

*"In the Bible God gives us revelations of himself  
which lead us to worship, promises of salvation which stimulate our faith,  
and commandments expressing his will which demand our obedience.  
This is the meaning of Christian discipleship."*

**JOHN R. W. STOTT**

## **BIBLE STUDY**

<b>Desire</b>	to know what the Bible says and how it intersects with my life
<b>Definition</b>	Bible study involves engaging the mind and focusing attention on Scripture in an attempt to understand and apply truth to every part of my life.
<b>Scripture</b>	<p>"Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way." (2 Timothy 3:16 <i>The Message</i>)</p> <p>"Let the word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God!" (Colossians 3:16 <i>The Message</i>)</p> <p>"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." (Psalm 119:11)</p>
<b>Practice Includes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attending to biblical instruction (oral or written) with an open mind and heart in order to grow in love and understanding of the truth</li> <li>• systematically studying Scripture to gain the big picture of what God is doing on planet earth</li> <li>• using study guides, manuscript studies, small group Bible studies, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>God-Given Fruit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• keeping company with Jesus no matter how little or much God speaks to me through his Word</li> <li>• loving God with my mind</li> <li>• learning and internalizing what Scripture teaches about God</li> <li>• having Scripture shape and form my thinking and lifestyle so they are increasingly redemptive and life-giving</li> <li>• using my understanding to build the community of faith</li> <li>• putting myself in a place where God can instruct and correct my behavior and attitudes</li> <li>• growing in my ability to rationally defend and express my faith</li> </ul>

## BIBLE STUDY

**THE BIBLE IS DIVINE REVELATION.** God's own word to us. It reveals who God is, who we are and why we are here. Through Bible study we gain insights into God, human nature and creation.\* Studying Scripture can equip, guide and reveal how to live in life-giving ways that deepen our friendship with God and others. Both Old and New Testaments encourage regular study, meditation, contemplation and memorization of God's Word. The benefits of Bible study are directly related to how open, attentive and obedient we are to what we read.

Jesus exemplified the love of God's Word in every area of his life. He used Scripture to answer those who tested him, resist temptation, find guidance, encourage his heart, comfort others, explain his actions and ultimately face his own death.

### SEVERAL WAYS TO STUDY THE BIBLE

**Artist method.** Read a passage of Scripture, considering three questions as you read:

1. What speaks to my heart? Draw a heart beside the word that speaks to your heart.
2. What new thought or idea comes to me? Draw a light bulb beside the new thought or idea.
3. What does Scripture move me to do? Draw a hand beside the action you want to take.

Consider how you can apply one of your insights today. Share your insights with a friend.

**Detective method.** Read a short narrative passage from one of the Gospels. Let the story take shape in your mind's eye. Imagine the scene. Observe all the facts. Ask the *who, when, where, what* questions. Once you have the facts, *interpret* the facts. Ask the *why* and *wherefore* questions. What meaning did the actions have for the characters? What meaning do the actions have for you? Then *apply* your study to your own life. Ask *how* will this change my life? What do you take away from the story?

**Treasure-seeker method.** When reading Scripture consider the following application questions: Is there an example here for me to follow? Is there a promise to claim or a command to obey? Is there a truth to be applied? Is there a prayer for me to pray? Is there a sin to be confessed? Is there a question God is asking me?

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\*I owe my understanding of Bible study to Ada Lum and Ruth Siemens. These two wonderful IFES staff mentored me in inductive study, fueling my desire to study the Scriptures.

**Jesus' apprentice method.** If you are unfamiliar with Scripture and don't know where to begin, choose one of the Gospels (Mark or Luke) and study to discover all you can about Jesus. Ask yourself the following questions: What seems important to Jesus? What sort of questions does he ask people? What sort of questions do people ask him? What is Jesus inviting me to be and do?

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How has God spoken to you through the study of his Word?  
How has Bible study affected your life?
2. When the Word of God seems dry to you, what do you make of this season in your life?
3. What are you looking for when you read Scripture—information, comfort, understanding, guidance, a word from God, communion with God?
4. How does what you are looking for influence how you study?

## SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

1. Experiment with different ways of listening to Scripture.
  - Read the Bible out loud. Savor the words. Which words stand out for you? Keep these words with you all day.
  - Listen to the Bible on tape or CD while driving or exercising.
  - Print a verse on a card and place it where you will see it throughout the day. Put a verse on your screen saver.
2. To enhance your understanding of the biblical context and meaning the text may have had to its original audience, invest in a Bible commentary, a Bible dictionary or go online and type in places, cultures and peoples you are reading about in your Bible study.
3. Go to a Christian bookstore or look online at the array of Bible study guides available. Does one of the study guides intrigue you? Let your desire guide you in choosing one for further study.
4. If systematic Bible study appeals to you, consider joining a Bible study at your church or in your community. Or begin your own neighborhood Bible study.
5. Study the questions Jesus asks people in the Gospels. What do you learn about Jesus and the importance of questions?

## RESOURCES ON BIBLE STUDY

*How to Lead a Seeker Bible Discussion* by Rebecca Manley Pippert

*How to Study the Bible* by Jack Kuhatschek

*Discovering the Bible for Yourself* by Judson Poling