Vol. 1 | 2025

FIG

FAITH IN GOD

Bringing Christian families to life

STRATEGISING TIME IN THE WORD FOR A NEW YEAR

6 HABITS FOR SUCCESSFUL BIBLE STUDY

Finding IDENTITY IN OUR WORK

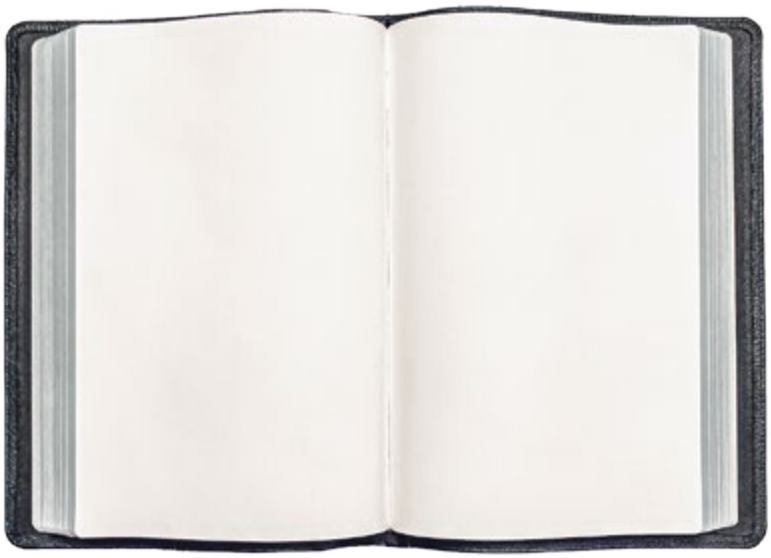


Exclusive interview with

THE WORD FOR THE WORLD BIBLE TRANSLATORS

HOME LIFE | WORK LIFE | CHURCH LIFE

For many people the
Bible is an empty book.



Not because they don't read, but because
they **do not have one** in their language.

More than **3,000 language** groups
do not have access to God's Word
in their heart language.

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Bringing Christian families to life



In Justin Huffman's article, *Knowing Christ In the New Year*, he writes that Christ is the gospel. The good news is Jesus himself. Salvation is found, not just in the absence of hell, but in knowing Jesus Christ. This is the tenor of all of Jesus' own teaching (*Matthew 11:28-29*; *John 7:37*). The activity of true faith is drinking in Jesus. And it is believing in Jesus which leads to the eternal, overflowing, abundant life.

In this New Year, make it your goal to set Christ as your great goal in everything you do.

The best way to do this, is to read His word. In this issue of ***Fig Magazine***, the focus is on all things Bible. How to make more time to read it, understand it and live it to the best of our abilities. As we are already 2 months into the New Year, you may have already started a bible study or reading plan as your resolution for this year. Some may be making good progress, others may have fizzled and popped. If you just haven't started reading your bible because you think its too late to start, don't worry, there is always time to read God's word.

Imagine never having access to the full bible in your own language. Never having the whole story from start to finish. Only ever hearing snippets that leave you feeling unfulfilled and wanting more.

In our feature story this issue, we connect with Sherlyne Erasmus from *The Word for the World Bible Translators*. She shares a bit about the work they do globally.

Please keep sharing this magazine with family and friends so that we can reach more readers and share the gospel. Subscribe on our *website* to never miss an issue. Happy reading!

TRANSLATING THE BIBLE WORLDWIDE



Ngoni villagers receiving their NT copies

TELL US HOW THE WORD FOR THE WORLD WAS BIRTHED

It started as one man's obedience, but it became a movement of nations, of discipleship, of equipping and releasing leaders. As long as there are people without Scripture in their heart language, this story is far from over.

In December 1979, Dr. Veroni Kruger found himself on a plane to the USA. He had been invited by the American Bible Translation

7000+ languages in the world

3600+ with access to some scripture

740 languages with a full Bible

1 Billion people do not have access to a Bible in their language.

Agency as a guest researcher at Indiana University, with the prospect of a full-time job awaiting him. For most, this would have been a clear and exciting next step, but as he sat there in quiet prayer, he asked, 'Lord, you know what I am expecting will happen. What should I decide?'

In that moment, he heard God's response: "Do you think I am stupid, to have caused you to be born and bred on one of the continents with the greatest need for Bible translation, only to have you join an American agency and work mostly in Latin America? I want you to return to South Africa and establish an indigenous Bible translation agency whose vision will be to empower nationals to translate the Bible for their own people."

That calling changed everything. It was never going to be easy, it was about obedience, faith, and a deep love for people to encounter God's Word in their own heart language.

From humble beginnings as a small non-profit, The Word for the World has grown—through sheer grace and miracle after miracle—into an international Bible translation organisation. Today, we work in 32 countries across Africa, Asia, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Europe, supporting 1,112 indigenous translators in 371 projects. That's 82.9 million people who now have access to God's Word in their language. And we are still growing!

At the heart of our mission is a simple but powerful vision: "The glory of God through transformed lives, by the power of His Word, in everyone's heart language."

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF YOUR ORGANISATION?

At The Word for the World, we hold fast to a vision that may seem impossible—but with God, nothing is. Our goal is to be instrumental in completing 1,000 full Bible translations by 2050, ensuring that millions more people can encounter God's Word in their heart language.

Achieving this ambitious goal requires faith, dedication, and innovation. We are embracing ground breaking strategies to accelerate Bible translation:

- **Leveraging Artificial Intelligence** to enhance and speed up translation efforts while maintaining linguistic and theological integrity.
- **Expanding and scaling Oral Bible Translation** for communities with strong oral traditions and limited literacy.
- **Developing Indigenous Leadership** to foster sustainable translation movements led by those who understand their own cultures best.
- **Providing Scripture in Sign Languages** to bring the Word of God to Deaf communities worldwide.
- **Upholding and enhancing Quality Assurance standards** to ensure every translation remains faithful and impactful.



This journey is one of faith, perseverance, and unwavering commitment to seeing lives transformed by Scripture. Every language reached is another community experiencing the power of God's Word. With His guidance, we press forward, knowing that what seems impossible to man is more than possible with Him.

CAN YOU SHARE SOME OF YOUR SUCCESS STORIES

Each month, we launch an average of six new projects. By empowering local communities to take ownership of the translation process, we ensure sustainability and long-term impact, allowing people to experience God's Word in the language that speaks to their soul.

We are also pioneering cutting-edge approaches to Bible translation:

- **Oral Bible Translation (OBT):** In regions with low literacy rates and a preference for oral communication—such as Africa, the Middle East, and the Far East—we

are expanding OBT to provide accessible Scripture. Our goal is for each project to complete the New Testament orally within six years.

- **Sign Language Bible Translation (SLBT):** With over 70 million Deaf individuals worldwide using 350 different sign languages, we are partnering with agencies to bring the Bible to this underserved community.
- **Artificial Intelligence-Immersed Bible Translation (AiBT):** We have developed AI tools that drastically reduce the time and cost of first-draft translations while maintaining accuracy and efficiency. AiBT also supports Zero Corpus Languages, ensuring linguistic integrity in translating ancient texts like Greek and Hebrew. Additionally, it contributes to language development by generating mother tongue literature and self-learning literacy tools.

These innovations are more than just strategies—they are transforming lives. Every new translation means another community can hear God speak to them in their own language. Through faith, technology, and the relentless dedication of our teams, we are witnessing history unfold as people encounter the transformative power of Scripture like never before.

HOW CAN READERS PARTNER OR GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION?

