

SAMPLE

READ THE BIBLE FOR

# LIFE

Listen. Understand. Respond.

WORKBOOK

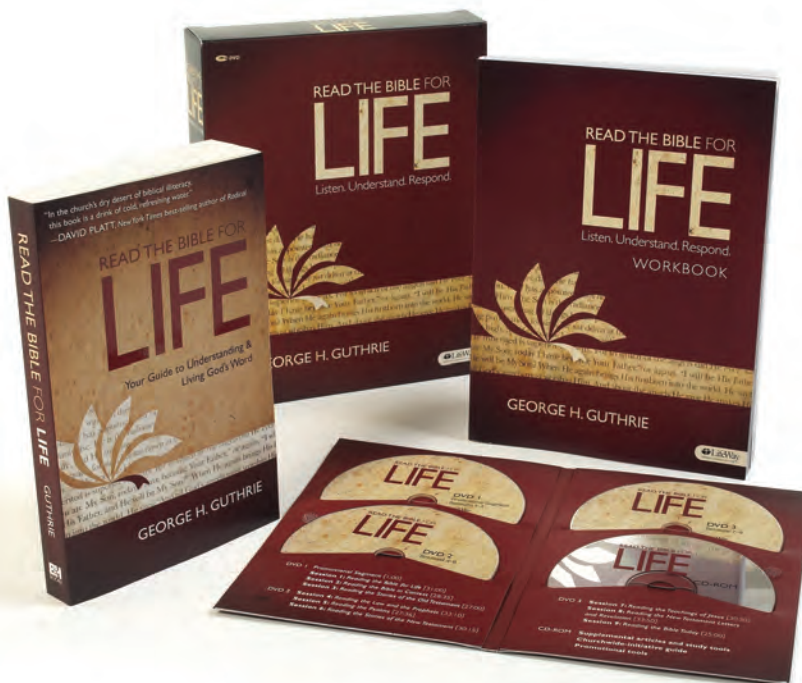


He inherited is superior to theirs. For to which of the angels did He ever say, "I am My Son; today I have become Your Father," or again, "I will be His Father?" He will be My Son? When He again brings His firstborn into the world, He says, "All God's angels must worship Him. And about the angels He says: He makes His

GEORGE H. GUTHRIE

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John P. Heskett

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LIFE

Listen. Understand. Respond.

GEORGE H. GUTHRIE

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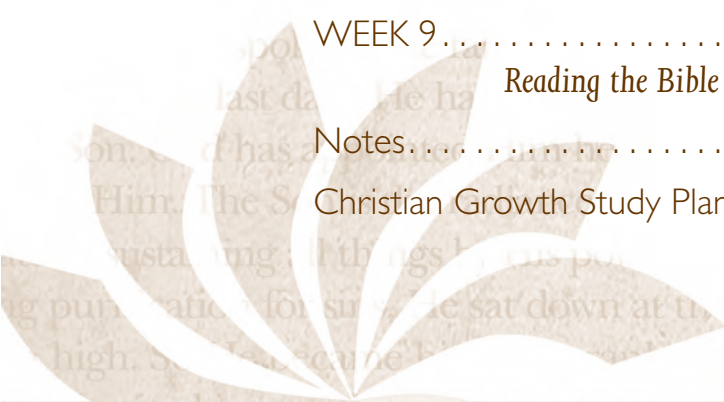
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He inherited is superior to all others. For to which of the angels did He ever say, "My Son; today I have become Your Father," or again, "I will be His Father, and He will be My Son? When He again brings His firstborn into the world, He says,

## The Author



George H. Guthrie serves as the Benjamin W. Perry Professor of Bible at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. A respected New Testament scholar and a deeply committed churchman, he is the author of numerous articles and several books, including *Hebrews* in *The NIV Application Commentary* (Zondervan, 1998) and “James” in *Hebrews–Revelation, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 2006).

