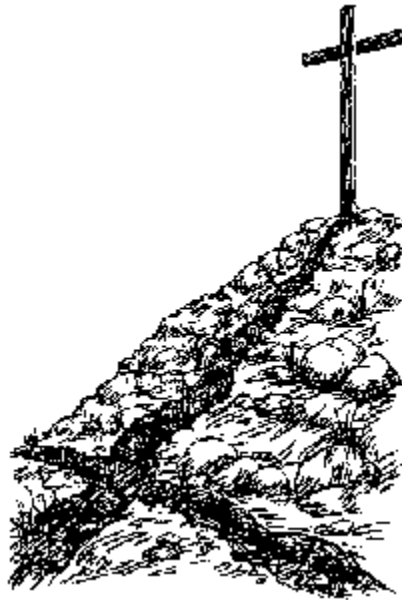


Part 1: Preparing The Heart & Soul For Bible Study

Put Them In Remembrance The Bible Is God's Word

2 Timothy 2:14-19



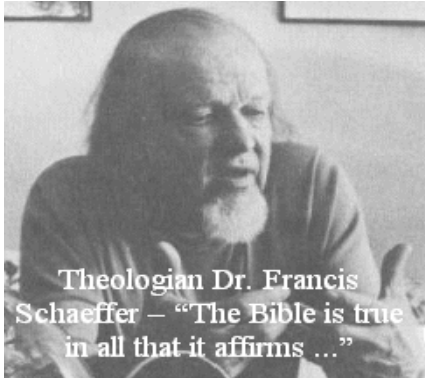
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2 Timothy 2:14-19 (KJV) "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. {15} Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. {16} But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. {17} And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; {18} Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. {19} Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Perceptions Matter

"How to study God's Word" – I can only scratch the surface of this immense subject. How does one study God's Word? Before we can even begin to talk about the *mechanics* of studying the Word, we must **discuss our perceptions of the Word**. What do I mean by *perceptions* of the Word.



Theologian Dr. Francis Schaeffer – “The Bible is true in all that it affirms ...”

There was a time when Christians were called "People of the Book" because we believed the Bible to be without error and sufficient in all that it affirms. This attitude has changed, even among pastors. According to a recent survey by George Barna ("Only Half of Protestant Pastors have a Biblical Worldview", January 12, 2004, www.barna.org) only 51% of Protestant Pastors have a Biblical worldview. "Worldview", by the way, is how we approach and respond to the world around us. Barna went on to say:

“The research also points out that even in churches where the pastor has a biblical worldview,” he continued, “most of the congregants do not. More than six out of every seven congregants in the typical church do not share the biblical worldview of their pastor even when he or she has one. This intimates that merely preaching good sermons and offering helpful programs does not enable most believers to develop a practical and scriptural theological base to shape their life. Our research among people who have a biblical worldview shows that it is a long-term process that requires a lot of purposeful activity: teaching, prayer, conversation, accountability, and so forth. Based on our correlations of worldview and moral behavior, we can confidently argue that if the 51% of pastors who have a biblical worldview were to strategically and relentlessly assist their

congregants in adopting such a way of interpreting and responding to life, the impact on our churches, families and society at-large would be enormous.”

If you **believe with me** that the Scriptures are:

... written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

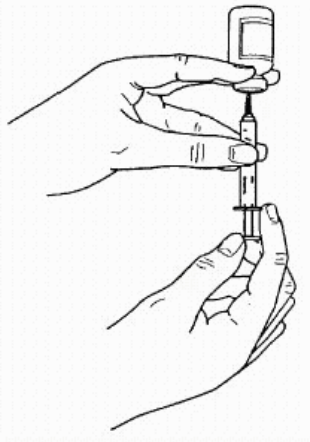
Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21. (Section I, Baptist Faith & Message, 2000)

then you will benefit from studying the Scripture. If you believe, however, that the Bible is packed with error, and that only the parts that appeal to you are truthful, then don't waste your time studying the Scripture. Why?

