

*Revived by*  
**God's Word**



**A Mini-Handbook for**

*Bible Study*

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*"Revive me, O Lord, according to your word."  
Ps. 119:107*

## Hungering for God's Word

You are invited to open a remarkable Book. This amazing Book, the Bible, was written by inspiration of God Himself through the Holy Spirit (see 2 Tim. 3:16 and 2 Pet. 1:21). Despite the enemy's attempts to stamp out the Word of God down through the centuries, the Bible has survived and continues to change the lives of all who open its powerful pages.

The Bible not only gives us the clear path to salvation and eternal life but also introduces us personally to the *Author* of salvation and the *Giver* of eternal life. "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

Inspiration tells us, "The Bible is God's voice speaking to us, just as surely as though we could hear it with our ears. If we realized this, with what awe would we open God's Word, and with what earnestness would we search its precepts! The reading and contemplation of the Scriptures would be regarded as an **audience with the Infinite One**" (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 6, p. 393).

Many Christians admire God's Word but fail to actually open and study it daily. Forgotten Bibles languish on countless bookshelves, while the world hungers for the good news found only in the Living Word. For all who desire new life, Jesus offers this unshakable hope: "He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). God waits to fill our every need with His abundant blessings; please join us in opening His Word today!

## Discover the Treasures

Matthew 13:44 tells about a man who found a treasure hidden in a field. Because of his great desire for this treasure, he sold all that he had so that he could buy the field. We are told, "The field containing the treasure represents the Word of God. As the treasure was found in this field, so by earnest searching, treasure is found in the Scriptures" (*Review and Herald*, July 3, 1900, art. A, par. 4).

God longs for us to uncover the precious treasures hidden in His Holy Word. In His great love He provides an answer for every impossible question and hope for the darkest despair. Take a moment to recall just a few of His promises:

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Is. 41:10).

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

"The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them" (Ps. 34:7).

"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Is. 40: 31).

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19).

“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Ps. 103:12).

You will find more of God’s incredible promises beginning on page 31. Read them, pray over them, and let them renew your faith in His power and goodness.

## **What the Bible Says About God’s Word**

Bible authors describe God’s Word as a light, a guide, and the source of all true wisdom:

“From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15).

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).

“They received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

“For whatever things were written before were written

for our learning, that we through the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

“Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from your law” (Ps. 119:18).

“I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation” (Ps. 119:99).

“How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Ps. 119:103).

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119:105).

## **Be Revived by His Word**

Revival and Bible study always happen in concert with each other. This was true at Pentecost, at the Reformation, and during the Second Advent Movement. It will also be true when the Holy Spirit is poured out in latter rain power.

“The law of the Lord is perfect, **converting the soul**; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes 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 judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether” (Ps. 19:7-9).

**“A revival in Bible study is needed.** Attention is to be called, not to the assertions of men, but to the Word of God. As this is done, a mighty work will be wrought” (*Evangelism*, p. 456).

## Studying God's Word

In these pages you'll discover inspiration and practical tools to help the Bible come alive. Read this booklet along with your Bible. Take time to look up each reference cited. Pray in the words of the Psalmist: "Revive me, O Lord, according to your word" (Ps. 119:107).

"[The] Lord has preserved this Holy Book by His own miraculous power in its present shape—a chart or guidebook to the human family to **show them the way to heaven**" (*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 15).

"There is **nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures**. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God's Word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose rarely seen in these times" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 90).

"No other book, no other study, can equal this; the principles it instills, like the power and nature of its Author, are omnipotent. It is capable of imparting the **highest education** to which the mortal mind can attain" (*Our High Calling*, p. 35).

"We should **day by day** study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 598).

## **Getting Started: Practical Tips for Study**

**Choose a time.** Write it on your schedule and consider it an unbreakable appointment with God. Ask for divine guidance as you establish your daily study habit.

**Choose a place.** Find a study location that's private and free of distractions if possible. Use a consistent location whenever you can.

**Make a plan.** Decide what to study and which approach to use. Having a specific plan will keep you motivated and focused. At the same time, follow the Holy Spirit's leading if you feel impressed to change directions.

**Choose a Bible.** You may already have a favorite Bible, or you may want to buy a new copy if you plan to do extensive marking in the text. Some Bibles have helpful marginal notes and cross-referencing of texts. Study Bibles include additional material, though your study should concentrate on the Bible passage itself.

**Choose your study tools.** A notebook is essential for journaling, recording insights, and organizing your discoveries. As you respond to God's Word in writing, the Holy Spirit will clarify your thoughts and lead you to a deeper understanding of the passage. Other useful tools include concordances, Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and study guides. Many resources are available online; use them wisely so your time is spent studying and praying rather than browsing the Internet.

**Begin today.** The King of the Universe longs to spend time with you!



## Preparing Your Heart for Bible Study

Throughout Scripture we are encouraged by word and example to study to show ourselves approved unto God, as workers who do not need to be ashamed, “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). However, successful Bible study is not merely an intellectual process, for even Satan is an excellent Bible student.

Beyond mental understanding and “right dividing,” we need *heart* transformation. This only comes through the power of the Holy Spirit.

