

 **Spiritual Disciplines: Bible Study #1**

Lesson 12: Wednesday, December 1, 2021

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**TEACHING NOTES**

**INTRODUCTION:**

***The spiritual disciplines are practices we find in Holy Scripture that honor God in our doing and promote spiritual growth in the gospel of Jesus Christ among believers.***

***They are practices or habits that Christians prioritize because it aids us to cling more to Christ and grow in Christlikeness.***

**1 Timothy 4:7** …discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; (NASB)

**Disciplines are practices**. Spiritual disciplines are things you do.

The next Spiritual Discipline we are going to study is a very important one. It is one that we must do!!

It is the spiritual discipline of **Bible Study**. I want to take our time with this one and so we will cover this discipline in two weeks of lecture and conversation in groups. Tonight, to help us get started, I want to start by looking at the why and the what.

**What is the Bible and why is our study of it so essential for us?.**

Then next week we will major on the how. On the application of how we bet study our bibles.

Turn with me to **1 Timothy 3:14-15** as I want to help us set the table for our study of this discipline tonight.

Paul says to Timothy here at the end of Chapter 3, “I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, *you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth”* (**1 Timothy 3:14-15**).

Paul wants to be with his brother in Christ, Timothy. He wants to be with his church family.

But in his absence, because he loves his church family, he sends this letter. **Why?** So that they “may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God.”

First, we who have trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior are the Church of the living God.

This is the unstoppable God we are talking about who is worthy of our entire lives.

Oh, how we need to know how to behave as the family of God.

We need to have the spiritual disciplines be a reality, so that we live and act and think and make decisions and spend money as God wants us to. We are the household of God.

We need to know what He wants because we are His.

He bought us and owns us and commands us. All that we have is His. It is our joyful privilege to be bought from slavery to sin and death and reign with Him and serve Him with all our lives. AMEN!

Paul sees the church here as the bride of Christ, the called-out ones, the saved and sanctified, the adopted sons and daughters of God, “a pillar and buttress of the truth.”

This is a vital explanation of what the church is to do and be in the world. We hold up the Truth of God’s word. A buttress in architecture is not the foundation of the structure itself it supports it.

In this Paul is not saying that the church is the source of truth. The foundation.

That would be to make light of the fact that truth is God’s alone. He is the chief cornerstone.

He is the source of ultimate truth. **He decides what is true and what is not.**

No, Paul is saying that we, the Church, are the conduit of truth—the pillar of truth.

Just as Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12), we too are called the light of the world.

Jesus said this in Matthew 5:14, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.”

We are also called the light of the world, not because the light originates in us, but because Christ is in us. We are the lamp stand. The city on the hill.

Paul is saying God’s truth is to move from and through the Church. This is huge!

This is a massive and major responsibility. To be pillars of truth for a lost world that is sin-saturated with lies and deception is massive and major because, as Jesus also says in John 8 verse 32, the truth will set people free!

See with me tonight, this is not something we get to be passive on or treat lightly.

We cannot afford to try to be the Church and do church and not ground ourselves in God’s truth!

**What is God’s word?**

\*\*HOLD UP THE BIBLE

*Church, this is the word of God, this is the source of all truth and the message of life with God that we are all utterly desperate for.*

1**. Who decides what is true and what is not?** God does.

2. **Where can God’s truth be found or known?** His holy, written word.

3**. How do we know what is true and what is not in this world of many opinions, experts, ideas, and beliefs?** We study, hold fast to, obey, and teach God’s word!

If we are going to be a pillar of truth, a foundation (or buttress) of truth, then we must have our foundation strongly built on the truth of God’s holy Bible.

Church, this is why it is essential that we understand, what the holy Bible is, why it is so essential for us and how we study it so that we can build our lives on it.

So first, **“What is God’s word?”**

First, God, the creator of the universe, the One who holds all things in being and who, therefore, knows everything there is to know, is infinitely wise and full of grace and truth. It is God who inspired the writers of the Bible in such a way that the Christian Scriptures are the infallible word of God.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

***all Scripture is "inspired by God".***

This is one word in the Greek, THEOPNEUSTOS. It literally means "God-breathed".

