

THE WORD

On Being A Student Of The Bible

The resource for all the information you have read in this manual so far is the Bible. The Bible is 'The Manual' that tells us about all the other stones in the foundation. It's the Source Book of all that we know about God, His will, and our relationship with Him.

It is the responsibility of every believer, not just professional teachers or pastors, to study God's 'Manual,' and tell others about it. While it is important to hear and read the biblical teachings of others, you need to study God's Word on your own.

I live on the coast of the Pacific Ocean, and I've often watched the brown pelicans fishing. They will dive out of the sky rather clumsily and come up out of the water with fish in their bills. I've noticed that the seagulls will follow the pelicans around, waiting for them to surface with fish in their mouths. When they see them, the seagulls will try and snatch the fish right out the pelican's bill! This reminds me of some Christians who don't study the Bible on their own; they just want to get it from somebody else who has paid the price to study it! I don't recommend this. Don't merely be a "scavenger" of other people's labor. Glean from your pastor and other Bible teachers - yes. But don't simply take their word for it. Research the 'Manual' for yourself!

I heard a story about a young man who while going off to college, asked his father to buy him a car. His dad handed him a Bible and said, "If you read this whole Bible this year, I'll buy you a car." At the end of the year the young man came back home and asked his father for the car he'd been promised. The dad reminded him of his agreement to read the Bible first, and that he knew that the boy hadn't kept his part of the bargain. When asked how he was so sure that he hadn't read the Bible, the father replied, *"I put a check in that Bible made out to you and left the amount blank. If you had read through it, you would have found the check and been able to buy your car."*

That's the way your Bible is. It has within it tremendous resources and riches! But in order to take possession of the riches, you have but to read and appropriate its contents.

In this 6th and final section on the Foundations of our faith in Christ, we'll look at some basic things which will help you on your way toward becoming an avid and successful student of the Bible.

- Where did the Bible come from?
- Why do I need the Bible?
- What should I do with the Bible?

WHERE DID THE BIBLE COME FROM?

The best source available to answer this question is the Bible itself.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..." 2 Timothy 3:16

"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:20-21

The men who wrote the Bible were *Spirit-moved* men, producing *Spirit-breathed* writings. The bottom line is *the Bible came from GOD!*

In another translation of 2 Timothy 3:16 it says that, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Let me give you one definition of this "inspiration."

"The inspiration of the Scripture is the supernatural process by which God worked through human prophets without destroying their individual personalities and styles to produce divinely authoritative writings."

Notice first that the inspiration of the Bible is a *supernatural process*. The Bible is a miraculous book. It's miraculous in the same way that the incarnation or resurrection of Jesus is miraculous. It's a miracle book in the same way that God did miracles at the parting of the Red Sea, the healing of the blind, and the feeding of the 5000.

In Matthew 5:18, Jesus claimed the Bible's miraculous inspiration, *"I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."*

In 2 Thessalonians 3:14 Paul says, *"If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed."* And then in 1 Timothy 4:11 Paul tells Timothy to *"Command and teach these things."* He's claiming divine authority when he says that the things

he's writing in his epistle are to be demanded and taught to all people *everywhere*. What we have in Paul's epistles (as well as all of the other letters of the Apostles that we have in our Bible's) are given by divine inspiration.

In Matthew 22:43, Jesus said, *"How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'?"* Jesus is saying that when David wrote the Psalms he was *speaking through the enabling of the Holy Spirit*. Also in Hebrews 3:7, *"So, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today, if you hear his voice ...'"* It was the Psalmist who said *'if you hear his voice'*, but the writer of Hebrews attributes it to the writing of the Holy Spirit. So the Bible itself claims that the Bible is a special book.

In addition to the claim of the Bible itself, there are a number of logical evidences of the inspiration of the Scriptures.

The Bible is a miraculous book!

Fulfilled prophecies in the Bible

In the Old Testament you'll come across many predictive prophecies, such as the re-gathering of the nation of Israel, the destruction of the cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Petra. Each of these, and many more, have been fulfilled in history. I think, however, that the most profound list of fulfilled predictions that you will find anywhere in the Bible are the ones regarding the coming, the life, the dying, and the rising of Jesus. Hundreds of years before He came, the following prophecies were written about Jesus the Messiah.

