

Treasures New and Old

The Word of God, Part 1

Summary for Teachers

Theme

Read the Word!—Getting into God’s Word, applying it and getting His Word into you!

Aim

To inspire the students with the importance and power of God’s Word, upon which our faith is built. To give them practical advice on how to develop good habits of having daily time reading the Word and getting the most they can from it.

Roundup

Opening Activity and Prayer (10 minutes)

Class Section 1: Bible Class on the Word (with songs included) (60 minutes)

The Bible was given to man by God

God’s Word is true and never fails

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the Word

The Bible was written for our benefit

It’s important to keep the Word

Benefits of the Word

All of these benefits will come when we read and absorb the Word

Class Section 2: How and What to Read (45 minutes)

When to

Where to

What to

How to

Don’t just read—study, question, and apply

Marking the text

Taking notes

Memorizing

What to do when you don’t understand something

Don’t worry about all the details of ancient history

Suggested Bible studies

Summary of steps for effective Word time

Closing Activity and Prayer (5 minutes)

Now it’s up to you to put this into action!

Prayer

Get Prepared

- This is an important fundamental class. In many ways it lays a foundation for the participants' time of study during the course, for they need to develop good habits of reading the Word and of applying it in order to benefit from the classes. They also need to get in the habit of learning the Word, memorizing it, and meditating upon it.
- Here is some counsel from the Lord on the delivery of this class: "My Word always bears fruit no matter how it is delivered, yet when it is delivered by someone who lives My Word and is excited about it and enthusiastic themselves, it will surely be a more inspired delivery. It will help those who hear these classes to receive them. Those who really love My Word will enjoy sharing My Word with others. Those who themselves have experienced the benefits of hiding the Word in their hearts will speak from a full heart and encourage their students to also do this."
- You may like to begin the meeting by asking for prayer requests. This is a way of getting the students to participate. Encourage each one to share a prayer request.
- In the first section of the class, there are lists of verses on each topic. You do not need to read every verse in the list, but you can select two or three on each topic.
- Remember when teaching this class that you want to encourage the students to participate. One way they can participate is by looking up verses in the Bible. You may need to teach them how to look up verses if they are not yet familiar with this. (Use the "Bible Navigation" page at the start of the Study Notes book to help you with this.) You can assign each student a verse on the list, then wait for a few minutes while everyone finds his or her verse.
- You'll notice that songs are interspersed throughout the meeting. You do not have to sing them all, but we hope you will sing some, as this will help the meeting to be lively. Copies of "The Word Song Sheet" should be made available if possible, so the students can sing along.
 - In some cases, songs based on verses in the text have been suggested. If you sing the verses, you don't need to also read them, unless you want to make a point of showing how these particular songs are based on the Word and how inspiring it is to sing the wonderful Words of life!
 - If you are teaching in English: You may want to explain that the words to the songs are taken from the King James Version of the Bible, whereas the verses in the classes and Study Notes book are from the New King James Version.
- At some time during the class, you should explain the expression "Word Time." This means time spent reading God's Word, both the Bible and other writings that He has inspired—"treasures new and old."
- There are some questions that could arise about the Lord's living Word, and the difference between that and the written Word, but these will be covered in later classes.
- You can use the Teacher's Aid, "God's Word: The Foundation of Our Faith" Picture Page to illustrate the principles covered in the class.
- Related material in *Activated* magazines:
 - Every issue contains a section entitled "Feeding Reading"
 - Activated* Issue #3, pages 4–5: "Navigating Life."
 - Activated* Issue #3, pages 6–7: "Bible in the Blaze"
 - Activated* Issue #3, page 7: "Go by the Book"
 - Activated* Issue #3, pages 8–10: "Proof at Last"
 - Activated* Issue #3, page 11: "Daily Word"

Optional Student Material

Understanding God's Word (booklet from the *Get Activated!* series)

Opening Activity and Prayer

10 minutes

Ask the Lord to bless your time together and help this class to strengthen everyone's faith. Ask for any special prayer requests and pray for these also.

