



There Are Four Important Growth-disciplines To Strengthen Every Fisher:
Prayer, Bible, Fellowship and Witnessing

2.) Fishers Need to Read the Bible

Did you know that the Bible is God's love letter to born again Christians. And God wants to lovingly meet with you regularly in His written Word. He wants you to enjoy both *peace with God* and the *peace of God* as you allow the living Word to be your Savior and your Lord. Meeting with the Lord as you read the Bible is important and that's how we can hear from Him as His Spirit illuminates His truth to our inner spirit. Studying the Bible is enjoyable and necessary for our spiritual growth. Proper Bible meditation and application will keep us strong—yes, God gives us wisdom as we spend time being *doers of the Word rather than just hearers*.

Have you ever missed a meal or two because you were really busy? At some point, your body probably told you "Hey stop, I needed food as fuel right now". It might have been by hunger pangs or a growling stomach. Whatever the sign, you need to stop and eat healthy food.

Now, you could possibly keep going and ignoring the signs, but your body would gradually begin to break down. You would get weak or maybe dizzy. In other words, you really need to take some time each day to eat food and that way you will survive. Most Christians won't forget to eat at least three meals a day, so why would they think it was smart to forget to eat spiritual meals each day from the Word of God?

Yes indeed, the same is true of our spiritual lives regarding refueling. If we don't feed ourselves, we will begin to get weak or possibly die spiritually. One of the most important ways that we can feed our inner spirit person is by reading or by studying the Bible—it's God's Word. In the Bible we see how David said that the Word was sweeter to him than sweet honey from the honey comb (see [Psalm 19:10](#)), and Job said that he treasured God's Word more than his necessary food (see [Job 23:12](#)).

Bible study tends to fall into one of three categories. As you grow in your relationship with Christ, you should take advantage of all three on a regular basis.

1) Directed Study

A directed, or deductive, study is meant to bring about an understanding of Scripture by applying it to everyday life. A directed study will be biblically-based, providing specific biblical principles and ways in which we can put those principles to work each day or in a particular situation.

A sermon at a church service is a form of directed study, but there are also many published Bible studies that fall into this category too.

2) Discovery Learning

Also known as inductive Bible study, discovery learning is more of an individually-based study of God's Word. Rather than relying on a speaker or a book to direct the process, discovery learning puts on the emphasis on your willingness to get into Scripture.

This could be likened to a search for treasure, in which you are exploring an area and examining everything you find for something of value. In fact, the writer of Psalm 119 uses this analogy when he writes, *"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure"* (Ps. 119:162).

There are three basic skills that come into play with an inductive study:

- **Observation.** This involves asking who, what, when, where, and why questions about the passage you're reading. When studying Scripture, it's important to understand the context of the passage. Think about the people, places, and events mentioned in the section you're reading. Don't be afraid to look at biblically-sound outside sources to provide a complete picture; just don't rely on it solely.
- **Interpretation.** Now that you understand the background of the passage, it's time to look for the meaning. What does this Scripture teach about God? What does it say about man? Is there a command to obey? A promise to claim? Is there a warning to heed? Is there an example to follow or avoid? The Bible is filled with principles—the building blocks that form the foundation of what we believe and how we behave toward God and others. Simply put, a principle is a spiritual lesson.
- **Application.** This is where the rubber meets the road, so to speak. Now that you've gained knowledge and spiritual understanding, you need to put it to work in your life. What is God trying to teach you through this passage? How does what you've learned apply to your life? How will you cooperate with God in living what you have learned? One thing you can do is write a statement of how you will put the spiritual lesson into practice. For example: I will be a consistent and faithful student of God's Word so I will grow.

Inductive study sounds like a difficult task, but it is something that anyone can use, no matter where you are in your walk with Christ. The secret lies not in having a head for facts, but in having a heart to listen, learn, and obey.

3) Devotional Reading

One of the easiest—yet most difficult—methods of studying the Bible is devotional reading or quiet time. This is simply a time of one-on-one fellowship with God through the reading of His Word, worship, and prayer.

First and foremost, make sure you set aside a reasonable amount of time and a quiet

place where you can read and pray without distractions. This is time you're setting aside to spend with God. You don't want anything to interrupt you during this time.

Have a plan of action. Whether you want to read through the Bible in a year, study one of the gospels in depth, or focus on a single person, there are many resources that can help you in those areas. A good starting point is simply to read a chapter of Scripture a day and keep on going.

Don't rely too much on outside sources. Devotional books are not bad, and can be a good supplement to your Scripture reading. But remember that the focus on your quiet time should be on reading God's Word and meditating on it, not what someone else wrote.

Once you've read through the passage, consider what God is communicating to you through that piece of Scripture. Maybe it has to do with something you're going through. Maybe it's something you're going to experience, and you just don't know it yet! Regardless, allow God to speak to you in His still, small voice as you contemplate His Word.