- **Isaiah 7:14 said that He would be born of a virgin, and He was!**
- **Genesis 49: 10 prophesied that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah - and He did!**
- **Micah 5:2 said that He would be born in a town called Bethlehem, and He was!.**
- **Isaiah 40:3 said that He would be preceded by a messenger who would prepare His way - this being fulfilled in John the Baptist.**
- **Psalms 78:2 said that He would teach in parables, and we know this to be true also!**
- **Malachi 3: 1 said that He would minister in the temple, and He did!**
- **Zechariah 9:9 prophesied that Jesus would enter Jerusalem on a donkey - and He did!**
- **Psalms 16:10 said that He would rise from the dead, and of course, He did!**
- **Psalms 68: 18 said that He would be betrayed by a friend, and He was! (Judas)**
- **Zechariah 11: 12 said He would be sold for 30 pieces of silver, which is the exact price that was paid to Judas!**

- Zechariah 11: 13 said the money would go to purchase a potters field, which is the specific thing that was purchased with the money!
- Zechariah 12: 10 it says that His side would be pierced - it was.
- Zechariah 13:7 said that He would be forsaken by His disciples, and He was!
- Isaiah 53:5-7 said that He would be wounded and bruised, spit upon and silent with His accusers.
- Isaiah 53:12 said He would be killed with thieves at his side, and He was!
- Psalm 22:7 predicted that He would be mocked, and He was!
- Psalm 22:15 says that He would be thirsty while on the cross, and He was!
- Psalm 22: 16 prophesied that He would be crucified (which was an unknown form of capital punishment when the Psalms were written), and He was!
- Psalm 22: 18 predicted that His garments would be parted, and they were!
- Psalm 69:21 prophesied that gall and vinegar would be offered to Him, and this also
- Psalm 34:20 that his bones wouldn't be broken on the cross, and they were not!

It seems pretty conclusive to me, what the Bible predicts, happens! It is, therefore, to my mind, not merely the word of men, but undoubtedly, *the Word of God*.

2. Alternate Possibilities of Authorship of the Bible.

Who else could have written the Bible? What other choices do we have? I can think of only three viable options. The Bible was either written by **good men**, or **bad men**, or **God**. I don't see how *good men* could've have written the Bible because the Bible itself claims to have come from God. If good men wrote it, then they were lying when they wrote words like, "*Thus saith the Lord.*" So if they were lying, they weren't good men at all, because good men don't lie! It's also not very likely that *bad men* wrote the Bible, since in the Bible bad men are sent to hell! *Bad men* are called sinners, wicked and evil. Why would *bad men* write a book that calls them all these things, and then condemns them to eternal separation from God? The only believable alternative left is that *God* wrote the Bible (through men)!

3. The Honesty of the Bible's Writers.

All the writers of the Bible, except for Luke, were Jewish, and yet the sins of the Jewish people are blatantly exposed throughout the Bible. It is interesting how most secular historians will accentuate the *good* of their own people as they write about them. But this is not the case with the writers of the Bible. There is a blatant and shameless honesty among its writers.

4. The Character of the Bible's Teachings.

The Bible doesn't eulogize man, instead it actually condemns him. It doesn't speak romantically of the human race, claiming that we are good. In fact, the Bible is clear in its teaching that man is wicked and sinful. This is another evidence of the divine inspiration of the Bible. If *man* had written it, he wouldn't likely paint the picture of humankind to be so bleak and needy. He would more likely portray humans as essentially good, and then leave out the concept of eternal punishment.

5. The Unity of the Bible.

The Bible is an incredibly unified book. Its message is basically the same throughout - though written on three different continents, in three different languages, over a 1600 year period, by 40 different people. It has *one* system of salvation and teaching without contradictions. Men could not have pulled off a feat like this on their own.

6. The Power of the Bible

Somebody said, "*A book that will lift men up to God, must have come down from God!*" Historically, people have spoken of the Bible as being *the* most powerful book in their lives, and how its contents have changed their lives. The Bible's power in the lives of believers throughout the centuries is yet another evidence of its inspiration.

7. The Indestructibility of the Bible.

People have opposed the Bible more than any other book in history, and yet it still exists as history's best seller! Unless it was a book written by God, the Bible, with all its opposition, wouldn't still be printed for modern consumption. In 1850, the philosopher Voltaire predicted that the Bible and Christianity would be obsolete by the end of his lifetime. Ironically fifty years after his death, the Geneva Bible society used Voltaire's house and printing press to print hundreds of Bibles! This is a special and supernatural book.