[Optional] Activity: The "Wise Words" game

- ① *Before class, write out five to ten quotes (depending on the number of people present). Each quote should be written on a separate color cardstock and cut into four or five parts, so that you will have various colored pieces of card with a few words on each card. (You may like to use the ready-made Teacher's Aid "Wise Words Game Cards" for this.)*
- ① *Explain to the group that you had all these wonderful sayings about the Word, but "some scissor-happy person" cut them up so you need their help to put the quotes back together. Distribute the pieces, and on the word "Go" everyone can find the others with the same color cards as theirs and then work on putting the quotes together. When they are done they read their quotes to the others in turn, and you can commend them for how fast they were and applaud, etc.*

Here are some suggestions of appropriate sayings to choose from:

When God's Word says something, He means it!

No good building is without a good foundation.

To read the Word without reflecting is like eating without digesting.

Faith is built on the Word.

The Word of God works!

The Word of God is like a map to help you find your way through life.

The Word of God will stand a thousand readings.

When you remind God of His Word, it shows you have faith in it.

The promises of God are the currency of Heaven.

God's promises are like the stars—the darker the night, the brighter they shine.

Class Section 1: Bible Study on God's Word

60 minutes

♪ *Optional songs: "Just Put Your Trust in Him"; "Not One Thing Hath Failed" (Joshua 23:14b); "Wonderful Words of Life"*

♪ *Other suggestions for songs can be found in "The Word Song Sheet."*

▶ The Bible was given to man by God

The Bible is a collection of 66 books that are the written record of messages God gave to about 40 people whom He chose as His spokesmen. Although the Bible was recorded by men, it was written by God.

2 Timothy 3:16—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

2 Peter 1:21—For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

[Optional] We can know the author

① *This can be acted as a skit. This story is also in Preparatory Class No. 1*

There's a story about a girl who was assigned some book to read in college. She started, and because she found it kind of dry and uninteresting, she threw it in the top of her closet and thought she'd read it later. Later on a man came to the college and lectured. She found out during the course of his lecture that he was the author of the book! She so fell in love with him on his visit to the college that after hearing his lectures, she immediately went home and dug the book out of the top of her closet and buried herself in the book to read it!—Why? How come the book was all of a sudden so interesting, whereas she thought it was dry and uninteresting before?—She knew the author!

What's the most important reason why we know the Bible is true? We know the Author. Before somebody introduced you to the Author, you probably didn't care much about the Bible and didn't know whether it was true or not, never read it and maybe didn't even believe it. But now since we've told you that it's Jesus and you've been introduced to Jesus and received Jesus in your hearts, all of a sudden you're interested in the Bible for the first time maybe in your life, because now you know the Author and you want to hear what He has to say!

[Optional] Archaeological finds confirm the veracity of the Bible

① *This article is also in the Study Notes book.*

Biblical archaeology is the scientific study, by excavation, examination, and publication, of the evidences of cultures and civilizations from the Biblical period. Archaeological discoveries paint in the background of the Bible, helping to explain many of its events. Although it is not possible to verify every incident in the Bible, the discoveries of archaeology since the mid-1800s have demonstrated the reliability and plausibility of the Bible narrative. Here are some examples:

The discovery of the ancient city of Ebla's archive in northern Syria in the 1970s has shown the Biblical writings concerning the Patriarchs to be viable. (*Patriarchs* is a name generally applied to the progenitors of families or "heads of the fathers" mentioned in Scripture, including such personages as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, etc.) Documents written on clay tablets from around 2300 B.C. demonstrate that specific people and places in the Patriarchal accounts are genuine.

The name "Canaan" was in use in Ebla, a name critics once said was not used at that time and was used incorrectly in the early chapters of the Bible.

The word "tehom" ("the deep") in Genesis 1:2 was said to be a late word demonstrating the late writing of the Creation story. "Tehom" was part of the vocabulary at Ebla, in use some 800 years before Moses. Ancient customs reflected in the stories of the Patriarchs have also been found in clay tablets from Nuzi and Mari.

The Hittites were once thought to be a Biblical legend, until their capital and records were discovered at Bogazkoy, Turkey.

Many thought the Biblical references to Solomon's wealth were greatly exaggerated. Recovered records from the past show that wealth in antiquity was concentrated with the king, and Solomon's prosperity was entirely feasible.

