

The Greatest Skill to Learn

In addition to learning how to pray, learning how to study the Bible is the most important skill you can ever learn. In the Word of God we find the greatest treasure on this earth – more valuable than anything else. In the Bible we find knowledge that can make us wise to salvation (2 Tim 3:15) and a guide to the best life we could ever live – both here and now and through eternity. And most importantly: the Word of God is the main way for us to get into a personal, living and saving relationship with our Creator and Redeemer.

But, I believe it is important to realize that Bible study is a skill. It starts small – and grows with training, perseverance and hard work.

Maybe you had the following experience: you come to a conference, and listen to sermons where the truths of the Bible are brought forth in such an interesting way. And you think to yourself; wow, I have to go home and start studying my bible. You get home, but it seems much more difficult and hard to understand. And then you soon give up....

That is kind of like you would look at a professional violin player. You look at him and say; oh, it sounds so beautiful, it looks so vibrant and easy. You determine to go home and buy a violin. You try to play it and it sounds awful.

If you want your Bible study to be extremely interesting, life-giving and spiritually invigorating, like God wants it to be:

- be perseverant and diligent!
- and *practice!* – don't give up at the first try.

A Powerful Quote

"It may be difficult for you to love to study the word of God at once, when you have not been in the habit of studying it, but God will help you. Pray for his forgiveness for neglecting his holy word so long, and then beg of the Lord to give you love and interest in his word, be in earnest in the matter. When I lose my love for the Bible I am alarmed. I know that I do not love Jesus if I do not love to search the Book that testifies of him." - Ellen G. White, YI, June 1, 1856 par. 9

7 Tips on How to Study the Bible

1. Prioritize

- ...daily

"The just shall live by faith" this important truth is communicated in Habakkuk 2:4 and then quote thrice in the New Testament (Rom 1:17, Gal 3:11, Heb 10:38). There is another phrase that we find three times throughout Scripture that helps us understand what this means: ***"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."*** - Matthew 4:4 (and Luk 4:4, Deut 8:3)

Living by faith is to live by every word! And just as we need physical food every day we need spiritual food everyday to by alive spiritually.

With other words Paul said it like this: *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet **the inward man is being renewed day by***

day." - 2 Corinthians 4:16 And Christ taught us to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." - Matthew 6:11

Three days to find him

"If Joseph and Mary had stayed their minds upon God by meditation and prayer, they would have realized the sacredness of their trust, and would not have lost sight of Jesus. **By one day's neglect they lost the Saviour; but it cost them three days of anxious search to find Him.** So with us; by idle talk, evilspeaking, or neglect of prayer, we may in one day lose the Saviour's presence, and it may take many days of sorrowful search to find Him, and regain the peace that we have lost." - Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages 83

- **...before other appointments**

It has happened to all of us that we decline an invitation because we have another appointment. But has it ever happened that you have declined an invitation because you have an appointment to commune with God? I think we all would agree that this is the most important. Then let us prioritize accordingly.

- **...in the beginning of the day**

The morning is the best and most important time for personal devotions. In order to receive the strength and inspiration we need for the duties of the day and to resist temptation, we need to take time with God in the beginning of the day.

The Manna

God taught Israel this important principle in the giving of the manna. For forty years the manna always rained down early in the morning. If they waited too long to pick it up it melted:

"And they gathered it every morning, each man according to his eating. And when the sun became hot, it melted." - Exodus 16:21

Christ

Christ, our great example, practiced this throughout His life on earth:

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and then prayed." - Mark 1:35

*"Christ was continually receiving from the Father that He might communicate to us. "The word which ye hear," He said, "is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me." John 14:24. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Matthew 20:28. Not for Himself, but for others, He lived and thought and prayed. **From hours spent with God He came forth morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men. Daily He received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the early hours of the new day the Lord awakened Him from His slumbers, and His soul and His lips were anointed with grace, that He might impart to others.** His words were given Him fresh from the heavenly courts, words that He might speak in season to the weary and oppressed. "The Lord God hath given Me," He said, "the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned." Isaiah 50:4."* - Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons 139

Charles Spurgeon

The Christian preacher Charles Spurgeon said it well:

"The morning is the gate of the day, and it should be well guarded with prayer...He who rushes from his bed to his business and waiteth not to worship is as foolish as though he had not put on his clothes, or cleansed his face and as unwise as though he had dashed into battle without arms or armor. Be it ours to bathe in the softly flowing river of communion with God, before the heat of the wilderness and the burden of the way begins to oppress."

