

"Get More from God's Word"

What can we do to get more from God's Word to help us in our day to day lives? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and this is In Search of the Lord's Way. We're going to explore how to study God's Word, so stay tuned.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. We're so happy that you've joined us today. God nourishes our souls and guides our path through His Word. We need God's Word in our lives. The Bible is a sacred treasure because it comes from God and teaches us the truth. And that's why we go to it again and again. Thanks for allowing us into your home to study God's Holy Word. Our time together is precious.

According to a recent Pew Forum Religious Knowledge Survey, people who identify themselves as Christians could only answer six of the twelve questions about the Bible and Christianity. Even many who went to church and were involved in spiritual training as teens could only answer half the questions. For instance, barely more than half knew the Golden Rule, "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets," well, that's not one of the Ten Commandments, it's in the New Testament. Less than half knew the four gospels are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Survey also revealed that 37 percent of Americans say that they read their Bible at least once a week, not counting worship services. Reading God's Word is essential to a strong spiritual life, so we need to dig deep into the Word of God. We need to study diligently what God says. Acts 17 verse 11 says that the Bereans, "were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

Now God regarded the Bereans as noble because they eagerly listened to the truth and compared Paul and Silas' message with the Scriptures. They knew the Scriptures well enough to distinguish the truth from a false doctrine. Do you know the Scriptures that well? Or do you swallow anything that you hear, or do you go to the Bible to see whether the teaching is so? There's a real need to study God's Word.

Now we offer the information on this program free. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, if you like, you can call our toll-free telephone number. We'll pay for the call. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also show this program on our website at www.searchtv.org. Well Larry Owsley will lead the Edmond church in song, and then we'll read from Psalm 19 verses 7 to 11.

Our reading today is a Psalm of David, Psalm 19, verses 7 to 11. "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring 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 judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; And in keeping them there is great reward." What a wonderful reading from God's word. Let's pray together. Oh Father, we're thankful that You have given us Your Word, Your wisdom, and You're love through this great message. Father help us to love You and to love the things that You have taught us. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

We need to follow God's teaching in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 15, which says "Be diligent to present yourself to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." We need to make every effort to be the kind of Christian worker that God accepts rather than one who is ashamed when God inspects his work. Timothy was a preacher of the gospel, and God expected him to correctly explain the word of truth.

Now this means that what people believe and teach matters to God it should matter to your soul. In fact, Paul had warned Timothy earlier in 1 Timothy 4 and verse 16, "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you." Only sound and healthy teaching can help us grow strong in our faith.

Now Paul warned Timothy to watch out for religious teachers who did more harm than good. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2 verses 16 to 18, "But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some." Now if you don't know the truth, you can easily be deceived and follow error. God's Word provides an unfailing standard of truth by which we can test right and wrong.

Now this is not some small matter. Because God's Word is utterly true, we can trust it and we can rest our souls on it. Romans 10 verse 17 says, "that faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Now if you want a deeper faith, then go to the Word, the Bible. If you want to know the truth, then go to the Word, the Bible. If you want to keep sin and error out of your life, then go to the Word, the Bible.

The Bible is a treasure that God freely gives to us; but the Bible won't do you any good if you leave it on the shelf. If you yearn to get more out of your Bible, then read it every day. Now each verse holds a vast treasure, and you won't get it all at just one reading. Read it many times. Get so familiar with its words and ideas that its message cannot fail to saturate your heart. God wants His Word to be written on our hearts (Hebrews 8 and verse 10).

Now if you're weary of the corruption that's in our society, then set your heart on the Word of God. Paul advised Timothy in 2 Timothy 3 verses 13 to 15, "But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, you continue in the things that you've learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you've learned them, and that from childhood you've known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Paul reveals the purpose and the value of the Bible in this same chapter, verses 16 and 17, he says "All Scripture is breathed out by God and it's profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (why?), that the man of God may be competent (that is adequate), equipped for every good work." God's Word is complete and it's all-sufficient for our spiritual needs. It will teach us what is right and wrong, it will reprove us when we go astray, it will correct our path, and it will train us in righteousness. It fully equips us for every single good work.