It was once claimed there was no Assyrian king named Sargon as recorded in Isaiah 20:1, because this name was not known in any other record. Then, Sargon's palace was discovered in Khorsabad, Iraq. The very event mentioned in Isaiah 20, his capture of Ashdod, was recorded on the palace walls. What is more, fragments of a stela (ancient stone slab or pillar) memorializing the victory were found at Ashdod itself.

Another king who was in doubt was Belshazzar, king of Babylon, named in Daniel 5. The last king of Babylon was Nabonidus according to recorded history. Tablets were found showing that Belshazzar was Nabonidus' son who served as coregent in Babylon. Thus, Belshazzar could offer to make Daniel "third highest ruler in the kingdom" (Daniel 5:16) for reading the handwriting on the wall, the highest available position. Here we see the "eyewitness" nature of the Biblical record, as is so often brought out by the discoveries of archaeology. (In Daniel 5:2, Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as the father of Belshazzar, however the word translated in this verse as "father" is more accurately translated as "grandfather" or "ancestor." Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus, and grandson or descendant of Nebuchadnezzar.)

(Based on the research of Bryant Wood, of Associates for Biblical Research.)

► God's Word is true and never fails

♫ *Optional song: "My Words Shall Never Pass Away" (Matthew 24:35)*

Psalm 119:89—Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven.

Isaiah 40:8—The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever.

Matthew 24:35—Heaven and Earth will pass away, but My Words will by no means pass away.

[Optional] The Bible works!

① *Can be acted as a skit.*

A skeptic, talking about the Bible, said that it was quite impossible these days to believe in any book whose author was unknown. James, who believes in Jesus, asked him if the compiler of the multiplication table was known.

"No," he answered.

"Then, of course, you do not believe it?" asked James.

The skeptic replied, "Oh, yes, I believe in it because it works."

"So does the Bible!" responded James.

[Optional] Testimony: "Through the Rivers!"

(Introduction: This is the translation of a letter that was sent to us by a Russian pastor who lives in a town on the Amur River in Russia, beyond the Ural Mountains.)

The Lord did a miracle for me shortly after I met you! One morning recently, I opened my Bible to Isaiah 43:1–2, which says, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you."

In the central hospital later that day, we were to hold services for the sick people. I prayed and asked the Lord what I should talk about, and He showed me to preach on those verses.

Then the next evening, I needed to go to a ship on the Amur River, as the engines needed to be tested. (I work as an inspecting engineer, besides being a pastor.) We agreed that at 9 p.m., I would come to this ship by another boat. The ship that needed to be checked is 45 meters long, with four meters of the hull below the surface of the water.

Before leaving, I finished all the work I had to do at home, I prayed, dressed warmly and left.

I arrived at the pier and took a boat to look for the ship on the river. It was now about 10 p.m. and very dark. Later I was in the captain's quarters of the small boat, and when I looked out the door I immediately saw the large ship I was looking for heading straight at us on an unavoidable collision course! The only thought I had time to think was, "Thy will be done, Lord!"

We collided, and I was immediately thrown out of the boat. The Lord surely guided me, as deep down in the water I swam close to the side of my boat, and I could hear the great propellers of the large ship pass near me.

When I rose to the surface, I called out to the Lord. I didn't have any strength, and I couldn't breathe well, but I knew He was helping me! I looked around. It was very dark and there was no one around. I was right in the middle of the Amur River. (Note: The Amur is one of the great rivers of the world, forming the border between Russia and China for 1,600 km.)

I thought, *What next, Lord?*

I got an answer: *Call for help*. I couldn't get enough air and didn't have much of my voice left, but I started to yell as loud as I could for help, still wondering, *Who can hear me?* To find a man on the water in the dark is like looking for a needle in a haystack ... but if the Lord said to do it, then my job was just to obey.

I later found out that after the ship struck our boat, it veered to the right and got stuck on a sand bar. My cries were heard and I was brought to the ship! Everybody looked at me with wide eyes, as they did not expect to see any survivors. I had no wounds, not even a cold. One man said, "You're alive! I would have died from a heart attack if I was in your place."

