



Global College of Ministry

EXPLAIN

The Christian and Study

A Look at the Back of the Book

“Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”

(Acts 28:31)

Many times when reading an exciting book we are tempted to look at the back of the book to see what happens. The Book of Acts is God’s Training Manual for Today’s Church. It is an exciting story in the most thrilling book in the world, the Bible.

The Bible is the story of the battle between good and evil. When you look at the last book of the Bible you see good wins and evil loses. The devil, Satan is bound for a thousand years and thrown into the bottomless pit where he can no longer deceive the nations of the world. Eventually he will be thrown into the lake of fire forever (Revelation 20:2, 10).

The Book of Acts is the triumphant story of the birth and growth of the Church. In the midst of a battle between good and evil, and persecution, the Church grew and became a powerful force in society.

“Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:20).

The first thing to be noticed about this verse is that Jesus wanted His followers to teach what He had commanded.

In the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) we see Jesus performing “on the job training” with His followers. He also promised He would be with us until the end of the world. Our being alive today proves the world has not ended. Through being filled with the Holy Spirit, we have the promise Jesus is still with us.

The Book of Matthew closes with the word “Amen.” This word means “let it be so!” It expresses our willingness to be obedient, and proves we are in agreement with the speaker. It also implies something is finished. Nothing can be added to the Word of God.

John in the Book of the Revelation warns us that if we add to the Word of God or take away from it, “God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city” (Revelation 22:18-19).

At the end of the Gospel According to Mark you find the powerful promises of the Word of God for the believer (Mark 16:15-18). The book closes with these words, “And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen” (Mark 16:20).

What a thrill to realize Jesus is working with us, and confirms the Word preached with signs following. He said, "these signs shall follow them that believe" (Mark 16:17) and, "greater works than these shall he do!" (John 14:12).

The Book of Acts is the only unfinished book in the Bible.

At the close of the book of Mark we find the word "Amen," letting us know the writing is finished and we should "let it be so."

The Gospel According to Luke ends with, "And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen" (Luke 24:53).

Again the word "Amen" lets us know the book is completed.

"And there are also many other things that Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen" (John 21:25).

The Lord Jesus Christ has done many great things in the past and continues to work in the church today. The book of John is complete.

However, when we look at the end of the Book of Acts we do not find the word "Amen."

It is a book that closes quickly. In this book we see the Lord at work through the Holy Spirit. We see the growth of the Church. The Lord is still at work, and the Church continues. God intends for the acts of His disciples, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the preaching of the Gospel to continue on until the end of the world.

Study Questions

1. What is God's Training Manual for Today's Church? _____
2. What are the names of the four Gospels? _____
3. What does the word "Amen" mean? _____
4. What does the word, "Amen" express? _____
5. Why is there no "Amen" at the end of the Book of Acts? _____

6. Using the Scriptures (provided in this lesson) found at the end of the four Gospels and Acts, list the things believers should be doing. _____

7. Using these same Scriptures, list the things Jesus is doing. _____

8. What will happen to the devil (Satan) in Revelation 20:2, 10? _____

9. What type of teaching method did Jesus use while He was on the earth? _____

10. The "Bible" is a story of a battle between what? _____

Additional Notes

Acts Facts

“To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs...” (Acts 1:3).

The Acts of the Apostles

The Bantu title for the Acts of the Apostles is, “Words Concerning Deeds.” A brief survey of this book will give the impression it is deeds the Lord continued to do, through the Holy Spirit (primarily) and His disciples (secondarily).

In ancient times this book was called, “Acts of the Holy Spirit”; “Gospel of Resurrection”; “Gospel of the Holy Spirit”; “The Acts of the Ascended and Glorified Lord”; and some referred to it as the “Fifth Gospel”.

In the New Testament, Acts is the only book that gives the history of church growth. Acts gives principles that should govern the church in every generation. The *Full Life Study Bible* states, “Acts records what the church must be and do in any generation as it continues Jesus’ ministry in the Pentecostal power of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts tells the story of two apostles and their ministry. Peter preached mostly to Jews and Paul to Gentiles. Acts is the story of the original church. It records how “the Word of God increased” (Acts 6:7). Acts gives insight into church growth dynamics and principles. It also teaches about evangelism, preaching, church life and leadership, the Holy Spirit, the Gifts of the Spirit, Apostles’ doctrine, missionary activity, church planting, prayer, role of women in the church, persecution, signs, wonders, miracles, and many other aspects relevant to the church today. The Holy Spirit is mentioned more than fifty times in Acts. No wonder some called it the “Acts of the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit was the source of power the early church had. Jesus had promised such power in Acts 1:8.

We see that the baptism and ministry of the Holy Spirit imparts:

1. power (1:8)
2. boldness (4:31)
3. fear of God (Acts 5:5)
4. wisdom (6:3,10)
5. guidance (16:6-10)
6. spiritual gifts (19:6)

The Book of Acts covers the first thirty years of church history and draws you into the world of the first century church. Some think it would be exciting to go back to the first century. However, the Holy Spirit continues to move in the twenty-first century. We are continuing to see the miracles of Acts being performed today; even to a greater dimension. Countries are

reporting thousands receiving the Holy Ghost in a single service; blinded eyes opened; and people being brought back from the dead.