God inspired certain prophets and apostles so that they then would put down in writing the exact words God wanted them to write.

**2 Peter 1:21** No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

\*HOLD UP THE BIBLE

***This book is unlike every other book ever written, because it is the very word of God.***

Consider this: **Praise God that this Holy book is not hidden in a cave in the distance reaches of the farthest mountaintops. No, it is in your hands! You have this Holy book!**

These words are the very words of God.

You know the old question we as kids would sit around and ask:

**If you were stranded on an island and could only have one item or if you lost all your earthly stuff but one item… what would it be?**

**There is no other answer but, the Word of God, if we understand what it is to us!**

**But that is a kids game….**

**What about everyday real life?**

**Do you know where your bible is? Do you leave home without it?**

**Do you not pack it for vacation or your work day because you just have to much stuff?**

**Do you neglect getting time in it because you are just too busy?**

**Or worse… because you are just not interested in it?**

Nothing should come close to what we ought to feel for the value of God’s word to us.

This is why the psalmist cries out in desperation: “Incline my heart to your testimonies” (Psalm 119:36)

God has saved you from the enemy and put a holy sword in your hands and said, “*Go, teach this to others, make disciples of the nations, go fight.”* But to many saved saints all too often essentially set their sword down and made their life about something else.

Church, this is God’s word to us!! Nothing should come close to what we ought to feel for the value of God’s word to us. This is why the Psalmist cries out in desperation, “Incline my heart to your testimonies” (Psalm 119:36).

He is asking this of God because as great as this book is, there are just too many distractions—too many fleshly temptations. We must fight to take it with us, to be in it, to value it, and to know it and study it. We need God’s help and each other’s help to this end! God gave us a book of complete truthfulness about Himself, His saving work, and His will for us. This alone should make us long to read it and savor it deeply every day.

**Psalms 119:9–11** How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Thy word. With all my heart I have sought Thee; Do not let me wander from Thy commandments. Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee.

There are two ways to state the ultimate goal of life—one positively and one negatively. Positively we could say the ultimate goal of life is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever. Or negatively, we could say the ultimate goal of life is not to sin.

They both mean the same thing because sinning is falling short of glorifying God by embracing other things as more enjoyable. So if we could learn how to glorify God by enjoying Him, we would know how not to sin. And if we could learn how not to sin, we would know how to glorify God by enjoying Him.

Verse 11 tells us one of the keys to not sinning. It says speaking to God*, "Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee."*

The way not to sin is to treasure the word of God in your heart, which means that the way to succeed in the ultimate goal of life—to live for the glory of God by enjoying Him forever—is to treasure the word of God in your heart. Turn with me to…

**Psalms 19:7–11** The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving 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 ordinances of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

As we look to this passage in Psalm 19, let’s consider what is Bible study practically helpful for?

**1. GOD’S WORD IS INSTRUCTION OF WHAT NOT TO DO**

“Moreover by them is thy servant warned”

One of the great blessings of God’s word is the warnings it brings.

These warnings, if ignored, bring great disaster to our lives.

It’s like an important warning label on a new tool or device. I am thankful to read the big red warning when I open a new tool or pay a lot of money for a car.

**Why?** Because I don’t want to ruin it, or, even more, I don’t want to ruin me! It’s the same for God’s word. Thankfully, He has given us warnings of what not to do. We need warnings. But thankfully, warnings are not all that come in God’s word.

**2. GOD’S WORD IS INSTRUCTION OF WHAT TO DO**

**Romans 15:4** 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.

The Bible is also filled with instruction and teachings of what we should do.

Honor your father and mother. What happens when a child ignores this command? YEP!

Love others as you love yourself, What happens when we live out this command? Life is great!

The practices, beliefs, and thoughts that make up the righteous life are often the framework of the author’s letters in the Scriptures. But if the Bible remains in our minds something mechanical, something wooden, like the instructions you get with a new electronic item full of warnings and directions, we will not long to sit and study it and read it. As thankful as we are to have instructions when we open a new device, the problem is many of us are guilty of never reading or studying them. Not doing this can mean we miss out on some features we never knew that could have made life better if we had only read the instructions. It’s the same for God’s word.