I answered, "Right! I would have died myself if it hadn't been for the Lord leading me and not allowing the 'river to overflow me'." Praise God for His miracles!

► The Bible tells us that Jesus is the Word

♪ *Optional song: "In the Beginning was the Word" (John 1:1,14)*

Jesus is the "Word made flesh."

John 1:1,14—In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (14) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Hebrews 11:3—By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

God has always spoken to people in many ways: through the beauty and wonder of His Creation, through His prophets and messengers, and through His written Word. But the clearest revelation of Himself—of His character, of His Love—is found in His Son, Jesus, Whom the Bible calls "the Word." Words are the means by which we express ourselves, by which we reveal our thoughts, our feelings, our character.—And Jesus is the means by which God expresses Himself to us. God's most outstanding means of communication with us, the way that He chose to communicate His Love to the World, was by His Own Son, Jesus.

► The Bible was written for our benefit

John 19:35—And he [John] who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.

1 Corinthians 10:11—Now all these things happened to them [Bible characters] as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.

John 4:13–14—Jesus answered and said to [the Samaritan woman], "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, (14) but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

Revelation 22:17—And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

[Optional] The Water of Life

Water is the most valuable commodity on earth, outside of life itself, which is why God symbolizes the Word with water, calling it the Water of Life, along with the Word of Life, the Water of the Word!—Water being such an essential element of man's life, existence and survival, and without which all life dies!

► It's important to keep the Word

♪ *Optional songs: "The Truth Shall Make You Free" (John 8:31–32), "If Ye Abide in Me" (John 15:4)*

Obedying and keeping the Word proves we know and love Jesus. As a result, we receive benefits!

John 8:31–32—Jesus said, "If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. (32) And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Luke 11:28—More than that, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!

John 15:7—If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

John 14:15—If you love Me, keep My commandments.

The Bible is like a map to guide you through life. To say you don't have time for it is like a driver going on a long journey, saying, "I'm in such a hurry to get there I don't have time to look at the map."

[Optional] Augustine's conversion

In 384 A.D. a young man from North Africa went to Milan, Italy, to take a position as teacher of rhetoric. While there, he became very absorbed by and troubled about the meaning of life.

One day in the back yard of his home, while on the verge of almost complete despair, he heard the voice of a child next door chanting, "Take and read, take and read."

Immediately he took the Scriptures and read that Jesus Christ was the way of complete forgiveness of sins. Through reading the Word of God, this man's life was changed and he became St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, one of the great Christian theologians of all time.

[Optional] The thief

In a meeting, converts were giving personal testimonies. One man arose, holding a New Testament in his hand. "My story," said he, "is unlike other men. I was a pickpocket, and one day I saw a man with a definite bulge in his hip pocket. A *fat purse*, thought I, and soon it was in my pocket. But when I arrived home, behold, it was this book. In disgust I threw it aside, but afterward, out of curiosity, I opened it and began to read. Before many days had passed I discovered Christ as my Savior and Lord."

Listening to this testimony, one of the volunteers from the Bible Society became interested. After the meeting, he asked to see the New Testament. It was the one he had carried with him for years, the one he had considered lost. Is not this evidence of the power of the Word to change and to transform man's life? What has the Word done for you?

[Optional] Abide in Jesus to bear fruit

John 15:1,4—I am the true vine. ... (4) As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

The physical illustration is clear. If a branch is cut off from the rest of the tree, it will wither and die and bear no fruit.

► Benefits of the Word

♪ *Optional Song: "According to Your Faith" (Romans 10:17)*

The Word gives us faith, truth, wisdom and strength!

Psalms 119:7—I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments.

Romans 10:17—Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

Acts 20:32b—The Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance.

Meditating on the Word brings blessings and success:

Joshua 1:8—This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Psalms 119:130—The entrance of Your Words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

The Word cleanses us, heals us, makes us happy, gives us peace!

John 15:3—"You are already clean because of the Word which I have spoken to you."

Psalms 107:20—He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

Psalms 119:165—Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.

Jeremiah 15:16a—Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.

2 Timothy 3:16—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

[Optional] It will light you home

① *Can be acted as a skit.*

Years ago, a minister went far into a backwoods settlement to hold a meeting, and it was necessary that he return late in the very dark night. A woodsman provided him with a torch of pitch-pine wood.

