

## How to Study the Bible in Your Personal Devotions

Keep working at your daily devotional plan for 21 days. By then it should become a habit. Pray for God to give you the desire and the discipline to spend time with Him each day. Don't give up. Eventually you will discover the joys and blessings of your obedience.

### Decide On a Time

If you view your time spent alone with God as an appointment to be kept in your daily calendar, you will be less apt to miss or skip it.

### Decide On a Place

Finding the right place is key to your success. If you try to spend quality time with God lying in bed with the lights off, failure is inevitable. Choose a comfortable chair with a good reading light. Have a place for all your "tools" - Bible, pen, journal, devotional book and reading plan. When you get up in the morning, simply go to the place and everything is ready.

### Decide On a Time Frame

There is no standard time frame for personal devotions. You have to decide how much time you can realistically commit to each day. Getting started with 15 minutes a day can quickly develop into more. Some people can commit to 30 minutes, others an hour or more a day. Start with a realistic goal that you feel you can meet. If you start with a plan of 2 hours a day, failure to meet the goal will quickly discourage you.

### Plan to Spend Some Time in Prayer

- **Adoration:** Praising God for who He is
- **Confession:** Asking and claiming forgiveness for the sins you have committed
- **Thanksgiving:** Expressing gratitude for His blessing and answers to your prayers
- **Supplication:** Making requests on the behalf of others as well as yourself

## A Daily Study Plan

We suggest getting a special loose-leaf notebook just for your morning devotions. Get it stocked with paper and have a pencil or pen and a Bible nearby. Keep your notebook organized so you will not waste time trying to figure out where things are. It is also helpful to have a plan. The paragraphs below suggest a few simple keys to studying the Bible effectively and making the most of your time with God.

**1. Prepare.** Before beginning your study of the Word, spend some time in prayer, asking God to teach you through His Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can make the Word come alive. See John 14:26, John 16:13. As you pray, present specific needs, problems, questions, plans, etc., to the Lord, and ask Him to speak to you about those areas.

**2. Paraphrase.** Take out a blank sheet of paper and jot down the date and passage you will be studying. Cover only as much as you have time to digest thoroughly—even if it is only 6-8 verses. Read the passage through a couple times until you begin to grasp what the writer is saying. Then, write a brief paraphrase of the passage in your own words.

It is often best to read through one book of the Bible at a time, picking up each morning where you leave off the day before. We recommend starting with short practical books first, such as James or I Thessalonians.

**3. Principles.** Next, spend some time meditating on the passage. Look for principles—moral precepts that operate in all situations.

Often the easiest way to find a principle is to ask yourself questions:

Is there a Sin to confess?

Is there a Promise to claim?

Is there an Attitude to change?

Is there a Command to obey?

Is there an Example to follow?

Is there a Prayer to pray?

Is there an Error to avoid?

Is there a Truth to believe? Is there something I just need to believe God for?

Is there Something to thank God for?

With a little practice you will soon find yourself able to almost instinctively ask just the right questions. Principles will seem to burst off the page. As soon as you see one clearly, jot it down on your paper.

**4. Projects.** Finding a principle is only half the battle. You must then go on to apply it to your personal life. This means transforming that principle into a project by answering more questions, such as: Who? What? When? Where? and How? What exactly does that verse suggest you should do?

As the Holy Spirit brings certain projects to mind, jot them down, checking to make sure they PASS:

Personal

Achievable

Specific

Scriptural

Then, commit to carrying out your application promptly. Continue finding principles and projects as long as you have time to study.

**Scripture Memory Tip:** As you read through different books of the Bible, you will discover many verses you will want to memorize. Jot these references down on a piece of paper and keep the list in your morning devotion notebook. Soon you will have dozens of choice verses you can look forward to memorizing.

### **The Importance of Commitment**

The most important key to keeping up with your morning devotion routine is commitment—for without it, there can be no consistency. Your morning devotions must become a daily part of our life, even if it is only for a few moments each morning. The goal is to build a habit strong enough to last the rest of your life. So be determined. Don't give up. Make whatever adjustments to your schedule that are needed to get quality time with the Master every day!