Because to introduce the possibility of error in a Divine Work that says of itself:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV) "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: {17} That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Scripture belongs to God because it comes from God. It is *inspired* of God. When the doctor prepares to give his patient a shot in the arm, he holds both medicine as well as needle up to the light. All air is voided out of the needle. The doctor slowly draws the medicine into the needle, looking for air bubbles. If any are seen the needle is tapped, and the air is pushed out of the needle. If air goes in the bloodstream it can cause the patient to die. Only medicine is to be administered. In the same way, we must trust that God gave us the pure and holy Word of God without error. If we **assume error in one part, then the whole is immediately suspect.**



**The New Testament As Valid
As The Old Testament:
The Bible Wholly God's Work!**

The Church is built on the *foundation* of the *apostles and prophets*. Here's the Scripture that supports this truth. First, the early Church *historically* relied on the

Old Testament Scriptures as well as the New Testament teachings of the Apostles – God's chosen men. We are told:

Acts 2:42 (KJV) "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

As the Church grew it was necessary that men be assigned to tend to the *physical needs* of the Church while its spiritual leadership focus on:

Acts 6:4 (KJV) "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

The Apostle Paul, writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God, made it plain that the *foundation* of the Church is **both apostles and prophets, Old and New Testaments:**

Ephesians 2:19-22 (KJV) "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; {20} And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; {21} In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: {22} In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

God used the **Apostles and the Prophets to build the**

Church's foundation. We cannot afford to chip away at our foundation – we must recognize the Scripture to be wholly trustworthy and completely sufficient. Paul praised the Thessalonians for accepting the apostle's doctrine as the "Word of God":

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (KJV) "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

and recognized that that Word "**effectually worketh** (Present Middle Indicative of *energeo* {en-erg-eh'-o}, effect) **also in you that believe**". The New American Standard states: "... **what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe**". The Bible does what it is supposed to do. It causes the Christian to *grow up!* Paul also said:

1 Corinthians 14:37-38 (KJV) "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. {38} But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant."

and

Galatians 1:11-12 (KJV) "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. {12} For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus

Christ."

It took a long time to get to this point. OK, let's look at our focal verses.

1. Avoid Foolish Questions & Figurative Interpretation

2 Timothy 2:14-19 (KJV) "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting¹ of the hearers.

¹ catastrophe – destruction. From which we get our word "catastrophe"

There are two "words" – the word of man, and the Word of God. I have shown you earlier that the Church is built on the *foundation* of the apostles and prophets – the writings these people left behind that we call "The Holy Bible" (**Ephesians 2:19-22; Acts 2:42; Acts 6:14**). **God is not the Author of confusion** (1 Corinthians 14:33), but of peace. The Word of God comes from God Himself, and as such is faithful, dependable, and unchangeable. The word of man, opinion, comes from our own fallible human psyche.

Opinion is changeable, but God's Word is sure. If we enter study of the Word setting our own human opinions *above* that which God's Word teaches then we will tear down rather than build up our Christian walk. Our Lord Jesus Christ condemned the Scribes and Pharisees for allowing their opinions to change the Word of God.

Jesus said:

Mark 7:9-13 (KJV) "... Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. {10} For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: {11} But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. {12} And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; {13} Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye."

God's Word commands that we honor our father and mother. The Pharisees, however, were worshipers of prestige and money – so they introduced a tradition they called "Corban". Once you declared a thing "Corban" – this instance, your money or your wealth – then it was to be dedicated to the Temple. Once dedicated it could not be given to the elderly suffering parents, though the one who pronounced it Corban could keep it in his possession.

If you're as confused as I am over the tradition of "Corban", then you understand why the **Bible orders us to study Scripture but not human opinion**. Human opinion comes from a sinful source, and ultimately *does not profit the user*.

D. L. Moody said, "I believe firmly that the moment our hearts are emptied of pride and selfishness and

ambition and everything that is contrary to God's law, the Holy Spirit will fill every corner of our hearts. But if we are full of pride and conceit and ambition and the world, there is no room for the Spirit of God. We must be emptied before we can be filled."

