

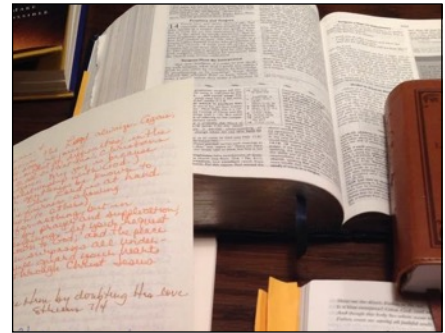
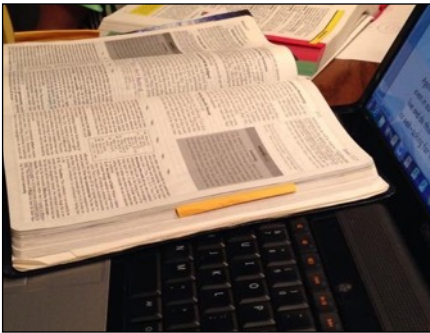
Studying the Bible



The Bible is the all time #1 Best Seller and is filled with rich history, poetry and pretty entertaining stories. While there are 40 or so contributing authors from all walks of life - kings, shepherds, fisherman, etc., there is only one true Author - our Creator and Heavenly Father - God. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

The Bible is God's Word to us. If we believe that, shouldn't we make time to read it and study it so that we can come to understand it? Studying God's word provides insight into who God is and what He has done for us.

In the Old Testament we read the story of a nation. In that nation, God raised up a family and promised a great blessing - the gift of the Messiah. The New Testament is the account of this promised coming. His name was Jesus. He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died for our sins and ascended into Heaven where He has made a home for us. By accepting Him as our Savior, we have the promise of eternal life in heaven. The New Testament ends with the promise of His second coming.



The pages are filled with guidance and direction for how we are to live our lives here on earth. It offers us insight into God's plan and our purpose for being here. It is our handbook - our guide to pursuing our goal of becoming like Christ.

The Bible is the greatest love story ever written. It offers us a glimpse of the enormous love our Father has for us. It is personal and God will speak directly into your life through the words on it's pages. It is alive and relevant today. As we get into God's Word, we will soon discover that it is getting into us, transforming us bit by bit.

If you are new to studying God's word, may I offer you a challenge? Will you commit to invest 3 or 4 hours a week reading and studying your Bible for the next 12 months. I know it sounds like a lot, but it is just 30 minutes a day devoted to the One who created you and the One who died so that you could live the abundant life. I promise, it will change your life. Test me on it and let me know what happens.

10 Tips to Help you Get Started...

1. Lay down any inhibitions you may have about the Bible. Allow yourself to enjoy God's word. Don't buy into the lie that you cannot understand it. It is not a puzzle you will be challenged to decipher. God has given His Word to us to speak directly to us. He has given us the Holy Spirit to guide us and to discern His wisdom. And He has given us teachers to help us interpret what He is saying to us. The more you study it, the more you come to understand who God is. The more you know Him and realize how much He loves you, the more you will desire to walk in obedience to Him.
2. Spend time in prayer each day before you begin your Bible study. The Bible teaches us that we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit and that He is our Helper. Ask Him to help you as you read and study. Pray for an alert mind and for understanding of God's word. Ask Him to show you what He has personally for you that day.
3. It matters what Bible you use. Be sure to select a translation you can understand, yet remains faithful to the original text. My personal favorite is the New King James Version.
4. You may want to find a good study Bible. A study Bible has notes at the bottom of the pages. Always remember that the text above the line is the inerrant and infallible word of God. The text below the line in the note section is not God-breathed, but man's quest to explain God's word. Study Bibles have Book Introductions before each book of the Bible. There, you will find who wrote the book, when it was written and to whom it was written. It is important to understand the context of what you are reading. What is happening? When is this taking place - before or after the birth of Christ?
5. Download a Bible app such as You Version to your smart phone, tablet or computer. Also, biblegateway.com is a great resource. Here you can compare translations and review commentaries. (A commentary is an explanation or interpretation of a written text.) These tools offer explanation and insight to help us gain a better understanding but should never change the meaning.

6. If you do not know where to start, you might choose the book of John and then follow with the other gospels - Matthew, Mark and Luke. John is the account of the life of Jesus Christ and His teachings. It is a powerful representation of His divine authority.
7. Study the verses you read. What do they mean? Look for an explanation. Take time to look up words you do not understand in a dictionary. If there are other scriptures referenced, be sure to read those as well.
8. Have a journal handy to make notes as you study. Remember what you learn by writing it down. Underline what stands out to you and jot notes in the margin of your Bible. (It is not sacrilegious to write in your Bible. It is okay for you to do it, even in fun colors.) If you have an experience where you believe God answered your prayer through His word, make a note in the Bible and date it. It is good to remember that answered prayer every time you turn to that page.
9. Find a great devotional book. Visit a Christian bookstore and ask the staff to help you find one. Make sure each day's devotional is focused on God's word. We are not interested in what man says, we are interested in understanding God's words to us.
10. Start a Bible study. You can purchase a participant guide and do it on your own or join a group online or at your church. I love a group study because you can hold each other accountable and share what you are learning.

You will never come to a place where you know everything God wants to teach you through His word. Enjoy the journey of growing to know Him more and more. Bask in His goodness and be amazed by all that you will discover. As you soak in His word, He will meet you there and grant you clarity and understanding you never imagined. Study it again and again, over and over, going deeper and deeper still - until the Lord returns.