

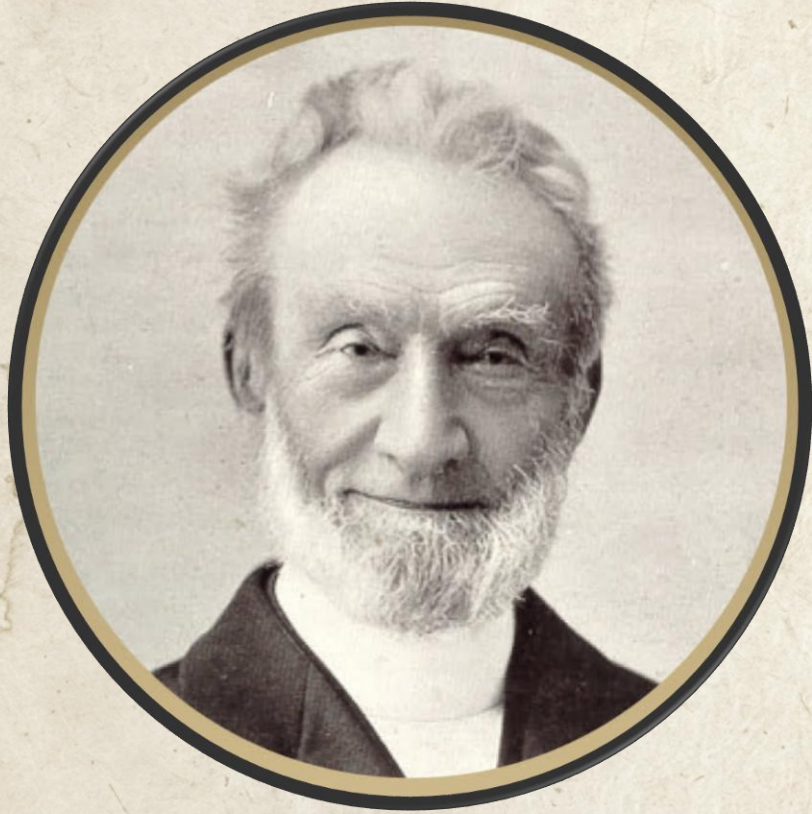
Men *of the* Word

## **SESSION 10:**

# **The Prerequisites of Bible Study**

# **IT IS WRITTEN**





“For the first four years after my conversion I made no progress, because I neglected the Bible. But when I regularly read on through the whole with reference to my own heart and soul, I directly made progress. Then my peace and joy continued more and more. Now I have been doing this for 47 years. I have read through the whole Bible about 100 times and I always find it fresh when I begin again. Thus my peace and joy have increased more and more.”

—George Mueller, *Narratives and Addresses*, 2.834



# I. Divine Regeneration

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## A. The Need for Regeneration

- **1 Corinthians 2:14–15** – “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.”
  - the unregenerate man's *moral bias*
  - the unregenerate man's *intellectual inability*
- *Context:* The knowledge of God revealed and recorded by the Spirit's ministry through select human messengers (1 Cor 2:6–13).



- **2 Corinthians 3:14–15** – “But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”
- **2 Corinthians 4:3–4** – “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”
- **John 14:17** – “. . . the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him . . . .”





## B. The Nature of Regeneration

- It is precisely the supernatural act of *regeneration* that overcomes the blinding effects of the sin nature and Satanic influence.
- Scripture speaks of regeneration as being “born of God” (John 1:12–13), being “born again” (John 3:5–8; 1 Pet 1:3, 23), having “the veil lifted” (2 Cor 3:12–18), being made “a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17), being “made alive” (Eph 2:5), and being “taught by God” (Eph 4:20–21).
- A. W. Pink: “Regeneration consists in a radical change of heart, for there is implanted a new disposition as the foundation of all holy exercises; the mind being renovated, the affections elevated, and the will emancipated from the bondage of sin.”



“We understand Scripture not because the Holy Spirit takes that which is opaque or translucent and makes it transparent; instead, we understand Scripture because the Holy Spirit transforms us, removing the moral blinders from our hearts’ eyes and enabling us to see Scripture *for what it is*.”

—David Garner, “Did God Really Say?,” 152



## II. Spiritual Illumination

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### A. The Nature of Illumination

- *Basic definition:* Illumination is “the work of the Holy Spirit giving understanding when the Scripture is heard or read” (MacArthur & Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 931).
- “Regeneration transforms the individual in totality, making him a new creation, resulting in a new nature. In other words, regeneration involves a dispositional change. Illumination, properly speaking, is the light seen by the one who is able, through regeneration, to see” (Stephen Nichols, *An Absolute Sort of Certainty*, 69).



