should continually seek to know Him more.
Colossians 1:10 – "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;"
Jeremiah 9:23-24 – "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: ²⁴ But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD."
- B. To have the mind of Christ
- 1 Corinthians 2:16** – "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."
1. We must seek to have our minds conformed to the mind of Christ

2. Our great desire must be to have our minds, attitudes, desires etc. conformed to Christ.

Philippians 2:5 – “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:”

C. To grow in holiness and true righteousness

1. Holiness means to be set apart. The proper application of the Word of God will help to distinguish us from the world.

1 Peter 2:11-12 – “Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; ¹² Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

2. Righteousness has to do with our obedience to the law
We can only grow in righteousness as we apply God’s law to our lives.
This can only occur as we conform our lives to the testimony of Scripture.