- **...enough time**

One bible student said: *"The first 10 minutes of Bible Study are often boring – and then it opens up."*

It is crucial that we take enough time in order for the Study of the Word to be what God intends. Ellen White put it like this:

"Many, even in their seasons of devotion, fail of receiving the blessing of real communion with God. They are in too great haste. With hurried steps they press through the circle of Christ's loving presence, pausing perhaps a moment within the sacred precincts, but not waiting for counsel. They have no time to remain with the divine Teacher. With their burdens they return to their work. These workers can never attain the highest success until they learn the secret of strength. They must give themselves time to think, to pray, to wait upon God for a renewal of physical, mental, and spiritual power. They need the uplifting influence of His Spirit... Not a pause for a moment in His presence, but personal contact with Christ, to sit down in companionship with Him--this is our need." - Ellen G. White, Education 260-261

2. Have the Right Attitude

"Never should the Bible be studied **without prayer**. Before opening its pages we should ask for the **enlightenment of the Holy Spirit**, and it will be given." - Steps to Christ p. 91

Why?

The Bible is a **spiritual** book (2Peter 1:19-21; Hebrews 4:12; John 6:63) that speaks **spiritually** (1Corinthians 2:13, 14; John 3:10- 12) to **spiritual** people (John 3:5; 1Corinthians 3:1-3).

*"But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knows the things of a man except the spirit of man within him? **So also no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.** But we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit from God, so that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God... **comparing spiritual things with spiritual.** But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are **spiritually discerned.**"* - 1 Corinthians 2:10-14

*"But **without the guidance of the Holy Spirit** we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them. There is **much** reading of the Bible that is without profit and in **many** cases a **positive injury**. When the word of God is opened **without reverence and without prayer**; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God, or in harmony with His will, the mind is clouded*

*with doubts; and in the very study of the Bible, **skepticism strengthens**. The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct. Whenever men are **not in word and deed seeking to be in harmony with God, then, however learned they may be, they are liable to err in their understanding of Scripture**, and it is not safe to trust to their explanations.” - Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ p. 110*

“If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.” - John 7:17

“Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.” - John 8:43

I will vs. IQ

With other words: **I will is more important than IQ!** This does not mean that the intellect is not important. It is. God wants us to love him with all our “heart, *mind*, and soul”. But your willingness to receive and heed what God says is the most important!

A philosophical idol

*“In rejecting the truth, men reject its Author. In trampling upon the law of God, they deny the authority of the Law-giver. It is as easy to make an idol of false doctrines and theories as to fashion an idol of wood or stone. By misrepresenting the attributes of God, Satan leads men to conceive of Him in a false character. **With many, a philosophical idol is enthroned in the place of Jehovah; while the living God, as He is revealed in His word, in Christ, and in the works of creation, is worshiped by but few.**” - Ellen G. White, Great Controversy 583*

Crucial

Prayerfully and reverently we need to come to the Word willing to hear and to heed! It is absolutely crucial that we come humbly and teachable without preconceived ideas. Yes, the truths might cut in our hearts (Heb 4:12), but that is when things start to get exciting. That is when we really can start to be blessed. And remember, God is like a surgeon, every time He cuts He cuts to heal!