A book that will lift men up
to God must have come down from God!

WHY DO I NEED THE BIBLE?

1. The Bible is a standard of living.

In Psalm 119:9 & 11, David says, "*How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word ... I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*" You can keep your way pure by living according to God's

Word. The Bible provides you a standard of living, and by heeding it you can avoid a whole lot of sin, grief and trouble!

In Washington DC they have, what they call, *The Bureau of Standards*. It contains all the standard weights and measurements that we use in this country. For example they have a platinum bar that is exactly one meter long. It is stored in a vacuum at a constant temperature so that it never changes size one way or the other. It is the 'standard meter.' That way, anyone who measures anything is measuring it against the original. That's what God's Word is to us; it tells us the truth about ourselves and about God. It never changes, and is therefore an eternally accurate measurement of our hearts and lives. God's laws are for our protection, they are the best way to live. You can compare His laws to our traffic laws, which we obey, not only because we don't want to get a ticket, but because they keep us from getting hurt.

2. The Bible is your Bankbook

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." 2 Peter 1:3-4

The Bible is not only a *rule book*, it's also a *promise book*! It not only tells you what you must do, but it gives you promises ("*great and precious promises*") and tools to do what God is telling you to do. The Bible is not just recipes; it is a cupboard full of ingredients to make the recipes. It tells us how rich we are in Jesus Christ, as well as encourages us to live abundantly within the context of those riches! If you want to know how rich you are, check your spiritual Bankbook daily!

The Word of God never changes,
and is there an eternally accurate
measurement of our hearts and lives.

3. The Bible is an aid to growth.

"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation." 1 Peter 2:2

"He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that

man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." Deuteronomy 8:3

Here you see that *the Bible is food for our souls*. Eating healthy food is a very good thing. But a lot of people who are health-food advocates, are at the same time, careless about what they feed their spirits. The Word of God is the food that will help you to grow in Jesus and become healthy in Him. *Read it, chew on it, feed on it every day!*

4. The Bible is a weapon against Satan.

"Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:17

The Word of God is the 'sword' of the Holy Spirit. It is the only offensive weapon. All the other weapons are defensive (the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, belt of truth...).

The Bible is a weapon against Satan because it is *the truth*, while Satan operates on the basis of lies. So when you have *the truth* you are not as affected by lies. In Matthew 4 Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness three times. In each temptation He responded to Satan's ploys with the words, *"It is written ..."* and then followed it each time with a quote from the Bible. Satan was therefore defeated and he fled. Jesus overcame the "father of lies" with *the truth* - and so can you!

5. The Bible is a safeguard against error.

"I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." Acts 20:29-32

Paul is warning them that there are going to be false teachers coming their way. His solution to that pending threat is that he commits them to the Word of God. The best way for you to detect *false doctrine* is to know the *true doctrine*. If you want to be safe from error, then *know the truth!* Don't read the Word of God to back up your preconceived ideas, or bend the Word to suit what you think *ought* to be true. Let it *bend you* to suit God and His purposes in your life!

6. The Bible is a means to know God.

The Word of God is like a window. We don't look *at* it as much as we look *through* it as a means of getting to know God on the other side of it. The Word of God leads to the knowledge of God! But don't be content to merely get to know *about* God through the Bible, but make sure you get to know God!

WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH THE BIBLE?

Someone said about the Bible, *“Read it to be wise, believe it to be saved, practice it to be holy.”* Put another way, *“Know it in your head, stow it in your heart, show it in your life, sow it in the world.”*

Know it in your head...

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15

If you're going to know the Word of God, you are going to have spend time reading it. If you are into wake boarding, baseball or some other hobby, you'll probably find yourself reading up on it. The proof of this is that there is a magazine for basically every interest known to man. People memorize batting averages, but then say they can't do the same with Bible verses. We read about everything that we're interested in, and we need to make time to read the words of our Creator!

There are many different approaches you can take for the reading and study of the Bible. Some people keep to a schedule such as reading through the entire Bible or the New Testament in a year. Others may take one book of the Bible and read it as many times as they can in a month and then move on to another book to do the same. If you are just beginning to read the Bible, I recommend that you begin with the Gospel of John, then move on to the Book of Acts, from there to Matthew, and then maybe to Romans. After that you might want to read some of the Old Testament. Begin with Genesis and then maybe some of the Psalms. It is not so important, however, *what* schedule you follow. It *is* important that you begin to get large doses of the Bible, and let the truth of God's Word renew your mind.