The minister, never having seen anything of the kind, said, "It will soon burn out."

"It will light you home," answered the woodsman.

"The wind may blow it out," said the preacher.

"It will light you home," was again the answer.

"But what if it should rain?"

"It will light you home," was the answer a third time.

And, contrary to the minister's fears, the torch did last him all the way home.

The Word of God is a torch given into the hands of each of us. What if it rains? What if the wind blows? What if all is dark around you? If you will hold the torch high, "it will light you home."

► All of these benefits will come when we read and absorb the Word

♪ *Optional song: "Out of the Mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4; Job 23:12)*

1 Peter 2:2—As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.

Matthew 4:4—It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

Colossians 3:16—Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.

2 Timothy 2:15—Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.

As someone wrote: "We get no deeper into Christ than we allow Him to get into us."

[Optional] We need to read the Word to receive the benefits

① *Can be acted as a skit.*

A certain wayward young man ran away from home and was not heard of for years. After he heard that his father had just died, he returned home and was kindly received by his mother. The day came for the reading of the will; the family members were all gathered together, and the lawyer began to read the document. To the surprise of all present, the will told in detail of the wayward career of the runaway son. The boy in anger arose, stomped out of the room, left the house, and was not heard from for three years. When eventually he was found, he was informed that the will, after telling of his waywardness, had gone on to bequeath him a large inheritance.

How much sorrow he would have saved himself and others, if he had only heard the reading through! Thus, many people only half read the Bible, and turn from it dissatisfied. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death," yes. But it says more. It says, "but the gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23).

Class Section 2: How and What to Read

50 minutes

① *There are some questions throughout this section that you can ask your students, to get their involvement in discussing and thinking about each suggestion. You don't need to ask each question, but could select a few.*

Skit: The Word of God is not just pretty pictures!

See skit text at end of the class.

The Words of God are not just pretty pictures. They are meant to be put into action. They should move you and motivate you; guide you and change you. For the next half an hour, we're going to look at how to get the most from what you read, and give you ideas of where to start. We won't be looking at many more verses, as we've already looked at the needs and benefits of reading the Word, but we'll be concentrating on practical tips about how to get the most from your time in the Word.

► When to:

It is difficult to get too far in your reading if you don't spend at least 20 minutes at it. Can you set aside 20 minutes daily? Or would three times a week be easier to start with? Whatever you decide, try to make a definite goal and then determine in your heart to see it through. It will be easier to follow through if you establish a definite time slot as part of your regular daily routine. It doesn't matter what time of day, just whenever suits you best. Some people find it easier to concentrate in the morning; others do better in the evening when the business of the day has been completed.

See what works best for you. Regard your "Word time" as an appointment with Jesus. Don't be tempted to cancel or postpone the appointment any more than you'd cancel an appointment with your employer.

☛ *How many of you are "day people" (more alert earlier on in the day)? How many are "night people"?*

► Where to:

Try to find a place to read where you will not be interrupted. If possible, use the same place every day, but the most important is that you have a quiet place where you won't be distracted. You might want to take the telephone off the hook (or turn off your cellular phone). In front of the TV is most likely not going to work!

☛ *Where in your home would it work out for you to read?*

► What to:

It's a good idea to make a plan of what to read over a period of time. But remain flexible. Ask the Lord what Bible chapters or other Word-based material you should read. Having a goal can help you. Perhaps you'll work your way through one of the Get Activated! books, while also reading through a book of the Bible. (There are suggestions of what to read weekly in the Study Notes book.)

Even if you're following a set reading course, you shouldn't always just say, "Well, I already know what I'm going to read. It's planned out for the next month." Each time before you sit down to read, you should pray for the Lord's leading, because maybe the Lord wants to change it! Maybe you needed to read up on "faith" a week ago, so you decided to read something on that subject. That's good. But maybe the Lord knows that you need to read about something else even more this week. So you need to pray about it instead of automatically following your previous plan.