Now, it's time to pray about it. Talk to God about what you have read, seeking His insight and His will. Ask that He would help you take what you've read and apply to your life today.

A great way to remember the things you're learning is to keep a journal. Write down what you read and what the Lord is speaking to you through it. Write out how it applies to you and how you will respond. This way, you can come back later, see how God has been teaching you all along, and be encouraged by it.

And last but not least, put what you learn into practice. All the quiet time in the world won't help you if you're not willing to live out what you've learned.¹

Never Forget that The Bible is Trustworthy

The Bible wasn't written to us, but it was written for us. God had the original writers communicate to certain recipients and we can benefit from what they wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And because the books that make up the Bible were written for us, God can speak to us as we read these books in the Bible. Yes, God communicates to us Christians as we prayerfully study the Bible in His Spirit. But we must be born again and we must understand what the original human writer intended each book to mean to the original recipients. The Bible can never mean what it never meant. We can't take what we are reading out of context and then use in such a way that the original writer wouldn't understand what we were saying if he spoke our language. If he were here with us, we would never want to embarrass him.

Did you know that 60% of the Bible is narrative? The Revelation is basically "one letter" to seven different local churches. We must understand the genre that each passage was written in (Revelation for instance was written in multiple genres). In the poetic biblical

writings, we can examine and see that the writers didn't use rhyming – they used meter and parallels instead.

There are two main texts from which we get all our Bibles: 1.) **The Textus Receptus** (the *Received Text*, or the Accepted Text, The Majority Text—that's Kurt's favorite one), and 2.) **Wescott and Hort's Text** who both predominantly influenced the whole group translating with them. Wescott and Hort took 90% of their work from the Codex Sineaticus and the Codex Vaticanus (which were altered or doctored texts that came out of Alexandria. These two men were very intellectual but weren't spiritual guys). Dr. Hort loved Darwin's books the most and admired the Mary worship done by many Catholics.

Know this: The Bible doesn't contain any errors, even though there are different versions using different wording. The Bible is fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts (called the Autographa). The Bible teaches both the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Autographa, and also the verbal, preservation of the Autographa. Real Christians accept Bible passages such as 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21 as clear declarations of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Autographa. This means that although a few minor copyists' errors may be present (since the Bible was copied and handed down by hand in the many centuries before the printing press came along), the text as we have it, accurately reflects the originals. It can be trusted! It is indeed the Message of God to human writers for us to learn from and enjoy.

Here are some reasons for you to believe...

1) The Bible's Honesty

The Bible is painfully honest. It shows Jacob, the father of its "chosen people," to be a deceiver. It describes Moses, the lawgiver, as an insecure, reluctant leader, who, in his first attempt to come to the aid of his own people, killed a man, and then ran for life to the desert. It portrays David not only as Israel's most loved king, general, and spiritual leader, but as one who took another man's wife and then, to cover his own sin, conspired to have her husband killed. At one point, the Scriptures accuse the people of God, the nation of Israel, as being so bad they made Sodom and Gomorrah look good by comparison (Ezekiel 16:46-52). The Bible represents human nature as hostile to God. It predicts a future full of trouble. It teaches that the road to heaven is narrow and the way to hell is wide. Scripture was clearly not written for those who want simple answers or an easy, optimistic view of religion and human nature.

2) The Bible's Preservation

Just as the modern state of Israel was emerging from thousands of years of dispersion, a bedouin shepherd discovered one of the most important archeological treasures of our time. In a cave of the northwest rim of the Dead Sea, a broken jar yielded documents that had been hidden for two millennia. Additional finds produced manuscripts that predated previous oldest copies by 1,000 years. One of the most important was a copy of Isaiah. It revealed a document that is essentially the same as the book of Isaiah that appears in our own Bibles. The Dead Sea scrolls emerged from the dust like a symbolic

handshake to a nation coming home. They discredited the claims of those who believed that the original Bible had been lost to time and tampering.

3) The Bible's claims for itself

It's important to know what the Bible says about itself. If the authors of Scripture had not claimed to speak for God, it would be presumptuous for us to make that claim for them. We would also have a different kind of problem. We would have a collection of unsolved mysteries, embodied in historical and ethical literature. But we would not have a book that has inspired the building of countless churches and synagogues all over the world. A Bible that did not claim to speak on behalf of God would not have become foundational to the faith of hundreds of millions of Christians and Jews (2 Peter 1:16-21). But with much supporting evidence and argument, the Bible's authors did claim to be inspired by God. Because millions have staked their present and eternal well-being on those claims, the Bible cannot be a good book if its authors consistently lied about their source of information.

4) The Bible Miracles

Israel's exodus from Egypt provided a historical basis for believing that God revealed Himself to Israel. If the Red Sea did not part as Moses said it did, the Old Testament loses its authority to speak on behalf of God. The New Testament is just as dependent upon miracles. If Jesus did not rise bodily from the dead, the apostle Paul admits that the Christian faith is built on a lie (1 Corinthians 15:14-17). To show its credibility, the New Testament names its witnesses, and did so within a time-frame that enabled those claims to be tested (1 Corinthians 15:1-8). Many of the witnesses ended up as martyrs, not for abstract moral or spiritual convictions but for their claim that Jesus had risen from the dead. While martyrdom is not unusual, the basis on which these people gave their lives is what's important. Many have died for what they believed to be the truth. But people do not die for what they know to be a lie.