“It is the office of heavenly angels to prepare the heart so to comprehend God’s Word that we shall be charmed with its beauty, admonished by its warnings, or animated and strengthened by its promises. We should make the psalmist’s petition our own: ‘Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.’ Psalm 119:18” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 600).

In Ezra 7:10 we are told, “For Ezra had **prepared his heart** to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.” How can we prepare our hearts as we approach God’s Holy Word?

- **Prepare with prayer, asking for the Holy Spirit.**

“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” (*Christian Education*, p. 59).

“These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches,

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; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:13, 14).

- **Prepare with a humble heart.**

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6).

“Everyone must now search the Bible for himself upon his knees before God, with the humble, teachable heart of a child, if he would know what the Lord requires of him” (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, p. 214).

“If you search the Scriptures to vindicate your own opinions, you will never reach the truth. Search in order to learn what the Lord says” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 112).

- **Prepare to search for truth like buried treasure, seeking to know Christ more fully.**

“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13).

“They received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” Acts 17:11

“As the miner discovers veins of precious metal concealed beneath the surface of the earth, so will he who perseveringly searches the Word of God as for hid treasure find truths of the greatest value, which are concealed from the view of the careless seeker” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 90).

## Important Principles of Bible Study

Consider these basic principles while studying God's Word:

- **Allow Scripture to interpret itself.**

Before rushing to outside sources, search the entire Bible for clues to enlighten difficult passages. Note the words of Isaiah: "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little" (Isa. 28:10).

"It is the first business of an interpreter to let his author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say" (John Calvin).

"The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the Word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts" (*Education*, p. 190).

- **Pay attention to context. Avoid building a doctrine on a single verse.**

In Acts 10:9-16, Peter saw a vision with a sheet full of unclean animals, which God commanded him to kill and eat. Many use this verse to claim that we can now eat unclean meats. But if you study the context in verse 28 and then into Acts 11, you realize that this vision is not about food at all; rather, it's about the gospel going to the Gentiles. Furthermore, many other Bible verses give great clarity to the topic of clean and unclean meats. We shouldn't take one passage out of context when building a doctrine. Look at the entire Bible in its historical, cultural, and geographical context. Scripture

will never contradict itself as a whole.

“One passage will prove to be a key that will unlock other passages, and in this way light will be shed upon the hidden meaning of the Word. By comparing different texts treating on the same subject, viewing their bearing on every side, the true meaning of the Scriptures will be made evident” (*Christian Education*, p. 85).

- **On the other hand, it is better to understand the deep meaning of one or two verses than to read many chapters with no purpose.**

General reading is an important part of Bible study, but many verses require in-depth study before their significance becomes clear. First, read lightly and broadly around your chosen verse, then read the verse itself more deeply. Note key words and look them up in a Bible dictionary. Use a concordance to compare the verse with others. You might also consult commentaries. Take time to pray about the personal application to your life.

“In daily study the verse-by-verse method is often most helpful. Let the student take one verse, and concentrate the mind on ascertaining the thought that God has put into that verse for him, and then dwell upon the thought until it becomes his own. **One passage thus studied until its significance is clear is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained**” (*Education*, p. 189).

- **Take your time. Don't read or study in haste.**

We don't read the Bible to fulfill a daily obligation. We spend time in the Word so that we can know God, love

Him, and be transformed into His image.

“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. . . . **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**” (*Education*, pp. 260, 261).

- Use common sense as you study.

Sometimes we’re tempted to invent obscure explanations of Bible passages. However, we’re told, “The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 599).

When we read Exodus 20:15, which says, “Thou shalt not steal” (KJV), we take it to mean just what is written—that we are not to take things that don’t belong to us. But what about a verse like Matthew 19:24, which says, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God”? We know that in the natural world, a camel cannot literally go through the eye of a needle. Rather, this illustration means that it is very, very difficult for the rich to enter heaven—not because God doesn’t want them but because the rich may love and trust their riches instead

of placing their trust in Jesus. Other Scriptures clarify these thoughts, but we must not forget to use common sense as we read.

- **Study with an open mind and heart. You always have more to learn about the Bible.**

The people of Jesus' day thought they knew all the commandments. Then Jesus showed them that anger with one's brother is like murder. Throughout the Bible, you can always find more truth under the surface. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

“A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel” (Prov. 1:5).

“Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His Word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 297).

- **Share what you learn with others, and don't be afraid to be cross-examined.**

No one learns more about a topic than someone who must teach it to others. When we share the Bible, our listeners grow in their knowledge of Christ; just as importantly, we increase our own knowledge and faith.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15).

“We are to ask blessings from God that we may

communicate to others. The capacity for receiving is preserved only by imparting. We cannot continue to receive heavenly treasure without communicating to those around us” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 143).

## **Practical Methods of Bible Study**

Consider this ancient Chinese proverb: “Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for life.” Let’s examine practical Bible study approaches that allow us to fish in God’s Word for ourselves. This is *not* an exhaustive outline but a list of pointers to get you started on the journey.