☛ *Do you have a Bible? Any devotional books?*

► How to:

♫ *Optional song: "Open Thou My Eyes" (Psalm 119:118)*

When you sit down to read, the first thing you should do is pray and ask the Lord to bring the Word alive to you by His Holy Spirit. As David prayed,

Psalm 119:18—Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.

You can read all the Word you want, but if it doesn't come to life by the Spirit, it's not going to do anything! Jesus said,

John 6:63—It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The Words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

And Paul told us:

2 Corinthians 3:6b—For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Unless we read the Word in a prayerful and receptive attitude, looking to the Lord and His Holy Spirit for guidance, it can be very difficult for us to understand some things. Ask the Lord to give you the spirit of wisdom:

Ephesians 1:17–18—...give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, (18) the eyes of your understanding being enlightened...

You can read a Scripture maybe all your life without grasping its meaning, until the Holy Spirit speaks it to you and applies it to your situation and brings it to life! The "voice of His Word," as it's called, is when He speaks to you personally through the Word, or He gives it to you in an answer, He brings it to life, applies it to a situation, and it becomes alive suddenly! It's no longer just mere words any more, or words that just run through your head, but all of a sudden you get the point!

In the Study Notes book, we have included some sample prayers for reading the Word.

[Optional] Humor: How not to read!

Sister Susan got out her Bible and decided she would let the Lord lead to the specific verse she needed for the day. So with eyes closed she opened her Bible and put her finger on a verse. Opening her eyes she read, "And Judas went out and hanged himself." She quickly sought a different verse, once again closing her eyes, cracking open her Bible, and placing her finger on a specific spot. This time she was disappointed to read, "Go and do likewise!" Undaunted she followed the same plan a third time, and the verse was, "What you do, do quickly!"

► Don't just read—study, question, and apply

2 Timothy 2:15—Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.

One of the main goals of this course is to help you develop a personal connection with Jesus, so you are able to get spiritual nourishment from His Word. "Rightly dividing the Word of truth" means to know what the Word says and means.

■ Read the Word carefully, prayerfully, and thoughtfully.

If every time you sat down to eat a meal, you gobbled and gulped it down as fast as you possibly could, you wouldn't digest or absorb it nearly as well as if you had eaten it a little more slowly.—Nor would you enjoy it as much!

This same principle applies to your spiritual food as well. Take time to fully digest, absorb, and benefit from the Word!

You can miss a lot of the meaning, the real depth of what the Lord's talking about, unless you stop to think about it and apply the Word to your personal situation, and ask, "How is that true and how does that apply to me?"—Not with a questioning or a doubtful attitude, but one full of faith, knowing that you can learn even more lessons if you search further and dig deeper.

■ Doers of the Word

“The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives.”—Dwight L. Moody.

The Word of God has been given to change our character and bring it more into conformity with Jesus'. All of our efforts in Bible study are valueless if in the final analysis we do not change and become more like Jesus. We must not merely listen to the Word, but we are to do what it says.

James 1:22—But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

You can't really get to know the Word of God unless you apply it in your life. You can be a walking Bible encyclopedia, with your head crammed full of Biblical and theological knowledge, but it won't do you any good if you don't apply it practically in daily living.

- When you are reading the Word, pray and ask the Lord to help you apply what you are studying and show you specifically what He wants you to do. Ask the Lord to show you:

“How can I apply this Word in my life?”

“How can I use this knowledge to help others?”

When you read the Word and you feel the conviction of His Spirit, stop right then to think and pray and meditate on what that instruction means for you personally. Don't delay taking the time to apply it to your life, because if you delay, the conviction will wane, you will forget, and the Word you read will be of no effect in your life. When the Lord is speaking to your heart, challenging you through His Word, that is the time to take action, to make commitments. You need to think, meditate, consider how you can live the Word, and make a definite plan right then as to what you'll do. Don't wait. Later will probably be never!

John 13:17—If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

► Marking the text

Read with a fine-point pen or dry marker in your hand. When you come across a passage or Scripture that stands out to you in some way, underline or mark it. Underlining the key phrases and marking the paragraphs that apply to you makes your reading more interesting and far easier to review.

- ① *Give some practical tips here, such as selecting the right sort of pen that won't bleed through the page, color coding, etc..*

► Taking notes

“A short pencil is better than a long memory.”