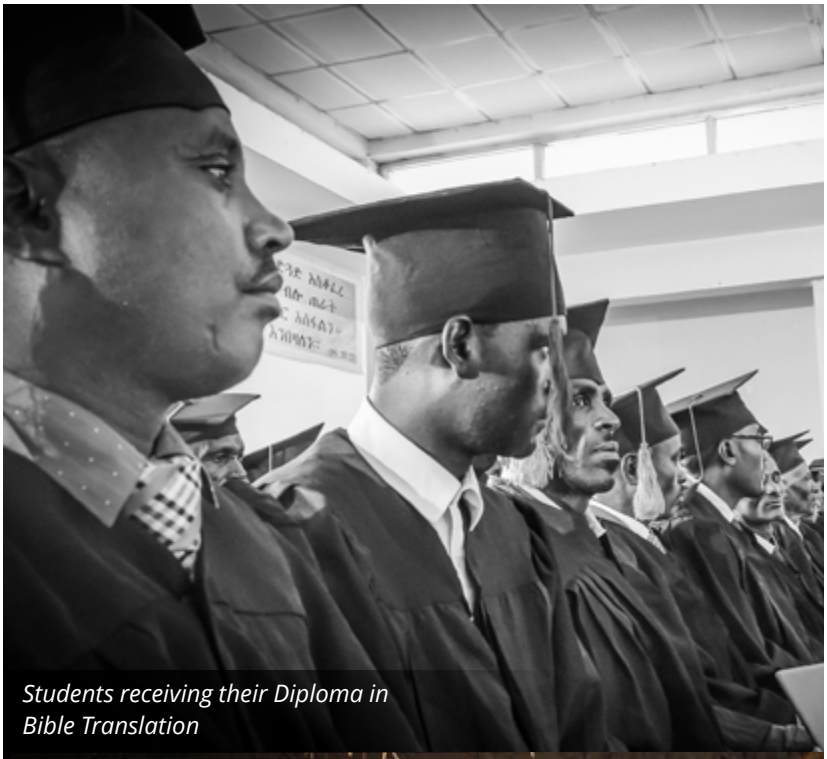
Readers have the power to change lives today! Millions of people are still waiting to hear God speak to them in their heart language, and we cannot do this work alone. Your financial support will directly impact Bible translation efforts, bringing Scripture to those who have never had access to it before.

This is your opportunity to sow into eternity. By partnering with us, you become part of a movement that is breaking barriers and transforming communities. Time is of the essence—the need is urgent, and every contribution makes a difference.

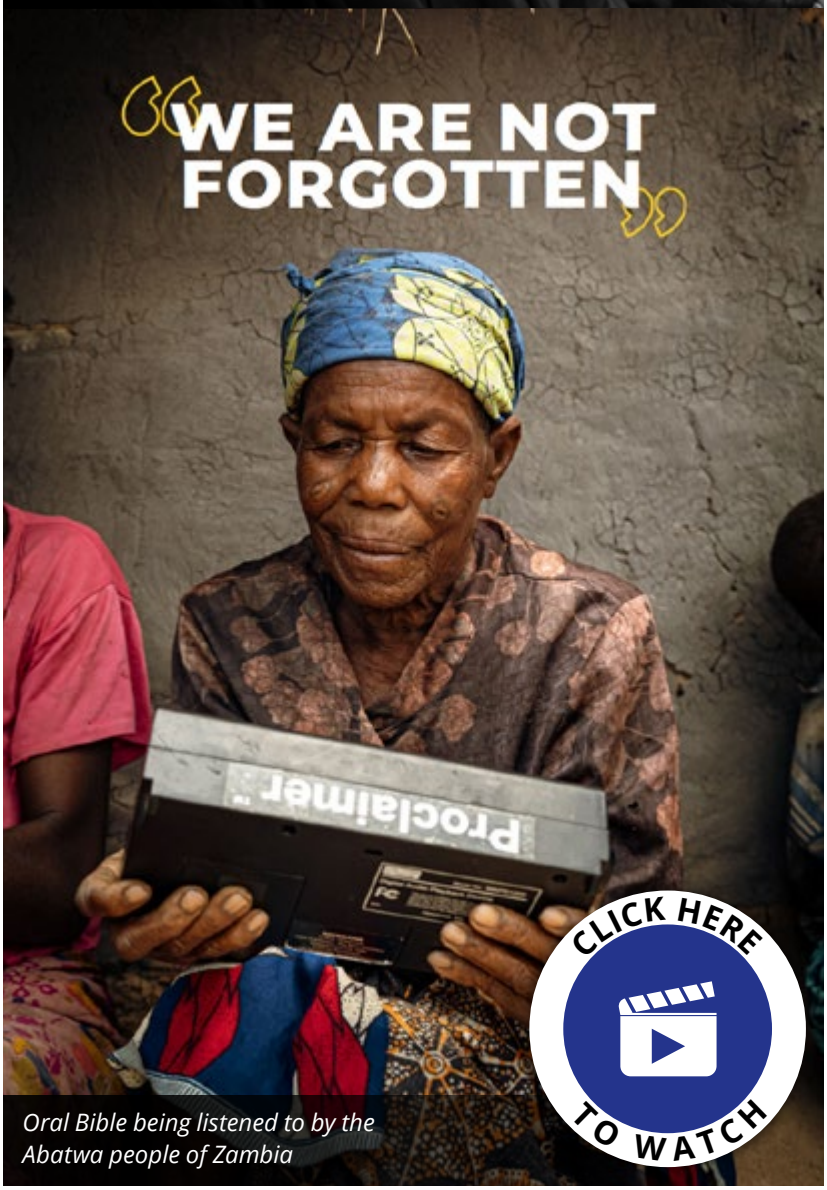
Join us in this mission and be part of history. To give or learn more, use the resources below:

Contact Sherlyne Erasmus: *sherlyne@twftw.org*
Website: *www.twftw.org*
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THE WORD FOR THE WORLD™
BIBLE TRANSLATORS



Students receiving their Diploma in Bible Translation



Oral Bible being listened to by the Abatwa people of Zambia

> "A new year often means evaluating where we have gotten stuck in a rut."



This article can be found at www.jenwilkin.net

Strategising Time in the Word for a New Year

With the start of the New Year, many Christians like to put in place some sort of structure to help hold them accountable to the personal habit of spending time in the Word. **By Jen Wilkin**

I'm a big fan of structure and accountability. I need them myself in any area of my life where the good behaviour that ought to happen habitually does not. But just as not all diet and exercise plans are equally beneficial or interchangeable, neither are all accountability systems for spending time in the Word. As you lay out your strategy for interacting with your Bible in the coming year, here is a breakdown to help you weigh your options.

Reading Plans

WHAT THEY ARE:

Reading plans provide a structure for reading the entire Bible over a set period of time. They vary in length and strategy. Some take you from Genesis to Revelation, some go in chronological order, and some combine daily readings from both the Old and New Testaments.

WHAT THEY DO:

Reading plans help us cover a lot of ground in a relatively short period of time. They give broad exposure to the Bible as a whole, helping us develop familiarity with it from beginning to end.

WHO THEY HELP MOST:

Reading plans help believers of any stage of maturity. Many mature believers have never read the Bible in its entirety, and for those who have, doing so repeatedly brings ever-increasing benefit.

WHAT THEY DON'T DO:

Reading plans don't allow for in-depth exploration of themes or stories. Their aim is breadth over depth.

WHICH TO CHOOSE:

Which plan you choose is, to some degree, a matter of preference. If you are looking to grow in Bible literacy, choose a plan that moves through each book of the Bible from start to finish, versus one that combines OT and NT readings each day. I favour chronological plans that move at a slow enough pace to allow time to absorb what you are reading. If finishing in a year means you are reading faster than you are able to retain what you are reading, slow down your schedule.

Here is a list of **BIBLE PLANS** you can consider.

> "If you are looking to grow in Bible literacy, choose a plan that moves through each book of the Bible from start to finish, versus one that combines OT and NT readings each day."



Bible Studies

WHAT THEY ARE:

Because we so often refer to any time we spend in the Word as Bible study, I want to employ a distinct definition here for the sake of clarity. Bible studies teach us an entire book or major passage of the Bible from start to finish, taking time to instruct us in context, genre, themes, and theological implications. They do so according to time-honoured rules of interpretation.

WHAT THEY DO:

Bible studies help us slow down and "own the text". A good Bible study teaches both method (how to study) and content (the text it covers), and that takes time. If reading plans are a sprint, Bible studies are a stroll.

WHO THEY HELP MOST:

Like reading plans, Bible studies help believers of all levels of maturity. For the new believer, they impart much-needed tools for ongoing study, as well as foundational comprehension and interpretation of the text. For the mature believer, they hone skills and deepen understanding, preparing them not just for further learning but for teaching others.

WHAT THEY DON'T DO:

Bible studies don't move at a pace that allows for broad exposure to the Bible over a relatively short period of time. Their aim is depth over breadth.