### **Read-and-Apply Method**

The Bible is meant to be read as the story of God and His people. Don’t skip over the Book itself by immediately digging into a stack of commentaries and reference works. Those materials have their place, but you don’t want to miss the story.

The Read-and-Apply Method (or Devotional Method) is probably the most common style of Bible study. Here we open Scripture and ask, “What does God have for me today in His Word?” Some follow a chronological reading plan, while others simply read until they find something that speaks to them. There is always a blessing when we study Scripture, whether for five minutes or for five hours.

But if we truly want to grow closer to God, we will not remain satisfied with a random approach in which we find a few gold nuggets on the surface of the Word. Like a gold miner, we will continually search for deeper and deeper treasures. Consider the following words:

“Search, O search the precious Bible with hungry hearts. Explore God’s Word as the miner explores the earth to find veins of gold. Never give up the search until you have ascertained your relation to God and His will in regard to you” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 111).

How can we turn our reading time into something more meaningful? First, choose or create a reading plan so you know where to start each day. You might read the whole Bible in a year, read a specific book of the Bible repeatedly for a month, or read portions of the Old and New Testaments daily. Or consider joining the worldwide Adventist Church in reading one chapter of the Bible each day ([www.revivalandreformation.org](http://www.revivalandreformation.org)). As you read, you may find questions that inspire you to try one of the systematic study methods described below.

Finally, pay attention to what you read by writing insights in a notebook, praying on your daily passage, and meditating on its meaning for your life. Take time to listen to God’s voice, remembering that your daily time in Scripture is “an audience with the Infinite One” (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 6, p. 393).

## **Inductive Method**

Inductive study is a method in which you allow the Bible itself to teach you what it means and how to apply that meaning to your life. This approach works for many Bible passages, though it is especially useful when reading stories or parables. Three steps will help you organize an inductive study: **Observation**, **Interpretation**, and **Application**.

### **Observation:**

First we need to create a picture of the facts. Start by reading the Bible passage several times and asking the



classic questions of a journalist: *Who? What? When? Where? Why?* and perhaps *How?* Consider the context by reading what comes before and after your chosen passage. Gather answers from the Bible when possible, then consult Bible dictionaries or commentaries for more background. Write everything down because you'll need it at the next stage.

Try doing your own inductive study of Matthew 14:22-36, where Jesus walks on water. Read and ask questions such as these:

- *Who* are the characters and what is happening?
- *What* events preceded this story (Matt. 14:1-21)?
- *When* and *where* do the events happen?
- *Why* did Jesus send the disciples ahead in the boat?
- Can you think of more questions? Write them down and investigate.

### **Interpretation:**

Now we ask ourselves, *What do these facts mean?* Focus on discovering the author's original intent and purpose for writing. Use a concordance or marginal references to carefully compare the story with other parts of Scripture. Look up key words in the original language and study cultural customs or idioms that may clarify the themes. For some passages, the meaning may be obvious. Still, we shouldn't rush to conclusions based on our own assumptions or human tradition. Let the Word speak as a whole.

As you interpret the story of Jesus walking on water in Matthew 14, you might ask these questions:

- Considering the events that preceded this story, what might have been on the minds of Jesus and His disciples?

- What did people of this time believe about ghosts?
- Verse 27 contains a phrase that may be translated as “Be of good cheer!” or “Take courage!” Where else can you find this phrase in the Bible?
- What are the themes of this story?
- What does this story say about God?

### **Application:**

Now we apply the passage to our lives today. Consider the insights and timeless truths found in the previous step and ask yourself, *What does this mean in my life, in my family, in my church, or in my community?* This stage requires prayer, honesty, and time in meditation. Write out your thoughts and share them with others when appropriate.

Consider the relevance of the story about Jesus walking on the water:

- Which characters do I identify with?
- What wisdom does the story offer for my current challenges or decisions?
- Does the story point to any sin in my life?
- Does it call me to make any changes?
- Does it contain promises I can rely on?
- How can this story help me grow closer to God?

### **Reminder for inductive study:**

To really understand a passage, read and study it several times while keeping track of insights in a notebook. Always start with the Bible itself, looking up key words using marginal references, concordances, and other study aids. When you feel that you have a good grasp on what God is saying in the passage, then consult Bible commentaries for additional background information. Commentaries are valuable tools, but do not rely on them more than is warranted. They are written from the

viewpoint of one author or group of authors; use them to inform yourself but not as the ultimate authority on biblical truth.

## **Survey Method**

Just as a surveyor initially covers his whole territory before making a map, another way to understand the entire Bible is to study specific Bible books one by one in light of the whole. As you read, look for the big picture, any predominant themes, and words or phrases that keep repeating themselves. Also pay attention to the order of events. Write down what you see. Take time to scan all the chapters in a given book and write out a few words that summarize each chapter. Once you complete your summary, consider memorizing it. Your confidence will grow when you can share with others in a few seconds what a chapter or book is about.

In surveying the big picture, also pay attention to the author, the historical background, the time period, who the book was written for, and why it was written. For a good background resource, consult the introduction to each book of the Bible found in the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*.

