

KNOWING GOD THROUGH HIS WORD



BILLY GRAHAM

EVANGELISTIC ASSOCIATION

Christians refer to the Bible as the “Word of God.” They look to its pages as the authority regarding the claims of Jesus Christ. *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

THE WORD OF GOD

One of the keys to understanding Christianity is studying the Bible. The Bible is a wonderful collection of 66 books written over a period of about 1,500 years. Many different authors contributed to its pages.

This book is God’s Word given to mankind to help individuals draw closer to God. The most important purpose of the Bible is to help us come to know who God is and what He desires for our lives.

“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. . . . Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:9–11, 105, NKJV).

As a newborn infant needs milk to thrive and grow, so newborn Christians need the milk of the Word of God to help them become stronger in their faith (1 Peter 2:2–3). But the Word of God is not just milk for newborn Christians; it is also meat to help more mature Christians continue to grow strong in their faith.

Christians need to continue to study the Bible throughout their lives. This practice will help you to:

- Stay close to the Lord.
- Avoid sin in your life.
- Keep your heart and mind fixed on Jesus.
- Keep your ways pure, as God desires.

GETTING STARTED

The best place to start is to choose a translation of the Bible that you can easily understand. Modern translations, such as the New International Version, the New Living Translation, or the New American Standard Bible, are written in today's English and are easier to understand, though some who have grown up with the King James Version will prefer its poetic style.

All of these versions are available in a “study Bible” format—that is, formats with footnotes that cross-reference related verses, commentary that explains the meaning, and other study aids such as maps and timelines.

Many other versions are available—both translations and Bible paraphrases. A paraphrase means that the author took a translation of the Bible and reworded it in simpler language. When this is done, some meaning may be lost. (The Living Bible and The Message are examples of these.)

HOW TO BEGIN

Start with prayer. Ask God to speak to you through the verses you read. You might begin with the words of Psalm 119:18, “*Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law*” (NKJV).

Designate a time and place. This will help you develop

a consistent habit. Set the same time every day in an environment where your visit with God can be unhindered. *“Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed”* (Luke 5:16; see also Mark 1:35).

Read with your heart. The Bible is God’s love letter to us. Read it daily in order to know Him better. Pray that *“the eyes of your understanding [may be] enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling”* (Ephesians 1:18, NKJV).

DO NOT CONFORM ANY LONGER TO
THE PATTERN OF THIS WORLD, BUT BE
TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF
YOUR MIND.

ROMANS 12:1–2

Read verses in the context of the rest of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16). It is easy to misunderstand the Bible when you look at only one short passage. The Bible is a whole consistent message. You know you are misunderstanding the meaning of a passage if it appears to disagree with the rest of the Bible. In addition, reading both Old and New Testaments is important for a Christian’s growth in faith. We do not have a clear picture of who God is without both. Try to understand the cultural context and the time of the original writing as well. Then grasp what it means to your life today.

Meditate on Scripture. Allow the verses you are reading to soak into your heart; reflect on them. Unlike Eastern meditation where the goal is to empty yourself of all that is in your mind, Christian meditation is opening your heart and mind to God’s Word to know Him more fully.

Memorize Scripture. If you have never memorized

Scripture before, don't be intimidated. You will find great strength and joy in having the Word of God available in your heart when you need it. Begin by simply choosing one of the verses from your meditation each week. Write it down and place it where you will see it often and delight in it throughout the week. You'll be surprised how quickly you will remember it.

Live what you learn. The ultimate goal of Bible study is to draw closer to God so that He might shape our lives to be like Jesus Christ. *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (Romans 12:1–2).

UNDERSTANDING

Many passages of Scripture may seem difficult at first. The more we study Scripture, the more God is able to show us who He is and what He wants.

The Holy Spirit is given to us to teach us. *"When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth"* (John 16:13, NKJV). As you study the Bible and pray for guidance, He will help you to understand Scripture better.

The Holy Spirit will use other resources as well. Your pastor is one. He may have insights about Bible study as well as resources in his library to help you.