Human opinion *subverts* or *causes catastrophes* in and among Christian gatherings. What causes growth and peace in a Church? Men working together, studying *and applying* the teachings of God's Word.

Proverbs 30:5-6 (KJV) "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. {6} Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

Luke 4:4 (KJV) "... Jesus answered [Satan], saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." quoted from Deuteronomy 8:2

The well that I draw truth from must be God's Word. I dare not draw from my experiences, nor from my desires or from what the world or the media may say.

Elmer Towns in his book "How To Study and Teach The Bible" gives this good advice:

Don't use a "figurative" or "spiritual" approach to interpreting the Bible. That is reading into the passage a meaning that is not there. Often this is called an "allegorical" or "figurative" way of

interpreting the Bible. The reader tries to find a hidden or "deep" meaning in the Word of God.

Rather, follow the normal way that normal people use when reading any book or document. Follow the **literal method of interpreting the Word of God.**

When the Bible talks about a tree, it is describing a tree growing in a field or woods. Don't try to make a tree into a family generation or an idea that is life-giving. Follow the normal grammatical literary method of reading and interpreting literature. Follow Cooper's Gold Rule of Interpretation. "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense. seek no other sense, but take every word at its primary literary meaning". (David L. Cooper, 1850)

We must bear in mind that God gave us His Word to study. In most instances every word means literally what it says.

2. Ask God For Help While Studying: Make Sure of Your Relationship With God

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV) "Study² to show thyself approved³ unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing⁴ the word of truth."

² spoudazo {pronounced spoo-dad'-zo}, be diligent to, study, apply oneself toward.

³ dokimos {pronounced dok'-ee-mos}, In the ancient world there was no banking system as we know it today, and no paper money. All money was made from metal, heated until liquid, poured into moulds and allowed to cool. When the coins were cooled, it was necessary to smooth off the uneven edges. The coins were comparatively soft and of course many people shaved them closely. In one century, more than eighty laws were passed in Athens, to stop the practice of shaving down the coins then in circulation. But some

money changers were men of integrity, who would accept no counterfeit money. They were men of honour who put only genuine full weighted money into circulation. Such men were called "dokimos" or "approved". (Dr. Donald Barnhouse)

⁴ orthotomeo {pronounced or-thot-om-eh'-o}, says Robertson (Robertson's Word Pictures) "Handling aright (orthotomounta). Present active participle of orthotomeō, late and rare compound (orthotomos), cutting straight, orthos and temno), here only in N.T. It occurs in Pro_3:6; Pro_11:5 for making straight paths (hodous) with which compare Heb_12:13 and "the Way" in Act_9:2. Theodoret explains it to mean ploughing a straight furrow. Parry argues that the metaphor is the stone mason cutting the stones straight since temno and orthos are so used. Since Paul was a tent-maker and knew how to cut straight the rough camel-hair cloth, why not let that be the metaphor? Certainly plenty of exegesis is crooked enough (crazy-quilt patterns) to call for careful cutting to set it straight."

God saved you when you accepted Jesus Christ as Savior. We do not save ourselves. As the Bible teaches us:

Ephesians 2:8-10 (KJV) "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: {9} Not of works, lest any man should boast. {10} For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

We who are saved are the workmanship of God. If God saves us, and wants us to study His Word, then God Himself will enable us to study that Word.

The Bible teaches us that the **Holy Spirit who indwells the believer guides us in all truth.**

John 14:16-17 (KJV) "And I will pray the Father,
12

and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; {17} Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

John 16:13 (KJV) "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come."