## **Verse-by-Verse Method**

Also termed the Expository Method, this is where you take time going through chapters one verse at a time using the Inductive Method outlined previously. In comparison with the Survey Method, this is about taking out your microscope and looking for details. You could spend days exploring the treasures of one or two verses.

As you study each verse and story, keep in mind a few

basic questions: What is the Bible saying at face value? What does this story say about Jesus? What does it tell me about God's church in context of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan? And of course, what is God's message to me personally?

Let's do a brief analysis with these questions in mind as we read the story of David and Goliath:

**What the Bible says:** In 1 Samuel 17:49-52, we read how David brought down Goliath with a single stone. After Goliath had fallen, he pulled out Goliath's own sword and cut off his head. Everyone shouted in victory; although there were still Philistines to fight, the battle had been won.

**Seeing Jesus:** Most of us view this as a powerful story of God's might, and then we keep reading. But have you ever contemplated the significance of that single stone and what it could represent? What about Christ, the Living Stone (1 Pet. 2:4), who threw Himself upon the kingdom of darkness, conquered sin and death, and set us free (Rom. 5:17)?

**Seeing the Great Controversy:** Remember the prophecy of Genesis 3:15? It's significant that David used Goliath's own sword to cut off his head. Likewise, at Calvary, Satan came after Christ with the sword of death to destroy Him. But Christ through death destroyed "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). When Goliath fell, the children of Israel "shouted"; most likely they shouted something such as "We won! We won!" Had they won? No, David, their substitute, had won. Then, because their substitute had already gained the victory, they pursued the Philistines all the way back to their own town.

**Message to us today:** Christ (like David) has gained the victory for us! Our job is to claim that victory and accept Christ's righteousness. Then we can confidently fight the battle against sin in our own lives, knowing we will be victorious because Christ has already gained the victory for us on the cross. But what are we trusting in this battle: our own strength, or the smooth "Living Stone" drawn from the Water of Life?

As you can see, this type of study is powerful, and it goes deep. You may cover just a few verses each day, but the time is worth it for the gold that you find.

### **Biographical Method**

How do we know the Bible is true? One of the best indicators of reliability is the honest reality displayed throughout Scripture. We have a perfect God seeking to rescue and save imperfect people. They fall away from God, they turn back to Him, they stumble, then they grow, just as we do today. Thus a fascinating Bible study method is to compile biographical sketches on specific people. Look up every reference to the person's life. Good characters to start with might be Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Paul, or, best of all, Jesus.

Do make sure that the texts you are studying all refer to the same person; several Bible names (such as Joseph or Mary) may refer to more than one person. Consider questions such as these as you build your character's biography:

- Where was he/she born? And when?
- What kind of family or town did he/she grow up in?
- Who most influenced this person's life?
- How did God use this person to carry out His will?

- What were the major turning points in this person's faith?
- Can I adopt any spiritual strengths from this person's life?

## **Topical Method**

This is the best way to gain deeper understanding of a specific subject. Rather than basing your beliefs on just one or two verses, you analyze your topic based on the entire picture presented in Scripture. To do this you need a comprehensive Bible concordance (one that coordinates with your Bible version) so that you can look up *every verse* related to your topic. If you are studying the topic of prayer, you will look up words such as *pray*, *prayed*, or *prayer*. Also check for all the verses that contain words such as *ask*, *intercession*, *supplication*, *cried*, *petition*, and so on. Such a study could occupy you happily for days or weeks.

As you study broadly in the Word of God, you begin to recognize quickly whether a teaching is biblical or not. In studying the topic of prayer, you will often read that one condition of answered prayer is asking according to God's will (for example, 1 John 5:14). We are also told to ask with proper motivation (see James 4:3). So how do we interpret Matthew 21:22: "And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive"? Does this mean we can have *anything* we ask for, whether or not it is God's will? Of course not, because we shouldn't build a doctrine on a single verse taken out of the larger biblical context. This is the advantage of detailed topical studies: clear passages of Scripture are allowed to shed light on the more difficult ones.

With topical Bible study, do keep in mind that we influence the study simply by choosing the subject

matter. It would be possible to neglect portions of the Bible if we used only this method. By spending significant time in general reading, we can keep a balanced picture of Scripture in our minds.

## **Word Study Method**

Not all words in the Bible are simple, but they all matter. What do words such as *atonement*, *propitiation*, *antichrist*, *justified*, and *sanctified* mean? Since the Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, it's usually helpful (even with simple words) to go back to the original language for clarity and greater understanding.

For example, our English word *love* actually represents three different Greek words. In John 21:15-19 (KJV) we find Jesus questioning Peter three times about his love. The first two times Jesus questioned Peter, "Lovest thou me?" He used the Greek word *agapao*, which refers to self-sacrificing, devoted love. Peter responded, "Yes, Lord, I *phileo* you!" *Phileo* is a Greek word that represents "just being a friend" or something more casual such as "a friendly fondness or approval for someone." Again Jesus questioned whether Peter had *agapao* love, and Peter replied with *phileo* love.

The third time Jesus questioned whether Peter even had *phileo* love. In other words, He switched His question to use the same term for *love* that Peter was using. The switch in the form of *love* being questioned is not detected in our English Bibles, but it helps us understand why Peter was so grieved that Jesus was questioning even his "friendship and fondness."