Helpful Bible study aids include a Bible atlas, a concordance, a Bible dictionary, and a one-volume commentary on the Bible. Your pastor can help you to determine which ones are best for you. He will also be able to teach you how to best use them.

Bible study is a lifelong pursuit for everyone who is a child of God. Jesus said, *"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'"* (Matthew 4:4). We invite you to begin feasting today on the spiritual food that God has given us.

MOVING FORWARD

- 1 Choose a book of the Bible. For a new Christian, we recommend starting with the gospel of John. A Gospel-teaching pastor may be able to help you get started. We also have materials to help people who are new to Bible study. Please contact us if you have not already received them.
- 2 Read for understanding. A common mistake is to read the Bible like any other book. The Bible is meant to be read thoughtfully, for understanding. God's Word is given to us for *information* as well as *formation*, so that we might become like Christ.

Note: Chapter, verse, and paragraph divisions did not appear in the original languages in which the text was written, but were added later to aid in reading during church services. If a chapter ends in the middle of a paragraph, read into the next chapter to complete the paragraph. Reading the Bible one paragraph at a time will help you study in complete thought segments and help you understand what you are reading.

- 3 Look for key words and phrases. Be ready to investigate. Locate words or phrases that give special meaning to the passage. For example, in the New Testament, John often uses words such as "life," "light," and "love." Paul uses the phrase "in Christ." Many times, there is a depth of meaning in these words that we do not recognize if we are reading lightly. A Bible commentary or dictionary can be helpful.
 - 4 Study to know God. God reveals Himself through His Word. A common mistake when studying the Bible is to devote most of our attention to discovering things that seem to apply to us. The first and ultimate purpose of Bible study is to know God. Begin each time of reading or study by asking God to show you more of Himself.
- Make application to your life. God also intends

5 that you apply the Bible to your own life and circumstances (see Luke 11:28 and James 1:22–25). After considering how the passage relates to knowing God and His ways and His will, consider how it applies personally to you. Studying the Bible with other Christians can help.

Keep notes on what you read. As God's Word increases our understanding of Him, we will be transformed by the things that God is showing us. Write down your thoughts in response to questions like: What does this passage tell me about God?
Is there a warning, a promise, or a law stated or implied? How should I apply that to my life?

SCRIPTURE FOR MEDITATION

Psalms 119 (the completeness of God's Word)

Matthew 22:29 (the power of understanding)

Luke 24:27 (Christ in all of the Bible)

Luke 24:45 (godly insight)

Acts 17:11 (the power of Bible study)

2 Timothy 2:15 (importance of correct understanding)

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (inspiration of Scripture)

Hebrews 4:12 (the power of Scripture)

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STEPS TO PEACE WITH GOD

STEP 1 GOD'S PLAN—PEACE AND LIFE

God loves you and wants you to experience His peace and life. The Bible says: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16, NKJV).

STEP 2 OUR PROBLEM—SEPARATION

Being at peace with God is not automatic, because by nature we are separated from God. The Bible says: *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23).

STEP 3 GOD'S REMEDY—THE CROSS

God's love bridges the gap of separation between God and you. When Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave, He paid the penalty for your sins. The Bible says: *"[Jesus] Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed"* (1 Peter 2:24, NKJV).

STEP 4 OUR RESPONSE—RECEIVE CHRIST

You cross the bridge into God's family when you receive Christ by personal invitation. The Bible says: *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name"* (John 1:12, NKJV).

To receive Christ, you need to do four things:

1. Admit your spiritual need. "I am a sinner."
2. Be willing to turn from your sins (repent).
3. Believe that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross and rose from the grave.
4. Pray and invite Jesus Christ to come in and control your life through the Holy Spirit. (Receive Him as your Lord and Savior.)

When you make this commitment, you become a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) and a part of His family (John 1:12).

Here is a suggested prayer: *"Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior. In Your Name, Amen."*

If you've made a new commitment to Christ or would like more information about our ministry, please call us at 1-877-2GRAHAM (1-877-247-2426) or visit our Web site, billygraham.org.



Billy Graham
Evangelistic Association

1 Billy Graham Parkway, Charlotte, NC 28201

PAM801

