

Discovery Class

Week 1 of 9: Why Study the Bible, and Personal Preparation
Clayton Valley Church

Session Goals

These are the questions this session will chase down and answer. Keep them in mind as we work through the material.

- *If I have the Holy Spirit and I can pray directly to God, why do I need to study the Bible at all?*
- *What does it mean for my day-to-day life that Scripture is the source of truth, wisdom, and life, and not just a reference book I turn to when I have a question?*
- *What is the honest state of my own preparation, and what is one quality I need to develop before I can handle the Word of God well?*

A. Reasons for Bible Study

Before we attempt to understand how to study the Bible, we must settle the question of why we should study it. Consider these common objections:

- If salvation brings us into a personal relationship with God, why spend time studying the Bible when we could be spending that time talking directly to Him in prayer?
- If I am continually dedicating myself to the Lord, will He not continually teach me what He wants me to know directly through His Holy Spirit?
- Does not 1 John 2:27 say that believers have a special anointing from God so that the Spirit teaches us all things? Can I not just read the Bible and let the Spirit teach me what I need to know?

Our need to study and know the Scriptures is an absolutely desperate one. Six reasons why:

1. Scripture is the source of Revelation by God.

2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21 *All Scripture is inspired by God... no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

2. Scripture is the source of Truth.

Psalm 119:160 *The sum of Thy word is truth, and every one of Thy righteous ordinances is everlasting.*

3. Scripture is the source of Wisdom, Guidance, and Knowledge.

Psalm 119:97-105 *How I love Thy law... Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.*

4. Scripture is the source of Equipping.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *...that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

5. Scripture is the source of Life.

John 6:63; Psalm 119:17-18 *It is the Spirit who gives life... the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.*

6. Scripture is the instrument of Internal Change.

Psalm 19:9-11 *The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold... by them Thy servant is warned.*

B. Personal Preparation for Bible Study

Before we can open the sacred Word of God, we must take a moment to examine our walk with God. We need to ask ourselves some probing questions about where we are in relation to the following qualities.

1. Believer

1 Corinthians 2:14 *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.*

The natural man does not receive Scripture because to him it is foolishness: an attitude problem. He cannot understand it because examining it is a spiritual exercise: an aptitude problem. To interpret Scripture as an unbeliever would be like a blind man judging a beauty contest.

2. Prayer

Since Bible study is a spiritual discipline, prayer must precede it, and prayer itself must be a discipline.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 / Ephesians 6:18a / Luke 11:13 / Romans 8:26-27 / James 1:5 / Ephesians 1:16-18a

3. Spiritual

1 Corinthians 2:12 *We have received... the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God.*

1 Corinthians 2:15 *He who is spiritual appraises all things.*

We need to be submissive to the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18; Colossians 3:16) and dependent on Him. Because the Scriptures were written by the Spirit, they can only be rightly understood by the Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Psalms 119:18 *Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law.*

4. Heart for God

If you have a heart for God, you will long to know His heart as revealed in His Word, and you will want the Word planted deeply within your heart so that you will not sin against Him.

Psalms 119:11 *Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee.*

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 *Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might... and you shall teach them diligently to your sons.*

It is our mission to love God and to love His Word so that we hide it deeply within us. When that happens, our lives are transformed into His likeness.

5. Discipline

1 Timothy 4:7b *Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.*

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.*

Ezra 7:10 *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.*

To be disciplined you have to set goals (1 Corinthians 9:25-27; Hebrews 12:1-2) and then concentrate on them: focus without distraction, training your mind not to stray when you sit down to master the Word of God (1 Timothy 4:13-16; Acts 17:11).

6. Humility

Humility is sound judgment about yourself, both your limitations and your abilities (Romans 12:3). It leaves you sensing your own inadequacy before the text (2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6), which causes you to tremble before the Word of God rather than stand over it.

Isaiah 66:2b *To this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.*

Jeremiah 23:9 *My heart is broken within me, all my bones tremble... because of the LORD and because of His holy words.*

*Five additional qualities are in the take-home handout: **Faith, Obedience, Courage, Competitiveness, Compassion.***

Handout: God's Plan of Transformation

Take-home reference. This diagram shows how the Spirit of God and the Word of God work together toward the same end.



↓ **Results in** ↓

**Increasing
Christlikeness**

↓ **Results in** ↓

Greater Glory to God

Romans 11:36

Key Principle

The Spirit of God works through the Word of God to transform the children of God into the likeness of God, so as to bring maximum glory to God.

Handout: Personal Preparation, Continued

Five additional qualities of personal preparation. Read through these before next week and ask yourself the closing question at the bottom.

7. Faith

We must have faith to overcome the obstacles to consistent study (Romans 4:18-21), to trust the infallibility of Scripture as God's perfect source of truth (Psalm 19:7), and to apply what Scripture teaches even when it speaks against our culture, our feelings, or our prior beliefs.

8. Obedience

True obedience flows from our union with Christ (Romans 6). Abiding in Christ's word is the mark of a true disciple (John 8:31). Obedience affects our conscience (1 John 3:18-22), gives us credibility (1 Peter 3:16), shows us to be sincere rather than hypocrites (Romans 2:17-29), and elevates God's reputation (Romans 2:23-24).

9. Courage

Christians lack courage when they are unsure what they believe. Fear leads people to hedge on the truth or change it, to love error, want their ears tickled, and want only pleasant words (Jeremiah 5:30-31; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; Isaiah 30:9-11). Be courageous, because your conscience is clear before the Lord and your conviction is certain in His word (2 Timothy 1:7; Matthew 10:19, 26, 28, 31).

10. Competitiveness

Not against people, but against the things that keep us from reaching our goals, and ultimately against the enemy who works to keep us from what will benefit us and God's people (1 Corinthians 9:25-27; Hebrews 12:1; 2 Timothy 4:2-7).

11. Compassion

It is easy to use the Word of God as a weapon. Scripture should lead us to greater love and compassion for people, not bitterness or judgmentalism when people,

including ourselves, fail to live by its truths (1 Corinthians 8:1; 2 Peter 1:5-7; Matthew 9:35-36).

Closing question for personal reflection: *What attitudes and areas of my life do I need to work on to be better able to handle God's Word?*

Homework

Answer both questions before next class. There is no grade. Write out your answer, then compare it honestly with the response guide on the class homework page.

Question 1

How will you discipline your life so that your time in God's Word will grow? Why does this matter?

Question 2

Of the eleven qualities of personal preparation (six taught in class: Believer, Prayer, Spiritual, Heart for God, Discipline, Humility; five in the handout: Faith, Obedience, Courage, Competitiveness, Compassion), which one is your current biggest gap, and what is one concrete step you will take this week?