3. Study

“But there must be earnest study and close investigation. Sharp, clear perceptions of truth will never be the reward of indolence. No earthy blessing can be obtained without earnest, patient, persevering effort. If men attain success in business, they must have a will to do and a faith to look for results. And we cannot expect to gain spiritual knowledge without earnest toil. Those who desire to find the treasures of truth must dig for them as the miner digs for the treasure hidden in the earth. No halfhearted, indifferent work will avail.

It is essential for old and young, not only to read God's word, but to study it with wholehearted earnestness, praying and searching for truth as for hidden treasure. Those who do this will be rewarded, for Christ will quicken the understanding.

*Christ is the truth. His words are truth, and they have a deeper significance than appears on the surface. **All the sayings of Christ have a value beyond their unpretending appearance.** Minds that are quickened by the Holy Spirit will discern the value of these sayings. They will discern the precious gems of truth, though these may be buried treasures.*

Very many are content with a supposition in regard to the truth. They are content with a surface work, taking for granted that they have all that is essential. They take the sayings of others for truth, being too indolent to put themselves to diligent, earnest labor, represented in the word as digging for hidden treasure. But man's inventions are not only unreliable, they are dangerous; for they place man where God should be. They place the sayings of men where a "Thus saith the Lord" should be.

Let none think that there is no more knowledge for them to gain. The depth of human intellect may be measured; the works of human authors may be mastered; but the highest, deepest, broadest flight of the imagination cannot find out God. **There is infinity beyond all that we can comprehend. We have seen only the glimmering of divine glory and of the infinitude of knowledge and wisdom; we have, as it were, been working on the surface of the mine, when rich golden ore is beneath the surface, to reward the one who will dig for it. The shaft must be sunk deeper and yet deeper in the mine, and the result will be glorious treasure.** Through a correct faith, divine knowledge will become human knowledge.

No one can search the Scriptures in the spirit of Christ without being rewarded. When man is willing to be instructed as a little child, when he submits wholly to God, he will find the truth in His word. If men would be obedient, they would understand the plan of God's government." - Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons Chapter 8, "Hidden Treasure" (Read all the chapter!)

- **Read very carefully**

Notice every word, read, reread, look at different translations, look up the original word. Reading the Bible should in some ways be **like reading a love letter**. Though you might want to read quickly through first you would then want to read and re-read and notice every word.

- **Short passages**

"But there is **but little benefit** derived from a **hasty reading of the Scriptures**. One may read the whole Bible through and yet fail to see its beauty or comprehend its deep and hidden meaning. **One passage studied** until its significance is clear to the mind and its relation to the plan of salvation is evident, is of **more value than the perusal of many chapters** with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained." - Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ p. 90

- **Write down what you learn**

This is simple but very helpful.

- **Concentrate on what you do understand**

Don't be discouraged and overwhelmed when it is much you do not understand. On the other side there are always things you can understand. Focus on that. Writing things down will help you to do that.

- **Memorize Scripture**

"God's precious Word is the standard for youth who would be loyal to the King of heaven. Let them study the Scriptures. Let them **commit text after text to memory** and acquire a knowledge of what the Lord has said.--ML 315 (1887)... Keep a pocket Bible with you as you work, and **improve every opportunity to commit to memory** its precious promises.--RH April 27, 1905." - Ellen G. White, Last Day Events 67

Much more could be said here but in short; this is a great blessing!

- **Study on a specific time/After a plan**

"Success in any line demands a definite aim." - Ellen G. White, Education 262

It is kind of like with exercise. Having a plan is a great help in many ways. It will help you to go out even though you do not feel like it. Similarly you should decide to study the Bible at the appointed time, even though you do not feel like it every time.

- **Use your sanctified imagination**

With God's help try to picture what you are reading and the stories will come more alive!

4. Ask Questions

- Who is writing/speaking
- To whom are he/she writing/speaking
- When and why?
- What is the context?
- What was happening when this person wrote
- What else has the writer written?
- What words did he use?
- What phrases did he use?
- What is his line of reasoning?
- Etc.

The key question to ask: What does this mean for me personally? What can I take with me?

5. Use Tools

This is not so important you might think, but I tell you, it is a great blessing!