It is impossible to study the Bible apart from the aid of the Holy Spirit of God. If you are a Christian – and I pray you are – then you are the Spirit of God lives inside of you. In fact, the Scripture is adamant on this point:

Romans 8:9 (KJV) "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (KJV) "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? {20} For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Jesus Christ our Savior sent the Holy Spirit to live inside of us who believe. The Spirit came to guide us in all truth. If you are to understand God's Word you must *first*

be saved and *second be in fellowship with God.*

If you are out of fellowship with God you are immediately handicapped insofar as Bible study is concerned. How can I understand such an immense body of work if its Author will not guide me? I cannot! Therefore as God's child by faith in Christ I recognize that I received the indwelling Spirit of God the very moment I was saved. This Spirit lives within me, and this Holy Spirit helps me understand the things of God.

1 Corinthians 2:12-14 (KJV) "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. {13} Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. {14} But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

If I am in the flesh, if I have fallen to sin, I must confess my sins before God, repenting of them, and ask forgiveness in the name of Jesus. I will turn away from the world and turn toward God. I will love Him who first loved me with my whole heart. When I repent I will do as the prodigal son did – I will turn from the world and toward home.

1 John 1:7-9 (KJV) "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,

and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. {8} If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. {9} If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

3. Be Faithful To Attend & Support Your Church – But Avoid Troublemakers

2 Timothy 2:16-18 "But shun profane⁵ and vain babblings⁶: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. {17} And their word will eat as doth a canker⁷: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; {18} Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some."

⁵ bebelos {pronounced beb'-ay-los}, ungodly

⁶ kenophonia {pronounced ken-of-o-nee'-ah}, discussion of vain and useless matters

⁷ gaggraina {pronounced gang'-grahee-nah}, where we get our word "gangrene". A disease of putrefication that causes parts of the body to rot, then fall off.

The Christian has a two way partnership in study of the Word of God: We study in partnership with God, and we study in partnership with other Christians. This is called the Church.

Hebrews 10:25 (KJV) "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

I am sure that you have heard your pastor quote this verse many times, always emphasizing that you need to go to Church faithfully. What few Christians seem to realize today is that we are all designed to work together toward a common goal. The spiritual gifts that exist in the Body of Christ exist are to *be used in the body, in the Church fellowship, to benefit the whole of the Church*. As the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NASB) "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 (KJV) "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. {13} For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. {14} For the body is not one member, but many."

Each Christian is designed to be a working member in a local Church. You will find *absolutely no support* in the Word of God for Christian isolationism. Jesus designed His Church to be several Christians gathered together in obedience to Him.

Our focal text talks about two people, **Hymenaeus and Philetus**. There is very little known about Philetus, but we know something about Hymenaeus. He is also mentioned in:

1 Timothy 1:20 (KJV) "Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

Hymenaeus is listed *first* in both instances – this in itself shows us that he was the **ringleader**. This man was teaching false doctrine in the Church – teaching his word instead of the word of God – and the Scripture says:

saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some

His main message was that the resurrection was *already past*. The International Standard Bible Dictionary states:

"... what Paul says regarding it makes evident that it was a form of **incipient Gnosticism**. This spiritualizing of the resurrection sprang from the idea of the necessarily evil nature of all material substance. This idea immediately led to the conclusion of the essentially evil nature of the human body, and that if man is to rise to his true nature, he must rid himself of the thralldom, not of sin, but of the body. This contempt for the body led to the denial of the resurrection in its literal sense; and all that Christ had taught on the subject was explained only, in an allegorical sense, of the resurrection of the soul from sin.

Teaching of this kind is described by Paul as having effects similar to the "eating" caused by a gangrene. It is deadly; it overthrows Christian faith. If not destroyed, it would corrupt the community, **for if there is no literal resurrection of the dead, then, as Paul shows in 1 Cor 15, Christ is not raised; and if the literal resurrection of Christ is denied, Christian believers are yet in their sins, and the Christian religion is false.**"

What Hymenaeus **proposed** was that **Jesus really didn't**

rise in bodily form from the dead. Yet this is one of the key teachings of Christianity – that Eternal God took on humanity, lived on this earth, and suffered death on our behalf. God the Father literally raised Jesus Christ from the dead, and He appeared to many in a physical resurrection body. Hymenaeus' doctrine caused many to walk away from the Church. Paul condemned this heretic in the strongest voice.