We are living in a tremendous day of opportunity.

C. Peter Wagner in his book entitled, *Prayer Shield* tells that more than 392 million Pentecostals were reported worldwide in 1991. He claims there has never been a movement that has grown as rapidly as the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement of the last thirty years. He claims that in any large city where they are open to new churches and Christianity that the largest churches will usually be Pentecostal or Charismatic. Of the twenty largest churches in the world with membership exceeding 20,000 in each local church, fourteen are Pentecostal/Charismatic. This shows that there is more opportunity to win souls today than ever before. The world is open to the vibrant, living, Pentecostal movement.

Study Questions

1. What two Apostles are primarily mentioned in the Book of Acts? _____

2. What are some of the names given to the Book of Acts throughout history? _____

3. How many times is the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Book of Acts? _____

4. How many years of Church history does the Book of Acts cover? _____
5. In Acts the baptism and ministry of the Holy Spirit imparts what? _____

6. What principles does the Book of Acts give us? _____

7. What are some of the subject areas covered in the Book of Acts? _____

8. What does the *Full Life Study Bible* say the Book of Acts records? _____

9. What does C. Peter Wagner say about the Pentecostal movement? _____

10. What are some of the things that have happened in your local church lately that also happened in the Book of Acts? _____

11. What are some of the things that happened in the Book of Acts that you would like to see happening in your local church (but they are not)? _____

12. Do you find that the largest churches in your city or country are the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches? If so, what are the names of these churches? _____

13. If your church is small, what would you consider to be some of the reasons for it being small? _____

Additional Notes

Don't Be a Spiritual Illiterate

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus"
(Acts 4:13).

To be illiterate is to be unable to read or write. Anyone able to read this lesson is not illiterate. It is possible, however, that one can be spiritually or biblically illiterate.

Jim Russell, in his book, *Awakening the Giant*, wrote, "Biblical illiteracy spawns serious weaknesses in Christian character. Hosea 4:6 states, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.' Lack of knowledge leaves Christians today without any sense of biblical vision, mission, or strategy. They remain ignorant of the central purpose of discipling that brings Christ-centered meaning and power into their lives."

Peter and John, common men, standing before religious professionals, spoke with boldness. These men were unlearned (did not have the benefit of an education). They had not attended Jewish schools. Their spiritual knowledge came from heaven and sitting at Jesus' feet. The religious leaders viewed them as uneducated, illiterate laymen. However, they took knowledge that Peter and John had been with Jesus. Peter and John had attended "The School of Jesus." The religious elite marveled at Jesus' followers, and seeing the healed man standing, they could not argue.

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty"
(1 Corinthians 1:26-27).

Several times in the New Testament, we read, "I would not have you ignorant." In this lesson we will look at several of these situations. In each case the subject under discussion is of such importance that it calls for careful study and attention to reduce misunderstandings and spiritual illiteracy.

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:1).

Paul closed 1 Corinthians 9 talking about the Christian race. The prize received is eternal salvation. Paul confessed that he did not want to run the race only to become a "castaway" — someone who fails, is rejected, and does not obtain the prize.

In chapter 10 he explained what takes place when a Christian stops living a holy life, walking in truth, and does not endure to the end. He did not want us to be ignorant of the fact that one can be redeemed, yet later rejected because of sin. Paul put forth as an example the children of God overthrown in the wilderness. They were delivered and enjoyed the blessings of God. But, because of their disobedience, they were later rejected, destroyed, and did not reach the Promised Land. God does not tolerate sin.

Paul provided this passage:

- 📖 As an example and a warning not to be involved in sin (1 Corinthians 10:6).
- 📖 As an admonition that God's judgment in the past is written to warn us against sinning and frustrating the grace of God (1 Corinthians 10:11).
- 📖 So the Christian would "take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).
- 📖 To prove that "God is faithful" (1 Corinthians 10:13). True believers should never fall into sin and submit to temptation. God does not allow us to be tempted above what we can handle. With each temptation, He provides a way of escape.

Having started the race, we must continue running to receive the prize.

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant" (1 Corinthians 12:1).

Paul spent three chapters providing information on the gifts of the Spirit. These gifts come from God and are used for His glory. Each person can serve the church in a spiritual area.







The gifts reveal God at work through human vessels. Various gifts allow us to:

- 📖 Speak like God speaks.
- 📖 Think like God thinks.
- 📖 Act like God acts.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

This chapter begins by exhorting believers to walk pleasing to God. Believers are expected to obey God's will by maintaining high standards of holiness. A believer should abstain from fornication, keep his vessel in sanctification, and remain unblameable in holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3, 3:13).

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul wanted Christians to be fully informed on an important subject—the believer's hope. Jesus is coming soon! This is referred to as the "Rapture." It comes from a word meaning, "caught away" or "caught up."

-  Christ will descend from heaven for His church.
-  The dead in Christ will rise first.
-  Both the resurrected believers and the transformed believers will be caught up together to meet Christ in the air.
-  Living believers will be transformed, their bodies taking on immortality. This will happen in a twinkling of an eye.
-  They will be united with Christ.
-  The believer's hope is that Jesus will return soon so that he can "ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:8-9).