As the architect of the Read the Bible for Life biblical-literacy initiative, Guthrie has written or edited four tools, including this workbook (LifeWay, 2010), *Read the Bible for Life: Your Guide to Understanding and Living God’s Word* (B&H, 2011), *A Reader’s Guide to the Bible* (LifeWay, 2011), and *Reading God’s Story: A Chronological Daily Bible* (B&H, 2011). Guthrie has participated in translation projects, such as the revision of the New Living Translation, and has served as a consultant on the Holman Christian Standard Bible, the New Century Version, and the English Standard Version. At Union University he led in the establishment of and serves as Senior Fellow in the Ryan Center for Biblical Studies, which is committed to promoting sound Bible reading, study, and interpretation in local churches.

Guthrie holds PhD and MDiv degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a ThM from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He and his wife, Pat, live with their two children, Joshua and Anna, near Jackson, Tennessee. The family attends Northbrook Church, which Guthrie and his wife helped plant and which he copastored for 10 years.

# Introduction

Welcome to the study of *Read the Bible for Life*. As we begin our nine-session journey together, I want to invite you to open your life to experience God's Word in a fresh way. Regular Bible reading is the most basic, helpful practice for a Christian's life. In fact, in a survey conducted by LifeWay Research, reading the Bible on a daily basis was the number one predictor of spiritual maturity among those surveyed. However, only 16 percent of people who regularly attend church read the Bible on a daily basis. Another 32 percent read it at least once a week. That means more than half do not read the Bible on a consistent basis.<sup>1</sup>

If you have spent time reading the Bible consistently, you know it can be encouraging, nurturing, and fulfilling. The Bible is a great source of joy for those who give focused attention to it. The more time you spend in the Word, the more you will long for your time in the Word each day.

*Read the Bible for Life* was written to help you learn how to read the Bible more effectively, in a way that produces real fruit in your life. Over the next nine weeks we will explore the dynamics of listening, understanding, and responding to God's Word. We will examine the different types of literature found in the Bible so that we can read them in accordance with God's intention. We will consider how the various books of the Bible fit into the ongoing story of God and His people, and we will discuss ways to purposefully apply Bible reading in our everyday lives.

Here are some suggestions for gaining the most from this study.

1. This workbook provides nine weeks of daily study that will guide you to read, understand, and apply God's Word more effectively. Each day you will receive basic instruction about reading the Bible and complete exercises that allow you to practice and apply the principles you have learned. Don't think of these exercises as homework! Think of them as opportunities to meet the living God face-to-face in His Word. Don't wait until the end of the week to complete the week's lessons. Determine to spend time daily completing the lessons so that you will cultivate the habit of daily time in the Word. Setting aside time each day both to read the material and to complete the activities will help you learn how to implement the guidelines you are studying.