And that's the reason why we should "like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you've tasted the kindness of the Lord" (1 Peter 2 verses 2 and 3). Without the Word of God, you'll never grow spiritually as you should. Now it's sad that some Christians never mature spiritually because they never study the Bible.

When Paul said farewell to the elders of the church at Ephesus, his parting words in Acts 20:32 were, "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." Oh, we need God's Word.

Now let's look at this book, the Bible. No book in the history of the world has been more loved or more studied than the Bible. You see, it remains the all-time best seller. The Bible is unique. It's actually a library of 66 books, written by about 40 men over a space of 1500 years. It was written in many different places in the known world of ancient times, and not all the authors were Jews.

The Bible was originally written in three languages. Most of the Old Testament is in Hebrew, but parts of Daniel are written in Aramaic, a language similar to Hebrew. The New Testament is written in Greek.

What do we mean when we speak of the Old and New Testaments? Well the word "testament" is perhaps better described as a covenant. Generally speaking, the Old Testament contains the first covenant, which God made with the Israelites and the New Testament contains the second or new covenant made with Christians.

The word "covenant" describes a legal, binding relationship between two parties. The Mosaic Law was given in the form of a covenant that a Ruler would establish with His people. The Bible says in Romans 3 and verse 19, "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law." In other words the Old Testament is binding on Israelites with whom the covenant was made. However, the Old Testament is also valuable to us Christians as God's sacred word.

While the Old Testament laws and the first covenant do not apply to Christians, its principles teach us truths about God and about His ways. The New Testament says this about the Old Testament in Romans 15 verse 4, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

Now correctly understanding the Scriptures means that we must follow some basic rules. The Bible must speak for itself and should never be made to say things that were never intended by the writers. Solomon urges us to "Buy the truth and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding" (Proverbs 23 verse 23).

1. *Familiarize yourself with the sixty-six books of the Bible.* Now each book of the Bible is a treasure of itself, written in its own time and for its own purpose. The books of the Bible are written in different styles of literature: some are history, some are narratives that is stories, true stories, some are poetry, some are wisdom literature, some are prophetic, some are letters or epistles, and some are apocalyptic. Now some books have a mixture of these literature forms. A good Bible student notices what kind of literature is found in each book and he reads those passages accordingly.

2. *Select some good Bible study helps.* Get a good Bible dictionary, a Bible atlas, a Bible handbook, and a concordance. The Bible was written many centuries ago in a foreign land. And these tools will help you to comprehend the people, and the places and customs that may be unfamiliar to you. The concordance will help you find the passages, which have the key terms that you're studying. Now a good study Bible will often have all of these helps in one book.

3. *Read each passage in its context.* Now each book of the Bible has a context or background in which it should be understood. Now many misunderstand the Bible because they've never taken time to investigate the background of the verses that they read. Ask these questions of the passage: Well first of all, who is writing the passage? To whom is the author writing? Not everything in the Bible is written to every person. The Old Testament was written to Jews, and the New Testament to Christians. When was the passage written? What was the author's intent and purpose in writing?

What circumstances prompted the writer to say these things? Well what would this message mean to those to whom it was first written?

What historical and cultural circumstances are in the background of this passage? Now to interpret a passage and not even regard its context is to misinterpret it; to interpret it contrary to its context is to teach falsehood for truth. The meaning of a word or a phrase is best defined by its immediate context. Now read the verses before and after the one that you're studying. The true meaning of any word comes from the way that it is used in its immediate context.

4. *Learn to draw out the meaning of a passage; don't read into the passage something that was not originally there.* Be careful not to read into a passage your own personal prejudices or concepts you think ought to be in the Bible. One must read God's Word with a humble mind, that's open to learn what He has said and to understand the Bible for what it says for itself. You see the Bible is always its own best interpreter.