**3. GOD’S WORD IS HIS LOVE LETTER TO US**

We have to stop seeing this book only as an instruction manual. Have you ever heard Bible stands for “Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth”? Please do not refer to the Bible as this. This is a terribly short-sided saying. If you see the Bible as your “orders” sent down from the General that must be executed to the T, you might, while you are young in bootcamp embrace them and study them and even enjoy living them out, but doing this will never grow your relationship with the General.

But if you read God’s word like a letter sent to you from your lover, whom you are deeply longing to know more and grow closer with, you will cherish it and hang on every word. You will read it again and again. You will memorize it so you can think upon it often throughout your day. It will give you inspiration and reason to press on and endure the hardships.

Hear me when I say I want you to see the power and beauty in the word of God so that you will long for it and dive into it. You need to see how personal God’s word is for us.

This is an unmistakable trust we get from David's six-fold repetition in today’s passage.

Verse 7: "law of the Lord" and "testimony of the Lord."

Verse 8: "precepts of the Lord" and "commandment of the Lord."

Verse 9: "fear of the Lord" and "ordinances of the Lord."

Six times he uses the phrase "of the Lord."

That is, of Yahweh, Jehovah, the God who says, "I am who I am" and there is no other.

The God who knows all the things that have ever been and that ever will be and who understands perfectly how everything in the universe works from galaxies to the subatomic energy, this God has spoken with a law and with testimonies and precepts and commandments and ordinances. It is God who is writing to us. This (Bible) is what He wants us to know about Him, about us, and about life!

The New Testament confirms this truth.

Paul says in **2 Timothy 3:16**, "All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable." It is inspired by God!

Jesus Himself said in **John 10:35,** "The word of God came, (and the scripture cannot be broken)." The Scriptures are the word of God.

It is God who is speaking to us! He is personal. He knows us. God understands you better than anyone else. He knows how people get to be the way they are and how they are affected by their surroundings. God understands society and groups perfectly.

God knows all facts about how the world works. God knows the future and how everything will come out in the end. God is wiser than any wise writer. God is more caring than any counselor. God is more creative than any poet or artist. It simply stands to reason that what God says will be more useful to us than what anyone else in the universe has to say. Not to sit at His feet and soak our minds with His wisdom is sheer craziness, if not suicidal.

The benefits of studying the word of God are many. In our passage today alone, we see three:

David says in verse 10 about the words of God, “More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.” And then at the end of verse 11, he says, “in keeping them there is great reward.”

If you have a choice between the word of God and gold, choose the word of God.

If you have a choice between the word of God and much gold, choose the word of God.

If you have choice between the word of God and much fine gold, choose the word of God.

The point is plain: The benefits of knowing and doing the word of God are greater than all that money can buy.

Now, the specific benefits of the word of God:

So what are some of these benefits? What is this "great reward" that verse 11 is talking about that makes meditating on the Bible so much better than much fine gold? It seems to me that what David says can be boiled down to at least three benefits: life, wisdom, and joy.

Let's look at these one at a time.

**1. The Benefit of Life**

It's the first thing David mentions because it's the basis of everything else. Verse 7: "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul." Life is either non-existent or it is in jeopardy, and the law of the Lord brings it back.

Jesus said when fasting in the desert, "Man shall not live by bread alone but [shall LIVE] by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (**Matthew 4:4**). This is why he was fasting for 40 days—to learn as a man the radical need for the word of God.

Food can only give physical life. But the word of God gives spiritual life, life that never ends, life which is life indeed. Many Christians feel like their faith is so bland. Maybe because their Christian bodies are so malnourished.

Story after story and testimony after testimony shows that the word of God has life-giving power. St. Augustine said it was Romans 13:13 that stunned him into life. For Martin Luther, it was Romans 1:16. For Jonathan Edwards, it was 1 Timothy 1:17.

A great testimony to the power of God’s word to birth and sustain faith is found in the story of the conversion and execution of Tokichi Ishii—a man who was hanged for murder in Tokyo in 1918.