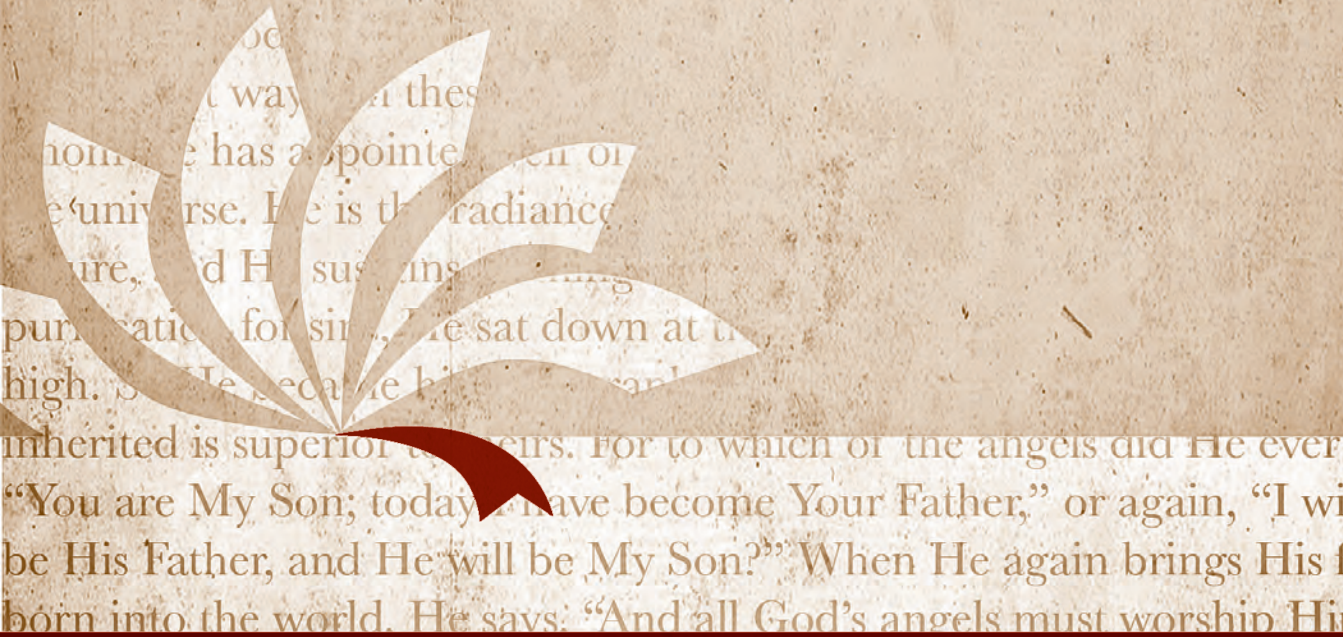
2. As you study, follow the three biblical timelines that are inserted in your workbook. You will find them invaluable tools for understanding the grand story of Scripture.
3. You will benefit most if you participate in a group study of this workbook. A guide for the group experience is provided at the beginning of each week's study. For example, the group experience for week 1 is found on pages 8–9. During each group session you will discuss with your group what you have learned during the previous week as you have completed the lessons in your workbook. Then you will watch my DVD teaching on another aspect of Bible reading. The lessons you complete in this workbook during the following week will reinforce my DVD teaching. As you and your group members share insights, you will learn much about how to live God's Word.
4. Each day pray that God will transform you and your small group by His powerful Word. Pray that God will bring renewal to your church through His Word.
5. Practice what you learn from God's Word. Reading the Bible isn't a dry academic exercise. The Bible is a gift that brings joy and strength if you internalize and obey it. Don't be satisfied with head knowledge about the Bible. Apply Scripture to your life in a way that is life-changing. The Word provides life and power for your Christian journey.
6. You can supplement your study of this workbook by reading the trade book *Read the Bible for Life*. It includes enlightening conversations with well-known Bible scholars about how to read Scripture with greater understanding and purpose. You will see a number of quotations from that book throughout this workbook.
7. Supplemental articles about the Bible and Bible study are on the CD-ROM included in the leader kit. Additional tools are available at [www.lifeway.com/readthebibleforlife](http://www.lifeway.com/readthebibleforlife) and at [www.mystudybible.com](http://www.mystudybible.com).

Knowing and living God's Word is the key to living life well. It provides a powerful foundation for the Christian walk until the day we see the Lord face-to-face. Eugene Peterson has said of the Bible, "We open this book and find that page after page it takes us off guard, surprises us, and draws us into its reality, pulls us into participation with God on his terms."<sup>2</sup> That's my prayer as we work through this workbook together—that we will meet the living God in the pages of His Word and will be changed by the encounter. So join me as we learn to read the Bible for life.



**WEEK 1**

# Reading the Bible for Life



...He has appointed...  
...He is the radiance...  
...He sustains...  
...He sat down at the...  
...He became his...  
...He ever...  
...You are My Son; today I have become Your Father," or again, "I will be His Father, and He will be My Son?" When He again brings His firstborn into the world, He says: "And all God's angels must worship Him."



