

LESSON SIX: BIBLE

BIG IDEA

The Bible is God's Word. It's His voice, constant and unchanging, speaking to a culture and a world that is always moving fast. Sometimes, it may seem impossible in the middle of your busy schedule to make time for God. Here's the good news: holding on to God's Word is not as hard as you think. Start by using the First Fifteen approach. Give God the first 15 minutes of your day by spending five minutes in the Bible, five minutes in worship, and five minutes in prayer. If you take those simple steps, God will honor your commitment, and the Word will put down roots in the heart of who you are. Make this time the foundation of your day, and watch how quickly God uses it to transform your everyday life.

DISCUSSION

- What is the Bible to you?
- Discuss the First Fifteen approach. How could giving God the first of each day by starting every morning with five minutes in the Word, five minutes in worship, and five minutes in prayer make a difference to the rest of your day?
- Have you seen your decisions and actions change by holding on to God's Word? How?

TEACHING

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet 1:16-21)

The Apostle Peter had a very unique experience. He saw and experienced Jesus in his glorified state. In the book of Matthew (chapter 17), Jesus took Peter, James, and John onto a mountainside and showed them his true, glorified identity. If that were not enough, the voice of God the Father came from heaven and identified him, saying he was well pleased with Jesus.

Sometimes, we think it would be easier to believe the Bible if we had a personal experience with God in the flesh. We think, "I would be more prone to believe this if God came down and told me himself." Peter is saying he had that experience. He lived with Jesus for three years, saw Jesus in his glorified state, and heard the audible voice of God. Peter says we have a "more fully confirmed" word of God in the Bible. You can trust it, you can believe it, you can depend on it!

Your relationship with God through the Bible is like other parts of your spiritual growth; it is a journey. Don't pressure yourself to have it all figured out right now. Start reading the Bible, learning it, being consistent in your time with it, and it will come alive to you.

Remember, the Bible is for you. Inside are all the promises and truths you will ever need to build your life on. Every time you read it, expect to receive from God. As you begin, there are a few decisions you need to make:

Make it the foundation of my life

This may sound strange as the first step, but it is vital. As followers of Jesus, we believe that the Bible is the inerrant, true words of God. If that is true, the Bible demands to be approached as the foundation upon which everything else is built: our lives, decisions, and worldview! (Mt 7:24)

The Bible makes a great foundation because even though everything else in this world changes, the Bible remains truthful and relevant for any age or season!

We are tempted in life to build on other foundations, such as:

- **Feelings:** Feelings are given to us by God. We are grateful for them and are in no way anti-emotion. At the same time, feelings seem so real in the moment that they can often affect major decisions, in good ways and bad. The problem is that feelings lie to us and are regularly changing! We need to apply God's Word as we experience emotions and be sure to give greater authority to the Bible.
- **Reason:** Similar to our emotions, our mind and our intellect are a part of how God created us. The Christian faith is not anti-intellect, and you in no way need to abandon your mind to be a Christian. The problem is when we view our intellect as authoritative and abandon our faith. This is choosing to live according to our own rules or the rules of our culture. The problem is that culture changes over time and geography. God's Word is timeless and transcends culture.
- **Success:** This one is laced into our culture, into the heart of the American dream! We are daily tempted to build our lives on success as defined by wealth or influence. While there is nothing wrong with wanting to be successful, it is not a good foundation for our lives. Pursue success, be excellent in stewarding what God has given you, but always submit it to God's Word and ways.

The truth is not a sailboat. The truth is an anchor that steadies and secures us. We have to decide that no matter what we are facing, our first move is always towards God's Word. By choosing to make the Bible the foundation of our lives, we set ourselves up to experience God in a real and authentic way!

Make it the first part of my daily life

We need to be in the Bible every day! The book of Romans says, "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." If you want to grow your faith you need to hear from God through his Word daily. The best time to do that is in the morning when you wake up.

If you have been around church, you may have heard a pastor mention this before. You may have wondered why. Why would reading the Bible first when you wake up be better than any other time during the day? The reason is really tied to our first point. If we are going to build our lives on the foundation of God's Word, then it makes sense to start there every day!

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Ps 119:105)

Starting with God's Word sets our day up for success! As good as that sounds, some of you may be wondering how to spend that time. Here is what I would suggest... we call it the First Fifteen.

5 minutes in the Word
5 minutes in Worship
5 minutes in Prayer

Build this spiritual discipline into your life as a starting point. Over time, you will want to adjust the times, and in certain seasons, you will give more time to one of the three. The point is that you learn to hear from God and make his voice the foundation of your life.

The next decision is where the fun really begins, and that is when we...

Make it flourish in my life

There is nothing like when you start noticing that the Word of God shapes and molds your life.

When you face a situation, and you have the answer
When the answer is different than what you used to think or believe
When life feels out of control and yet you have peace because you know the truth
When you see change in you and the relationships around you
When the Bible comes alive to you

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb 4:12)

The Bible gives us what we could never find anywhere else! Supernatural wisdom, power, and faith! For this to happen, it is so important for you to really dig into your Bible. We want to make sure you are set up for success, so here are two practical recommendations:

Read through the Bible in a year

The best way to take this journey is with a friend or group of friends. At the beginning of the year, find some people and agree to read through the Bible together, holding each other accountable throughout the year. It is important that you understand the Bible in its entire context by reading it cover to cover.

Get a study Bible

A study Bible is a Bible that has added commentary to help you understand what you are reading. This is especially helpful as you start your journey with the Bible. It allows you not only to understand what you are reading, but also gain context on the larger God story of the Bible.