- A survey of the biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit's ministry of illumination reveals that illumination:



- 1) *expands* the believer's *understanding* of God's Word;
- 2) *endows* the believer with *assurance* in the importance and truthfulness of God's Word;
- 3) *enlarges* the believer's *hunger* for the message of God's Word; and
- 4) *enables* the believer to *appropriate* the message of God's Word.

- This teaching on illumination is particularly concentrated in the Bible's prayers—especially the prayers of Psalm 119 and the prayers of Paul.



- **Psalm 119:18** – “Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law.”
- **Psalm 119:34** – “Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law and keep it with all my heart.”
- **Psalm 119:73** – “Your hands made me and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.”
- John Chrysostom: “We have, you see, a loving Lord, and when he sees us anxious to learn and demonstrating a keen appetite for understanding the divine sayings . . . he immediately enlightens our thinking, bestows illumination from himself, and in his inventive wisdom he implants in our soul the whole of his trustworthy instruction” (*Homily on Genesis*, 24.2).



- **Ephesians 1:17–19a** – “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.”
- **Ephesians 3:14–19** – “. . . that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”



## B. The Implications of Illumination

- Illumination is *not* revelation—the giving of new divine knowledge; instead, it operates in tandem with the revelation already given.
- Illumination is *not* inspiration—the work of the Spirit to ensure that divine knowledge is captured perfectly in human understanding and language; illumination is not a guarantee of perfect understanding.
- Illumination does *not* occur apart from the Bible; the Spirit works with the Word and through the Word, but never without the Word.
- Illumination does *not* negate the role of pastors and teachers, or the need for disciplined study; it works together with other God-ordained means.



“The role of the Holy Spirit is indispensable to proper biblical interpretation. The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible and He illumines Christians who read the words centuries later. Inspiration means that God superintended the writing of Scripture down to the last ‘jot and tittle.’ Illumination means that the Holy Spirit is now at work in the Christian to help him understand what is already there and to assist in applying the Word authentically. Inspiration gave us a revelation of God’s will without error, according to the Bible itself. But the Bible makes no such promise concerning illumination or Spirit-assisted understanding and application.”

—Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible*, 43–44



### III. Genuine Desire

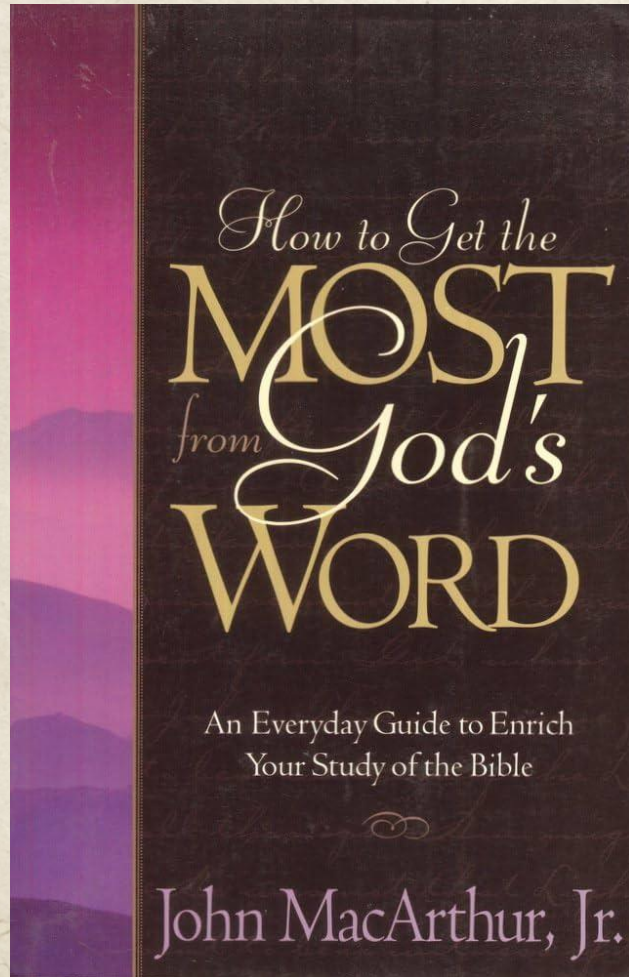
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- Appetites dictate actions! Hunger prompts us to eat, and the appetite for certain foods motivates us to do what it takes to find such food.
- But appetites must be developed—and this all begins with *settled conviction* and *repeated consumption*.
- **Matthew 4:4 (citing Deuteronomy 8:3):** “But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.”””
- **1 Peter 2:2** – “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”



- **Psalm 19:10** – “They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.”
- **Psalm 119:16** – “I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.”
- **Psalm 119:20** – “My soul is crushed with longing after Your ordinances at all times.”
- **Psalm 119:24** – “Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors.”
- **Psalm 119:131** – “I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for Your commandments.”