Unbelievers continue to mockingly ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter 3:4). Christians continue to look forward to the coming of the Lord and the promise of a new heaven and earth.

God counts a thousand years as almost nothing. He does not measure time by human standards. God views time from eternity's perspective.

"He can accomplish in one day what we might expect would take a thousand years, or He can take a thousand years to accomplish what we would like to see done in a day." (*Full Life Study Bible*, page 1997.)

The Lord delays His coming because He is longsuffering and does not want anyone to perish. The gospel should be preached to everyone. God is patiently giving sinful mankind the opportunity to repent.

Peter demanded that all Christians live holy and godly lives, looking forward to the coming of the Lord.

Christians hasten the coming of the Lord by committing themselves to evangelizing the entire world and by desiring and praying for His return.

Gene Edwards in *The Silas Diary* supposed that many of the early believers were "illiterate, but that does not mean they are ignorant." He suggests that the apostles taught through offering practical advice, answering questions, and telling stories. The student(s) would repeat the stories back to the teacher. Mistakes were corrected until the student(s) could repeat the story almost word for word.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.” (Hosea 4:6)

People in Hosea’s day were destroyed by their lack of knowledge. Not because knowledge was not available but because they rejected God’s Word. People today continue to be destroyed because of their sinful ways, love for the world, and rejection of truth.

“Those that rebel against the light can expect no other than to perish in the dark.”

(Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible)

“Both priests and people rejected knowledge; and justly therefore will God reject them. The reason why the people did not learn, and the priests did not teach, was not because they had not the light, but because they hated it—not because they had not ways of coming to the knowledge of God and of communicating it, but because they had no heart to it; they rejected it. They desired not the knowledge of God’s ways, but put it from them, and shut their eyes against the light.” (From *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database.)

“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Satan is always trying to gain advantage over us and lead us away from God. Christians should not be ignorant of Satan’s devices. Before Paul wrote 2 Corinthians 2: 11, he was talking about “forgiveness.” One way we allow Satan to get an advantage over us is by refusing to forgive.

Spiritual illiteracy can be costly. It is a matter of eternal life or death.

Study Questions

1. What affect does a lack of biblical knowledge have on Christians today? _____

2. Where did Peter and John receive their spiritual knowledge? _____

3. How did the religious professionals view Peter and John? _____

4. Why did Paul say, "I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea"? _____

5. What do the various gifts of the Spirit allow us to do? _____

6. What is expected of believers according to 1 Thessalonians 3:13? _____

7. What subject did Paul address in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18? _____

8. What is the believer's hope? _____

9. When Jesus returns and catches away the church, how long will they be with the Lord? _____

10. What answer would you give those who ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3:4)? _____

11. How did the apostles teach the early Christians who were illiterate? _____

Accurately Handling God's Word

“Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah; so he asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” (Acts 8:30).

Philip met an Ethiopian man traveling on a lonely, dusty road. Seated in his carriage he was reading—but not understanding—Isaiah 53:7-8. He needed an interpreter. God had one waiting on the side of the desert road. God is always on time. He had the right man, at the right time, and at the right place.

The Ethiopian asked, “Was Isaiah talking about himself or someone else?” Philip used this Scripture, and many others to tell this hungry soul the good news about Jesus. As they rode along, they came to some water, and the man asked, “Why can’t I be baptized?” They stopped and Philip happily baptized him. The Ethiopian had an open heart, and was willing to ask the right questions. Philip was an obedient preacher prepared with the right answers. The questions asked, and the answers given in this story reveal an important process. Welcome to a lesson about “Hermeneutics.”

Herman Who?

You may be thinking “Herman, who?” We are not talking about Mr. Herman New Ticks but of a Greek word (“*hermeneuo*”) meaning “to explain” or “to interpret.”

Acts 14:8-18 is an amusing narrative about Barnabas and Paul. They prayed for a man who had never walked. God healed him. When the locals saw the miracle, they shouted, “The gods have come down in human bodies.”

They concluded that Barnabas was the Greek god, Zeus and Paul was Hermes because he was the “chief speaker.” Hermes (or Mercury) was the messenger of the Greek gods responsible for speech, writing, and directing traffic. Sculptures of Hermes stood at street corners to mark directions (much like traffic or roadway signs used today).

What is Hermeneutics?

Hermeneutics refers to (among other things) correctly interpreting the Word of God. *Webster’s Dictionary* defines “interpretation” as “an explanation produced by interpreting” or “the essence of meaning.”

Hermeneutical principles work hand-in-hand with other Bible study methods. They help us to accurately understand, preach and teach God’s Word.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:16, *NASU*).

Is Hermeneutics for everyone?

Hold on! You may be thinking, “This is a lesson for preachers and Bible teachers. I’m neither. Could I skip over this lesson?”

The answer is, “No!” Everyone needs to understand the Bible. God’s Word is accessible in thousands of languages so we can read and comprehend it in the language of the heart—our mother tongue.

The principles taught here will help you to study, understand, and apply God’s Word. The process of biblical interpretation is not difficult. Let me share a secret. You are already involved in interpreting God’s Word. That is right. We use hermeneutics often and may not even realize it.