You might want to start writing key passages and verses into a special notebook that you can reread easily. It will become sort of a spiritual diary. You can use it to write down things you want to remember that are important to you in your walk with the Lord and your relationship with Him and others. Sometimes just writing something down will help you to meditate on it and remember it.

There are different ways to organize a notebook like this. It can be chronological, like a diary, with meaningful quotes and verses written down from day to day. Or you can start a page for each of the different topics you're interested in, and then record helpful passages and verses you find on each one as time goes by.

- ☛ *Does anybody already keep a notebook with favorite quotes or Scriptures?*

► Memorizing

Bible memorization has always been a strength to God's people, even as King David testified:

Psalms 119:11—Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!

Moses made mention of the same:

Deuteronomy 11:18—Therefore you shall lay up these Words of Mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets (decorative bands worn on the forehead) between your eyes.

The Scriptures we commit to memory will be a great blessing to us. In times of sickness and difficulty, verses are a tremendous comfort and strength. Knowing specific passages and Scriptures also helps us in our witness to others, as Peter advised,

1 Peter 3:15b—Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.

We will be looking further at the subject of memorizing in a later class.

► **What to do when you don't understand something**

Don't stop reading if you come across something that you don't understand. Keep on reading, as there'll be plenty of other things that you will understand.

If you don't understand something, maybe God will reveal its meaning to you at a later reading. When you come across something you don't understand, you can wrap it up in a little "bundle of faith" and put it on the shelf. Wait for the Lord to unwrap it for you and reveal it to you later.

Proverbs 2:6—For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

[Optional] We do not have to understand everything

St. Augustine was once walking by the seashore. He was greatly perplexed about a particular aspect of faith and doctrine. He observed a little boy with a seashell running to the water, filling it and then pouring it into a hole that he had made in the sand.

"What are you doing, my little man?" asked Augustine.

"Oh," said he, "I am trying to put the ocean in this hole!"

Augustine learned his lesson, and as he walked away, he said, "That is what I am trying to do. I see it now. Standing on the shores of time I am trying to get into this little finite mind of mine things which are infinite." Let us be content to let God know some things that we cannot know.

► **Don't worry about all the details of ancient history**

Many of us have found that the most rewarding aspects of our reading of the Bible have not been in getting to know all the details of ancient history contained in its pages, but in finding what applies to us in our daily lives. For instance, when we read about the life of Jesus and the early Christians, we see a pattern of "love in action" that we know we should try to follow. When we read the Psalms and other devotional passages, we can apply them in our own prayer lives. Although the history of God's people as written in the Bible is interesting and it is good to at least have a general picture of who did what and where and when, extensive in-depth studies of Biblical history are not the most important for you to spend a lot of time on.

► **Suggested Bible studies**

Psalms and Proverbs are good devotional books, and by all means read the talks and lessons and Words of Jesus in the New Testament! The Gospel of John quotes more of the Words of Jesus than any other Gospel, including passages like His farewell talk in chapters 14–17. So, a good place to start reading the Bible is with the Gospel of John.

(You'll find that there are around seven chapters suggested to be read in each section of the Study Notes book.)

☛ *Do you already have a part of the Bible that you read regularly?*

[Optional] The Parable of the Sower

① *You can read and discuss Luke 8.*

► Summary of steps for effective Word time

- Make a commitment to set aside a regular time for reading and try to follow through on your plan.
- Find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted or distracted.
- Make a plan of what to read over a period of time, but be flexible and let the Lord lead you to read something different as the need arises.
- Begin your time of reading by praying, asking the Lord to speak to you from His Word and to bring it to life by the Holy Spirit.
- Don't just read—study.
- Try to apply what you are reading to your daily life and commit yourself to putting it into action.
- Mark the text so that later on you will find it easier to review.
- Keep a notebook with the most outstanding verses and passages.
- Memorize key verses.
- If you don't understand something, don't give up but keep reading!
- Two key questions to ask yourself when you read: How can I apply this Word in my life? How can I use this knowledge to help others?

Closing Activity and Prayer

5 minutes

► Now it's up to you to put this into action!