“Halfhearted Bible study is a bore. If you come to the Scriptures legalistically, ritualistically, or because you are intimidated by your peers or your pastor, you won’t get much out of it. What you need is a hunger in your heart, a passion for knowing God through His Word.”

—John MacArthur, *How to Get the Most from God’s Word*,  
153–54

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## IV. Consistent Prayer

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- John MacArthur: “No Christian should ever look down at the Word without first looking up at the very Source of the Word and asking for guidance. To engage in Bible study without prayer is presumption, if not sacrilege” (MacArthur, *How to Get the Most From God’s Word*, 155).
- **Psalm 119:12** – “Blessed are You, O LORD; teach me Your statutes.”
- **Psalm 119:18** – “Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law.”
- **Psalm 119:33** – “Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, and I shall observe it to the end.”



- **Psalm 119:131** – “I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for Your commandments.”
- **Psalm 119:135** – “Make Your face shine upon Your servant, and teach me Your statutes.”



- **Psalm 119:144** – “Your testimonies are righteous forever; give me understanding that I may live.”
- **Psalm 119:169** – “Let my cry come before You, O LORD; give me understanding according to Your word.”



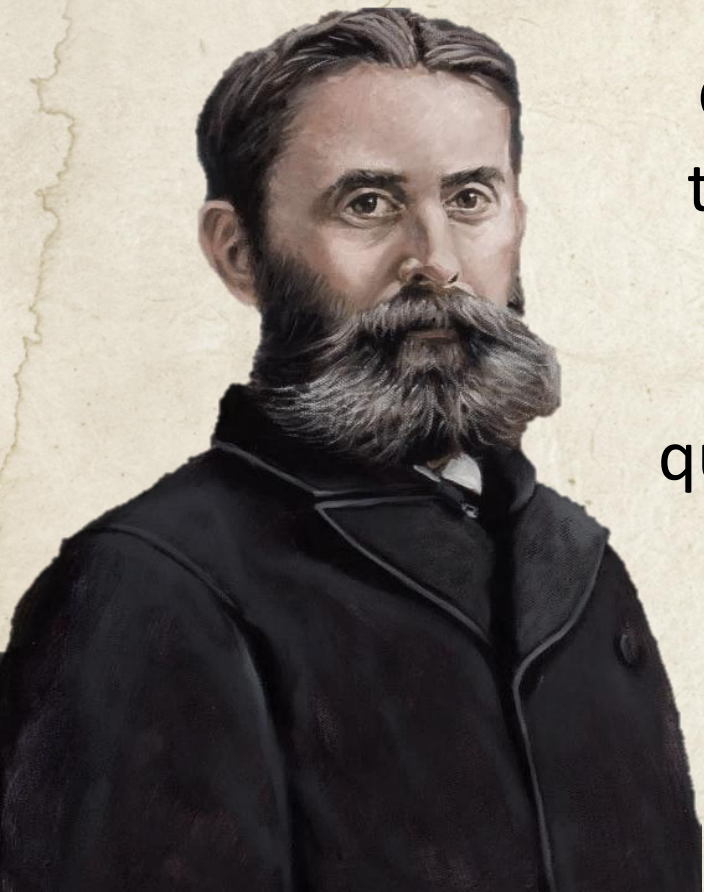


“Almighty, eternal and merciful God, whose Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, open and illuminate our minds, that we may purely and perfectly understand your Word and that our lives may be conformed to what we have rightly understood, that in nothing we may be displeasing unto your majesty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

—Huldrych Zwingli’s consistent prayer before beginning his weekday instruction in exegesis

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“Sometimes we hear it said that ten minutes on your knees will give you a truer, deeper, more operative knowledge of God than ten hours over your books. ‘What!’ is the appropriate response, ‘than ten hours over your books, on your knees?’ Why should you turn from God when you turn to your books, or feel that you must turn from your books in order to turn to God? If learning and devotion are as antagonistic as that, then the intellectual life is in itself accursed, and there can be no question of a religious life for a student, even of theology.”

—Benjamin B. Warfield, “The Religious Life of Theological Students,” 182



## V. Disciplined Study

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- **2 Timothy 2:15:** “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”

**The Course of  
Discipline (v. 15c)**

**The Character of  
Discipline (v. 15b)**

**The Command for  
Discipline (v. 15a)**

- Thomas Schreiner: “People say to me, How can scholarly knowledge facilitate the understanding of Holy Scripture? My answer is, How does ignorance contribute to it?” (*Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 5).



