

BIBLE STUDY LESSON

“THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF DEVOTION TO THE WORD”

II TIMOTHY 3:16

Introduction: The spiritual disciplines are like various paths leading us into the presence of God where we can behold His glory. In this lesson I will focus on the paths of Hearing, Reading, and Studying the Word of God.

The spiritual disciplines of the Christian life are like paths to help us come into the presence of God to behold a different aspect of His glory. One day as you meditate on Scripture, you see one aspect of God’s glory. On another day as you fast and pray you see a different sight of His beauty. The problem is that too often, we get so focused on completing the spiritual discipline that we forget why we are doing it. We get caught with completing the discipline, and forget that the value in the discipline is to commune with God and behold His glory.

Today, we are going to begin to discuss the spiritual disciplines related to cultivating our relationship with God. There are many different spiritual disciplines in this regard, including devotion to the Word, Prayer, Fasting, and Worship.

We’re going to begin tonight with what I believe is the most vital spiritual discipline of all

Devotion to the Word of God. Under that discipline there are several subdivisions:

- Hearing the Word
- Reading the Word
- Studying the Word
- Memorizing the Word
- Meditating on the Word
- Obeying the Word

I’m sure that we won’t be able to discuss all six aspects of devotion to the Word to, so tonight we’ll just examine the first three, and look at the last three next week.

1. Hearing The Word:

This is the easiest of all the sub-disciplines related to devotion to the Word of God. It is important that you *hear* the Word of God. Think about it. Why does God call and raise up pastors, preachers,

and teachers of the Word? Because He wants His people to **Hear** the Word proclaimed. God wants you to hear the Word. Consider these passages of Scripture:

Luke 8:21 (NKJV) “***But He answered and said to them, “My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.”***”

Luke 11:28 (NKJV) “***But He said, “More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.”***”

Romans 10:17 (NKJV) “***So then faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.***”

I Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB) “***For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.***”

In order for you to benefit from hearing the Word, all you have to do is make sure you are gathered with the church when they meet and then listen carefully to the Word which is being proclaimed. Some Christians isolate themselves from the rest of the body of Christ. They don't gather with other believers, but instead just stay at home and read their Bible and think that is enough. It's not. God has designed that Christians would assemble to hear His Word proclaimed for their own strengthening and edification. Commit yourself, at the very least, to regularly hearing the Word.

2. Reading The Word:

I don't think we really, truly, understand how great of a blessing it is that we have a copy of God's Word and can read it whenever we want. Think about it. Until about 1450 A.D. the Bible could not be printed. So how did Christians in the first century grow in his faith?

- a. He cherished the gatherings of the church where the Scriptures were read.
- b. He committed the sayings and stories of Jesus to memory.
- c. He sang songs of praise which were collections of Scripture.

A Christian in the first century could never imagine the blessing that we possess today.

Jesus often asked the scribes and Pharisees a question beginning with the words in **Matthew 19:4 (ESV)**, “***Have you not read***”? Jesus assumed that those who claimed to be Followers of God would read the Bible. At one point Jesus responded to Satan in **Matthew 4:4 (ESV)**, “***man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.***”

Jesus expects us to read His Word. **II Timothy 3:16 (NKJV)** says, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,*”

Revelation 1:3 (NASB) says, “*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.*”

There is a blessing promised to those who read, hear, and study the words of God, but those who discipline themselves to read it will receive the blessing.

Let me give you a few practical suggestions for those of you who want to embrace the spiritual discipline of reading the Bible in order to commune with God.

1. Make the time every day to read the Scripture. Probably the greatest excuse people give is that they just don’t have the time to read the Bible on top of everything else they are doing. You are going to have to eliminate some other activities that are really not that important and replace them with a daily time of reading the Bible. Notice what Job said, in **Job 23:12 (NKJV)** “*I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food.*”

a. Job considered the words of God as more valuable than his food. Do you? So, No Bible – No Breakfast. No Read – No Feed. Take that seriously.

b. The answer of course is to get up earlier to make time.

c. If you take the spiritual disciplines seriously it may radically reorientate your life. Remember it takes about three weeks to form a habit, and another three weeks for that habit to feel like it’s a natural part of your life.

d. Form a Plan. In other words, don’t play Russian Roulette with your Bible. My suggestion is to start in one of the gospels, preferably John. Then continue reading through the New Testament. When you are done with the New Testament, go ahead and read through the Old Testament. If you get bogged down in an Old Testament book, come back to a book in the New Testament for a while in which God has spoken to you.

3. Studying The Word:

Another path to the top of the mountain to behold God’s glory is study. Jerry Bridges in his book “Studying God’s Word” puts it this way, “Reading gives you breadth, but study gives you depth.”

If you simply read through the Bible at several chapters a day, you’ll get a good overview of

Scripture, but it's not until you slow down and study that you will really begin to understand a book of the Bible.

Example of Studying

a. A good example of someone who studied the Word was Ezra. Notice **Ezra 7:10 (AMP)** “***For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.***” Ezra was committed to doing three things:

- Study the law
- Practice (Obeyed) the law
- and Taught the law.

Notice that he had set his heart to do these things. Ezra disciplined himself to study God's Word (V.6).

b. Another example is Paul's exhortation to Timothy in **II Timothy 2:15 (NASB)**, “***Be diligent (study) to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.***” This exhortation is especially relevant for pastors and bible teachers, but every Christian should strive to fulfill it. All believers should study the Word of God so that they accurately handle God's truth.

c. Another great example of someone who disciplined themselves to study God's Word was the Apostle Paul.

In **II Timothy 4:13 (NIV)** we have the great apostle writing his last inspired words before his death, and we get a glimpse into his heart when he writes, “***When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.***” The “books” and “parchments” would have almost certainly included copies of the Scriptures. If the great apostle needed to study the Word, surely you and I do as well.

So, how does a person study the Bible? It's really not complicated. If you are already reading the Bible, just slow down and keep a pen and a notebook open before you. Start recording observations about the passage.

- Who is writing?
- Who is he writing to?
- What is the central idea of the passage?
- Write down the connecting words like “for, therefore, nevertheless, but, as, like, so that.”

- Write down questions that come to your mind as you are reading the text.
- Look up cross-references in the margin of your bible to see if you can get answers to those questions.
- Look up a key word in the verse you are studying and trace how it is used in the concordance in the back of your Bible or look it up in an online Bible software program.
- Notice the time and place words.
- Ask yourself the 5 W's, (Who, What, When, Where, Why) and also How.
- Notice the repeated words or phrases.
- You might also outline a chapter, paragraph by paragraph, and then when you have finished the chapter, move on to the next chapter until you have outlined the whole book.

As you get more and more familiar with the Bible you will want to do some topical studies, character studies, and word studies. There are a lot of bibles that will do all of this for you. My advice is don't use a study Bible that has all kinds of notes and explanations, until you have exhausted your own study. If you run straight for the answers from someone else's work, you will rob yourself of the joy of discovering truth for yourself. If you have prayed, journaled, and searched the Scripture and you are still stumped by something, then consult study bibles or commentaries to see what insights you might glean from other writings.

Conclusion:

Christians who enjoy God the most are the ones who are willing to expend the most effort in their pursuit of Him. Take some time right now and think about it.

- Who are the people that you personally know who are the most godly?
- Do you have them in your mind right now?
- How many of those people are devoted to God's Word?

In my mind, every single person that I know who is truly godly is also truly devoted to His Word. I can't think of a single exception. If you truly want to be a godly person, the path to get there is devotion to God's Word.

Are you regularly climbing the mountain to behold the glory of God? If not, will you commit today to disciplining yourself to be devoted to His Word?