You can think of this as being like a cookery class. We've given you a recipe, but if you don't go home and pull out the ingredients and try to cook it, you'll never find out how delicious a meal you could enjoy!

► Prayer

Have a prayer on the theme of being faithful to read the Word every day, to get the most from the reading.

Skits and Songs

Skit: "The Word of God is Not Just Pretty Pictures"

Characters: Pastor, Miss Jones, Mrs. MacKintrick

Narrator: In the highlands of Scotland, some years ago...

Scene 1: *The pastor's office. Pastor enters to greet Miss Jones.*

Pastor: Good morning, Miss Jones.

Miss Jones: Good morning, Pastor.

Pastor: Miss Jones, do you have the check ready for Mrs. MacKintrick?

Miss Jones: Aye, Pastor. I put it in the envelope on your desk.

Pastor: Yes, thank you so much, Miss Jones. I've got to get it to her today, as she's due to pay her rent. I am so glad that we can help poor people like Mrs. MacKintrick who aren't able to take care of themselves.

Miss Jones: Doesn't she have a son who went abroad?

Pastor: Aye, he went to Australia and has got quite a good position, as far as I understand, and he makes plenty of money. He's a good boy, but I don't know why he doesn't look after his poor old mother and send her a little money so that her life wouldn't be quite so hard.

Miss Jones: Aye, Pastor. I know many members of our church who also have this question, though they're all happy to help out Mrs. MacKintrick.

Pastor: Aye, well, I think when I go to her house today, I'll ask her about her son and why he doesn't help her. Well, Miss Jones, I've got to be going. Can you fetch me the envelope now, please?

Miss Jones: Aye, Pastor. Here you go.

Pastor: Thank you, Miss Jones, and I'll see you this afternoon. A good day!

Miss Jones: Good day!

Scene 2: Pastor arrives at the house of Mrs. MacKintrick

(Pastor knocks on door.)

Pastor: Are ya there, Mrs. MacKintrick? (He opens the door and goes in.) Good day, Mrs. MacKintrick!

Mrs. MacKintrick: (in old, warbly voice) Good day to you, Pastor. Won't you come in?

Pastor: Why, thank you. (Closes door.) I brought ya your monthly check.

Mrs. MacKintrick: What?

Pastor: (louder) Your monthly check Mrs. MacKintrick! So you can stay in this nice little house of yours.

Mrs. MacKintrick: Oh, it's all thanks to you and the Lord that I can stay here. If it weren't for you helping me, I don't know what would become of me.

Pastor: Aye, it sure is a nice little house that the Lord has blessed you with. Mrs. MacKintrick, you'll pardon me if I speak very plainly about something? Your friends who are helping you with the rent cannot understand why it is that your boy does not support you. They understand that he has a very good position in Australia and that he loves you dearly. Is this not the case?

Mrs. MacKintrick: Aye, oh, aye, and he never forgets me! For every week he writes me the most loving letter. I'd like for you to see one of his letters.

Pastor: I'll be most interested to!

Mrs. MacKintrick: I'll get them for you.

Pastor: (Thinking aloud to himself) I'd be very interested to know more of such a son who could so love his mother, and yet leave her without a penny in her pocket!

Mrs. MacKintrick: Here they are. I keep them in these boxes here. These are his letters. You open this one, Pastor. With every letter, he always sends me a pretty picture. They aren't very big and just fit nicely in the letter, but it shows he thinks about me.

Pastor: A picture in every letter? Hmm. May I see one of those pretty pictures, Mrs. MacKintrick?

Mrs. MacKintrick: Aye, of course! Some are of a man's head, some are of a man sitting on a horse, and a number of them have the king's picture on them. Say, this one here has the king of England. Long live the king!

Pastor: Oh, long live your son, Mrs. MacKintrick!! My dear friend, do you know that you're a rich woman?! These are banknotes! This is money! Why you have wealth here! And to think how you've suffered and done without, when right here in the house all the time you had riches and you thought they were just pretty pictures!

Narrator: Did you know that the promises in God's Word are not just "pretty pictures" or beautiful language to fill up space, but the Lord wants us to prove His Word and use His precious promises in our time of need. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises." Why live in poverty when you can have riches beyond your wildest dreams?