HOW TO CHOOSE ONE:

Look for studies that ask you to do the work of comprehending and interpreting the text, providing you with the tools to do so. The less spoon-feeding of commentary they do, the more they will help you grow in Bible literacy. Look for studies that ask you to work at personal discovery before they offer you interpretation and application. I like the NavPress LifeChange series, studies by Kathleen Nielson, or you can try any of the studies I have written. For a faster pace with solid approach and content, Nancy Guthrie's studies are also excellent. *(2024 update: Check my Instagram highlights for my expanded and updated recommendations!)*

Topical Studies

WHAT THEY ARE:

Again, clarity of terms matters. Topical studies differ from Bible studies in that they seek to integrate broad concepts by pulling verses from all over the Bible, versus moving systematically through one text. Covering topics ranging from doctrine to finding contentment to how to be a godly parent, they offer a Biblical framework for understanding a particular doctrine or issue.

WHAT THEY DO:

Topical studies help us explore, synthesize and apply broad concepts found in the Bible.

WHO THEY HELP MOST:

Topical studies offer the most help to those who have (or are working to have) a foundational understanding of the Bible. In other words, you gain the most benefit from them if you have given time to reading and studying your Bible.

WHAT THEY DON'T DO:

Used exclusively or excessively, topical studies offer limited help in building Bible literacy.

HOW TO CHOOSE ONE:

Because they rely so heavily on the footwork of the author/teacher, it's wise to choose topical studies written by those with a track record of expository (line by line) preaching/teaching. An expository teacher is less likely to pull verses out of context to make a point. It is also vitally important to research the author's theology. While you don't have to align perfectly with their theology, knowing their vantage point will help you think critically about what is being taught. Tim Keller, D.A. Carson, John MacArthur, and R.C. Sproul are good authors to start with. If you're interested specifically in female authors, Melissa Kruger, Jen Michel, Hannah Anderson, Megan Hill (forthcoming), Nancy Guthrie and Gloria Furman have written excellent topical offerings in study formats or with study guides.

A Matter of Allocation

Perhaps the most important question to ask at the start of the new year is not *"Which should I choose?"* but *"Which should I emphasize?"*

All three of the options described above have a role to play in our spiritual growth, as do memorization, meditation, and even devotional reading. A new year often means evaluating where we have gotten stuck in a rut. Sometimes a rut isn't necessarily a bad practice, but a good practice followed to the exclusion of other good (or better) practices. I suggest you assess where the bulk of your time has been spent when you sit down with your Bible. Then seek to allocate it going forward in a manner that builds both breadth and depth of understanding.

I pray the Holy Spirit brings about fruitfulness and maturity in you as you thoughtfully place yourself under the nurturing authority of the Scriptures, this year and every year.





Be ready

To Answer Your Kids' Questions About The Bible

Kids are thinkers. They ask good and sometimes hard questions.

By Jon Bloom

JON BLOOM (@Bloom_Jon) serves as teacher and cofounder of Desiring God.

My kids have asked me some of the hardest theological questions between ages 5 and 8. They've queried me on comparative religion, death, eternity, heaven, hell, Jesus and the cross, and what about all those people who have never had a chance to hear the gospel? Interestingly, these questions tend to come at bedtime. But frankly, I don't care if they are at times bedtime-stalling techniques; such questions are always worth staying awake to talk about.

One of my children repeatedly pressed me with questions like, "How do you know that Christianity is the right belief?" That naturally led us to talking about the Bible. Who wrote it? How is it God's word if men wrote it? What makes it different from other religions' holy books? How do we know it doesn't have mistakes in it? What does it not tell us? Christianity stands or falls on the reliability, inspiration, and authority of the Bible. Children pick up on that early. We tell them that they should trust the Bible. At some point they will (and should) ask why (if they feel it's okay to ask). So here are a few answers (in language I would speak to my 9 year old twins) that might be helpful for some mealtime (or bedtime!) discussions.

HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE IS RELIABLE?

We know that our Bible says the same things as the Bibles people read thousands of years ago because so many ancient Bible manuscripts have survived. There are over 5,000 full or partial Bible manuscripts and they allow us to compare them with each other and our current versions for accuracy. No other book from the ancient world even comes close to as many surviving manuscripts. Most other ancient classical works have 20 or less.

But far more important than having lots of old manuscripts is the fact that when we read the Bible ourselves, it begins to win our trust. It is no ordinary book! It has an authority all on its own. It contains 66 books that were written by 40 different authors in three different languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic) over a period of about 1,500 years and yet it is consistent — it all fits together — and doesn't contradict itself! You don't have to be a scholar to see this. The Bible shows itself to be the word of God to those who read it! Here's how a children's catechism (or teaching lesson) from over 360 years ago says it:
Question: How doth it appear that the Scriptures are the word of God?
Answer: The Scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God, by their majesty and purity; by the consent of all the parts, and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God; by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation: but the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the Scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very Word of God. (*Westminster Larger Catechism*, question 4)

WHO DECIDED WHAT SHOULD BE IN THE BIBLE (AUTHORITY)?

Actually, God did. No individual or group of people or institution decided which writings would be in the Bible. Each book of the Bible has its own story about how it came to be included in the Scriptures, but in each case, God caused his people over time to recognize these writings as manifesting the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. That's why the Apostle Paul wrote, "All Scripture is breathed out by God" *(2 Timothy 3:16)* and why the Apostle Peter wrote, "For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" *(2 Peter 1:21)*. God has used men, councils, and the church to weed out the writings that were not inspired by God (a lot of wrong and even strange teachings have been written!), but God himself determined the Scriptures. And this means that every individual, group of people, church, and denomination are under the authority of Holy Scripture as God's revealed written word and must submit to Scripture as their final authority.



HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE HAS NO ERRORS IN IT (INERRANCY)?

Since the Scriptures are "breathed out by God" *(2 Timothy 3:16)* and not produced by the will of man but the Holy Spirit, the original copies written by the biblical authors were without error — we call this "inerrancy." This means that when the Scriptures were originally written, they were without mistakes, whether speaking about how God created the world or history or God's plan to save lost people. Believers have always understood the Scriptures to be inerrant, from the time of Moses *(Deuteronomy 4:2)* to the writers of the Psalms *(Psalm 19:7)* to (most importantly!) Jesus, God the Son *(John 10:35)*. This fact doesn't mean that the men who wrote the Scriptures were inerrant. They were sinners like us. When they wrote inerrant books it was a miracle of God, like Jesus's miracles.

Do we have any of the original copies written by the biblical authors? No. So how do we know that our versions don't have errors? That's where having thousands of ancient manuscripts is important. We can see by comparing these manuscripts to each other and to our current Bibles that we have a very accurate record of what the originals said. God is so wise in preventing us from having the originals, because we humans have a great tendency to make idols out of such things. We likely would have believed that the original copies had mysterious, magical powers in the paper and ink rather than in the words God actually said.

WHO CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE (CLARITY)?

Anyone can understand the Bible! That's a wonderful thing about this book! The Scriptures speak plainly and clearly

communicate what we need to know for life and godliness *(2 Peter 1:3)*. Adults and children can read or listen to it and understand the most important things — how to be saved. This doesn't mean that pastors and teachers aren't needed or that everything in the Bible is equally clear. Some portions of Scripture are harder to understand than others *(2 Peter 3:16)*, and God gives us pastors and teachers as gifts to help deepen our understanding of the Bible and how to apply it *(Ephesians 4:11)*. But anyone who can read it can understand it.

WHY DO WE NEED THE BIBLE TO KNOW GOD (NECESSITY)?

We can learn a lot about God by observing the natural world *(Romans 1:20)*, but the Bible is necessary for us to read or hear because God has chosen to reveal the most important things about himself and his glorious gospel to human beings through his Word *(1 Samuel 3:21)*. God has not chosen to give each person direct verbal inerrant revelation. Instead, he has provided us a written record. This again shows us God's wonderful wisdom. Can you imagine how confusing things would get if each person claimed to personally hear the word of God perfectly! How could we test what was God's word and what wasn't? But the written Bible provides a consistent and durable (long-lasting) record of God's revelation so that all saints throughout all ages of the church can understand, believe, and contend for the faith "once delivered" to them *(Jude 1:3)*.

