

Spiritual Rhythms

STUDY

“A great deal is said, and rightly said, about the superiority of the Bible as literature. So beautiful are the words of prophet and psalmist, as well as those of our Lord and his apostles, that they can scarcely be made less than beautiful, even by the clumsiest translator... But to study the Scriptures for their literary beauty alone is to miss the whole purpose for which they were written.”¹ —A.W. Tozer

The daily discipline of reading the Bible is essential for any growing disciple. But studying the Bible to understand the biblical narrative, historical context, literary genre, and interpretive principles is particularly important for a deeper life. How are you setting aside the time and energy necessary to learn from God’s Word? Do you have specific, focused study time set aside on your calendar each week? A special, prepared, inviting space in which to study? Making study a priority begins with a willingness to invite the Holy Spirit to provide wisdom and discernment for your study.

The ultimate value of deep Bible study, though, is more than just the knowledge of the text and understanding the historical context. God’s word illuminates a path through which we can encounter God’s character through the story of his people and the life of Jesus. The more time we invest in God’s word, the more transformed we can become. Transformed lives lead to kingdom impact—our ultimate purpose for studying the Bible.

SCRIPTURE BASIS

Read and reflect on Psalm 119:9–16 and 137–144.

- What are some actions the psalmist describes of the “person who stays on the path of purity” (look for specific verbs—what does that person do)?
- According to the psalmist, what are some benefits of “living according to [God’s] word”?
- Make a list of some of the words used to describe God’s word in these verses.

Read and reflect on Acts 17:10–12.

- This short text describes some noble Jews who “received the message with great eagerness” and “examined the scriptures every day.” Would you describe yourself as someone who has “great eagerness” to study the Bible daily? Why or why not?
- The author of Acts describes the Bereans as “noble” because of their eagerness to study the Bible. How might we emulate their character this week?
- How might you encourage someone else to study the Bible more regularly?

¹ A.W. Tozer, cmalliance.org/devotions/tozer?id=770

RESPONSE

- Challenge yourself to memorize Psalm 119:10–11 this week.
- How have you created space in your life in which to study God’s Word more deeply? What encouragement or resources do you need most?
- What Bible study resources have you found to be most helpful? Are there any that you would *not* recommend? Why?
- What barriers need to be overcome for us to be people who *eagerly* study the Bible daily?

CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Origen² (c. 185–254) is described as one of the most important theologians and biblical scholars of the early Greek church. He studied under a teacher of philosophy, eventually learning Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. As a student of the original scriptures, he wrote dozens of commentaries and sermons and was in high demand as a preacher. He also taught many pupils, one of whom was Gregory (later a bishop of Neocaesarea). His study of the word led to his writing a “statement on Christian doctrine” as a call for disciples to commit themselves to the rule of faith laid down by the Apostles. He wasn’t just interested in the academics of studying scripture; he wanted God’s word to have an impact on Christians’ lives. Interestingly, some of his positions were later deemed heretical by church councils. Nevertheless, his influence on biblical exegesis through the centuries cannot be minimized. His example shows that the faithful study of scripture can impact generations to follow.

PRACTICE

Choose one or more exercises to try this week to implement in your Bible study.

- Use the SOAP acrostic to guide your study on a scripture of your choosing.
 - Scripture: Read it in multiple versions. Write out the verse(s) that stand out to you.
 - Observe & Interpret: Ask questions of the text and draw conclusions. What do you notice? What truth can you learn? What principle or command is present? What is the overall message?
 - Application: Draw out the purpose of this text. How might this passage apply in your own life? How will you live differently because of the truths here? Why does this text matter today, to you?
 - Pray: Ask God to show you how to best apply this scripture to your life. Use phrases or themes from the text in your own prayers.
- Listen to an audio version of the text with your eyes closed. Then listen again with pen in hand. Write down what you notice.
- Write out all or part of your text three times in a notebook. Commit part of the text to memory.

PRAYER FOCUS

Use these prayer prompts to deepen your practice of Bible study:

- **CCC:** What a treasure, Lord, to have access to your word in my language. To have innumerable resources available to aid in understanding the Bible and friends with whom to discuss it. May each of us cultivate the daily discipline of personal Bible study.

² britannica.com/biography/Origen

- **Omaha:** God, we acknowledge that our external witness in the world is only as good as the internal witness of your word. Give us the desire to soak in your word so that we daily become more like Jesus. Shape us into people who reflect your character as we study scripture to meditate on your own character. May we be conduits of your love and grace to the people around us.
- **C&MA³:** Lord, we confess that when we avoid Bible study, we forget how holy you are, and how unholy we are. We repent of our apathy toward your scriptures and turn from our own unholiness. We want to be people of your word so that we can draw others to know your Word, who is Jesus Christ. Use your word to remind us of your holiness and to draw us closer to your standard of holiness.

RESOURCES

Books and websites that support this week's practice:

- The Bible Project, *How to Read the Bible* (19 short video episodes), bibleproject.com/explore/how-to-read-the-bible
- American Bible Society, *A Brief Description of Popular Bible Translations*, bibleresources.americanbible.org/resource/a-brief-description-of-popular-bible-translations
- Online Bible options with study aids:
 - netbible.org/bible
 - blueletterbible.org
 - biblegateway.com
- *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (2000, John Walton); *New Testament* (2014, Craig Keener).
- N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Scripture: Engaging Contemporary Issues*, (Harper One, 2015).
- Kay Arthur, *How to Study your Bible: The Lasting Rewards of the Inductive Method*, (Harvest House, 1994).
- Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, (Zondervan, 2003).
- Ezra 7:10, Job 23:10–12, Psalm 19:7–11, Psalm 119, Isaiah 55:8–11, Matthew 4:1–4, Ephesians 1:17–18, 2 Timothy 3:16–17, 2 Peter 1:16–21

NEXT STEPS

Join an inductive study on a book of the Bible. Find classes and groups at cccomaha.info.

³ To sign up for a Christian & Missionary Alliance forty-day prayer resource, visit cmalliance.org/40days.