

**Series:** Bible & Discipleship Day 2023  
**Title:** A Disciple Who Values God's Word  
**Text:** Selected Passages  
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In our study of what it means to seek God, it is necessary to talk about the role of Scripture in such things. God's Word plays a major role in our spiritual progress and development. As in any relationship, our relationship with the Lord involves communication. To communicate with his people, the Lord raised up prophets and apostles to deliver his Word. Those individuals were inspired to deliver his special revelation of himself (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). We now have the Lord's specifically revealed truth for us in a book called the Bible. In order to really know the Lord, we must develop a deep devotion to this book.

I recently read a story about Julius Caesar. The man was known for a deep devotion to reading. His books were regarded as some of his most beloved treasures. It was said that he loved them more than his illustrious royal robes. It was said that he once carried his books high above his head while crossing a river to escape his enemies. Caesar was careful not to allow any harm to come to his beloved volumes. In telling that story, one church historian has asked, "What are Caesar's books to God's book?"<sup>1</sup>

In the Bible, we have a book that is unlike any other book. The true pursuit of God travels through the pages of the Bible. In what follows, we will seek to gain a greater appreciation for seeking God through Scripture. To do so, I'll speak to one issue related to our relationship with Scripture. I will also provide three practical steps for developing a devotion to God's Word.

### **A HEART ISSUE (PROVERBS 18:15)**

The book of Proverbs has a lot to say about the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. The genre of the book is actually considered to be "wisdom literature." Most of the book was written by King Solomon of Israel, the son of David. In the ancient world, kings often left a volume of sage advice for their heirs. The idea was to provide a volume of wisdom that one could consult throughout his reign.

Given the purpose of a book like the book of Proverbs, one can understand why Solomon consistently extolled the importance of wisdom. He prefaced his volume by saying his purpose in writing was, "To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight..." (Proverbs 1:2). In Proverbs 4:7, he admonished his son, "The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight." Solomon wanted his heirs to understand that understanding and wisdom were the most important commodities in life.

Solomon's sage advice was not for future kings alone. We now know his writings were given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16). His words have meaning for all of God's people for all of time. Those who know the Lord are to place a premium and priority on the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge. The Bible is the primary means of acquiring such understanding.

### **The Heart of the Matter**

It is important to note that Solomon's vision of wisdom was not an intellectual one alone. He did not regard wisdom as a mere cerebral matter. For him, the human heart had a pivotal part to play in the acquisition of godly wisdom. On one occasion, he told his son, "An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge" (Proverbs 18:15). For the king of Israel, an "intelligent heart" is a prerequisite for those who want to gain wisdom from the Lord. The king's instruction is insightful for us. To be disciples of God's Word, we need a work of God's grace in our hearts.

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<sup>1</sup> Haykin, G. A. Michael. *An Honourable Esteem Of The Holy Words Of God*. (Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth, Feb 2011), 20.

The Hebrew word for “heart” in Proverbs 18:15 is one that referred to the inward part of humanity. It was regarded as the place of the human will, volition, and affections.<sup>2</sup> In his Proverbs, Solomon constantly extolled the importance of the human heart (Proverbs 6:14, 18; 7:10, 25; 8:5; 11:20). In Proverbs 4:23, he exhorted his sons, saying, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” To experience the life of God, one must give close attention to his or her heart. Charles Spurgeon once said, “A disease of the heart is an injury to the whole man. If anything goes amiss at the fountain the streams of life soon feel it. The entire manhood depends upon the heart.”<sup>3</sup>

Solomon exalted the role of the heart in godly living, but he also spoke of its relationship to the acquisition of Scriptural and spiritual knowledge (Proverbs 2:2, 10; 3:1,3,5; 4:4; 5:12; 7:3; 10:8; 15:14; 23:12). In Proverbs 6:20-21, he said, “My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not your mother’s teaching. Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck.” For the King of Israel, the human heart has a major role in the acquisition of biblical wisdom and understanding. The Puritan Thomas Watson would have agreed. In his day, he said, “The heart is what the devil strives hardest for...In religion the heart is all.”<sup>4</sup>

### **A Change of Heart**

What do these things have to do with seeking the Lord through Scripture? Solomon’s words reveal that we need a work of grace in our hearts in order to become people who grow in wisdom and understanding of God’s Word. By default, the human heart is crooked and sinful (Jeremiah 17:9). However, the work of Christ provides God’s people with new hearts (Jeremiah 24:7; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:18). To become passionate in our pursuit of God through Scripture, we must seek after a transformation through the work of Christ in our innermost being.

Jesus himself extolled the importance of the heart in the Christian life. In his famous Sermon on the Mount, he said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). A new heart is absolutely necessary if one wants to become one who hungers after God’s truth and knowledge. Additionally, one must regularly keep a close watch on his or her heart, seeking to become more attuned to the ways of the Lord. It is for this reason that the New Testament constantly encourages God’s people to safeguard the heart:

“...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22).

“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (James 4:8).

“You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:8).