We may not be fluent in Greek or Hebrew, but many resources can help illuminate our word studies. One

helpful source is found online ([www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org)). Here you can read a Bible text, then click on the “C” (for concordance) beside any verse, and it will show you the Greek or Hebrew definitions for the words in that verse. You can also find print versions of biblical Greek or Hebrew dictionaries. For English readers of the King James Bible, the *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* is a classic resource for word studies.

If you don’t know the original language, another way to help identify linguistic nuances in the original is to compare several reputable English translations. When all the versions translate a word or verse in a similar way, you know the original was fairly clear. If many translations are different from each other, you know that the original was unclear. If most translations are consistent and just one is different, you may have identified a translator bias.

### **Seeking-Answers Method**

This method is larger and broader than the topical study and actually includes aspects of each Bible study approach. Here we search for biblical answers to specific life problems or issues. Some key questions for which we may want answers:

- What must I do to be saved?
- If God is good, why is there so much suffering?
- How is the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan depicted throughout the Bible?

Such questions seem complex, but we discover answers as we prayerfully choose multiple Bible study methods to uncover God’s wisdom. Keep this principle in mind as you study: “My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you



incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God” (Prov. 2:1-5).

## **Details to Watch for in Bible Study**

Pay attention to details. They are often keys that help unlock the answers we’re searching for.

### **Watch for Comparisons**

Let’s look at Malachi 3:2, 3: “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For **He is like** a refiner’s fire and like launderers’ soap. He will sit **as** a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them **as** gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.”

In the passage above, the bold words highlight comparisons. Christ is compared to a refiner’s fire. This is significant. If we research the old-fashioned process of silver refining, we learn that a silversmith must hold the silver under the hottest part of the fire to burn away all the impurities. This takes time. The silversmith knows he has accomplished his purpose when he sees a reflection of himself in the silver. Hence God seeks to refine and purify us, even through fire, that His righteousness might be reflected in us.

What meaningful insights may be found in simple comparisons! Look for others as you study.

## Watch for Contrasts

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, **but** of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7).

Here we see the “spirit of fear” contrasted with the spirit of “power and of love and of a sound mind.” Therefore, if we have the spirit of fear, we know we didn’t get that from God but from the enemy. That’s a valuable gold nugget we can apply to our lives today. Scripture abounds with other contrasts between good and evil, obedience and rebellion, light and darkness—pay attention to distinctions.

## Watch for Cause-and-Effect Indicators

Whenever we see a word such as “therefore,” we need to ask ourselves, *What is the therefore there for?* Are two seemingly separate thoughts being tied together through cause and effect?

One example is the Sermon on the Mount, in which the *therefore(s)* connect passages that might otherwise seem unrelated. Consider Matthew 5:23, 24: “**Therefore** if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” This passage is often used alone, but the word *therefore* ties it to the preceding verses about anger. This bears further investigation.

Depending on your Bible version, other cause-and-effect words to look for include *so*, *hence*, *consequently*, *thus*, and *as a result*.

## Watch for Expressions of Time

Watch for words related to time, such as *when*, *before/after*, or *until*. They hold clues about chronology, and they may provide spiritual insights you would otherwise overlook. Take Acts 1:8 (KJV) as an example: “But ye shall receive power, **after** that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

Note the word *after*. Unfortunately, we often try to become God’s witnesses *before* we have received His power. But if we pray, seek the Holy Spirit, and wait until *after* the Spirit has come upon us, we won’t be so futile in our endeavors. We are guaranteed the power, not just to be witnesses in our own community but throughout the earth. Now take note of the word *when* in the next verse (Acts 1:9). Do you see that this is the last promise Christ gave before He returned to heaven? Expressions of time reveal exciting truths throughout Scripture, especially in prophetic writings.

## Watch for Types of the Antitype

A biblical *type* is a person, thing, or event in the Old Testament that foreshadows and shares characteristics with a person, thing, or event in the New Testament, called the *antitype*. The type (such as the Old Testament sacrificial system) might be considered a prophetic model that points forward to the antitype (such as the New Testament sacrifice of Christ on the cross). Types are more than straight metaphors; they are intended by God to prefigure the coming of Christ and the great spiritual truths of salvation.

As an example, consider the story of Abraham when called to sacrifice Isaac in Genesis 22. When he discovers the lamb in the thicket and sacrifices it instead, we recognize the lamb as a type that points to Christ, the Antitype, who would be sacrificed in our place. Search for more of these types as you read; for careful readers, this is one of the most exciting aspects of Bible study.

“There is one great central truth to be kept ever before the mind in the searching of the Scriptures—Christ and Him crucified. Every other truth is invested with influence and power corresponding to its relation to this theme” (*The Faith I Live By*, p. 50).

## **Making Time for Bible Study**

For some, the hardest part of Bible study is making the time to begin. Have you ever tried to fit God into your busy lifestyle? How much better to fit our lifestyles around our time with God! If we have to cut out some work, ministry projects, time with friends, extra sleep, or even a meal, then we must do this. Disconnect the television and Internet if necessary. Anything can be discarded—as long as we do not shortchange our time with God in His Word. Without this time, we die spiritually.