## Session I Group Experience

### Get Started

1. Introduce yourself and share what you hope to gain from this study.
2. Take a moment to answer the following questions. Then discuss your answers as a group.  
How often have you read the Bible in the past month?  
☐ Once a day                      ☐ A few times a week  
☐ About once a week          ☐ Occasionally  
☐ Not at all  
What is your greatest challenge in consistently reading the Bible?  
☐ Time demands                  ☐ Lack of understanding  
☐ Lack of discipline              ☐ Feeling the Bible isn't relevant  
☐ No reading plan                ☐ Other:
3. What are your expectations when you read the Bible?
4. What is your biggest frustration about your usual time in the Bible?
5. Think of a time when you read the Bible consistently. What were the circumstances that drew you to God's Word? How did it change you?

### Study with Your Group

The following process is recommended to complete a group study.

1. In this introductory session you will watch DVD session 1.  
As you watch, complete the DVD viewer guide on page 9.
2. During the following week each person should complete the daily studies in week 1 of this workbook. These lessons will expand on the DVD teaching you have viewed.
3. In group session 2 you will discuss the material you have studied during week 1. Then you will watch DVD session 2 before completing week 2 in the workbook during the following week. Each subsequent group session follows this pattern.
4. An optional group session is provided on page 205 for groups that want to follow up on their individual study of week 9 in the workbook.

Supplemental articles are provided on the CD-ROM and at [www.lifeway.com/readthebibleforlife](http://www.lifeway.com/readthebibleforlife).



# Watch the DVD

The number one predictor of a person's \_\_\_\_\_ is whether or not they read the Bible on a daily basis.

\_\_\_\_\_ percent of churchgoers read the Bible every day.  
\_\_\_\_\_ percent say that Bible reading and study have made a significant difference in the way they live their lives.

## Listen

We can't \_\_\_\_\_ what we don't hear.

## Understand

We cannot \_\_\_\_\_ what we don't understand.

1. Have a readable \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Have good \_\_\_\_\_.

## Respond

The goal is not just knowledge but to apply Scripture to our lives so we will make a \_\_\_\_\_.

"Apply yourself wholly to the \_\_\_\_\_."

"Apply the Scriptures wholly to \_\_\_\_\_."

## Two Kinds of Space

1. \_\_\_\_\_ space
2. \_\_\_\_\_ space

## Close with Prayer

This video session is available for download at [www.lifeway.com/readthebibleforlife](http://www.lifeway.com/readthebibleforlife).



## Week 1

# READING THE BIBLE FOR LIFE

Most of us struggle to read the Bible consistently for two main reasons: lack of information and lack of motivation. Reading the Bible makes demands on our minds and our hearts. We need basic information to grow in the skill of reading the Bible in a way that lets us hear what God is saying to us. But we also need motivation. The Bible calls to us, giving us good reasons to read it and absorb its teachings.

We need to do more than just read the Bible. We need to read the Bible well. We need to read it so that we hear what God wants to say to us, in a way that is life-changing. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a young German theologian who stood against Hitler, told his students, “When you read the Bible, you must think that here and now God is speaking with me.”<sup>1</sup> I pray as you spend time in Scripture during the coming weeks, you will hear God speak, and your life will produce the fruit of obedience to His Word.

As you complete the daily lessons this week, think about your attitude toward God’s Word. How much time do you spend with it? How much value do you place on it? Do you apply it to your life? Each day this week we will read key Scripture passages that highlight the value of God’s Word. Set aside a consistent time and place to read the Scriptures and to complete the suggested activities. Dig deep, both into your own heart and into God’s Word, as you learn what it means to read the Bible for life.