If you want to grow in your devotion to God’s Word, don’t regard the matter as a mere mechanical one. Something more than human discipline and will power is needed. Pray that the Lord would give you a hunger and thirst for Scriptural knowledge. Remember Solomon’s

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas, Robert L. *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*. (Anaheim, CA: Foundation Publications, 1998), [CD-Rom].

<sup>3</sup> Spurgeon, C.H. *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1880; 26 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 2005), 339.

<sup>4</sup> Watson, Thomas. *The Doctrine Of Repentance*. (Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2016), 53.

advice to his son. God's people are called to cultivate an "intelligent heart" that "acquires knowledge."

## **BECOMING A DISCIPLE OF THE WORD**

Having talked about important issues related to the pursuit of God through God's Word, it is helpful to consider practical ways to grow in our devotion to Scripture. I've discovered that many believers espouse a high regard for Scripture; however, many need real-world helps for incorporating Scripture into their lives. The life of Christ cannot be manufactured through a few quick and easy steps and the life of a disciple is deeper than mere methods and techniques. However, practical advice is often helpful. To close our study on the pursuit of God through God's Word, let's consider three points of application for becoming disciples of God's Word.

### **1) Engage in personal consumption.**

There is no substitute for the regular reading of God's Word. To stay in the straight in narrow paths of discipleship, God's people need to regularly ingest Scripture. Yes, there is a place for Scripture study and meditation; however, the regular reading of God's Word over the course of time has a cumulative effect on the mind and soul. Many discount the place of Bible reading because of a desire to "dig deep." They want to avoid a mere cursory reading of the Bible in which one skims the surface of God's truth and quickly forgets what he or she reads.

Yes, we do want to avoid meaningless, cursory readings of the Bible, but we should realize that God often speaks to his people through the simple reading of Scripture. An example of such things is seen in the life of Daniel. Though the man had been carried off as a captive to Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, he remained faithful to regularly reading scrolls that contained God's Word. On one occasion, his regular reading opened his eyes to specially revealed truth about Israel's captivity. In Daniel 9:2, the prophet gave testimony, "...in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years" (Daniel 9:2). By simply reading the book of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 23:3-4; 24:6-7; 25:11; 29:10-11; 30:1-3; 42:9-12; 50:17-20), Daniel received insight and encouragement regarding the calamity that had fallen on his people.

I recently performed the funeral service for an older woman. In planning for the service, a family member gave me the woman's Bible. I was told of the way the woman was using a Bible reading plan at the time of her death. It was her goal to read through the Bible within the year.

When I examined the woman's Bible, it was obvious that the pages had been used a lot. The binding of the Bible was weak and there were handwritten notes throughout both the Old and New Testaments. I was reminded of an old one-liner that says, "Bibles that are falling apart usually belong to lives that aren't falling apart." If you want to become a disciple of God's Word, make a commitment to regular Bible reading. One has rightly said, "You can never have a Christian mind without reading the Scriptures regularly because you cannot be profoundly influenced by that which you do not know. If you are filled with God's Word, your life can then be informed and directed by God - your domestic relationships, your child-rearing, your career, your ethical decisions, your interior moral life. The way to a Christian mind is through God's Word."<sup>5</sup>

### **2) Pray about it.**

It has often been said that prayer changes things. Such is true (James 5:16). It is especially true when we pray in alignment with God's will. The Bible says, "And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us" (1 John 5:14). It is God's will for you to be a disciple who is strong in God's Word; therefore, you can be confident

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<sup>5</sup> Hughes, R. Kent. *Disciplines Of A Godly Man*. (Crossway Books , a division of Good News Publishers, copyright by Kent Hughes, 1991) 77.

that He will respond to prayers in which you pray for a great desire for his Word. Are you weak in your Bible devotion? Pray and ask God to give you a great zeal and hunger for his truth. He will move in your heart and soul and increase godly desires. In time you will become stronger in the Scriptures.

### **3) Study God's Word in community.**

The Lord has given private means of grace like Bible reading and prayer as conduits through which we can grow in godliness. However, he has also given us what we could call a public means of grace — the body of Christ. Through gathering with and fellowshiping with God's people, we are strengthened and encouraged spiritually. The community found in a healthy congregation has a way of fostering greater desires for the things of God within our souls. It is for this reason that one Bible teacher has said, "Your success in the Christian life is significantly linked to how well you walk with other Christians."<sup>6</sup>

When you gather with God's people on the Lord's Day, you have opportunity to hear the Word proclaimed. Paul told Timothy, "...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching..." (2 Timothy 4:2). Public proclamation from God's Word should be a part of every Sunday worship gathering. In addition, Christ's people are to regularly encourage each other by "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). Because of these things, the regular assembling of God's people gives you a great opportunity to deepen your devotion to Bible truth. Are you availing yourself of the opportunities the Lord's Day affords you for growing as a disciple?

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<sup>6</sup> Gallaty, Robby. *Growing Up: How To Be a Disciple Who Makes Disciples*. (Nashville, Tn: B & H Publishing Group, 2013), xxv.