Consider implementing the following tips to *intentionally* safeguard your daily time with God:

- Re-evaluate your daily list of duties. Re-arrange or cut out the non-essentials.
- Make your time with God the first priority of your day—literally. Don't do anything else when you wake up (other than hygienic essentials, drinking a

glass of water, etc.) until you've had your time with God. We do *not* earn salvation by getting up early, but when we truly love the Lord, we will desire His presence and put Him first in our lives.

- Make an appointment with God in the morning and keep it (just as you would with a boss or important dignitary). If you can't wake up early enough, start praying that God will wake you up (see Isa. 50:4; Mark 1:35; Prov. 8:17; Ps. 5:3). Just don't presume upon God if your own sleep habits need to change. What you eat and how much you sleep *the night before* will affect your success in meeting with God the next morning.
- Try to give yourself at least an hour for Bible study and prayer each day. This may seem impossible, but where there's a will, there's a way. Soon you will discover that an hour is not nearly long enough to spend with the King of the Universe. Whatever time you give God, He will more than repay.
- Keep electronic media turned off until after your time with God. Save e-mails, text messages, news headlines, radio, and phone calls for later.
- If possible, find a quiet place away from noise and distractions for your devotions.
- As you make a commitment to spend this time with God each day, expect that Satan will do everything he can to distract you and derail your plans. But if you persevere, God will give you physical and spiritual victory, and you will begin to discover rich gold like you've never seen before.

**“I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12).**

“Satan well knows that all whom he can lead to neglect prayer and the searching of the Scriptures, will be overcome by his attacks. Therefore he invents

every possible device to engross the mind” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 519).

“As our physical life is sustained by food, so **our spiritual life is sustained by the Word of God**. And every soul is to receive life from God’s Word for himself. As we must eat for ourselves in order to receive nourishment, so we must receive the Word for ourselves” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 390).

“The life of God, which gives life to the world, is in His Word. . . . The whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ. It is our **only source of power**” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 250).

## **Moving Beyond the Bible Study**

We pray that you’re inspired by the Bible study suggestions in this book and motivated to use them soon. But without God’s transforming grace and the Holy Spirit’s blessing, any method is just another set of rules. What really matters:

- Will you allow God’s Word to change your heart from the inside out?
- When you find new light in Scripture, will you follow where it leads?
- Will you allow the Bible to shape each part of your daily life?

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall **meditate on it day and night**, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it” (Josh. 1:8).

“But be **doers of the word**, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22).

## Safeguarded by God's Word

God longs for His people to know the Savior as revealed in the life-changing stories, prophecies, poetry, and epistles of Scripture. Above all, He longs for us to know one vital truth: God is love. He created us, He redeemed us, and He will sustain us until we see Him face-to-face.

Satan wants nothing more than to obscure this divine love. Some of his greatest attacks before Christ's second coming will be directed at God's Word, for he knows that it contains truth and life. But we need not fear Satan's deceptions; our salvation is by faith in Jesus and His righteousness, and that faith is safeguarded by the treasures found in Scripture.

**"The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him" (2 Sam. 22:31).**

"The people of God are directed to the Scriptures as their safeguard against the influence of false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness. Satan employs every possible device to prevent men from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 593).

"None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict. To every soul will come the searching test: Shall I obey God rather than men? The decisive hour is even now at hand. Are our feet planted on the rock of God's immutable Word? Are we prepared to stand firm in defense of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus?" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 593).

## Praying God's Word

The precious promises of the Bible are as good as gold when we claim them in prayer. As we begin to grasp God's promises by faith, we can start praying His own words back to Him with boldness. The Bible tells us, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6).

Daniel took God at His word when the people of Jerusalem had been exiled to Babylon. He came to God in prayer, bearing the promise of Jeremiah 29 which prophesied deliverance after 70 years. Although Daniel approached God humbly—the Bible says he was fasting, wearing sackcloth and ashes, and confessing the sins of his people—he was not afraid to point to God's promise and ask for it to be fulfilled.

We too can place our hands on the promises, ask according to God's will, and believe that His Word means what it says. Then we can thank Him in faith, knowing that He will answer at the right time. By thanking Him for His gifts in advance, we turn the focus away from our fears to His unlimited strength. Scripture will come to life before our eyes as we watch Him pour out His blessings.

### Praying With Faith in God's Word

"Plead for the Holy Spirit. God stands back of every promise He has made. **With your Bible in your hands say, I have done as Thou hast said. I present Thy promise,** 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you'" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 147).



“We are to send our petitions through the darkest clouds that Satan may cast over us, and let our faith pierce to the throne of God encircled by the rainbow of promise, the assurance that God is true, that in Him is no variableness neither shadow of turning. **The answer may appear to be delayed, but it is not so.** The petition is accepted, and the answer given when it is essential for the best good of the petitioner and when the fulfillment of the request will work most for our eternal interest. God scatters His blessings all along our path to brighten our heavenward journey” (*In Heavenly Places*, p. 125).