## DAY 1 Why Read the Bible?

Today I invite you to begin thinking deeply about your motivation in relation to God's good Word. Most of us struggle with consistency in reading the Bible, so don't feel bad if this is the case for you. Reading the Bible is a skill and a discipline that require work and practice to develop. However, reading the Bible can become a great joy as you see God begin to change your life through consistent interaction with His Word.

As you learn to read the Bible more effectively and walk with a Christian community in which the Word is greatly valued, you will grow in consistency, understanding, and obedience to the Word. That in turn will encourage you to spend more time in the Word.

Realizing the benefits of reading the Bible, therefore, can motivate us to deeper commitment to God's Word. The Bible itself identifies those benefits in such passages as Psalm 1. Most scholars see Psalms 1–2 as the introduction to the Book of Psalms. Think of Psalms as the songbook of faith, giving the people of God, both individually and as a group, a voice to talk to God about many aspects of life. Psalm 1 lays a foundation for this experience of worship and prayer by focusing attention on God's Word as central to a relationship with Him.

**Carefully read Psalm 1:1-3, thinking about each word and phrase.**

*How happy is the man  
who does not follow the advice of the wicked  
or take the path of sinners  
or join a group of mockers!  
Instead, his delight is in the LORD's instruction,  
and he meditates on it day and night.  
He is like a tree planted beside streams of water  
that bears its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither.  
Whatever he does prospers.*



Circle the main benefits of Scripture, according to this passage. What do these word pictures mean?

Draw a box around the attitude of this person toward God's instruction. What observable evidence would indicate that someone delights in God's Word?

Underline the description of the active involvement of this person with God's Word. How might this translate into practical action today?

These verses indicate that being a person of God's Word provides the foundation for a "happy" (v. 1) or blessed life. It also leads to spiritual productivity and endurance; such a person "is like a tree planted beside streams of water that bears its fruit in season," and "whatever he does prospers" (v. 3). But in order for our lives to look like that, we have to give a central place to the Word. We need to be immersed in it to the point that it becomes part of the way we think. Yet, as this passage reminds us, staying in the Word is not drudgery but pleasure. Does that summarize your attitude toward God's Word?

Use the words of Psalm 1:1-3 to pray about your attitude toward God's Word and about ways you want God to change your interaction with His Word. Feel free to write your prayer on a separate sheet of paper. Here are some examples of requests you could pray.

- "Lord, I don't want to have a life characterized by taking bad advice and hanging out with the wrong crowd."
- "I want to delight in Your Word. I want to learn to meditate on it consistently."

## Day 2 A Passion for the Word

Yesterday we learned that a devotion to God's Word is a skill and a discipline, but it is more. We saw that Psalm 1:1-3 speaks of happiness and delight in relation to God's Word. If you love God, you love His Word. You want to know what it says because it reveals God's heart. The more you learn from the Word, the more passionate you become about reading it. Today I invite you to think about the condition of your heart in relation to God's Word. What are you really passionate about? How does God's Word rank among your passions and desires in life?

No one epitomizes a passion for God's Word like Mary Jones, a little girl who lived two centuries ago. As an 8-year-old, Mary lived in a beautiful valley on the southwest side of Cader Idris mountain in Wales. Her parents were simple, godly people who took their little girl to church and taught her Bible stories from her earliest years. These stories had to be taught from memory since the family did not own a Bible in the Welsh language. Such Bibles were very scarce, and most people could not afford them. Yet Mary loved the Word of God and longed to read it for herself. When a school opened in her area, Mary enrolled so that she could learn how to read. Then she began visiting a neighbor who owned a Bible in order to study the Bible for herself. She even memorized whole chapters of the Bible and shared them with her parents.