DOES THE BIBLE TELL US EVERYTHING WE NEED TO KNOW (SUFFICIENCY)?

The Scriptures tell us everything we need to know in order to live godly lives in Christ Jesus *(2 Peter 1:3)*. They provide us sufficient (enough) information about what God is like, how God created the world, what human beings are like and how we fell into sin, God's plan of salvation, what the future holds, and what the age to come will be like so we can trust God and live by faith (*Galatians 2:20*; *2 Corinthians 5:7*). There is a lot that the Bible doesn't tell us. These are things God wants us to discover through the process of exploration, observation, study, and experience. But when it comes to understanding things like how to be saved from God's wrath against sin through trusting in Jesus's death and resurrection and how to have eternal life, the Bible tells us everything we need to know (*Romans 5:9*; *John 5:24*). And God is not adding more revelation to the Bible *(Revelation 22:18–19)*, like some false religions want us to believe (e.g. Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses).

A LOT MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM!

I hope this is helpful to you, particularly with younger kids. But there's so much more to say, and so much more kids may ask. So let me point you to a gold mine of the doctrine of Scripture on our website (and a couple beyond) where you can strengthen your understanding of and stoke your awe over the miracle that is the Bible.

- *"Why We Believe the Bible"* is a five-part seminar John Piper did a few years ago. It's wonderful and time well spent. If you have older kids, this would be an excellent resource to watch or listen to with them.
- *"Why I Trust the Scriptures"* is a single 90-minute message on the reliability of the Bible. John addresses some recent challenges to the Bible's trustworthiness.
- *"Is the Bible Without Error?"* is a three-minute audio clip of Pastor John answering this question. A great refresher if you're child asks.
- *"What Is Inerrancy?"* is a nine-minute audio clip of Pastor John answering this question.
- *"How Are the Synoptics 'Without Error'?"* is an article John wrote back in his pre-Bethlehem professor days addressing apparent inconsistencies in the Synoptic Gospels.
- *The ESV Study Bible* contains many wonderful, brief summary articles on just about everything you want to know about the Bible.
- Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*, as always, provides an excellent overview of the Doctrine of Scripture.



GOD MAKES A MEAL out of messes

By Abigail Dodds



I survey the kitchen and living room, and my eyes are assaulted with messes. Mail, worksheets, art projects, toys, plates of food with a few bites left, an origami style army of paper tanks, counting blocks. The messes feel endless. And for a tired mom, the messes can feel like the enemy.

Of course, they're not. They're evidence of life and growth. They are the essence of learning, exploring, and doing. A home without messes is a home without people, without life. If I want my children to grow as people, I must invite them to make messes. To take part in learning requires physical stuff to be used, to be handled, changed, glorified.

Then I also must invite them to learn to pick up, put away, restore order, and turn their learning into more than mere mess. A messy kitchen ought not to be chaos only, but the evidence of raw materials being transformed into something tasty and warm and good to eat.

And as I study God's word, I find the same to be true. His word is living and active, and the process of growth that happens as I seek to understand it, and live my life under its authority and protection, makes messes. Not the kind of messes that are atrophy and dust-collection, but the messes of life and growing and glorification.

EXPAND YOUR CATEGORIES

As children have joined our family, so have our categories for living. Twelve years ago, I didn't have a category for a load of laundry that was all pink. But three daughters later, now I do. Before having sons, our family life didn't include a category for toys that were all of the round and throwable sort, but two sons later, the importance of such things is real. This is doubly true in relation to our son with disabilities. I had no category in my brain as a 21-year-old for a family that included a son with a feeding tube. I never contemplated what it might be like to change a g-tube or help him sleep hooked up to his tube all night. How could I have? I don't know that I'd ever heard of such things.

Now we've expanded our life to include those sorts of things, along with countless other ways our lives have grown, changed, and become messier since having children. When I study the Bible, the same kind of category expanding happens. The Bible regularly calls on me to open up a new file folder with a title I'd never contemplated before and couldn't have anticipated.

FORM NEW FILES

As I'm currently studying 1 John, I found that I had to create such a category in accordance with *1 John 2:15–16*, which says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life — is not from the Father but is from the world."

John tells us not to love the world, which on first glance, seems external, like all those outside influences pushing in on me. Don't love your TV or your house or maybe even your family. But then he defines the world as "desires of the flesh and desires of the eyes

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and pride of life." Desires come from within, not without. So I made a new category: desires that come from my sinful self, but are from the world — and that may very well mean I should forsake my TV or love of house. But it was helpful for me to realize that the desire for the world, even the world itself, is in me. The battle to be waged is first internal.

ALIGN WITH GOD'S LOGIC

The Bible reveals God to us, and God's logic and categories are not fallen or tainted by sin as ours are. So, I constantly am in need of aligning myself with his logic, his categories, his priorities.

And this growth, this stretching of my brain, can make some messes while I'm working them out and growing up into them.

I read in *1 John 3:14*, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death." I'm given a principle that goes against what society tells me is true. It pressures me toward mere "tolerance" on the terms of unbelief — which is really a form of indifference toward others, not full-orbed biblical love.

John eliminates such a category for the Christian. He tells us that we are to love the brothers, and that not to do so is to hate them — or as he puts it, "to abide in death." We cannot be indifferent toward our brothers, and their eternal good. We must love them, and the failure to do so is death.

When I seek to work this out in my life, it can get a bit messy. Because the categories of the world that include "tolerance" and indifference are set down more firmly than I may have imagined, and it takes work to shake them off. It takes stepping out of my comfort zone to love and actually care for and about people I was content to ignore or avoid. But God is a strong Helper and his Spirit can turn mere tolerant, indifferent people into loving, big-hearted brothers and sisters.

As we act in obedience to love others, he can miraculously change our feelings toward them. He can delete the category of mere tolerance and help us see the true categories of biblical love and risk.

GIVE YOURSELF TO HIS WORD

Studying the Bible is a remarkable gift, not to be squandered for fear of the disruption it may cause in our lives. And it is essential, if we want to make the kind of messes that turn into nourishing meals for our soul.

Even, and perhaps especially when, the other messes in your life are piling up, give yourself to knowing God through the Book he's given us, and ask him to transform your mind and life — to reorder the chaos according to his perfect Word.

The glory, and eventual order, that await us are more than we could ask or think.





Real Life Tips to Health

By Jennifer Kornegay



Did you make a list of things you'd like to change in your life in 2025? Is one of them to get and stay healthier? Whether you set that goal down as a formal New Year's resolution or it's a wish you've had (but not worked hard on attaining) for a while now, we've got some good news: If you break it down into an item-by-item itinerary, you'll see that the journey to good health is easier to complete than you might think.

The key is continuing to make small changes that move you forward toward your goals at your pace.

BROADEN YOUR DEFINITION OF HEALTH

What does "healthy" mean to you? Consider not just your body, but your mind and spirit too, and write down the forms of actual and metaphorical nourishment — people, places, activities and more — that make you feel and perform at your best.

FOCUS ON HEALTHY BEHAVIOURS RATHER THAN THE SCALE

Again, think beyond your physical body when you think about being healthy. Your worth is not defined by pounds or inches!

BE WARY OF CLEVER MARKETING

The diet industry is a $71 BILLION industry that's built on pushing people to try the next new diet that's sure to make you "lose weight quickly and easily." Many of them are fads and only temporary fixes. Some can be dangerous and detrimental to your health. And if you're only focused on your weight, you're not seeing your entire health picture.

CHALLENGE NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

We are often our own harshest critics, and how you talk to and about yourself matters. You can put yourself in a negative mindset that ends up reinforcing the habits or behaviour you want to change. Instead, when you're tempted to bad-mouth you, ask yourself, how would you talk to a friend struggling with something? Be your own best friend and fill yourself with the encouraging and supportive advice and info you'd give someone else.

GET BACK TO THE BASICS

Healthy eating is the foundation of overall wellness. And it isn't complicated. Commit to these five principals.

EAT

- ✓ More whole grains
- ✓ More fruits and veggies
- ✓ More heart-healthy fats
- ✓ More lean meat and plant protein
- ✓ More low-fat (replacing full fat) dairy

HYDRATE WITH WATER

Many of us don't drink enough water, and it's an essential element our bodies need to thrive, so it's key to make drinking water a part of your daily routine. But, you don't have to ONLY drink water. Don't deprive yourself of other beverages you enjoy!