***“Read it to be wise,
believe it to be saved,
practice it to be holy.”***

Stow it in your heart...

Psalm 119:11 says, "*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*" It isn't enough just to have the Word of God in your *head*, you need to have it stored in your *heart* too! I think you'll find that if you internalize the words of the Bible, then in times of crisis, the Word of God will exude from your heart, and help you know how to respond to the crisis.

I suggest that you take key verses and put them to memory. This is one part of "hiding the Word in your heart." Here are some verses that you might consider memorizing soon:

1 John 1 :9; Romans 10:9-10; John 1:1; 2; 12; John 10:10; Romans 5:1; Corinthians 5:17,21; Ephesians 2:8-9

Look them up in your Bible, write them on a card or folded piece of paper, take it with you into your day, pull it out as often as you can and recite it out loud.

Show it in your life...

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like." James 1:22-24

The Bible was written to *change our lives*, not just *fill our heads*. Some people try to *'audit' the Christian life* like they're auditing a class in college. When you *'audit'* a class you are merely an observer, you're just a hearer (the word, "audit" is related to 'auditory,' and 'auditorium'). You don't get credit for the class. You're just trying to pick up some information for which you will not be accountable! But you mustn't do this with the Bible. You have to do something with it. You have to see yourself in His Word and then *"do what it says."*

There are three steps to studying the Bible:

1. **Investigation** (What does it say?)
2. **Interpretation** (What does it mean?)
3. **Integration** (What will do with it? How will I integrate it into my life?).

We're not just reading the Bible for *information*, but for the *transformation* of our lives.

Sow it in the world...

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

As Christians, we have the privileged responsibility of sowing the seed of the Word of God in the world. We can't just selfishly keep it for ourselves. This is news too good to keep! You must not just study the Bible; but take it to heart, practice it, and share it with others! Give it away to someone else who needs to hear it. And by the way, be sure not to shoot at people with the Bible as *bullets*. Rather sow it *like seed* in people. And do it in such a way that it can take root and develop in them a life of fruitfulness for God.

If it's changing *your life*, it can also change *others*. Don't be selfish with it; tell them what you're learning!

Father God, I thank You for your incredible Word. I bless you for the Bible. I thank You that it is indeed food for our souls, a banquet from heaven to nourish us. It's a bankbook showing us how rich we are in You. Thank You for this weapon against Satan, this safeguard against error, this means of getting to know You intimately. I pray that You will help each of my new brothers and sisters to become close friends with You and your flawless Word. In Jesus' Name. Amen

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Get started...

- By now you're probably already read the Gospel of John. I recommend that you read it again three times in a row before moving ahead in any successive books of the Bible. When I read the Bible (and other books for that matter), I always have a pen in hand to mark things that stand out to me and write things in the margin that come to me as I read. I suggest that you do the same in your Bible.
- Here are some things that you might look for and mark in John's Gospel: the 7 "signs/miracles" of Jesus recorded in the book, the 7 times Jesus says, "I am..." (i.e. "I am the light of the world"), and see if you can locate the reason that John wrote the book. (Hint: As you might suspect, it's toward the end of the book.)

Some verses to memorize...

1 John 1 :9; Romans 10:9-10; John 1:1; 2; 12; John 10:10; Romans 5:1;
Corinthians 5:17,21; Ephesians 2:8-9

(I recommend that you look up these verses, write them on a card or something, and repeat them over and over throughout the day until you can quote them verbatim.)

Read it and write it...

- Take time everyday to read the Bible. (See above my recommendation to read the Gospel of John over and over and mark it up with a pen.)
- And then journal your thoughts, feelings, and questions. In addition to talking to God everyday out loud, write some of your praises and prayers on paper (or on your computer). Be honest and intimate in your conversations with Him. Expect Him to communicate with you with honesty and intimacy as well.

CONCLUSION

Well, there you are - six foundational stones upon which you may build a strong and sturdy Christian life. I trust that these brief materials have somehow been an aid to you toward that end, and will prove to be eternally helpful to you in your growth as a follower of Jesus.

I hope you'll keep this manual, go over it again in a few months, and see if you don't just get something new from it the second time through. And look for opportunities to turn around and share these truths (and even the manual itself) with someone who may be newer in the faith than you.

God's blessing on you in your pursuit of a passionate, obedient, and fulfilling life in Jesus!