5. *Let the Bible explain itself.* For instance, in Ephesians 4 verse 4 Paul says that there is "one body"; now this body is defined as the church in Ephesians 1:22 to 23. And therefore we can say, there is one church. The Bible is its own best interpreter. Now a plain, clear passage should always be used to make the difficult passages clear. A difficult passage never, never defines or denies rather or contradicts the plain teaching of a passage.

6. *The Scriptures warn us not to add or take away from what is revealed.* Moses said in Deuteronomy 12 verse 32, "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it." The Lord Jesus said in John 8 verses 31 and 32, "If you abide in my word (that is to remain or continue in My word), then you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Now true disciples listen to what the Lord has to say and to practice what they learn.

7. *Take all that the Scriptures teach on any subject.* Now all the truth on any one subject is not usually found in one passage. Something may be true but not the whole truth. For instance, John 5 and verse 24 says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." Now it's true that we are saved by faith, but there's more to be said. Faith apart from love or obedience will not save. John 3 and verse 36 in the New American Standard says, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Now faith apart from repentance or baptism will not save (according to Luke 13:3; and Acts 2 and verse 38).

8. *Come to the Word of God with a right heart.* You know a love for God and humility are essential to good Bible study. The seed, and that's God's word, the seed has be planted in a good and honest heart to bring forth fruit with patience (Luke 8 and verse 15). Now the Bible is no ordinary book; it's God's Holy Word and it contains the words of eternal life. And so when you approach the Bible as you would, approach it as you would approaching God himself. Why, because the Bible is God's Holy Word.

Then number 9. *Let's apply the message of the Bible to our lives.* Respond to what you read with an open heart and be willing to practice it. When you're reading the word of God, ask yourself, well you know is this passage commanding something that I'm not doing? Does it suggest a change in my behavior? Does this verse encourage a spirit or an attitude that I'm not showing? Does this passage confirm a belief that I already hold, that's good? Or does this verse challenge my beliefs? How would it change matters if I obeyed this command? What would Jesus do if He were in my place?

Get more out of your Bible by putting more into your study, and it'll bless you. Let's pray together. Oh Father, we're thankful for Your Word, for what it teaches, for the truth that it has, the love that it shows. And Father help us to be diligent students and to be obedient to Your Word. May this world and this earth obey You just as heaven obeys You. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!

Study, study, study the Word. I have a friend who reads through the New Testament every month; he's done that for years! How long has it been since you read the Bible? Love the Word. David said in Psalm 119 verse 97, "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long." Obey the Word. James 1:22 says, "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." Oh I tell you, God will bless you for it.

God gave us His Word to bless us, and we show our love by keeping His commandments. 1 John 2 verses 3 to 6 says, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I've come to know Him,' and doesn't keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."

We need to walk as Jesus walked; live and love as He did. People claim they love the Lord, but you must study the Scriptures to know and love Jesus. Some serve an imaginary Jesus unfortunately, one that they've dreamed up, not the Jesus that's actually found in the words of the New Testament. Loving Jesus requires loving and practicing what He teaches.

Now if you love Him, believe in Him as the Son of God, repent of your sins, confess Him as Christ and Lord, and be baptized according to the teaching of the Scriptures. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins will be washed away (Acts 2:38 and 22 verse 16). Now when you're baptized, the Father will make you His child, He'll give you the promise of eternal life. And today, today is the best day to obey Jesus Christ.

We hope that you've been blessed by today's study of God's Word. If you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, that is "Get More from Your Bible," mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now all our programs also appear on our website at www.searchtv.org. And you can access them or download them in a printed, audio, or video format. We also offer a free Bible Correspondence Course that you can study at your own convenience. Just call or write and ask for the course.

We ask that you please attend worship at one of the churches of Christ in the area. The people at the church love guests, and you'll be glad that you visited. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.