

BEFORE YOU GO...

//STUDY THE WORD

I BELIEVE THAT ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN A CHRISTIAN FOR ANY AMOUNT OF TIME UNDERSTANDS THAT WE MUST READ GOD'S WORD; FOR THIS IS HOW WE COME TO KNOW OUR GOD; WHO HE IS, WHAT HE LIKES, AND WHAT HE DISLIKES. YET, WHY DO SO MANY CHRISTIANS DISREGARD THE IMPORTANCE OF BUSTING OUT THE BIBLE? ESPECIALLY WHEN WE CONSIDER WHAT WE ARE TOLD IN 2 TIMOTHY 2:15: "BE DILIGENT TO PRESENT YOURSELF APPROVED TO GOD AS A WORKMAN WHO DOES NOT NEED TO BE ASHAMED, HANDLING ACCURATELY THE WORD OF TRUTH."

Yes, we are to be diligent, we are to work at knowing God's Word, what it has to say to us, and what it commands us to say to others. But if you're anything like me, there are always a million other things to do in life. Like watching a movie, going motorcycle riding, eating, sleeping, and even making a cake (just kidding on the cake). But know this ... it's the Word of God that can change our lives! The reading of God's Word can build us up where we are weak and it can fortify and strengthen our inner spirit. But most importantly, it should cause us to be more like our Heavenly Father. Let me remind you of what the Bible says in Romans 10:17, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

The ability to move by faith and trust in the promises of God is put into hyper drive by the reading of His Word. It unleashes the power from on High to us who simply believe what God has spoken to us.

So, when we say study the Bible, don't go old man on me [pre-Christian] and get all psyched-out about it. Just pick up the Bible and read it. Here are three reasons why:

//TO BE EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK:

2 Timothy 3: 16-17 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

//BE READY TO GIVE AN ANSWER:

1 Peter 3: 15 says, "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always {being} ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

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//TO KEEP US FROM SIN:

It was King David who said in Psalm 119:9, 11, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping {it} according to Thy word, Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee."

Now that we have the "**why**" down, let's take a look at the "**how**." Ken Needham, a pastor from Ireland gives us some good ideas on how to study the Bible. Here are **seven steps** worth taking to heart.

STEP 1

//WE SHOULD STUDY THE WORD LIKE A MAN

Why? Because that is what we are! We can be limited and a little clueless at times. Meaning, we don't always grasp spiritual things with our natural mind. It was the apostle Peter who said in 1 Peter 2:2, "Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."

Understand... the purpose of studying the Bible is to know God and what He requires of us. Listen to how one of the minor prophets of the Old Testament put it in Micah 6:8: "He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."

It was Warren Wiersbe who said, "We do not read the Bible to circle the precious promises, although there are many, nor do we read it to learn Bible doctrine, although that is essential. We read the Bible to get to know the heart and mind of God."

STEP 2

//WE ARE TO STUDY THE WORD LIKE A STUDENT.

We should passionately study God's Word to know everything that God desires to reveal to us. Listen to Ecclesiastes 1: 13: "I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven" [NIV]. Yes, you have to go for it, read it, and treasure it, making it part of your daily routine.

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STEP 3

//WE ARE TO STUDY THE WORD LIKE A COW.

A cow has four stomachs, which causes him to chew on his food many times over. Job 23:12 says, "I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."

In the same way, we must ponder and meditate on what we read. We must consider what it means to us personally. We must try to figure out how it applies to our lives right where we live, work, or go to school. Then we must let it grip our very hearts and soul. Listen to Psalm 1: 1-3,

"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree {firmly} planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers."

Yes ... **how blessed** or **how happy** is the man who meditates, or chews on the Word of God like a cow. When we do this, it causes our heart to change from the inside out. And that is what compels us to passionately share this life changing message with others! Make note ... **It is not how you mark your Bible that counts, but rather how your Bible marks you.**

STEP 4

//WE ARE TO STUDY THE WORD LIKE A SOLDIER.

Why? Because a soldier is dedicated and committed to following the orders of his superior so that he may please him. That's why the Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:4, "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."

That word **entangles** in the Greek language means to involve, to interweave. I wonder if that would describe you. Are you interwoven into this world? We cannot entangle ourselves in the affairs of this life. This world will take our focus off becoming who God has desired us to be.

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STEP 5

//WE NEED TO STUDY THE WORD LIKE A LOVER.

We should be passionate about our time with God, The Bible says in Psalm 119: 140, "Thy word is very pure, therefore Thy servant loves it."

When you're in love, you act like you're in love, Meaning, you are constantly reminding yourself of him or her. You long to be with them, you want to spend time with them. Let me ask you, should it be any less with our Savior, the one who came, bled, and died for us? This is important to remember ... God desires to spend time with you because He is passionately in love with you. Like He says in Psalm 139: 17-18, "How precious also are Thy thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. When I awake, I am still with Thee."

STEP 6

//WE SHOULD STUDY THE WORD LIKE A TEACHER.

We must read it to understand it, along with the intention of teaching it. We have to ask questions when we hit a wall (make yourself part of a Bible study group so you have someone to ask). And then, pass it on. Reach out to everybody you know like a teacher. Speak of the things of God in a way that makes sense. Learn to illustrate the Word in a way that people will understand it. Look into their eyes, to see if they're tracking with you and when you're finished, make sure they got it. It was David who wanted to be like a teacher in Psalm 51:13, "{Then} I will teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners will be converted to Thee."

I like what Martin Luther said, "I study my Bible as I gather apples. First, I shake the whole tree that the ripest might fall. Then I shake each limb, and when I have shaken each limb, I shake each branch and every twig. Then I look under every leaf,"

//YES, WE ARE TO STUDY THE WORD LIKE:

- //1. A **mere man**
- //2. A **student**
- //3. A **cow**
- //4. A **soldier**
- //5. A **lover**
- //6. A **teacher**
and finally...

STEP 7

//WE ARE TO STUDY THE WORD LIKE A REAL PERSON.

It is important that you know this ... the Bible is a love letter from the Creator to you. It's a treasure chest full of His promises to you and to me, we must read it and we must believe it.

Then we must act on it. Meaning ... we must do what it says to do! Then you will see the Holy Spirit of God unleash His perfect will in your life, Remember what Jesus said in John 15:7, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."

Well, there you have it. We are all supposed to be like fat cows, just kidding, But we are supposed to study the Word of God with a real passion. A passion that not only answers the questions that life throws at us, but with a zeal that desires to give an answer to every man that asks us "why" we believe what we believe.

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