Next, Mary began saving money to purchase her own copy of the Bible. Over the next six years she sold eggs, gathered wood, mended clothing, and cared for younger children. Finally she had enough money to buy a Bible. The closest town where a Bible could be bought was Bala, more than 25 miles away. So very early on a spring day in 1800, Mary Jones began to walk, barefooted, to Bala. There she met Thomas Charles, a godly man who did a great deal of ministry throughout Wales. When Mr. Charles asked Mary about herself, her family, and her knowledge of the Bible, he was impressed. Moreover, he was amazed by her love for the Scriptures and her patient endurance in saving for a Bible of her own. But he sadly told the girl that all of the Welsh Bibles he had received from London in the past year had been sold months ago, except for a few that had been promised to friends who must not be disappointed. He also told her that the Bible Society in London had no plans to print more Welsh Bibles.

At this news Mary dropped into a nearby seat and began to sob. The little girl's passion for the Word moved Mr. Charles. His own voice broken with emotion, he rose from his seat and placed a gentle hand on Mary's head. "My dear child, I see you must have a Bible, as difficult as it is for me to spare you one. It is simply impossible to refuse you." So Mary Jones walked the 25 miles back home with her own copy of the Bible.

The impact of Mary's life was much more far-reaching than her little village. In 1802 Mr. Charles visited London and, moved by his experience with the girl, told Mary's story to the Religious Tract Society. From that meeting the British and Foreign Bible Society was established to spread the Scriptures around the world.<sup>2</sup>

Mary is a great example of someone who is passionate about God's Word, whose heart is receptive to God's Word, and who is productive for His kingdom. Jesus addressed these qualities in a parable that He said was foundational for hearing from God through His Word.

**Stop and read Mark 4:1-20 in your Bible. Match each type of soil with the corresponding response to the Word.**

- |                         |                                                |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| ___ 1. Soil on the path | a. The Word is received but develops no roots. |
| ___ 2. Rocky soil       | b. The Word is received and produces fruit.    |
| ___ 3. Thorny soil      | c. Satan prevents the Word from penetrating.   |
| ___ 4. Good soil        | d. Worries and desires choke the Word.         |

Jesus compared the Word of God to seed that a farmer broadcasts in a field. Scattering seed in this way was not exact. In Jesus' word picture, some seed falls on the hard-packed path running beside the field. Some seed falls on rocky ground. Other seed falls in thorny soil, and still other seed falls in good soil. In verses 14-20 Jesus interpreted the parable, using the seed and soils to describe various responses to God's Word. The seed that falls on the path outside the field represents the thud of a heart hardened toward God's Word. The Word doesn't penetrate. The rocky soil speaks of a shallow response. When things get tough, that person abandons the Word. The seed in the thorns illustrates someone who is receptive to God's Word,

but the cares and desires of life choke out the Word, and no spiritual fruit results. Finally, the good soil represents a heart that is open to God's Word, a heart that receives the Word and acts on it. The result is spiritual fruit.

Which of the following best describes the condition of your heart toward God's Word? You will be asked to share your answer with your group.

- ☐ Seed on the path: the thud of a hard-packed heart
- ☐ Seed in rocky soil: the withering of a shallow heart
- ☐ Seed in thorny soil: the congestion of a weed-choked heart
- ☐ Seed in good soil: the productivity of a receptive heart

Each of these responses relates to space, or the lack of it, in a person's life. Life space refers to blocks of time in your life. If you say about an activity, "I don't have time for that," you are saying you don't have any life space left. Heart space refers to room in your heart, your inner life, to process things deeply. It's important to identify the life-space or heart-space issues in your life in relation to God's Word. You will discuss these issues with your group this week.

Do you make regular time for God's Word? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If not, identify things you can eliminate to make room for Bible reading or other adjustments that need to be made.

Do you have enough emotional, mental, and spiritual space in your life to process God's Word deeply? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If not, pray and ask God to show you what needs to change so that you can focus on His Word.

Describe what you would like for your interaction with God's Word to look like six months from now.

## **Day 3** Benefits of Reading God's Word, Part I

Why is consistently reading the Bible important for a follower of Christ? The Bible is both the foundation and the fuel of a Christian's spiritual vitality. Accordingly, there are many reasons believers need to read the Bible on a consistent basis.