BE ACTIVE IN A WAY THAT FEELS GOOD TO YOU

Physical activity is good for your body, and it also boosts your mood and strengthens mental health. But if you're not into formal exercise classes or "working out," no problem. How you move isn't as important as moving more and moving often. Find something you like to do and make it a habit. If you enjoy it, it will be easier to stay at it.

DIVERSIFY WHO YOU FOLLOW ON SOCIAL MEDIA

An open mind and the willingness to consider other perspectives lead to stronger, healthier relationships and life-long learning, both of which contribute to wellbeing and happiness. If you spend any amount of time on social media, don't get stuck interacting with only the people who look and think like you. Make a point to explore some new voices. Expose yourself to different shapes, sizes, races, ethnicities and backgrounds.

FOCUS ON SMALL, SUSTAINABLE CHANGES

Doing many small things often is more effective than doing one big thing occasionally!

CONSISTENCY OVER PERFECTION

Balance what your HEAD and your HEART want and give yourself a break! Eliminate the black and white thinking that can lead us to judge and derail the positive changes we have made. Remember, good health is a journey!

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ANSWERING KIDS' Hardest Questions

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What If My Friends Tell Me to Do Something That Is Wrong?

By Betsy Childs Howard

DO THE RIGHT THING

What if my friends tell me to do something that is wrong? I heard someone say it's never the wrong time to do the right thing. The fact that people you like, who you want to like you, are encouraging you to do something wrong doesn't make it right to—just this once—do the wrong thing.

So if a child asks you this question, I would point them to 1 Corinthians 10:13 that says, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to man. God is faithful. He will provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

So if someone tells you to do something you know that is wrong, stop and remember that you don't have to do it. You don't have to give into temptation. And then think about what is the way out that he has provided for you.

That may be that you need to tell a grownup and ask for help. It may be that you think of something else to do and suggest that to your friends. Or it may be that you need to get out of there and run as fast as you can so that you're able to withstand the temptation. But remember that you can do it by the power of the Holy Spirit in you. You can do the right thing, and you won't be sorry.



ARLO AND THE KEEP-OUT CLUB

Arlo and the Keep-Out Club teaches kids ages 3–7 about the danger of peer pressure, the benefits of doing right, and the joy of putting their trust in Jesus as their ultimate friend and comforter in times of loneliness.

This article is part of the *Answering Kids' Hardest Questions* series.

IDENTITY IN OUR WORK

FINDING (THE RIGHT)

By Paul Tripp



Is your life of work balanced appropriately? Would those closest to you define you as a workaholic? How often do you feel torn between the demands of career, the responsibilities of family, and the call to serve the church actively? Could it be that you are asking your job to do for you what it cannot do?

Your life could be simplified to a triad of three inescapable dimensions of calling: relationships, work, and God. Or, to phrase it another way, you have three intersecting, overlapping domains of godly living: the social domain, the labour domain, and the spiritual domain (although everything is spiritual). Visualize these three areas as overlapping circles, with each circle connecting to the other two. Each of these is a significant expression of how God calls every one of us to live, and to a certain extent none of them is more important than the other since each exists because of divine calling.

It sounds simple enough, right? Yet you have a limited amount of time to devote to these domains—24 hours in a day, 7 days in a week, 30 days in a month, and 365 days in a year. So, if one circle expands over a longer duration of time, it can do so only because you have contracted another circle. Sometimes, without my even realizing it, the demands of work gradually begin to gobble up more and more of my time, and, as they do—because I do not have limitless time—I am left with less time for my family. Likewise, as your commitment to career expands, you will inevitably have little time left to do anything but casually attend church. Almost no one would say, at least publicly, "Work is a greater priority to me than family, so I am going to spend less time investing in my family." Few believers would declare (or even believe) that career is more important than their relationship with God and his people, yet many of us actively live in this way. It is impossible for one area of my calling to expand without its causing other areas of equally important calling to contract. Ask yourself, and invite others to answer this for you: Has my domain of work expanded to the point that it has caused a harmful contraction of my time with my family and my pursuit of God?

CAREER AS AN IDENTITY

The question of these three domains' expanding and contracting is a necessary one, but, as helpful as it may be for rearranging schedules and reallocating time, this question does not get at causality—that is, at the heart motivation that explains why so many of us are workaholics. Why are so many of us so driven to an unhealthy degree when it comes to our careers? Why are so many of us invested in our job to the detriment of family and church?

In a word: identity. I do not think that the

workaholics among us have first a priority or a scheduling problem; they have an identity problem, which results in a relationally and spiritually detrimental schedule problem. Only a secure identity in Christ can keep work in its rightful place.

Identity in Christ has freed me from looking for identity anywhere else. I am what I am because of who Jesus is for me by grace. In his awesome glory I really do find everything I need. I do not have to look elsewhere for the spiritual resources I need for living. I do not have to hunt elsewhere for meaning and purpose for my life. I do not have to look elsewhere to define who I am. I do not have to look elsewhere to measure my potential. I do not have to look elsewhere to find that inner sense of peace and well-being. Why? Because I have found all those things in him. Identity in Christ liberates me from a life-distorting bondage to identity in anything else.

Identity amnesia will leave you with an identity vacuum that you will fill with something in your life. If you forget who God is, you will not know who you are as his child, and you will subsequently look horizontally for what you have already been given vertically. Naturally, because work and career form such a huge and significant dimension of our lives, it becomes very tempting for us to look for our identity in those places. And, when you look to work for your identity, you will find it very hard to resist its challenges, demands, and promises of reward.

THE HORIZONTAL IDENTITIES OF WORK

Work and career, status and success promise multiple false identities to you. I want to highlight two. First, "I am what I have accomplished." Success makes you feel able and competent. A trail of achievement seems to make a statement about who you are and what you are able to do. We generally celebrate successful people as our personal and cultural heroes. We tend to see success as always, a good thing. But what does the true gospel say? "By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" *(Eph. 2:8–9)*.

God's grace offers you what you did not earn and forgives you for the wrongs you actually did. Grace radically alters your identity and your hope. Your identity is not in what you have achieved or in what the people around you think of what you have achieved. No, as a result of grace, your identity is rooted in the achievements of another. Your hope is based not on how well you are doing but on what Jesus has done for you.

When success becomes your personal saviour—that is, the place where you seek life—you can scarcely harness your drive for it. If you look to achievement to feel good about your life, to feel secure, or to have a life of meaning and purpose, then you will be dissatisfied with today's success. The buzz of today's success will fade, and you will need the next success to keep you going, and then another success to follow that. You will be looking incessantly for the next mountain to conquer. Without your realizing it, success will have morphed from something you enjoy to something you cannot live without. Your heart that once desired success will now become ruled by it. Because of this you will tend to go where success leads you, willing to invest whatever time, energy, and relationships you need to invest in order to get it. Only when identity in Christ has defined you as his child and given you a lasting and secure identity will you be able to keep something like a natural hunger for success in its proper place.

The second false identity I want to highlight is "I am the size of the pile of stuff I have accumulated." Because God has given us the capacity to recognize and enjoy beauty, it is tempting to identify the "good life" as a life filled with beautiful things, which is often the result of a successful career and high-earning job. Of course, the desire for beauty and possessions is not evil in itself. In fact, when I appreciate beauty, I mirror the Creator, whose artistic hand is the source of everything beautiful. I am designed to enjoy beautiful things, but I must not attach my identity to how many of those things I possess, and I must not let my heart be ruled by them. If you have attached your identity to material possessions and physical affluence, you will spend the bulk of your waking hours seeking to gain them, maintain them, use them, enjoy them, and keep them. And, because you are constantly working to increase and maintain your pile of stuff, other areas of your life will suffer. Only when you are living securely out of your identity as a child of the one who created and owns everything will you be able to rest as his child in the knowledge that he will faithfully provide every

good thing that you need. And only when your heart is satisfied in him can you be freed from looking for spiritual satisfaction in the fleeting pleasures of the physical world. When you are satisfied in him, you will be liberated from working constantly in order to possess more of what you hope will form your identity.

A CAREER SHAPED BY VERTICAL IDENTITY

A security in your vertical identity in Christ, on the other hand, will teach you eternal truths that help you put and keep work and career in their proper place.

