

Christian Basics: Bible Study
Selected Scriptures

Dr. Steve Hereford, Pastor-Teacher

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INTRODUCTION

1. We are looking again at a series I began last Wednesday night called *Christian Basics*.
2. The basics that I am referring to have to do with those Christian disciplines like prayer, bible study, witnessing, and ministering your spiritual gifts.
3. In our last study together we talked about the first basic and that was prayer.
4. Prayer is hard work but it is a must for every believer.
5. Some have described it like breathing.
6. And just like breathing is to the body, so is prayer to the soul—both are needed to live.
7. Now our working definition for prayer was simply “talking to our heavenly Father.”
8. As we prayed tonight, we were petitioning our heavenly Father about people who are dear to our hearts that have specific needs.
9. But we didn’t just pray asking God to intervene in

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the lives of these people, we also were communing with Him.

10. Charles Spurgeon defined prayer as “the longing of the soul to hold communion with the Most High.” (1895, Sermon 2433).
11. And that’s what we have demonstrated to—the desire to commune with the Most High.
12. Now tonight, I want to move from prayer to our second basic and that is *Bible study*.

LESSON

I. Prayer

II. Bible Study

If prayer is to the believer is like breathing, then Bible study has to be like eating.

We need to be fed a steady diet of God’s Word.

And though that is the pastor’s primary responsibility to the flock to feed them, we also need

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to grow to a place where we can feed ourselves.

Jesus said that “man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Mat.4:4).

So how can we feed ourselves God’s Word.

First you need to...

- A. Read the Bible (This answers the question, “What does the Bible say?”)

Charles Spurgeon said, “How often do we open the sacred book and read a chapter through, perhaps at family-prayer, or perhaps in our own private devotions, and having read from the first verse to the last, we shut up the book, thinking we have done something very right and very proper, and in a vague way somehow profitable to us. Very right and very proper indeed, and yet, right and proper as the thing is, we may really have gained nothing thereby. We may, in fact, have only drilled ourselves in the merely external part of religion, and may not have enjoyed anything spiritual, or anything that can

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be beneficial to our souls, if we have forgotten the divine Spirit through whom the Word has come to us” (Spurgeon, C. H. (1998). Vol. 58: Spurgeon's Sermons: Volume 58 (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Spurgeon's Sermons. Albany, OR: Ages Software).

1. Prayerfully

Ps.119:18 - “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.”

2. Undistractedly

After Jesus fed the five thousand, Matthew 14:22-23 says, “Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitude away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on a mountain by Himself to pray. And when evening had come, He was alone there.”

3. Daily

John MacArthur says, “Sophisticated and

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ingenious Bible study methods books are fine, but they should never come ahead of fundamental steps. And there is no more fundamental step than systematically reading God's Word, line upon line, precept upon precept, absorbing its total truth and cohesiveness" (How to Get the Most From God's Word, p.156).

There are a number of reading plans. I would encourage you to read through the Bible at least once a year.

4. Repetitiously

Take a book in the NT and read it over-and-over once a month. You can select one of your choice or read the one we're studying. Break larger books into smaller sections and read each section for 30 days (eg. Revelation has 22 chapters - divide it up into 8, 7, 7)

5. Carefully

"Don't hurry as you read the passage. Take as much time as is necessary."

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Hans Finzel says, “The process of observation can be divided into three steps of study, following in logical sequence. First, we look at the *whole*; divide that up into *parts*; and finally scrutinize the *details*” (Unlocking the Scriptures, p.35).

- B. Interpret the Bible (This answers the question, “What does the Bible mean?”)

“In interpretation you study the purpose of the passage, as well as the meaning of the details. Interpretation is the point at which you put yourself in the author’s place and try to recapture his thoughts, emotions, and attitudes. Your ultimate task is to discover *why* the author wrote what he wrote. A good definition for interpretation is ‘the science of discovering the original meaning intended by the author’ (Hans Finzel, Unlocking the Scriptures, p.65).

To do this you must:

1. Understand the problems

“The Bible has been around for many years,

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parts of it for as long as four thousand years. Now how are we going to understand what there were saying and the various circumstances in which they lived?" (John MacArthur, *How to Study the Bible*, p.70).

We have to bridge the gaps!

- a) The language (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) - Mat.28:19-20 (grammatical construction)

Helps: Vine's Expository Dictionary,
Hebrew & Greek lexicons

- b) The history (mostly Jewish) - James 1:1 - "To the twelve tribes scattered abroad." (History - Acts 8:1-4)

Helps: Unger's Bible Dictionary,
Commentaries

- c) The culture (Jewish / Gentile) - John 1:1, "Why is Jesus called the *Word*?"

Helps: *The Manner's and Customs of*

the Bible

- d) The geography (The Middle East)

Helps: Bible Atlas'

- 2. Be familiar with the principles

- a) Always remember that context rules

“Context” means “that which goes with the text”

“When you interpret anything – a word, a verse, a teaching – it must always be considered in the light of the surrounding verses and chapters, the book in which it is found, and the entire Word of God” (Kay Arthur, *How to Study Your Bible*, p.60).

Richard Belcher in his book, *Biblical Exegesis*, says, “Familiarize [yourself] with the total passage itself, seeking to determine in a rough manner the main theme of the passage and the main

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divisions and subdivisions within the passage” (p.2).