“We are to come before the mercy seat with reverence, calling up to our mind the promises that God has given, contemplating the goodness of God, and offering up thankful praises for His unchangeable love. **We are not to trust in our finite prayers, but in the word of our heavenly Father, in His assurance of His love for us.** Believing the promise of His unchanging love, we press our petitions to the throne of grace” (*In Heavenly Places*, p. 125).

“**Talk and act as if your faith was invincible.** The Lord is rich in resources; He owns the world. Look heavenward in faith” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 147).

### **Our Needs and God’s Promises**

Consider your most important needs and boldly claim these promises in prayer:

- Help in Trials: Ps. 50:15; 2 Chr. 20:12; Isa. 41:10
- Help in Temptation: Eph. 6:10-17; 1 Cor. 10:13
- Deliverance: Ps. 34:6, 7, 19; Lk. 18:7, 8
- Physical Needs: Phil. 4:19; Matt. 6:31-33; Ps. 4:3

- Forgiveness: 1 John 1:9; Ps. 103:12; Isa. 1:18
- Wisdom: James 1:5; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:17
- Guidance: Ps. 32:8; Prov. 3:5, 6; Isa. 30:21
- Strength: Isa. 40:29-31; Eph. 3:16; 2 Cor. 12:9
- The Holy Spirit: Lk. 11:13; Eph. 1:13
- Salvation: Rom. 10:13; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 1:4
- New Heart: Ezek. 36:26; Deut. 30:6; Phil. 2:13
- Physical Food: Isa. 33:16; Ps. 34:8; Ps. 37:25
- Spiritual Needs: Ps. 81:10; Matt. 5:6; Jer. 15:16
- Spiritual Fruit: Ps. 1:3; John 15:4; 2 Chr. 16:9
- Souls Saved: Ps. 2:8; Josh. 1:3; 2 Pet. 3:9; Joel 2
- Endurance: Matt. 24:13; 2 Tim 2:3; Heb. 10:35
- Peace: John 14:27; Isa. 26:3; Ps. 46; Ex. 14:14
- Revival: Ps. 85:6; Ps. 138:7; Ezek. 37:5; Eph. 5:14

## Memorizing God's Word

Nothing sharpens the mind or strengthens a discouraged soul like memorizing Bible passages. The Psalmist writes, “Thy Word have I **hid in my heart** that I might not sin against thee” (Ps. 119:11, KJV).

“We might **close the door to many temptations**, if we would commit to memory passages of Scripture. Let us hedge up the way to Satan’s temptations with ‘It is written’” (*The Faith I Live By*, p. 8).

“Several times each day precious, golden moments should be consecrated to prayer and the study of the Scriptures, if it is only to commit a text to memory, that spiritual life may exist in the soul” (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 4, p. 459).

### Tips for Memorizing Scripture:

- If you are a beginner, start with favorite verses from your daily devotions, or you might pick verses that

strengthen you for temptations or trials. If you're already memorizing such verses, you might start memorizing doctrinal verses that can help you witness for your faith.

- Write your verses on small cards (or use a computer to print them) and carry them in a small pack, in your wallet, or on a metal ring.
- Spend a few minutes daily going over your new verse again and again until you have it word-perfect in your mind. (Learning the verse accurately the first time is vital to long-term retention.)
- Keep reviewing throughout the day (as you drive to work, as you walk to school, during breaks in the day, in the grocery line, everywhere you go).
- When you have a few minutes, type or write it out by hand, over and over, to cement it in your memory.
- Get an accountability partner for scripture memory. This is so helpful!
- Write the date and perhaps something significant from your current life on each verse card. This will help you recall when you memorized the verse.
- You might start with two verses a week, but many people memorize a verse each day. The more you memorize, the easier it becomes.
- Consider learning entire Bible chapters. Some good choices: Isa. 53; 1 Cor. 13; Heb. 11; Ps. 23; Ps. 34; Ps. 91.
- After learning a verse, review it often for at least a month, then you may set it aside as you learn more and more verses. But it's important to review old verses at least once a month. You might do this together with family or friends.
- Share the verses you memorize with others. Use them when you pray. You will be so grateful to have them stored in your heart.

## Learning to Live by God's Word

Because God's Word is divinely inspired, it is not like a human piece of literature that we can tamper with or adjust to suit our purposes. We don't push it aside for our own theories or preferences of interpretation. Why? Because it came by inspiration of God, and God does not change (2 Pet. 1:20, 21; Mal. 3:6).

"The life of a Christian is a life regulated by the Word of God just as it reads" (*Reflecting Christ*, p. 77).

"The children of God have reached the most critical part of their pilgrimage; for the nets and pitfalls of the enemy are on every side. And yet with the guidance of the Lord, with that which is plainly revealed in His Word, we may walk securely and not stumble. But we shall daily need to seek God, to inquire, 'Is this the way of the Lord?' You cannot go on following your own inclination, and at the same time be treading in safe paths. You cannot live to please yourself, but must submit your will to God. **But how will you understand what is the will of God unless you study His Word with humble and contrite heart?**" (*Youth's Instructor*, May 18, 1893, par. 4).

"Direct my steps by Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me" (Ps. 119:133).