Each time we open the Bible and read a passage we take up two roles:

1. Reader
2. Interpreter

As we examine a verse we immediately consider how it relates to us. Silently each reader asks, “How is this relevant to my situation? How does it apply to me?” If what we read does not apply we leave it behind.

Those who work among diverse language groups are familiar with interpreters. They explain the spirit and heart of what is said in a way local people can comprehend.

“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading” (Nehemiah 8:8).

Read distinctly	Read carefully and thoughtfully. Do not rush through God’s Word.
Gave the sense	Interpreted the words from the original into the language of the people.
Caused to understand	Explained the meaning.

As one missionary preached he noted something unusual. He would speak a few words and the interpreter would take much longer to interpret. The preacher looked at him and asked, “Are you interpreting what I am saying?”

The interpreter responded, “Yes, and I am greatly improving upon it.”

Preachers interpret God’s Word but should never “greatly improve upon it.” The Bible is complete—addition and/or subtraction are not permitted.

Misinterpretation and/or misunderstanding of Scripture abound. Extra-biblical teachings (false doctrines) are widespread. Wrong ideas lead people away from truth. Some doctrines are designed to gain popularity and acceptance. Always look for God’s approval and not that of men (2 Timothy 2:15). Beware of false teachers who twist scriptures to conform to their flawed thinking (Philippians 3:1-2; 2 Peter 3:16-17). A fundamental rule of interpretation is to never make the Bible mean what it never meant to the author (2 Peter 1:20). To make the Bible say something that was never intended is abuse, misuse, and exploitation. This is not pleasing to God (See Revelations 22:18-19; Galatians 1:8-9).

Here is some advice for those who preach and teach God’s message: “And remember why he is waiting. He is giving us time to get his message of salvation out to others. Our wise and beloved brother Paul has talked about these same things in many of his letters. Some of his comments are not easy to understand, and there are people who are deliberately stupid, and always demand some unusual interpretation—they have twisted his letters around to mean something quite different from what he meant, just as they do the other parts of the Scripture—and the result is disaster for them. I am warning you ahead of time, dear brothers, so that you can watch out and not be carried away by the mistakes of these wicked men, lest you yourselves become mixed up too. But grow in spiritual strength and become better acquainted with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:15-18, *TLB*).

Perhaps, you do not claim to be a preacher. Do not feel left out. Here is some guidance for you.

“Then we will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds, about what we believe because someone has told us something different or because someone has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth” (Ephesians 4:14, *NLT*).

John Bunyan in *Pilgrim’s Progress* refers to the House of the Interpreter. This alludes to the House of God. People come to church anxious to hear God’s Word preached and interpreted for them. They want the Bible to be explained and applied in a way they can understand.

The Interpreter that Christian meets invites him into his house, and commands his man to light the Candle. In this we learn that the preaching of God’s Word brings illumination to the hearer.

“As your words are taught, they give light; even the simple can understand them” (Psalms 119:130, *NLT*).

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalms 119:105).

Once inside Christian sees the picture of a serious person hanging against the wall. This is what the picture looked like: “It had eyes lifted up to Heaven, the best of Books in his hand, the Law of Truth was written upon his lips, the World was behind his back; it stood as if it pleaded with men, and a Crown of Gold did hang over its head.”

This is an ideal portrait of a preacher. He depends upon God for anointing, wisdom, and direction. The “best of Books in his hand” is a reference to the Bible. He preaches or teaches truth and translates the Word of God for people.

Study Questions

1. What is “hermeneutics”? _____

2. Is “hermeneutics” for everyone in the Christian community? Explain. _____

3. What two roles do we take each time we open our Bible and read? _____

4. What do we consider or ask each time we read a verse? _____

5. What is the job of an interpreter? _____

6. What three things do we learn from Nehemiah 8:8? _____

7. Some doctrines are designed for popularity. Whose approval should we seek in preaching? _____

8. What is the fundamental rule of interpretation contained in this lesson? _____

9. Write out Psalms 119:130. _____

10. What is the ideal picture of a preacher? _____

Additional Notes

The Four Interpreters

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

All involved in multi-cultural ministry appreciate interpreters. Without them communication would be lost. Interpreting brings together and unites thought. Four interpreters assist us in understanding God’s original meaning in the words He spoke.

The Bible as Interpreter

The Word of God provides direction to all who read it or listens to it being preached or taught. The Psalmist said, “The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple” (Psalms 119:130, *NIV*). “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Psalms 119:105, *NIV*).

Anyone can find a Bible text to prove just about anything. This is dangerous! The entire Bible needs to be considered before arriving at an interpretation. The whole counsel of Scripture is necessary to reach legitimate conclusions. The principle of every word being established by two or three witnesses can be stretched to apply to interpretation (Matthew 18:16).

Skip Heitzig in *How to Study the Bible and Enjoy It* said, “The ultimate context of any text is the entire Bible.” Someone has said, “Scripture interprets Scripture.” This is especially true and needful when one Scripture seemingly contradicts another. God is the author of the Bible and His word is “consistent, cohesive, and coherent.”

Balance of truth is maintained when one verse is compared with the rest of the Bible. When this is not done false teachings creep into the church.