- (1) Remember “isolation breeds misinterpretation”
- (2) Scripture is to be understood in its immediate context (eg. 2 Pet.2:20-22)

b) Always seek the full counsel of God

- (1) Be like the Berean Christians (Acts 17:11)
- (2) Check out what you’re studying or hearing being taught
- (3) The daily reading and studying of Scripture will aid you in this

“Saturate yourself in the Word of God; it is your safeguard against wrong doctrine” (Kay Arthur, *How to Study Your Bible*, p.62).

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- (4) Don't forget to meditate on Scripture (Ps.1:2; 119:97-100, 148)

Thomas Manton said, "The end of study is information, and the end of meditation is practice, or a work upon the affections. Study is like a winter sun, that shines, but warms not: but meditation is like a blowing upon the fire, where we do not mind the blaze, but the heat. The end of study is to hoard up truth; but of meditation to lay it forth in conference or holy conversation."

- c) Remember that Scripture will never contradict Scripture

- (1) Contradiction comes from poor study or interpretation

If you don't take the necessary time to discover the author's original intended meaning, the

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conclusion will be contradictions.”

- (2) Scripture must be understood in the light of the whole of Scripture

This is what the Reformers called *Analogia Scriptura* – which means, the analogy of Scripture.

“One part of the Bible doesn’t teach something that another part contradicts” (John MacArthur, *How to Study the Bible*, p.74).

J. I. Packer said, “The Bible appears like a symphony orchestra, with the Holy Ghost as its Toscanini, each instrument has been brought willingly, spontaneously, creatively, to play his notes just as the great conductor desired, though none of them could ever hear the music as a whole...The point of each part only becomes fully clear when seen in relation to all the rest”

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(God Has Spoken).

- (3) The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture

The Old Testament explains the New. The New Testament explains the Old.

Richard Baxter said, “It is not the work of the Spirit to tell you the meaning of Scripture, and give you the knowledge of divinity, without your own study and labor, but to bless that study, and give you knowledge thereby...To reject study on presence of the sufficiency of the Spirit, is to reject the Scripture itself.”

- d) Do not base your doctrine on an obscure passage of Scripture

“An obscure passage is one in which the meaning is not easily understood” (Kay Arthur, *How to Study Your Bible*, p.62).

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- (1) Doctrine is based on clear repeated teachings of Scripture

For example: (Jesus is God, Salvation is by Sovereign grace through supernatural faith in Jesus, Elders are godly men who lead the church, deacons are men and women to assist the elders in a support role by serving the needs of the congregation) – None of this is obscure in Scripture but taught repeatedly!

- (2) Do not build your theology on obscure passages of Scripture

(a) The baptism for the dead (1 Cor.15:29)

(b) Tongues being a personal private prayer language (1 Cor.14:2)

- e) Interpret Scripture Literally

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- (1) The Bible is not a book of mysticism

“God has spoken to us through His Word that we might know the truth. Therefore, take the Word of God at face value” (Kay Arthur, *How to Study Your Bible*, p.63).

- (2) Scripture is to be understood in its natural normal sense

The rabbi’s used to say, “If you take the consonants of Abraham’s name, brhm, and add them up, you get 318. Therefore, when you see the word Abraham, it means he had 318 servants.”

- f) Check your conclusions by using reliable commentaries

“As you consult these various commentaries, remember that no one person has a corner on all the truth. You may disagree with the writer on one

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thing and agree on another, but don't discount all an author says just because you don't see everything the same way. And don't believe it just because a godly person who is a scholar has said, 'This is what it means.' Check out the interpretation according to the inductive principles you have been given" (Kay Arthur, *How to Study Your Bible*, p.64).

3. Follow a particular procedure
 - a) Ask specific questions (who, what, where, when, why)
 - b) Follow specific steps
 - (1) State an initial proposal based on the content you have studied

This can be the theme or a principle the passage is teaching
 - (2) Search the context
 - (3) Seek comparison (cross-reference)

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- (4) Survey secondary resources (commentaries, etc.)
 - (5) State your conclusions
 - (a) In one sentence or less
 - (b) With cross-references
 - (c) In accordance to the context
 - (d) Include any application principles that may come directly from your study
- C. Apply the Bible (This answers the question, “How does it apply to my life?”)

1. Application always follows interpretation

J. Robertson McQuilkin said, “The goal of all Bible study is to apply the truth of Scripture to life. If that application is not made, all the work put into making sure of the author’s intended meaning will have gone for naught. In fact, to know and not do, doubles the offense of disobedience” (Understanding and Applying the Bible, p.255).

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- a) Ps.119:34 - “Give me understanding and I shall keep your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart.”
 - b) James 1:22
2. Application must be kept simple, practical, and personal
- a) Ask the right questions
 - “How does this relate to my life?”
 - (1) Is there a principle to apply?
 - (2) Is there a command to obey?
 - (3) Is there an attitude to adjust?
 - (4) Is there a sin to repent of?
 - b) Principlize what you learn
 - Take the Scripture you are studying and write a brief sentence of what it is teaching.
 - c) Model before others what you learn

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Phil.4:9 - “The things which you have learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

d) Teach what you learn to others

2 Tim.2:1-2 - “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

CONCLUSION

1. These are the basics!
2. Prayer and Bible Study.
3. They should be a daily part of your life.
4. If you haven't given much attention to them, start today.
5. Make a commitment to fervent prayer and diligent Bible study.

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6. Remember - the goal is to know and to glorify God not to fill your head with knowledge!
7. Also remember that you can apply all of these principles and leave the Holy Spirit out. Don't leave Him out. He is your resident teacher.
8. Let's thank Jesus for His Word by praying together.