



Introduction:

**Have you ever been theologically challenged by someone from another religion knocking at your door and you discovered they knew the Bible better than you did?
Can you share a story of when someone theologically stumped you?**

How did you feel after that experience?

How could we use such experiences to hone our own Bible knowledge?

Whenever anyone raises a biblical question you don't know how to answer, that is an excellent gift to you. It shows you a very specific topic of which you can begin to gain a biblical knowledge that you previously did not have. As you go back and study the Bible on that topic, you are becoming more equipped in your knowledge and understanding. The next time that question is raised you will be prepared to respond in a loving, confident way.

Have you ever been in a spiritual conversation with someone where you knew the biblical point you wanted to make but didn't know where or how to find the relevant scripture in the bible?

Share experiences!

Have there been any times when a speaker gave an insight into a scripture passage that changed your perspective greatly and you wondered why you hadn't seen that perspective before?

Share with us some examples.

Why might they have had a greater understanding than you with regard to that passage?

If you wanted to go deeper into studying the bible, would you know how?

What do you think is the difference between reading the Bible and studying the Bible?

In the past, some in the church believed that only a few trained professionals should be able to read and study the Bible in order to limit people from coming up with false interpretations. Do you think "all" Christians should be able to study the Bible or just a few select "professionals"?

If you knew your job, only as well as you know your Bible, how long would your job last?

Why do you think we are motivated to study for a career, but not study the Bible?

What is the relationship between how well you know your Bible with regard to how well you live your life?



1 Peter 2:2-3 (NIV)

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

What happens to us spiritually if we do not spend time in God's Word?

We don't grow up spiritually. We stagnate and stay spiritually immature.

What parallels can you make between a baby "not" getting milk and believers "not" craving the Word of God?

However, we need to then grow beyond "milk" to "solid food" if we are to continue to grow and mature. The writer of Hebrews has some harsh words for believers that are considering walking away from the truth, simply because they hadn't taken the time to go deeper in their understanding.

Hebrews 5:11-14 (NIV)

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. ¹² In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! ¹³ Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

How would you differentiate between "baby food" and "solid food" and how would that parallel how we read the Bible?

Do you think your approach to reading the Bible more reflects "baby food" or "solid food"?

What is the goal of moving on to more solid food?

The goal for the Hebrews would have been that they would understand that their righteousness cannot come from adhering to the Old Testament laws, but solely through the grace of Jesus Christ (vs. 13). Some were tempted to return to their old Judaist beliefs and practices and the writer is essentially saying they would know better had they only taken time to reflect more deeply in the word of God. They would have discovered that the Old Testament was a foreshadow of the real event of Jesus' death and resurrection. They would have discovered that life only comes Jesus Christ and would have stood firm ground in face of Jewish oppression to return to the Law for righteousness.



By studying the word of God AND applying it, they would have TRAINED themselves to be able to distinguish truth from error, good from evil.

Solid food leads to a changed life that is built on a much deeper and more firm foundation that cannot be shaken by the influences or false teachings of others.

The book of Hebrews is an excellent study on going “deeper” into God’s truth.

How long should one be a Christ follower before they should move on to more solid food and be able to teach the Bible to others?

The writer of Hebrews continues...

Hebrews 6:1-3 (NIV)

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, ² instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And God permitting, we will do so.

What will it require for us to move on to more solid food?

We will need to learn how to become self-feeders and study the Bible for ourselves.

We will need to become disciplined in the practise of “studying” the Bible.

We will need to learn how to see truth, apply it, and allow it to change our lives.

2 Timothy 2:15 (NIV)

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

Study to show thyself approved unto God...

Are you comfortable presenting yourself to God in light of how well you are familiar with understanding and applying his teachings?

Do you feel confident you can correctly handle the Word of Truth? How important is this to us as a church to equip our members in knowing how to study the Bible?



Studying is not always easy!

2 Peter 3:15-17 (NIV)

Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are **hard to understand**, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. ¹⁷ Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.

Have you ever had the sneaking suspicion that someone was using a verse out of context to support their point? Can you share a story?

**How can we guard ourselves from such abuses of the Bible?
How can we protect ourselves from buying into some false teaching or spreading false teaching?**

Understanding Eisegesis and Exegesis

Eisegesis [ahy-si-jee-sis] **vs. Exegesis** [ek-si-jee-sis]

Does anyone know the difference between these two words?

Eisegesis: Occurs when we read our ideas INTO a text.
In other words, we make the passage say what we want it to say. This occurs when we come to a scripture passage with a preconceived idea we want to support, but in so doing we take a passage out of its proper context and force it to agree with us.

Can anyone think of an example where eisegesis was used to support their beliefs?

Common eisegesis error:

Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)

Where there is no vision, the people perish

How have you heard this verse interpreted?

This passage is often used to encourage leaders to develop a vision – a future direction for their church or ministry. Without a game plan – people will not move forward and the ministry will perish. This is not at all what the passage is referring to and this interpretation is the result of someone finding a verse that supports what they already want to say.



Exegesis: Occurs when we allow the text to speak and ideas come OUT of the text. In other words, we let the scripture passage speak for itself and we don't force it to say anything it is not trying to say.

Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)

Where there is no vision, the people perish

Proverbs 29:18 (NIV)

Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint;

The writer is declaring that if people receive no revelation of God's word – they will have nothing to restrain their sinful tendencies and will plunge into sin and ruin.