The gifts that you employ and the time that you invest in your work come from and belong to God.

Work is the regular place where God calls you to be a good steward of the gifts, opportunities, and abilities he has given you. Since God has given you these gifts, you must exercise them in submission to his will and for the sake of his glory. God has also created you to live in and for a certain time and place. He is the only being in the universe who exists in timelessness, which means we must do all he has called us to do within the limits of the time he has given us. How can you use these gifts and time in your work in a way that recognizes God as the giver and submits to the commands, values, and principles of his Word?

You are called to live for something bigger than yourself.

By grace God has connected me to things that are huge and eternal. My life is enormously bigger than merely my life. I am not at the centre of things. What I want and what I own on earth should not be the principal motivators of what I do and how I spend my time.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. *(Matt. 6:19–21)*

The choices and investment I make in my world of work must always submit to the reality that I have been called to the service of an eternal kingdom that is not my own. Success is not about how well I have been able to build my own little kingdom but about the degree to which I have done all I have done in the service of a greater King.

Success is not about accruing power but about resting in God's power.

The most successful person is the person who knows his place and humbly submits all that he has and all that he does to the power of one greater than himself. Success is not about using my world of work to create personal power or control. Success is about recognizing God's control and using my gifts for his purpose, accepting the power that comes my way as a stewardship from him. Success also means recognizing that whatever power I have is not independent power to use however I wish to use it. All human power is representative power. God grants me this power and calls me to use it in a way that is consistent with the values he makes clear in his Word.

CONCLUSION

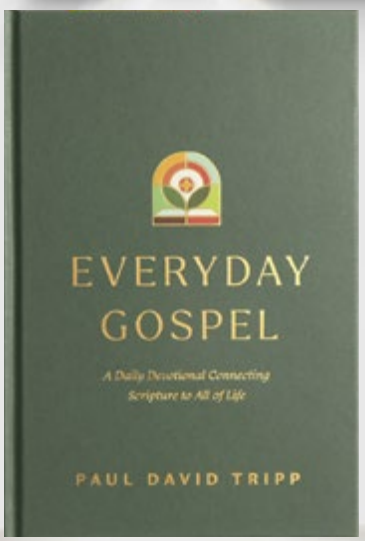
Let us return to the original illustration of those three overlapping circles. God is too wise and loving to call you to one area of responsibility in a way that will necessitate your being irresponsible in another. God will never call me to a career that makes biblical commitments to my family and my church impossible. If it seems impossible for me to balance my life of work with doing that which God calls me to do in my family and church life, I am in such a situation not because God's calls are unmanageable but because I am seeking to get things out of work that I should not. We can never blame God for the consequences of our bad choices.

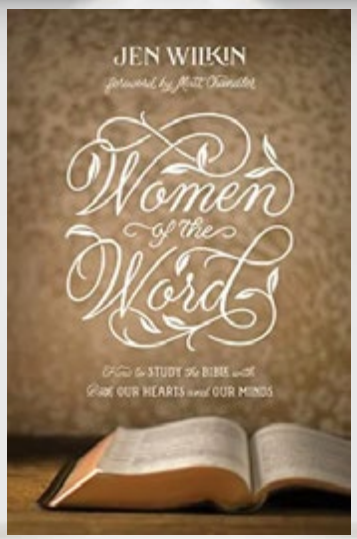
Many of our work lives are out of balance, so it is important for us to remember that this is not a priorities problem but an identity problem. Identity in Christ allows us to rest in the security that we will find everything we need in him. By grace our life of work can now be an expression of rest and not worry. Our lives of work can stop being driven by "I have got to have (fill in the blank)" and can now be shaped by "Look at the amazing things we have been given." Rather than being driven by anxious need, our work can now be shaped by worshipful gratitude. Yes, you are committed to work because God calls you to labour, but as you work you can rest in his covenantal commitment to meet every one of your needs.

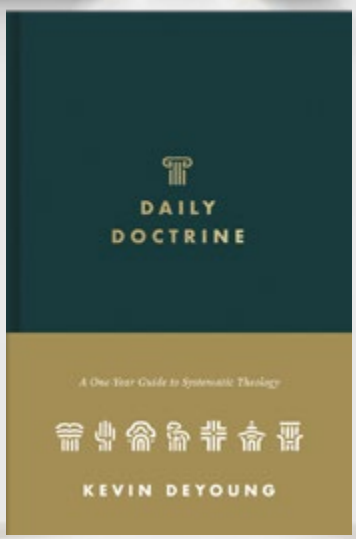
"Identity in Christ has freed me from looking for identity anywhere else. I am what I am because of who Jesus is for me by grace."

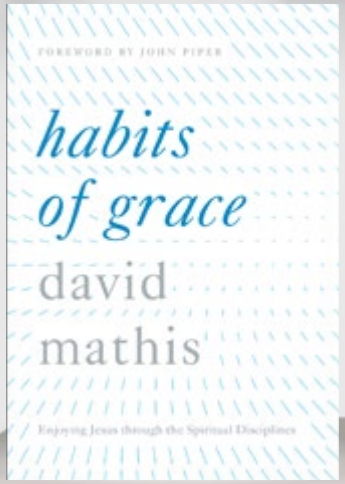
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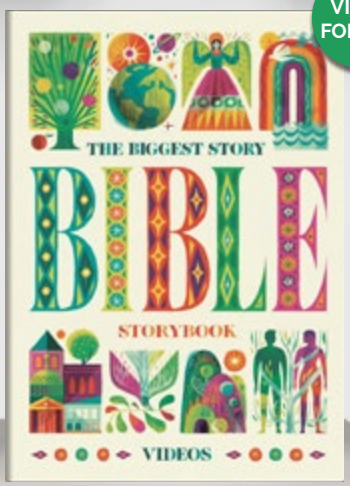










