

LESSON 9: LEARNING

The goal of studying the Bible is to learn to apply biblical truth to your life. We get to know God and deepen our relationship with Him as we learn about Him and obey His commands. We learn how to walk in love as we read examples from the life of Jesus and other godly men and women. We need to be able to share biblical truth with other people in obedience to the things taught in God's word. We can learn from gifted Bible teachers, but a follower of Christ must be able to learn from the Bible directly and not be entirely dependent upon others to teach him.

Review and reflection:

- Have you had an opportunity to share a gospel presentation with someone?
- Tell what happened when you shared the gospel.
- Remember that you are simply to share Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leave the results to God.
- Who else do you know who needs to hear the gospel?
- Do you have any questions?

THE GOAL OF BIBLE LEARNING

Read 2 Timothy 3:14–17

- What does Paul tell Timothy about the Scripture?
- Who is the author of Scripture?
- Why is Scripture necessary?

Read James 1:22–25

- What does James say about Scripture?
- How does Scripture act like a mirror?

Read John 14:15–26

- What does Jesus say about His commands recorded in the Scripture?
- How do you obey Jesus?
- Who will help us understand God's word in the Bible?

We speak to God in prayer. God speaks to us through His word in the Bible and through the Holy Spirit who lives in us and teaches us and guides us. We who love Christ want to be yielded to God in such a way that the Holy Spirit continually speaks to our heart and teaches us God's word to lead us in His ways for our entire life.

If we want to follow the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:18–20**), we must teach people to “obey” everything that Christ commanded us. This is different than just “teaching them everything He taught.” For Jesus, the important thing is obedience, not knowledge.

We need to learn the content and principles of the Bible and to grow in our relationship with God. We are going to learn a simple process for understanding and wisely applying the Bible to our lives.

LEARNING FROM THE BIBLE

One of the best things that a believer can do is to get to know God better. The best way we can accomplish this is to look carefully at the book He has written—the Bible. The Bible communicates who God is and His plan for people. One of the most effective and simple approaches to reading and understanding God's Word involves three steps:

- Observation—What does the passage say?
- Interpretation—What does the passage mean?
- Application—What am I going to do about what the passage says and means?

Step #1: Observation

Careful observation of the text is the first step. As you read the passage, you need to look carefully (and often slowly) at what is said, and how it is said. Ask four questions:

- **Who** are the people in this passage? What are their goals?
- **What** is happening in this passage? What do I learn about God?
- **When** is this story taking place? What happened before and after this story?
- **Where** is this story taking place? Can you imagine the setting?

As you discover the answers and imagine the event, you'll probably come up with more questions of your own.

Step #2: Interpretation

Interpretation is discovering the meaning of a passage, the author's thought and intention when he wrote it.

Three things can help you determine what the author wanted to communicate:

- **Context.** You can answer most of your questions about a passage when you read the text. Understanding the context involves looking at the text that comes before and after the passage.
- **Cross-references.** Let Scripture interpret Scripture. Other passages in the Bible may shed light on the passage you are looking at. Many Bibles list cross-references of additional verses that might be helpful for gaining understanding.
- **Culture.** The Bible was written long ago, in a particular part of the world, by many authors who lived in different cultures. So when we interpret a passage, we need to understand it from that writer's cultural viewpoint.

Once you have understanding of the passage context, cross-reference, and culture, you can ask two more questions:

- **What** did the author want the reader to understand?
- **What** got your attention personally or what did you think was important in the passage?

Step #3: Application

We want to be obedient to God and to grow to be more like Jesus Christ. After we have observed a passage and interpreted in order to understand it, to the best of our ability, we must then apply its truth to our own life.

Ask the following four "How" questions of every passage of Scripture you read:

- How does the truth revealed here teach me about God, who He is, and about my relationship with Him?
- How does this truth affect my relationship with others?
- How does the passage apply to my life today?
- How must I now change my life?

Simply answering these questions does not complete the application step. The key is putting into practice what God has taught you. There is always something you can apply, even if you have difficulty applying everything you learn. We grow over time. And when you work on applying a truth to your life, God will bless your efforts to obey.

It is a good idea to write notes concerning what you are learning from the Bible. You may wish to keep a journal of the things God is teaching you through His word. Whenever you read the notes you have written in the past, you will be able to see how God has used the Bible to produce growth in your life, because applying God's word always produces good changes in our lives, making us look more like Jesus.

LEARNING AND GROWING IN THE WEEKS AHEAD

- Start your personal Bible study by learning about Jesus in the book of John. John explained that he wrote the book to help readers "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." (**John 20:31**)
- Next, start studying the book of Romans. Paul wrote the book of Romans to a group of believers whom he was unable to visit yet. Out of concern for their growth, he wrote the book of Romans to teach what he hoped to teach them in person when he was able to visit them. The book of Romans covers many important issues in Christianity. Its central theme is summarized in **Romans 1:16-17**, declaring the relationships between the gospel, salvation, righteousness, faith, Jews, Gentiles, God and man. Therefore, Romans gives a logical summary of the basic truths concerning the Christian faith and its practice.