Sometimes heretics creep into the Church. This happens, but if all the members of the Church are working together as Christ intended their impact can be minimalized. There is a terrible trend I'm seeing today that has *absolutely no support* in Scripture. The trend? **Television or Internet Church**. Hymenaeus crept into the Church, bringing his false doctrine with him, but the Hymenaeus' of this world today shout their messages on cable and telephone wire. **Jesus walked among us for three years prior to going to the Cross for a reason**. **Christianity is a personal faith in a personal God**. You cannot be a well adjusted Christian if you do not go to Church and **worship personally with other believers**. The Body of Christ is just made that way!

More people have been led away from the Word of God and into cultic worship by television and the Internet than – as my momma used to say – you can shake a stick at. I recommend *a careful approach* to televised and Internet Christianity. God gave us the fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Christ to guide us as we grow. Use this resource!

4. Study The Scripture With The Intent Of Doing What It Says

2 Timothy 2:19 (KJV) "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth⁹ them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity⁸."

⁸ adikia {pronounced ad-ee-kee'-ah}, unrighteousness, wickedness

⁹ ginosko {pronounced ghin-occe'-ko}, to know personally

When God wrote the Scripture using the prophets and the apostles, He wrote the Scripture with you in mind. Yet the secular media with its incessant advertising of the "do what you want to do as long as it makes you happy" has begun to condition the Christian mind. We have begun to look at certain things, certain lifestyle choices, and have started to think "Hey, it's no big deal". We absorb so much negative non-Christian garbage from the television that we have begun to think of God as a "Good 'Ol Boy" and the Scriptural commands as "optional equipment" for the Christian way of life.

This is absolutely not true. Though the Hymenaeus' of this life may creep into the Church we need to realize that God is still in control. The foundation is sure, and God knows His own children. Our God is not some impersonal Being that sits high above us – He is a *personal God*. He personally shed His Blood for us, and He knows every one of His children.

I have met "theologians" who study the Word of God just so they can debate it. The knowledge itself is all they

seek. Yet our Lord Jesus tells us:

Luke 8:21 (KJV) "And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it."

Luke 11:28 (KJV) "But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep¹⁰ it."

¹⁰ phulasso {pronounced foo-las'-so}, to guard, to protect, keep a watch over

The Word of God, our Bible, is a precious treasure we are to study, absorb, guard, and do. There is no value for the Christian in merely hearing the Word without putting what He has learned into practise. Christianity is a practical walk with God. The teachings of the Bible are just as valid today as they were several thousand years ago. Jesus God, Very God of Very God, Eternal Creator Who put on humanity for us, ordered that we both *hear* and *do* the Word of God.

Part 2: The Mechanics of Bible Study

2 Timothy 2:15 "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing¹⁰ the word of truth.

¹⁰ orthotomeo {pronounced or-thot-om-eh'-o}, Present Active Participle, correctly handling, hold to a straight path, divide equally

Getting Started On A Bible Reading Program

There are a number of ways that the Christian can study their Bible. Many people do not study their Bibles because they don't know where to start. If you are a new Christian, or are new to Bible study, the best place to start is by *setting up a Bible reading program*.

There are four different ways to read your Bible. First, you can read your Bible through in a year by:

1 Reading it from **front to back**, just a few chapters at a time. Or by

2 Reading it **chronologically**, in the order that the events occurred. Or,

3 You can use a plan that takes a **portion of both Old and New Testaments**, with Psalms and Proverbs each day. Or,

4 You can use a plan that reads the **same text every day for seven days**. This last program will let you read and better comprehend the New Testament in two years.

Any of these plans are excellent – but for them to work you *must be* consistent in following the plan. **Make an appointment with God**, telling Him when you are going to read your Scriptures every day. Then *do what you promised*. Read the Scriptures with care – they are the

Word of God. If you try reading the Bible before you go to bed the cares of the day will stand in your way. In other words, you'll fall asleep! Sit up and read, and pay attention.