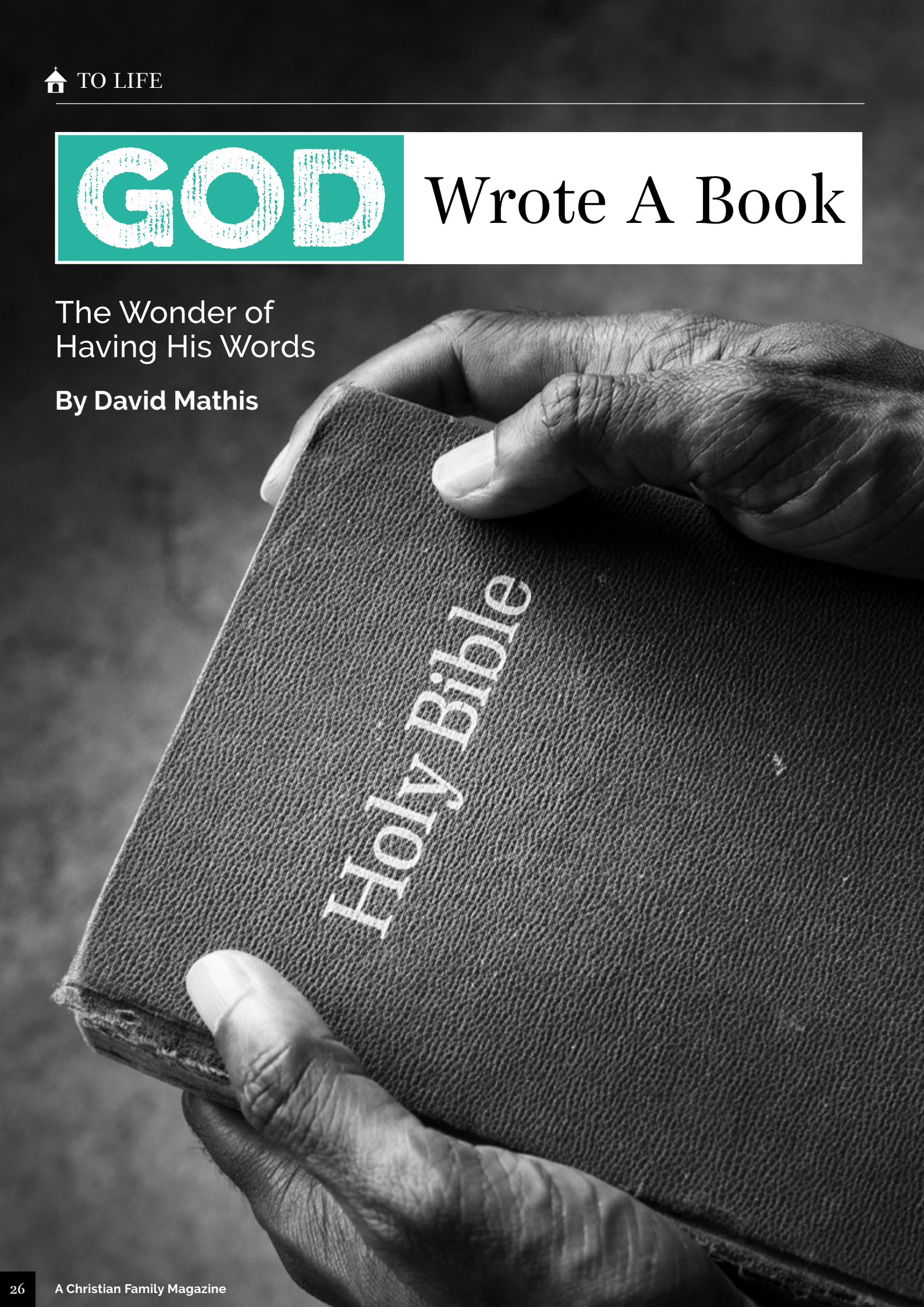


CROSSWAY

GOD Wrote A Book

The Wonder of Having His Words

By David Mathis



We actually have the words of God. This is almost too good to be true. And yet how often are we so accustomed to this reality — one of the greatest wonders in all the universe — that it barely moves us to handle the Bible with care (and awe), or at least to access his words with the frequency they deserve?

Familiarity can breed contempt, or at least neglect. While scarcity drives demand, abundance can lead to apathy. For many of us, we have multiple Bibles on our shelves, in multiple translations. We have copies on our computers and phones. We have access to the very words of God like never before — yet how often do we appreciate, and marvel at, the wonder of what we have?

WONDER OF HAVING

One of the greatest facts in all of history is that God gave us a Book. ***He gave us a Book!*** He has spoken. He has revealed himself to us through prophets and apostles and appointed that they write down his words and that they be preserved. We have his words! We can hear in our souls the very voice of God himself by his Spirit through his Book.

"No word of God is a dead word."

Think of all God went to, and what patience, to make his self-revelation accessible to us here in the twenty-first century. Long ago, at many times, and in many ways, God spoke through the prophets *(Hebrews 1:1)*. Then, in the fullness of time, he sent his own Son, his own self, in full humanity, as his revealed Word par excellence, in the person of Christ, represented to us by his authoritative, apostolic spokesmen in the new covenant.

For centuries, God's word was copied by hand and preserved with the utmost diligence and care. Then, for the last 500 years of the printing press, God's word has gone far and wide like never before. Men and women gave their lives, upsetting the apple carts of man-made religion, to translate the words of God into the heart language of their people. And now, in the digital revolution, access to God's own words has exploded exponentially again, and yet — and yet — in such abundance, do we marvel at what we have? And do we, as individuals and as churches, make the most of what infinite riches we have in such access to the Scriptures?

HIS WORDS, OUR GREAT REWARD

The psalmists were in awe of what they had. In particular, Psalms 19 and 119 pay tribute to the wonder of having God's words. For instance:

> The law of the Lord is perfect,
> reviving the soul;
> the testimony of the Lord is sure,
> making wise the simple;
> the precepts of the Lord are right,
> rejoicing the heart;
> the commandment of the Lord is pure,
> enlightening the eyes;
> the fear of the Lord is clean,
> enduring forever;
> the rules of the Lord are true,
> and righteous altogether.
> More to be desired are they than gold,
> even much fine gold;
> sweeter also than honey
> and drippings of the honeycomb.
> Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
> in keeping them there is great reward.
> *(Psalm 19:7–11)*

God is honoured when we approach his words as those that revive the soul and rejoice the heart, as those that are more to be desired than gold and sweeter than honey. The summary and culmination of Psalm 19's unashamed tribute to God's words is this: great reward. He means for us to experience his words as "my delight" (*Psalm 1:2*; *119:16*, *24*), as "the joy of my heart" *(Psalm 119:111)*, as "the delight of my heart" (Jeremiah 15:16), as kindling for the fires of our joy.

Not only ***has God spoken*** in this Book we call the Bible, ***but he is speaking***. Writing about Psalm 95 in particular (and applicable to all the Scriptures), Hebrews says "the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" *(Hebrews 4:12)*. No word of God is a dead word. Even Hebrews — the New Testament letter plainest on the old covenant being "obsolete" in its demands upon new-covenant Christians *(Hebrews 8:13)* — professes that old-covenant revelation, while no longer binding, is indeed "living and active." "Is not my word like fire," God declares through Jeremiah, "and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" *(Jeremiah 23:29)*.

From cover to cover, Genesis to Revelation, God has captured for his church his objective, "external word" (as Luther called it) which he speaks (present tense) to his people through the subjective, internal power of his Spirit dwelling in us. We hear God's voice in his word by his Spirit. And so, Hebrews exhorts us,

"See that you do not refuse him who is speaking" (Hebrews 12:25).

WONDER OF HANDLING

So then, how will we who marvel at having God's living and active words not also fall to the floor in amazement that he invites us — even more, he insists — that we handle his word. It is no private message to Timothy, but to the whole church reading over his shoulder, when Paul writes,

> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

The charge lands first on Timothy, as Paul's delegate in Ephesus, and then on pastors (both then and today) who formally and publicly "handle the word" for the feeding and forming of the church. But the summons to rightly handle the word of truth (both in the gospel word and in the written Scriptures) is a mantle for the whole church to gladly bear.

In the midst of a world of destructive words, God calls his church to first receive (have) and then respond to (handle) his words. As human words of death fly around us from all sides — in the air, on the page, on our screens — he gives us his own life-giving words to steady our souls and the souls of others. As the world quarrels about words, "which does no good, but only ruins the hearers" (2 Timothy 2:14) and coughs up "irreverent babble" that leads "people into more and more ungodliness" and spreads like gangrene (2 Timothy 2:16–17), God gives us an oasis in the gift of his words (2 Timothy 2:15). We receive them for free, but that doesn't mean we take them lightly or expend little energy to handle them well.

MAKE EVERY EFFORT

God, through Paul, says "do your best" — literally, be zealous, be eager, make every effort — "to present yourself to God as one approved." We orient Godward first and foremost in our handling of his word, then only secondarily to others. Which will make us "a worker who has no need to be ashamed."

Being a worker requires work, labour, the exertion of effort, the expending of energy, the investment of time, the patience of lifelong learning. To do so without cutting corners ("unashamed") or mishandling the task. And in particular, for building others up, not tearing others down. For showing others the feast, not showing ourselves to have been right.

"Rightly handling" — guiding along a straight path — harkens to the vision Paul casts in 2 Corinthians of his own straightforwardness with God's word. Paul was not coy about

> "God gives us his own life-giving words to steady our souls and the souls of others."

hard truths. He was not evasive. He was not a verbal gymnast, gyrating around humanly offensive divine oracles. Rather, he was frank, honest, candid, sincere. "We are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word," he declares, "but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:17). He has more to say about such sincerity:

> We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Corinthians 4:2)

LISTENING LIKE HEDONISTS

But rightly handling God's word doesn't just mean we're convinced of its truthfulness and handle it as such. Rightly handling doesn't only include rigorous careful analysis and forthright unapologetic candour. Rightly handling includes the psalmists' intense spiritual sensibilities. To see in and through God's words his "great reward," and knowing him to be a rewarder of those who seek him (Hebrews 11:6).

In other words, we come to his word like holy hedonists, stalking joy. Worldly hedonists pursue the pleasures of sin; they don't wait on them to arrive. And so do Christian Hedonists. We don't wait around for holy pleasures. We don't passively engage God himself through his own words. We stalk. We pursue. We read actively, and study, and meditate. When we are persuaded that God himself is indeed the greatest reward, is there any better avenue to pursue than his own words?

At Desiring God, we don't aim or pretend to be unique. However flippantly or earnestly others handle God's words, we mean to receive them with the utter seriousness and joyful awe they deserve — he deserves. God wrote a Book. And gave it to us. Let's give ourselves to this wonder, and marvel that we get to handle his words.