“‘We must acknowledge’—said the late Adolphe Monod—‘that in the beginning of the study of Scripture, there are many difficulties, and much obscurity. Some labor is necessary to dissipate them; and the mind of man is naturally slow and idle; and he easily loses courage, and is satisfied with reading over and over again, without penetrating further than the surface; and he learns nothing new; and the constant perusal of the same thing causeth weariness, as if the word of God was not interesting; as if we could not find some new instruction in it; as if it were not inexhaustible as God Himself. Let us ever’—he adds—‘beware of thinking these difficulties insurmountable. We must give ourselves trouble. For here, as in every part of the Christian life, God will have us to be laborers with Himself; and the knowledge of the Bible, and a relish for the Bible, are the fruit and recompence of this humble, sincere, and persevering study.’”

—Charles Bridges, *Ecclesiastes*, v–vi



## VI. Personal Obedience

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- **Deuteronomy 29:29** – “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”
- **Joshua 1:8** – “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”
- **Psalms 119:4** – “You have ordained Your precepts, that we should keep *them* diligently.”



- **Ezra 7:10** – “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice *it*, and to teach *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel.”

**Step 2: Obey**

**Step 3: Teach**

**Step 1: Study**

- **James 1:22–25** – “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.”





“Whoever fancies he can have an insight into truth, while he is yet living a wicked life, is mistaken.”

—Augustine

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“Let the Word of the Lord come, let it come. We will submit to it if we had many hundred necks to put under it.”

—the German preacher Baldusgar,  
cited in Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel Fear*, vii-viii

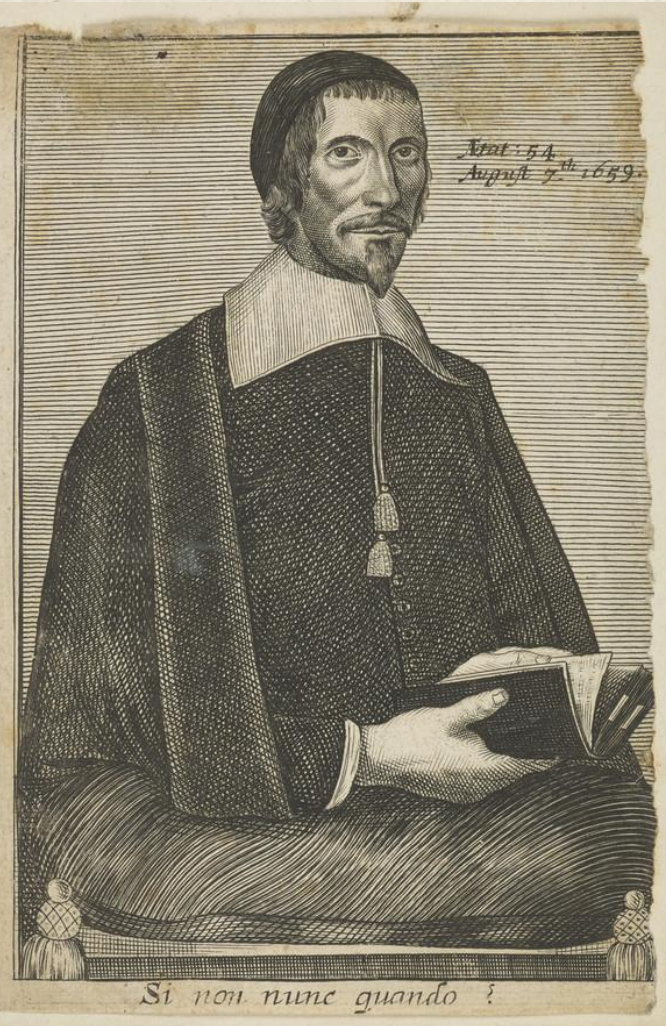


## VII. Fearful Reverence

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- **Psalms 25:9** – “He leads the humble in justice, and He teaches the humble His way.”
- **Ecclesiastes 12:13** – “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.”
- **Isaiah 66:1–2** – “Thus says the LORD: ‘Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being,’ declares the LORD. ‘But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.’”





“Oh, the Word of God has more of God’s name in it than all the world besides! Take heaven and earth, the whole creation altogether has not as much of the name of God as the Word of God has. There is more of God, there is greater and more divine luster in the Word of God, than there is in heaven and earth. . . . If you fear God’s Word, you need fear nothing else.”

—Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel Fear*, 8–9, 19

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“The more reverence we have for the Word of God,  
the more joy we shall find in it.”

—Matthew Henry

“It is most important to study the Bible in the spirit of the Bible—to exercise a critical habit in a spiritual atmosphere. Prayer, faith, humility, diligence, will bring rest and satisfaction to minds exercised in the school of God.”

—Charles Bridges

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# The Personal Prerequisites of Bible Study

I. Divine Regeneration

II. Spiritual Illumination

III. Genuine Desire

IV. Constant Prayer

V. Disciplined Study

VI. Personal Obedience

VII. Fearful Reverence



Men *of the* Word  
**2024–2025**

# IT IS WRITTEN

A Study of  
the Doctrine  
of Scripture