Before you begin reading, go to the Lord in prayer. Make sure that you **confess any known sin in your life to God (1 John 1:8-10)**, asking forgiveness in the name of Jesus. Ask God to open your eyes as you read the Scripture.

Do not rush your reading program, but try and pay attention to every word you read. Treat the Scripture like a treasure chest filled with diamonds. You don't want to skip one of its precious words.

It is going to take some time to read the Bible. Just settle down and do it. As you read, keep a notepad and a pencil handy. When you learn something interesting jot it down on the notepad. If you run across something you don't understand, **write your question down** and take it to Church with you. **Ask your pastor or your Sunday School teacher** about the question well, ask them in private!

Pray The Psalms

I often do this – I enter my prayer closet, open up my Bible to the Psalms, and *pray* the Psalms. How do you do this? Here's an example. I read:

Psalms 5:1 (KJV) "... Give ear to my words, O
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LORD, consider my meditation."

Then I pray, "Dear Lord, I beg you to hear me as I pray. I am focused on You now, O Lord. Please hear my cry".

I read:

Psalms 5:3 (KJV) "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up."

Then I pray, "I know You will hear my prayer, O Father. I pray to You early in the day, and look to You for blessing."

In other words, I read the Psalm then incorporate what King David prayed into my prayer. King David's prayers are soothing to my soul as I find he had a lot of the same problems I have. Praying the Psalms helps me to put my troubles in perspective, while giving me an opportunity to meditate on God's Word.

Heeding The Context of Scripture

2 Peter 1:20-21 "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. "

Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Spirit – the Bible is the very Word of God. We are not qualified to *interpret* God's Word apart from God's

leading. If God is the Author of Scripture – and the Bible says that it is – then God must *interpret* that which He wrote. God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, was sent to help us understand Divine truths.

John 14:16-17 (KJV) "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; {17} Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

John 14:26 (KJV) "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

Read the Scripture *in context*. More errors could be avoided in the pulpit and in the pew if we paid attention to the *context* of the Scripture. The Scripture is a *cohesive whole* – if we read the Holy Text carefully and in context we can discover great truths that God has revealed to us.

I recommend that each Christian have in his possession two wonderful tools: an exhaustive concordance of the Bible (like Strong's Concordance) and a *topical Bible* (like Nave's Topical Bible). Both of these works can be used to quickly look up every instance of every topic taught in the Word of God. Allow *Scripture to interpret Scripture* if at all possible.

Here are the *basic steps* for studying the Bible:

STEP 1: OBSERVATION: As you read the text ask yourself the same question a reporter on a newspaper would ask -

WHO is the passage written to? Does it apply to me?

WHAT is being presented here?

WHEN was the text penned. What was happening historically as the text was being penned by God's prophet or apostle?

WHERE were God's people and prophets at while the writing took place.

HOW do I apply this to myself?

STEP 2: INTEGRATION What do other parts of the Word of God have to say about this subject. This is where your *topical Bible* will come in handy. Look for key words in the passage you are studying and then look these key words up in your topical Bible or concordance.

Look at the *meaning* of the original language word in your *Strong's concordance*. Let the Bible itself tell you all it can about the passage. Finally, and very importantly,

STEP 3: APPLICATION How does this text apply to me? If the text deals with the Levitical offerings of the Old Testament it may have no actual application in your present manner of life. Some things that the Scripture

presents are good to know, other things are applicable to me where I am now.

You can only **gain spiritual insight** from the Word of God by living it. Just reading it alone **without application is ineffective**.

1 Timothy 4:15-16 "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

Unless we as Christians make a concerted effort to read, study, and apply God's Word to our lives, America is going to get more and more like Sodom and Gomorrah. As believers we stem the tide of evil when we *refuse to be party to it*. We only do this by utilizing God's Word the way God intended – as a light to guide us:

Psalms 119:105 (KJV) "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

May God bring revival to His Church through study and application of His Word. God Bless!