The Holy Spirit as Interpreter

A quick survey of the duties of the Holy Spirit will reveal, among others, that He illuminates, inspires, empowers, witnesses, counsels, reveals, leads, teaches, and guides. A closer look at some of these responsibilities explains how the Holy Spirit is an able Interpreter. As the Spirit of truth (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13) He guides into all truth (John 16:13). He leads us to Jesus Christ, “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6) and to God’s Word of Truth (John 17:17). The Holy Spirit also serves as a Teacher, “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26). His instruction pertains to several areas:

- Instruction in all things (John 14:26);

- Reminding what Jesus has said (John 14:26);
- Guiding into all truth (John 16:13);
- Revelation of the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10). (Zuck, *Spirit-filled Teaching*)

Not only does the Holy Spirit lead us into all truth, directing us to the Word of God, He also interprets or explains truth. Since He is dealing with God's Word of truth, His interpretation will never be in conflict with what the Bible says. The Spirit and the Word always agree. The Spirit is not an independent worker. "He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13). One might ask, "What is all truth?" The Spirit guides or leads along the road to "all truth" which is all of the Word of God. "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). The Spirit does not highlight part of the truth and hide another.

Have you ever read a Scripture and thought, "I've never noticed that before?" The Word of God comes alive. It is as if a light comes on. This phenomenon is called "illumination." The Holy Spirit did as Jesus prophesied, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

The Spirit's work as a Truth Guide does not eliminate the need for sound teaching and personal Bible study. If it did there would be no need for Bible study methods or tools. The hermeneutics textbook would never be opened. Bible studies and Bible teachers would be obsolete. The need for Bible colleges and seminaries would be minimized. However, this is not the case. These work hand-in-hand with the Holy Spirit to foster correct interpretation and understanding.

As we study God's Word the Holy Spirit works as our personal interpreter to help us with the meaning of a passage or verse. The Spirit expects us to study. "One should not think of the Spirit's work as an excuse for laziness, a way to avoid hard work in the study of the Scriptures. Discerning the meaning of a Scripture...usually results from intense and even prolonged research and study." (Zuck, 45)

The Pastor/Teacher as Interpreter

The Holy Spirit is an awesome Bible instructor and interpreter. However, God has other spiritual gifts in mind for our benefit. We still need godly, Spirit-filled teachers to "ground" us in God's Word. "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:11-12, *NIV*).

Remember the men of God mentioned by Nehemiah? "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" (Nehemiah 8:8, *NIV*).

Preachers interpret God's Word for the understanding of His people.

The Christian as Interpreter

The Bible is its own interpreter. The Holy Spirit leads, teaches, and guides us into all truth. The pastors and teachers interpret God's Word and declare it to people. The role of interpretation is not in the hands of a select few. Christians have a responsibility to read, study, and interpret God's Word too. We are advised to, "Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth" (2 Timothy 2:15, *AMP*). "Analyzing and accurately dividing" are twin brothers in the interpreting process. God reveals His deep things to those who love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9). He expects us to be obedient to His commands.

To assist with Bible study and interpretation three tools are needed: a study Bible, a Bible dictionary, and a concordance. Care must be taken not to use commentaries and dictionaries as a crutch. We cannot accept the views of another without hesitation. It is best to pray, study, allow the Holy Spirit to guide, and to look at the whole counsel of Scripture on a subject. Confirm your findings with consulting the work of seasoned teachers and pastors.

Have you ever heard someone say, "That is my interpretation of this passage"? Biblical interpretation, coupled with the role of the Holy Spirit to guide and teach is needed. As we interpret God's Word we endeavor to understand the meaning of Scripture to the original hearers (the then and there) and translate this for hearers and readers today (the here and now). The Interpreter builds a bridge between the ancient and modern worlds.

Ezra provides a role model to follow, "For Ezra had prepared and set his heart to seek the Law of the Lord [to inquire for it and of it, to require and yearn for it], and to do and teach in Israel its statutes and its ordinances" (Ezra 7:10, *AMP*).

Conclusion

One may wonder, "Who or what is the most important Interpreter?" Is it the Holy Spirit? Is it the Word of God? Is it the Bible teacher or pastor? Is it the Christian? The greatest strength is found when all four work together. Balance is needed. It is easy to get off-balance. Private interpretation should be avoided. "[Yet] first [you must] understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is [a matter] of any personal or private or special interpretation (loosening, solving)" (2 Peter 1:20, *AMP*).

Consider Acts 17:11 for the perfect blend. "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11). The preacher, Holy Spirit

(working in the lives of the preacher and the listeners), Scriptures, and Bereans all worked together to examine, interpret, and understand God's Word.