Make it a weapon for the challenges of life

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm...And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, (Eph 6:13, 17)

This is a powerful truth about God's Word. It isn't just information or revelation; it is also ammunition for the battles we face in life! No matter what you are facing, I promise there is a verse that will give you confidence and victory. One of the best ways to do this is by memorizing scripture so that you will always have your weapon ready to go in the moment of need.

Six Rules of Bible Study

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. (2 Tim 2:15)

- 1. Faith and the Holy Spirit are necessary for proper interpretation**
Studying the Bible isn't primarily an intellectual exercise. It is a relational exercise. I need the Holy Spirit to teach me so I can understand what I am reading and studying. Begin by telling the Holy Spirit you trust him and what you are about to study. When you conclude, thank Him for being faithful to teach you.
- 2. The Bible interprets itself**
Learn to do cross-reference study. The vast majority of the time, the Bible describes or teaches similar topics in a variety of places. For example, if you are studying "love", find all the places the Bible talks about love. Don't stop at one reference in one book.
- 3. Understand the Old Testament in light of the New Testament**
The unity and diversity of the Old and New Testaments is an invitation to come and see more of God's Word. The New Testament fulfills all the promises of the Old Testament in Christ, for Jew and Gentile alike. The New Testament explains the person and work of Christ by showing how he fulfills the Old Testament. Together, these two testaments are a literary unity, progressively revealed.
- 4. Understand the unclear passages in light of the clear passages**
Being a student of the Bible does not mean you get to a place of mastery over the Bible. You will always have questions. Even when you get answers to your initial questions, you will find that new questions pop up. Keep studying, keep learning, and do not be stalled by questions that haven't yet found their answer.

5. **Understand words and verses in context and with authorial intent in mind**
It has to have been true for them to be true for you. The vast majority of bad doctrine is simply doctrine pulled out of context. Don't impose our culture on the culture of the Bible. Remember, the Bible is a book written in real time and place. Seek to understand who is writing and to whom books are being written. Understand the genre the book is written in. Place the word in the sentence, the sentence in the paragraph, the paragraph in the chapter, the chapter in the book, the book in the testament, and the testament within all of scripture.
6. **Understand historical passages in light of doctrinal passages**
In the same way, we should understand personal experience in light of scriptures, the Bible gives us teaching and then shows us other people of faith working the teaching out in their lives. Be careful not to make authoritative decisions of a person without understanding the doctrine they are applying or disobeying.

DIG DEEPER

- Share your experience with reading the Bible. What has worked well for you? What has not worked well for you?
- What would you like to know better about the Bible?

COMMON QUESTIONS

What is the Bible?

The Bible is the living Word of God and our guidebook to life. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says it best: "The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from 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 helps us do what is right. It is God's way of preparing us well at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone."

How do I get more from my Bible?

There are three great steps to get the most out of your Bible. First, accept its authority by receiving God's Word with an open heart and responding to His Word with obedience. Second, absorb its truths by hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on God's Word. Third, apply its principles. James 1:22 tells us plainly, "Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

Why are there different translations/versions of the Bible?

The Bible was originally written in ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Different translations exist because language is alive, constantly developing, and changing. The truths in God's Word stay the same, but the words we use to communicate them effectively, change along with the language.

Formal and Informal translations

The different versions of the Bible are all trying to communicate the same truths in ways that match up well with our modern language. God told His prophet in Habakkuk 2:2 to

“write down the revelation and make it plain.” The different translations are all taking the same truths and trying to make them plain.

The Bible has been translated many times into English from the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. Some translations are formal, word-for-word translations. Others are informal, thought-for-thought translations. Talk to your mentor about finding a “formal” translation study Bible. Every word of God proves true (Prov 30:5), so we want to take each word seriously. If you are new to the Bible and want to understand what you are reading, an “informal” translation is a great place to start.

What is the difference between the Old Testament and New Testament?

The Old Testament is the foundation. The New Testament is the fulfillment. God made promises in the Old Testament and keeps His promises in the New Testament. The Old Testament is about God making the world. The New Testament is about God saving the world. God’s people in the Old Testament were Israel. God’s people in the New Testament are the Church.

NEXT STEPS

- Make a commitment to set the foundation of your life in God’s Word. Find and begin to use a study Bible or join a One Year Bible plan
- Dedicate the first part of your day to Him by taking the First Fifteen approach
- Decide ahead of time that you will attend church each week so that you can hear the Word preached regularly

RESOURCES

- The Doctrine of the Word of God by John Frame
- How We Got the Bible by Timothy Paul Jones
- Understanding Scripture by Wayne Grudem
- How to Read the Bible for All It’s Worth by Gordon Fee
- Bible Study Methods by Rick Warren

MEMORY VERSE

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb 4:12)

DAILY SCRIPTURE AND JOURNALING

Day One

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Mt 7:24)

Journal: What choices are you making now to assure that you are building upon the rock?

Day Two

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Ps 119:105)

Journal: Is there a path/place in life for which you would appreciate more "light"/clarity?

Day Three

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm...And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, (Eph 6:13, 17)

Journal: How well are you standing in your walk with God? Where do you need more strength?

Day Four

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. (2Tim 2:15)

Journal: What does "rightly handling the word of truth" mean to you?

Day Five

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2Tim 3:16-17)

Journal: From what part of the Bible do you gain the most inspiration and why?

PRAYER FOCUS

Focus this week on praying that the Word of God would draw each person into a more vibrant relationship with the Father.