- **Dictionary** (2 Cor 5:18-20 - Understand the word reconciled and you will be blessed!)

The Bible is built up by 66 books that are built up by chapters that are built up by verses that are built up by words. Therefore, in order to understand the Bible, it is crucial that you understand the words. Maybe you think you do not need it. Then try to define the words: bless, holy, sanctify, worship etc. I think it will still be helpful!

- **Bible Lexicon** (Num 13:16 - Look up the meaning of Hoshea and Joshua. Powerful!)

Smith, Easton and Hitchcock are some good lexicons you can get for free.

- **Bible Commentaries** (Matt 23:24 - Funny and fitting. Look it up!)
Matthew Henry is a good one. **But always remember: there is a difference between God's Word and words about God's word.**

- **E-Sword, MacSword and Eloquent**
E-Sword is a *great* tool you can get to computers and smartphones. You can download all kind of bible translations, lexicons, commentaries etc. for free! (www.e-sword.com). For Mac you have macsword (macsword.en.softonic.com/mac) or Eloquent (www.macupdate.com/app/mac/13000/eloquent)

- **Ellen Gould White**
Read a book of Ellen White parallel to your study of that part of the Bible. That has been a great blessing to me.

6. Apply

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." - James 1:22

"A religion which is not practical is not genuine." - Ellen G. White, Messages to Young People 72

"They clung to the dead forms, and turned away from the living truth and the power of God. It was this that proved the ruin of the Jews, and it will prove the ruin of many souls in our own day. Thousands are making the same mistake as did the Pharisees..." - Ellen G. White, Desire of Ages 280

One of Laodicea's great problems

"Much excellent labor was bestowed upon the Laodicean church. To them was given the exhortation, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." But the church did not follow up the work begun by God's messengers. They heard, but they failed to appropriate the truth to themselves, and to carry out the instruction given them. The result that followed is the result always sure to follow the rejection of the Lord's warnings and entreaties." - Ellen G. White, MS 128, 1903, 7BC 964.5

See Colossians 4:13, 16

7. Have the Right Focus

"For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." - 1 Corinthians 2:2

"The central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters, is the redemption plan, the restoration in the human soul of the image of God. From the first intimation of hope in the sentence pronounced in Eden to that last glorious promise of the Revelation, "They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads" (Revelation 22:4)... ...the burden of every book and every passage of the Bible is the unfolding of this wondrous theme,--man's uplifting,--the power of God, "which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:57. He who grasps this thought has before him an infinite field for study. He has the key that will unlock to him the whole treasure house of God's word." - Ellen G. White, Education 125-126

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. And they are the ones witnessing of Me" - John 5:39

*"And He said to them, O fools and slow of heart to believe all things that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? **And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.**" - Lukas 24:25-27*

Three Most Important Questions...

- **M**essiah - *what does this tell me about Christ?*
- **M**e - *what does this mean for me personally? What can I take with me?*
- **S**alvation - *what does this tell me about how I can be saved? Or how I could come in danger of losing the eternal life?*

This is what God wants. He wants to send us an MMS – he wants to restore His image in us! In order to receive an MMS we need to have the mobile on and have the right settings. The bigger picture that is loaded the longer time it takes. The image of God is very big – it is the greatest image in the universe. It does not load over a night. It is the work of a lifetime.

Appeal

Dear reader, my appeal to you today is simply to take time to open your moBible, to prioritize time for that daily. Come to the Word with the right settings/attitude. Take these tips with you and especially always ask these three questions when you study. Then God will transform you and restore His picture in you – day by day, from faith to faith, from glory to glory. Thus you can become a part of His amazing kingdom of perfect peace, harmony, joy and love that He soon will set up. I want to receive that MMS, don't you? If you, God forbid, would loose the connection one day; plug in again! If you do not have the connection that you should have with God right now; plug in today!

Recommended resource

"Revived by God's Word". Get it for free at: www.revivalandreformation.org