Study Questions

11. List the four interpreters introduced in this lesson. _____

12. What would happen if a multi-cultural ministry did not have an interpreter? _____

13. Write out Psalms 119:130. _____

14. What principle is mentioned in Matthew 18:16? _____

15. What/who is the best interpreter of Scripture? _____

16. What happens when one verse is compared with the rest of the Bible? _____

17. What happens when one verse is not compared with the rest of the Bible? _____

18. What are some duties of the Holy Spirit? _____

19. How is the Holy Spirit considered to be an able Interpreter? _____

20. The instructions given by the Holy Spirit are in what four areas? _____

21. The Holy Spirit's interpretation will never be in conflict with what the Bible says. Explain.

22. The Spirit's work as a Truth Guide does not eliminate the need for teaching and Bible study. Explain. _____

23. How do we usually discern the meaning of a Scripture? _____

24. What is the primary work of godly, Spirit-filled teachers? _____

25. What three tools assist with Bible study and interpretation? _____

26. How did Ezra provide a role model for us to follow? _____

27. Who or what is the most important interpreter? Explain. _____

28. Write out 2 Peter 1:20. _____

29. How does Acts 17:11 provide the perfect blend (mixture)? _____

30. What did the four interpreters working together (in Acts 17:11) accomplish? _____

Additional Notes

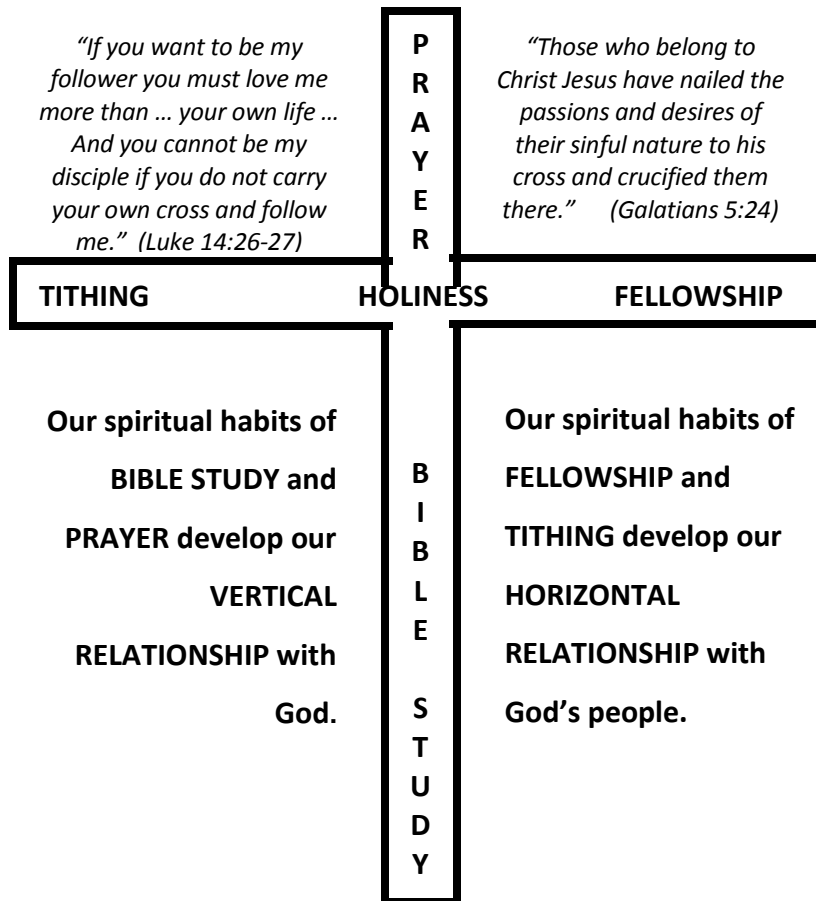
The Disciple's Cross (How to Maintain Good Habits)

(Adapted from a lesson by Raymond Woodward)



To benefit from a habit, you must embrace it voluntarily – it cannot be forced on you!

The Disciple's Cross



Our spiritual habit of **HOLINESS** is central to BOTH of these relationships, because it **GLORIFIES** God and **TESTIFIES** to man.

*"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
(Matthew 5:16)*

"In the past you voluntarily gave your bodies to the service of vice and ... the purposes of evil. So now give yourselves to the service of righteousness - for the purpose of becoming truly good." (Romans 6:19)

If SIN develops in my life through the simple repetition of BAD habits, RIGHTEOUSNESS will develop in my life through the simple repetition of GOOD habits!

HOW TO MAINTAIN GOOD HABITS

1. DESIRE

If you start half-heartedly, you'll never succeed. Whether you think you CAN or you think you CAN'T, you're right!

2. DECISION

Don't procrastinate. It's much easier to break a bad habit today than it will be later! "Tomorrow" just never comes.

"If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done." (*Ecclesiastes 11:4*)

3. DECLARATION

The power of a promise is awesome, particularly if you have a friend hold you accountable to keep it!

"Let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over each other, studying how we may stir up and stimulate each other to ... helpful deeds and noble activities." (*Hebrews 10:24*)

"Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up." (*Ecclesiastes 4:9-10*)

4. DETERMINATION

Never be swayed by the devil's temptation to return to your old habits "just this once." The act of yielding to temptation weakens your will and reinforces your lack of self-control. Remember that it takes 3 weeks to become comfortable with a new habit (doing it daily) and another 3 weeks for it to become a permanent part of your life.

5. DEPENDENCE ON GOD

Rely on God's power to help you establish your new habits. Satan will do all he can to tempt you, cause you to slip, or discourage you. Pray for God's help!