### Applying God's Word to Your Life

How does God's Word affect the following areas of your life?

**Life Goals:** Do these reflect the Word of God? (See Matt. 6:33; Jn. 17:3.)

**Daily Decisions and Life Decisions:** Are these made based on biblical principles or on your own feelings and desires? (See Prov. 3:5, 6; Prov. 14:12; Prov. 11:14.)

**Attitudes:** What are your thoughts and motives? Are you looking at life through the lens of God's Word or through your own human viewpoint? (See Phil. 2:5; 2 Cor. 10:5; Phil. 4:8; Ps. 19:14; Ps. 119:165; Isa. 55:8, 9.)

**Lifestyle:** Does your lifestyle (from how you spend your time and money to what you do for entertainment) glorify God, or is it all about what you want? (See 1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Tim. 2:3.)

Now ask yourself, *If my goals/decisions/attitudes/lifestyle do not align with God's Word, am I willing to change?* Ask God to change you from the inside out! Consider these words of conviction and promise:

"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" (2 Cor. 13:5).

"For the **word of God is living and powerful**, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and is a **discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart**" (Heb. 4:12).

"**Obedience** is the test of discipleship. It is the keeping of the commandments that proves the sincerity of our professions of love" (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 146).

"If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact. . . . **[While] we must not trust at all to ourselves or our good works, our**

lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 57).

“Even one wrong trait of character, one sinful desire, persistently cherished, will eventually neutralize all the power of the gospel” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 34).

“The understanding, the will, the affections, must be yielded to the control of the Word of God. Then through the work of the Holy Spirit the precepts of the Word will become the principles of the life” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 514).

### **A Word of Encouragement**

As you hold your life up to the mirror of God’s Word, you may be tempted by discouragement. You may even feel like giving up on Bible study. Instead, lift your eyes away from your shortcomings to God’s unlimited grace. He not only forgives your mistakes but also frees you from the power of sin. Stay close to your Savior in prayer and by reading His Word. Lean on His promises, and He will never leave you nor forsake you.

**“He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ”** (Phil. 1:6).

**“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”** (Matt. 11:28, 29).

“We should not make self the center and indulge anxiety and fear as to whether we shall be saved. All this turns the soul away from the Source of our strength. Commit the keeping of your soul to God, and trust in

Him. **Talk and think of Jesus.** Let self be lost in Him” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 71).

“**Great peace** have those who love **Your law**, and nothing causes them to stumble” (Ps. 119:165).

## **The Coming Revival**

By beholding Christ in His Word, we allow Him to change our hearts, our church, and our world. Trust Him to keep His promise: “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: **I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people**” (Jer. 31:33).

“When we as a people understand what this book means to us, **there will be seen among us a great revival**” (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 113).

“Before the final visitation of God’s judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. **The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children**” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 464).

“The Bible will be regarded as a charter from heaven. Its study will absorb the mind, and its truths will feast the soul. The promises of God now repeated as if the soul had never tasted of His love, will then glow upon the altar of the heart, and fall in burning words from the lips of the messengers of God. They will then plead with souls with an earnestness that cannot be repulsed. Then the **windows of heaven will be opened** for the showers of the latter rain” (*Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 312).

## Reading God's Word Together

The Seventh-day Adventist world church has launched a daily Bible reading program. Thousands around the world are reading together, and countless believers are experiencing personal revival even now. You can too!

We invite you to join in daily Bible reading with fellow believers across the globe. Find more details on our Web site ([www.revivalandreformation.org](http://www.revivalandreformation.org)).

### Your Personal Invitation

"I would like to invite every church member to join the worldwide family of Seventh-day Adventists in reading one chapter of the Bible a day. As we prayerfully read and meditate upon God's Word, we each will be led to a renewed experience with the Savior as we look forward to His soon coming!"

**Ted N.C. Wilson, President**

**General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists**

### Our Prayer

May God's people rediscover the boundless treasures of His Holy Word, for "more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Ps. 19:10, KJV).

Lord, "will you not **revive us again**, that your people may rejoice in You?" (Ps. 85:6).



## **Revival & Bible Study Resources**

**General Conference Revival Web Site:**

[www.revivalandreformation.org](http://www.revivalandreformation.org)

**Revived by His Word Web Site:**

[www.revivedbyhisword.org](http://www.revivedbyhisword.org)

**ARME Bible Camp 5-day Bible Study Training:**

[www.armeministries.com](http://www.armeministries.com)

**Ten Days of Prayer Event:**

[www.tendaysofprayer.org](http://www.tendaysofprayer.org)

**Ellen White Online Books and Commentaries:**

[egwwritings.org](http://egwwritings.org)

**Bible Study and Scripture Memory Program:**

[www.fast.st](http://www.fast.st)

**Bible Study Tools:**

[www.biblestudytools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com)

**Questions about the Bible:**

[www.bibleinfo.com](http://www.bibleinfo.com)

**The Online Electronic Sword:**

[www.e-sword.net](http://www.e-sword.net)

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**“The study of God’s Word,  
leading to a life-changing  
experience with Jesus, is at the  
very heart of revival.”**

Mark Finley

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