The goal in exegesis is to understand the: AUTHOR'S INTENT

Whenever there is a wrong interpretation, it is usually because the person approached the Bible using eisegesis instead of exegesis. We want to learn to study the Bible in a manner where we simply let it speak truth to us as opposed to us telling it what "truth" to speak.

Studying the Bible can never be based in guilt or a "should do" mentality. It needs to be rooted in a longing to be in dialogue with God and to understand his truth in a life-changing way. This will happen as we begin to see its value and the positive impact it can have on us and others.

In the following passages discuss the benefits of knowing how to study God's word.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

By having a thorough knowledge of God's word, we are equipped to teach others God's truth or refute false teaching when it occurs, we are able correct false behaviour and embed righteous behaviour into our lives.

2 Peter 2:1-3 (NIV)

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. ² Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. ³ In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.



False teaching is rampant and unfortunately many people are embracing it, why do you think this is the case?

How can we protect ourselves from being theologically misled?

Are there any false teachings you have embraced in the past, as a result of not knowing God's word thoroughly enough?

John 8:32 (NIV)

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

In what ways does God's truth set us free and what are the implications for us if we limit our knowledge of God's word?

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
²⁰ and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**
And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

**If we are serious about being disciples and making disciples,
then we MUST be very serious about knowing
EVERYTHING Jesus commanded us.**

**We want to help you know how to correctly handle the Word of God
so that you can grow AND you can help others grow.**



Over the next few weeks we will show you:

- some “words” to look for when reading the Bible to help make passages become much clearer.
- how to look at the context of the passage so people can’t as easily misinterpret or distort what is being said.
- how to start applying scripture in ways that will cause your life to change.



Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22 (NIV)

DAY 1

Joshua 1:7-8 (NIV)

Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸ Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Context: Moses has just died and Joshua is responsible to lead the Israelites across the Jordan into the Promised Land.. Joshua knows how sinful and stubborn the Israelites can be and he also knows the enemies that await him on the other side of the river. It is an understatement to say he is a little nervous about this task.

How will meditating on scripture day and night help him with the very practical task of leading a nation into battle?

You might want to read the passages surrounding this passage to get a bigger picture.

How might this be applicable to you and any task you have to undertake?

Can the Word of God actually affect how you do your daily work?

Can the Word of God actually make you effective in your business?

HOW?



Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22 (NIV)

DAY 2

Read Psalms 19

As you read this Psalm we want you to start thinking about the flow of a passage and why the poet wrote it this way.

This Psalm is broken into three sections – can you identify each one?

What are the two ways that God reveals his character to us?

When talking about scripture the Psalmist uses two metaphors of gold and honey. Why do you think he uses these specifically?

The first two sections which reveal God's character drive us to the third section. What is the third section all about?

What is the relationship between all three sections?

How does this Psalm relate to your life?

Can you relate to the poet's zeal for God and his Word?

If you were to study this more in-depth you might want to read all the narrative passages about David to understand his deep appreciation for God and his Word.

Obviously David had experiences both with nature and with obeying/disobeying the Word. Reflection on both obviously had a great impact on his life.

Have you taken time to reflect on God as he has revealed himself through nature and scripture?

Perhaps do so now.



Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22 (NIV)

DAY 3

Matthew 22:23-33 (NIV)

That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question.

²⁴ "Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. ²⁵ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. ²⁷ Finally, the woman died. ²⁸ Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"

²⁹ Jesus replied, "**You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures** or the power of God. ³⁰ At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. ³¹ But about the resurrection of the dead--have you not read what God said to you, ³² 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

³³ When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

Jesus' phrase, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God" has incredible significance for us.

How have you held wrong beliefs because you did not know scripture?

How often have you embraced sin because you did not know scripture?

How often have you underestimated the power of God?

Spend some time reflecting on Jesus' words in this passage with regard to the importance of knowing the bible.

How might this drive you to study more?

How might knowing more give you a greater appreciation for God?

How might knowing scripture help you speak truth when falsehood is being promoted?



Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22 (NIV)

DAY 4

Acts 17:11-12 (NIV)

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. ¹² Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

Why were the Bereans of more noble character?

To which are you more similar – the Thessalonians or the Bereans?

Why did the Bereans not simply accept Paul's teaching at face value?

Why was this considered something they would be praised for?

The Bereans knew how to study the Bible to evaluate Paul's teaching. Do you feel you are equipped to do the same?

The result of studying God's word was that the Bereans came to a deeper faith. Is the extent you are presently studying the Bible taking you to deeper levels of faith?

Are you prepared to invest the time to know God's word beyond a surface level? Do you think it will pay off in your life and in the lives of the people around you to invest that time?



Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22 (NIV)

DAY 5

Read Luke 24:13-35

Could you explain to a Jewish person all about Jesus using only the books of Moses and the books of Old Testament prophesy?

What are some passages you think Jesus must have alluded to?

Do you have a desire to know your Bible so well you could teach someone from any part of it?

How will that happen? How will you gain that knowledge?

Is it solely up to the church to train you, or can you start assuming some of that responsibility yourself?

Did Jesus simply “miraculously” know the Bible content or do you think as a man he had to study it to gain knowledge?

All of Paul’s teachings in the New Testament are based solely on his knowledge of the Old Testament – there was no “new testament” part of the Bible yet.

How did Paul come to know the scriptures so well?

You may not feel as equipped as Paul, but the more studying you do, the more equipped you will be to create life change in yourself and others.