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline." (*2 Timothy 1:7*)

"For it is God who is at work within you, giving you the will and the power to achieve his purpose." (*Philippians 2:13*)

The Habit Of Bible Study



SIX WAYS TO GET A GRASP ON YOUR BIBLE

"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 making us well prepared at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

HOW TO HEAR GOD'S WORD

"Faith comes from hearing the Word of God." (*Romans 10:17*)



The problem is that we forget 95% of what we hear after 72 hours. We have to work on it!

1. Deal with attitudes that prevent you from hearing God. (see the Parable of the Sower in Luke 8:4-15)

"Consider carefully how you listen ..." (Luke 8:18)

✓ **A Closed Mind:** Could fear, pride or bitterness be preventing me from hearing God

Speak?

- ✓ **A Superficial Mind:** Am I only casually listening, or really serious in wanting to hear God speak?
- ✓ **A Preoccupied Mind:** Am I too busy, inattentive or concerned with other things to concentrate on what God has to say?
- ✓ **A Ready Mind:** I really want to hear from God!

2. Take notes on what you hear.

"We must pay more careful attention to what we've heard, so that we do not drift away!"
(Hebrews 2:1)

3. Act on what you hear!

"Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says!" (James 1:22)

"Whoever ... does not simply listen and then forget, but puts it into practice - that person will be blessed in what he does." (James 1:25)

4. Read God's Word DAILY!

"(The Bible) shall be his constant companion. He must read from it every day of his life so that he will learn to respect the Lord his God by obeying all of his commands." (Deuteronomy 17:19)



If I read approximately 15 minutes a day, I can read through the Bible once a year.

SUGGESTIONS:

- ✓ Read the Bible **systematically**, not haphazardly.
- ✓ Use a Bible without notes so **GOD** can speak to you.
 - ✓ Read from different translations for **understanding**.
 - ✓ Read the Bible aloud (quietly to yourself) for **focus**.
 - ✓ Underline or highlight key verses for **emphasis**.
 - ✓ Choose a reading plan and **stick with it!**



One idea is to use the KING JAMES VERSION for its accuracy, the NEW LIVING TRANSLATION for its readability, and other versions occasionally for CLARITY.

HOW TO STUDY GOD'S WORD

"... they accepted the message eagerly and studied the Scriptures every day ..."
(Acts 17:11)

"Be a good workman ... know what His Word says and means." (2 Timothy 2:15)

The difference between reading and studying the Bible is simply that you **MAKE NOTES** when you study. The two secrets of effective Bible study are: (1) comparing other Scripture verses on the same subject, and (2) using additional study helps to answer background questions.

- Study Bible – helps find other Scriptures on same subject
- Parallel Bible – compares two or more Bible translations
- Application Bible – relates the Scriptures to modern life
- Bible Dictionary – gives detailed background information
- Concordance – helps find certain words in the Bible
- Commentary – offers inspirational background material



Be sure to let your BIBLE speak to you FIRST, before referring to these resources.

HOW TO MEMORIZE GOD'S WORD

"Guard my words as your most precious possession. Write them down, and also keep them deep within your heart." (*Proverbs 7:2-3*)

1. Pick a verse that speaks to you.
2. Say the reference before and after the verse.
3. Read the verse aloud many times, or record it!
4. Break the verse into natural phrases.
5. Emphasize key words when quoting the verse.
6. Write down the verse and erase one word at a time.
7. Write out the verse on a flash card.
8. Carry some cards with you at all times for review.
9. Display your verses in prominent places.
10. Always memorize the verse perfectly.
11. Put the verse to music – write a song!
12. Get a partner so you can check each other.

BENEFITS OF MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE:

1. It helps me resist temptations.

"I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you." (Psalm 119:11)

2. It helps me make wise decisions.

"Your Word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path." (Psalm 119:105)

3. It strengthens me when I'm under stress.

"... Your promises to me are my hope. They give me strength in all my troubles; how they refresh and revive me!" (Psalm 119:49)

4. It comforts me when I'm sad.

"Your words are what sustain me ... They bring joy to my sorrowing heart and delight me."
(Jeremiah 15:16)

5. It helps me witness to unbelievers.

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." (1 Peter 3:15)

"Your teachings are worth more to me than thousands of pieces of gold and silver." (*Psalm 119:72*)



The key to memorizing Scripture (or anything else) is REVIEW! Everyone makes a CHOICE to remember things that are important to them.

HOW TO MEDITATE ON GOD'S WORD

"(Those) who are always meditating on His Laws ... are like trees along a river bank bearing fruit ... they never wither and whatever they do prospers." (*Psalm 1:2-3*)



Meditation is FOCUSED THINKING about a Bible verse in order to discover how I can apply its truth to my own life.

1. **Picture it!** Imagine the scene in your mind.
2. **Pronounce it!** Say the verse aloud, each time emphasizing a different word.
3. **Paraphrase it!** Rewrite the verse in your own words.
4. **Personalize it!** Replace the pronouns or people in the verse with your own name.
5. **Pray it!** Turn the verse into a prayer and say it back to God.
6. **Probe it!** Ask questions like these: **IS THERE A ...**

S IN TO CONFESS?
P ROMISE TO CLAIM?
A TTITUDE TO CHANGE?
C OMMAND TO KEEP?
E XAMPLE TO FOLLOW?
P RAYER TO PRAY?
E RROR TO AVOID?
T RUTH TO BELIEVE?
S PECIAL BLESSING TO THANK GOD FOR?