He had been sent to prison more than 20 times and was known as being cruel as a tiger. On one occasion, after attacking a prison official, he was gagged and bound, and his body suspended in such a way that he said, "My toes barely reached the ground." But he stubbornly refused to say he was sorry for what he had done. Just before being sentenced to death, Tokichi was sent a New Testament Bible by two Christian missionaries, Miss West and Miss McDonald. After a visit from Miss West, he began to read the story of Jesus' trial and execution. His attention was riveted by the sentence, "And Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."' This sentence transformed his life. “I stopped: I was stabbed to the heart, as if by a five-inch nail. What did the verse reveal to me? Shall I call it the love of the heart of Christ? Shall I call it His compassion? I do not know what to call it. I only know that with an unspeakably grateful heart I believed.”

Tokichi was sentenced to death and accepted it as "the fair, impartial judgment of God." Now the word that brought him to faith also sustained his faith in an amazing way. Near the end, Miss West directed him to the words of 2 Corinthians 6:8-10 concerning the suffering of the righteous. The words moved him very deeply and he wrote,

"As sorrowing, yet always rejoicing." People will say that I must have a very sorrowful heart because I am daily awaiting the execution of the death sentence. This is not the case. I feel neither sorrow nor distress nor any pain. Locked up in a prison cell six feet by nine in size I am infinitely happier than I was in the days of my sinning when I did not know God. Day and night . . . I am talking with Jesus Christ.

"As poor, yet making many rich." This certainly does not apply to the evil life I led before I repented. But perhaps in the future, someone in the world may hear that the most desperate villain that ever lived repented of his sins and was saved by the power of Christ, and so may come to repent also. Then it may be that though I am poor myself, I shall be able to make many rich.

The word sustained him to the end, and on the scaffold with great humility and earnestness he uttered his last words, "My soul, purified, today returns to the City of God.”

**Romans 10:17** says, “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” Our “life” begins with the word and our soul is nourished by its words.

God has sent you His epic story.

It is the story of a great King who deserved the worship and dedication of His people, but He was rebelled against. He was mocked and trampled on in the mind and hearts of His people.

But instead of letting them suffer for eternity, He pursued His people by sending His Son to walk amongst them and teach them and, in the end, to die for them! All so they could receive His deserved seat at the King’s table, and so He could absorb their deserved condemnation.

This is the story that has shaped all of time. This is the testimony that changes lives as you hear it—that we are to pass from generation to generation. This is the good news of Jesus Christ that revives the soul!

*God’s living word is his chosen instrument to revive the soul*, David says! God has made it the means of life. Without it, we wither and don’t experience revival.

**2. The benefit of wisdom (God’s word grows us)**

We see this in the second half of verse 7: "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;" and the second half of verse 8: "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

So for example, self-denial will look foolish and laying up treasures on earth will look wise only if you are in the dark about the reality of heaven that we read about in Luke 12:33, the danger of riches that we read about in Mark 10:25, and the rewards of sacrifice that we read about in Matthew 19:29.

But if you live in the light of the reality of heaven and the reality of the danger of riches and the reality of the staggering rewards of sacrifice because of your time in God’s word, then it makes sense to obey the command of the Lord to deny yourself for His sake. This insight is the path of wisdom.

How do you escape the darkness? The commandment of the Lord gives light to the eyes. The testimony of the Lord makes wise the simple. Wisdom is a life that makes sense in the light of reality. And the light of reality shines from the Bible, not from the God-ignoring world.

Please see with me tonight just how absolutely foundational God’s word is for all of life!!!

**Life Doesn’t Happen Without the Word of God**

1. **Physical life begins by the word of God.**

… by his Word we were created (**Psalm 33:4, Hebrews 11:3**)

"He upholds the universe by the Word of his power" (**Hebrews 1:3**)

1. **Our spiritual life begins by the word of God.**

"By his own will he brought us forth by the Word of truth" (**James 1:18**)

"You have been born anew . . . through the living and abiding Word of God" (**1 Peter 1 :23**)

You are born again in Christ. This is not your doing but God’s. He does this by giving you ears to hear the living word of God.

We cannot have faith; we do not have faith without hearing and receiving the Word of God.