DAVID MATHIS *(@davidcmathis)* is executive editor for desiringGod.org and pastor at Cities Church. He is a husband, father of four, and author of Workers for Your Joy: The Call of Christ on Christian Leaders (2022).



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Truth For Life is the teaching ministry of Alistair Begg and is committed to teaching the Bible with clarity and relevance so that unbelievers will be converted, believers will be established, and local churches will be strengthened.



Mike Winger is the featured teacher of BibleThinker online ministry. BibleThinker is a ministry dedicated to helping you learn to think biblically about everything.



6 HABITS FOR SUCCESSFUL BIBLE STUDY

By Jon Nielson

STAY ON TRACK

Years ago, when I was serving in high school ministry, we offered this simple plan to our students as they learned how to lead small-group Bible studies with their peers. It consists of the cultivation of six habits that constitute a basic approach to studying any passage of Scripture. Developing these habits will help keep you on track in your study—paying attention to the text, avoiding rabbit trails, and doing everything you can to get the main point and the central application as God intended it. Let's look at these habits.

1 READ CAREFULLY

Our first habit is simply careful reading. So many mistakes are made in hermeneutics (biblical interpretation) because people read too quickly through a passage, assume they understand what it's saying, and then make a leap to something in their experience that the passage makes them think about. Carefully reading the text several times can be the first and most important step in making sure we are listening to what the Bible is actually saying. Take time to read slowly. Make observations and linger over the text. Read it silently, then out loud. And don't forget to pray for God's help as you listen to his word and seek to understand and apply it faithfully.

2 READ IN CONTEXT

It's important to understand that mistakes in the interpretation and application of the Bible often can be avoided simply by taking time to understand the context of specific verses and passages. A verse that seems to be saying one thing at first glance could actually be understood to mean the opposite when it's read in its proper context. When we study the Bible, then, we need to pay attention to the verses directly around the passage we're reading. We need to think about the historical situation of the original audience in order to understand what the biblical author was saying to them before we apply the passage to ourselves. And we need to make sure that we are remembering the context of the entire Bible, which tells the story of God's creation, humanity's fall, redemption through Christ, and the promise of resurrected life in God's new creation. Reading every Bible passage—and every Bible verse—in its proper context is vital for proper understanding and application of God's word.

3 IDENTIFY CORE TERMS

Next, we must look for core words or phrases in a passage of Scripture. As we study a Bible passage, we must

This article is adapted from *Understanding God's Word: An Introduction to Interpreting the Bible* by Jon Nielson.

ask, "What words or phrases are repeated? Are there ideas that keep coming up again and again in the passage? Is there a particular point that the author makes—perhaps at both the beginning and the end of a story or section of Scripture?" This habit is designed to help us get closer to the crux (main point) of the text (see the next habit) by identifying repeated emphases employed by the biblical author. When we tell a story or give a speech, we almost always repeat or emphasize the points that are most important to us. It's no different with the biblical text, so paying careful attention to repeated words often can be a helpful way to capture what God's word is saying to us.

4 IDENTIFY THE MAIN POINT

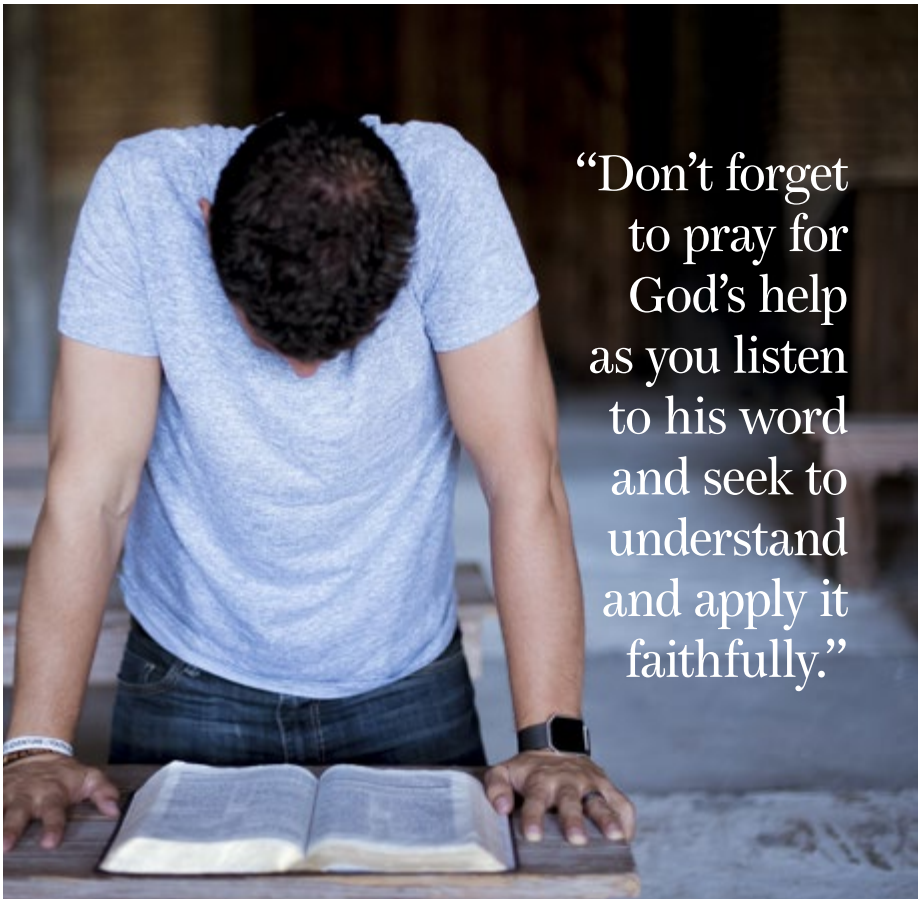
This habit can help pinpoint the theme of a passage of Scripture, which can be defined as the timeless theological truth that the passage is teaching. The theme of any biblical passage is just as true today as it was when the passage was written. It may be a truth about the character of God, humanity, sin, salvation, or our fallen world. Whatever it may be, an important discipline in Bible study is to work hard to capture that main point. Try to put this theme into just one sentence—something like "The main point of this passage is _." Taking this step in Bible study doesn't mean you'll always get the main point exactly right, but it will help you discipline yourself to not only study a passage of Scripture verse by verse, but also to see a chunk of Scripture as a whole, seeking to discern the overall main point that the biblical author, as inspired by God the Holy Spirit, was making to his original audience (and is making to us, God's people today).

5 SEE CHRIST IN THE TEXT

The simple conviction behind this habit of Bible study is that the Scriptures ultimately are about God's redemption of sinners—and all of creation—through the life, death, resurrection, and final return of his Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible's climax is the saving work of God through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. So it's appropriate for us to ask, when studying any passage of Scripture, "How does this passage relate to Jesus and the gospel?" Of course, it's important to remember that different passages of Scripture point to Jesus and the gospel in different ways. Some Old Testament passages offer direct prophetic words about the coming of Jesus, while others simply display the need for Jesus, the Messiah, to come and save sinners. Some New Testament passages explain Jesus's work on the cross in detail; others apply his saving work or hold him out as an example for Christians to follow. Whatever the case may be, it's important—and valid—for Christians to seek to connect every passage in the Bible to the person and work of Jesus Christ, who is the Savior of all who believe.

6 ANSWER GOD'S CALL

This is where the rubber meets the road. Here we ask that all-important question, "What does the truth of this passage mean for the way I think, act, and speak?" We are asking ourselves, "What is the central call of this passage to me as a follower of Jesus Christ?" We're talking, of course, about application. If the Bible is true—and if Jesus indeed is our Savior and Lord, who invites us to follow and obey him—then every passage of Scripture should have a real impact on our lives. If we do not practice this final habit of Bible study, there is a very real danger that while we may engage in some cerebral or academic study of Scripture, we will not allow the Bible to challenge and change us. God's word is living and active *(Heb. 4:12)*; our Lord intends for us to obey it and to be constantly changed by it as it calls us to deeper obedience, sanctification, and growth in Christ. When we study the Bible, then, we are trying to discover what it means, but also what it means for the way we live as faithful followers of Jesus Christ.





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