BENEFITS OF MEDITATING ON SCRIPTURE:

1. It is the key to becoming like Christ.

"... Your life is shaped by your thoughts." (*Proverbs 4:23*)

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (*Romans 12:2*)

"As we ... contemplate the Lord's glory, we are being transformed into His likeness ..." (*2 Corinthians 3:18*)

2. It is the key to answered prayer.

"If you live your life in Me, and my words live in your hearts, you can ask for whatever you like, and it will come true for you." (*John 15:7*)

3. It is the key to successful living.

"... Meditate on (the Word) day and night, so you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." (*Joshua 1:8*)

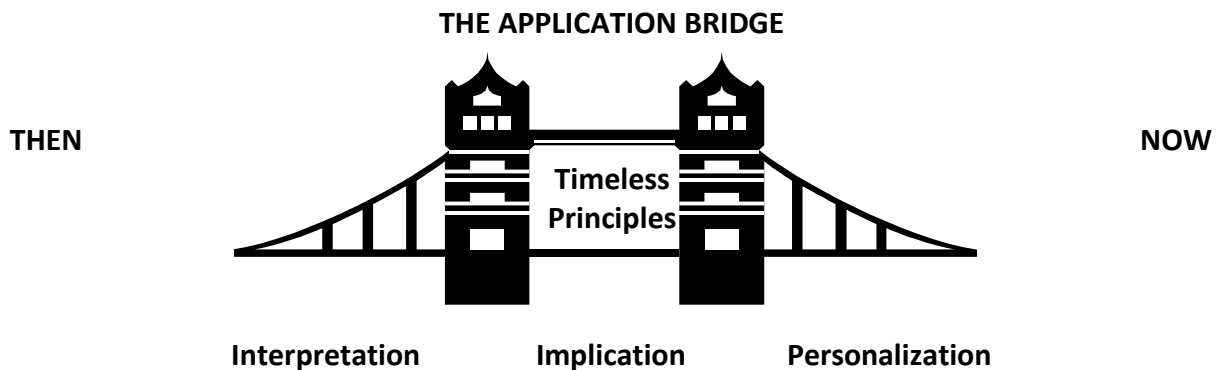


WORRY is simply negative meditation. If you can worry, you already know how to meditate!

HOW TO APPLY GOD'S WORD

"Do not fool yourselves by just listening to the Word. Instead, put it into practice." (*James 1:22*)

"... Whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (*Matthew 5:19*)



QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- 1.** What did this mean to the original hearers?
- 2.** What is the underlying timeless principle?
- 3.** Where or how could I apply that principle?

AN EXAMPLE:

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Interpretation: The Apostle Paul requested that the Corinthian Christians not eat meat offered to idols so as not to offend weaker believers recently delivered from idol worship, even though they knew the idols had no power.

Implication: Don't do anything that offends a fellow Christian, even if the activity is not sinful in and of itself.

Personalization: I will not patronize businesses where there are bars, even though drinking alcohol might not be a temptation for me, because my presence could influence a weaker member in our church to go there and fall into sin.

"Now that you know these things - do them! That is the path of blessing!" (*John 13:17*)

Study Questions

1. List the spiritual habits that develop our relationship with God. _____

2. List the spiritual habits that develop our relationship with God's people. _____

3. What spiritual habit is central to both of the above relationships? Why? _____

4. Write out (with Scripture reference) a verse that supports the above question and answer. _____

5. If _____ develops in my life through the simple repetition of _____ habits, _____ will develop in my life through the simple repetition of _____ habits.
6. List and briefly explain five (5) ways to maintain good habits. Support your answers with Scripture where possible.
1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

7. List (with Scripture reference) the six (6) ways to get a grasp on Bible study.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

8. List and briefly explain three attitudes that prevent you from hearing God.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

9. Write out one verse of Scripture, with reference (from the Old Testament) that commands us to read God's Word daily. _____

10. If I read approximately 15 _____ a _____, I can read through the _____ once a _____.

11. The difference between _____ and _____ the Bible is simply that you make _____ when you _____.

12. List the two (2) secrets of effective Bible study:

1) _____

2) _____

13. Given the following different study helps, explain what each of them assists you with in Bible study.

- 1) Study Bible _____
- 2) Parallel Bible _____
- 3) Application Bible _____
- 4) Bible Dictionary _____
- 5) Concordance _____
- 6) Commentary _____

14. Be sure to let your _____ speak to you FIRST, before _____ to these _____.

15. List twelve (12) suggestions of ways to memorize God's Word.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____
- 11) _____
- 12) _____

16. List five (5) benefits (with Scripture reference) of memorizing Scripture.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

17. The key to _____ Scripture (or anything else) is _____!
Everyone makes a _____ to _____ things that are _____ to them.

18. Define meditation. _____

19. List and briefly explain six (6) ways to meditate on God's Word.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

20. List three (3) benefits (with Scripture reference) of meditating on Scripture.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

21. _____ is simply negative _____. If you can _____, you already know how to _____.

22. List the three (3) timeless principles of application.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

23. List the three (3) questions you should ask to apply any verse from the past to your life now.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

**"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15, *KJV*)**