**Romans 10:17** Sofaith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ

**John 8:31-32** …Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

**Not only do we *begin* to live spiritually by God's word, but …**

1. **We go on living by God's word.**

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4 and Deut. 8: 3)

Jesus models here that the only way we navigate the lies of the devil is to use scripture!

Do not be fooled to think that you are a Christian who will grow in God if you are not feasting on God’s word! The Word of God is not a book you might do ok without …

If you treat scripture as optional, you abandon the very foundation on which your spiritual life is built.

**Why Is It Important That We Faithfully Study God’s Word?**

**1. God’s word revives the soul.**

The reality is that every day with Jesus is not sweeter than the day before. David says in **Psalm 19:7**, “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.” We just studied in **Psalm 23:2-3** where David says, “He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.”

Our joy is only consistent when the truth of the life-changing, satisfied gospel is fresh in our minds and heart. Without the word reminding us and reorienting us, we wander from the life of the vine and pursue the lies of the temporary, fallen world, the deception of the great deceiver, and the peril of self-vanity.

God’s word is the kindling to keep the fire of our affections for Christ burning white hot. Even on days when every cinder in our heart feels cold, if we crawl to the word of God and cry out for ears to hear, the cold ashes will be lifted, and the tiny spark of life will be fanned.

When our spiritual fire of life in Christ seems cold, and the cinders are cooling to ash in our heart, the kindling of the word of God revives us, deepens the temperature of the coals, and it preserves the joy found in Christ from being extinguished.

If the word of God is that central to our “soul fire” burning bright, practically, we must hold fast to the word of life!

**2. God’s word is the source of our sanctification.**

So that you can, “Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (**Philippians 2**)

God’s word is the source of our sanctification. “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” (**John 17:17**)

**3. God’s word is the light for our path.**

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. **Psalm 119:105**

So, when the word of God is in my life, it is now a “living word” that brings me into the bigger story of God. It illuminates my understanding of who God is, and therefore who I am in relationship to Him.

God’s word helps illuminate the depth of my depravity, my wickedness, and my rebellion from God; at the same time it raises within me a deep appreciation for, and great fullness for, His grace, love, and new life that Jesus brings through His life, death, and resurrection.

Here is the key: when this deeper understanding and relationship happens, now I can make a deeper connection by faith and worship into Jesus who is the vine, who is life, and by whom the power for change comes!

Do you see it? When I hold fast to the scriptures, it pulls me into Him. He is now at work in and through me. He is my power; He is my authority; He is my hope; He is my life! I worship Him; I trust in Him; I lean on Him. I enjoy Him!

**4. God’s word is the authority of our lives.**

### 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness

**John 14:23-24** Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Fathers who sent me.

Our full and right submission to the authority of God’s word is so serious that the scriptures give warning for those who don’t submit themselves to it.

**Proverbs 13:13** Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded.

It is essential that we study, believe in, abide in, teach accurately, and hold to every word of God.

The problem is that in the flesh our tendency is to submit to the rationale of our human mind instead of the authority of the almighty, eternal God’s holy word. As a result, we form views of who God is and how He acts or doesn’t act based more on our personal feelings or logic instead of the divine and perfectly written words He gave us in scripture. This is so dangerous and detrimental.

Instead, we need to take very seriously the words of God, submit to God’s authority and conform to His image, and not try to make Him conform to our ideas or will.

**Do you want God’s word to change you, to conform you into His likeness?**

I am asking you to take this verse seriously:

**2 Timothy 4:3-4** For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

There is a way to look to the Bible just to itch your ears in order to make you feel good about yourself and what you know and where you want to go, or you can submit yourself to it!

We are at war with our sin, selfishness, and self-reign. We must realize that we are desperate for the authority of God’s word to correct our futile view of God, self, this world, and everything in it. We are desperate for His word to lead us with authority.

The question is: **Do you submit yourself to it fully or with reservation?**

Next week we will continue to look at Bible study and get even more practical about how to do it.

But, this week, consider you’re your belief that God’s word is essential and fundamental.

**Do you have a right view and value of it? Do you see all that it is meant to do in your life?**

**What will it look like to change your priorities and make holding fast to God’s word something you cannot do without?**