5) The Bible's Unity

Forty different authors writing over a period of 1,600 years penned the 66 books of the Bible. Four hundred silent years separated the 39 books of the Old Testament from the 27 of the New Testament. Yet, from Genesis to Revelation, they tell one unfolding story. Together they give consistent answers to the most important questions we can ask: Why are we here? How can we come to terms with our fears? How can we get along? How can we rise above our circumstances and keep hope alive? How can we make peace with our Maker? The Bible's consistent answers to these questions show that the Scriptures are not many books but one.

6) The Bible's Historical And Geographical Accuracy

Down through the ages, many have doubted the historical and geographical accuracy of the Bible. Yet modern archeologists have repeatedly unearthed evidence of the people, places, and cultures described in the Scriptures. Time after time, the descriptions in the biblical record have been shown to be more reliable than the speculations of scholars.

The modern visitor to the museums and lands of the Bible cannot help but come away impressed with the real geographical and historical backdrop of the biblical text.

7) The Bible's Endorsement By Jesus Christ

Many have spoken well of the Bible, but no endorsement is as compelling as that of Jesus of Nazareth. He recommended the Bible not only by His words but by His life. In times of personal temptation, public teaching, and personal suffering, He made it clear that He believed the Old Testament Scriptures were more than a national tradition (Matthew 4:1-11; 5:17-19). He believed the Bible was a book about Himself. To His countrymen He said, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:39-40).

8) The Bible's Prophetic Accuracy

From the days of Moses, the Bible predicted events no one wanted to believe. Before Israel went into the Promised Land, Moses predicted that Israel would be unfaithful, that she would lose the land God was giving her, and that she would be dispersed throughout all the world, regathered, and then re-established (Deuteronomy 28-31). Central to Old Testament prophecy was the promise of a Messiah who would save God's people from their sins and eventually bring judgment and peace to the whole world.

9) The Bible's Survival

The books of Moses were written 500 years before the earliest Hindu Scriptures. Moses wrote Genesis 2,000 years before Muhammad penned the Koran. During that long history, no other book has been as loved or as hated as the Bible. No other book has been so consistently bought, studied, and quoted as this book. While millions of other titles come and go, the Bible is still the book by which all other books are measured. While often ignored by those who are uncomfortable with its teachings, it is still the central book of Western civilization.

10) The Bible's Power To Change Lives

Unbelievers often point to those who claim to believe in the Bible without being changed by it. But history is also marked by those who have been bettered by this book. The Ten Commandments have been a source of moral direction to countless numbers of people. The Psalms of David have offered comfort in times of trouble and loss. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount has given millions an antidote for stubborn pride and proud legalism. Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 has softened angry hearts. The changed lives of people like the apostle Paul, Augustine, Martin Luther, John Newton, Leo Tolstoy, and C. S. Lewis illustrate the difference the Bible can make. Even entire nations or tribes, like the Celts of Ireland, the wild Vikings of Norway, or the Auca Indians of Ecuador have been transformed by the Word of God and the unprecedented life and significance of Jesus Christ.²

***“The Bible is alive, it speaks to me,
the Bible has feet, it runs after me,
the Bible has hands, it grabs a hold of me.”***

—Martin Luther

The Word of God is alive and powerful. The Bible is not like any other book. It describes itself as a sword. It has power to change lives and power to save sinners. No other book speaks of a Jesus who is God and can take all of men's guilt away except the Bible. God uses the Bible to sanctify those who believe in Christ. It brings truth and maturity to the saints. You will never grow spiritually apart from the Word of God. You will never grow strong until you begin to feed on the milk of the Word regularly with a heart to apply it everyday. God give comfort and sufficiency to the sufferer by His Word. Many times I have seen people hurting or in torment, and they have found great solace in the Bible which they could find nowhere else, because the text points to a relationship with God through Christ. It brings satisfaction to the scholar. You can study it for a lifetime and still not fathom its depths. I know I can't seem to get to the bottom of the Bible—I keep learning more and more about the Lord. Yes, it is a Book so deep that you too can swim forever and never touch bottom, yet so simple that even a child can understand and take a drink without fear of drowning. You can never move forward in your faith until you come to see the Bible for what it really is: God's precious gift to us, given so that we may know Him and find eternal life. Become a bibliophile—a lover of God and of His Book. You can be certain that the Bible is true (not partially true, not a true myth)—it's the Word of the living God!

¹ The three study categories above are from my pastor at *Harvest Ministries* in California—a very reputable evangelism organization.

² We have RBC Ministries to thank for the ten reasons listed above.