- We read the Bible to know the truth. We want to think clearly about what God says is true and valuable (see 2 Pet. 1:20-21).
- We read the Bible to know God in a personal relationship (see 1 Cor. 1:21; Gal. 4:8-9; 1 Tim. 4:16).
- We read the Bible to live well for God in this world. Living out His will expresses our love for Him (see John 14:23-24; Rom. 12:2; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
- We read the Bible to experience God's freedom, grace, peace, and hope (see John 8:32; Rom. 15:4; 2 Pet. 1:2).
- We read the Bible because it gives us joy (see Ps. 119:111).
- We read the Bible to grow spiritually as we reject conformity to the world and are changed by the renewing of our minds (see Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:1-2).
- We read the Bible to minister to other Christ followers and to those who have yet to respond to the gospel, experiencing God's approval for work well done (see Josh. 1:8; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17).
- We read the Bible to guard ourselves from sin and error (see Eph. 6:11-17; 2 Pet. 2:1-2).
- We read the Bible to be built up as a Christian community with others in the body of Christ (see Acts 20:32; Eph. 4:14-16).

**Circle the three reasons that are most pertinent to you at this time. Be ready to share them with your group.  
Read the Scriptures beside those reasons.**

Let's look at an Old Testament passage that focuses on the importance of interacting with God's Word. Deuteronomy 6:1-12 is part of a long series of instructions God gave to the people of Israel, through Moses, to prepare them to enter the promised land.



In your Bible read Deuteronomy 6:1-12, noticing the emphasis on listening to God's Word. What is the relationship between loving God and living according to His ways?

Verses 4-9 of this passage have historically been very important to the Jewish people, making up part of the *Shema* (pronounced shuh-MAH), a Hebrew word meaning *listen*. God instructed the people to keep His commands in their hearts, to teach them to their children, and to talk about them constantly. He even told them to bind His words on their hands and on their foreheads and to write them on their doorposts. When we love God, we listen to His Word and obey its teachings.

Why do you think it was so important for the people to be immersed in God's teachings as they entered the land?

How can Christians today keep the Word at the forefront of our lives as we interact with the world?

It is just as important for modern-day Christians to keep God's Word in our hearts and minds as it was for the Hebrews who were facing new challenges in a pagan land. One of the most basic ways to do this is to establish a pattern for spending time in God's Word.

Read "How to Have a Quiet Time" on page 18. Do you have a designated time and place to meet regularly with God to pray and read His Word? If so, when and where?

# HOW TO HAVE A QUIET TIME

1. Make a personal quiet time the top priority of your day. Select a time to spend with God that fits your schedule. You may choose to have your quiet time the first thing in the morning to avoid distractions that arise later in the day. Or you may prefer bedtime so that God's Word is the last thing on your mind before you go to sleep. No matter what time you choose, make it a time when you can be consistent, missing no more than a handful of times per month. When you miss a day, catch up the next day.
2. Select a place for your quiet time that is free of distractions. Gather materials, such as your Bible, a notebook, and a pen or pencil, in advance.
3. Develop a balanced plan of Bible reading and prayer. Pray for God's guidance during your quiet time. Follow a systematic plan to read your Bible, such as the one provided in *A Reader's Guide to the Bible*.<sup>3</sup> Make notes of what God says to you through His Word. Pray in response to the Scriptures you have read. Use various components of prayer, such as confession, thanksgiving, praise, petition, and intercession.
4. Be persistent until you are consistent. At first strive for consistency rather than for length of time spent. Try to have a few minutes every day rather than long devotional periods every other day. Gradually add to your time with God as you grow accustomed to listening to Him and talking to Him.
5. Focus on the Person you are meeting rather than the habit. If you scheduled a meeting with the person you admire most, you would not allow anything to stand in your way. Meeting with God is even more important. He created you for fellowship with Him.<sup>4</sup>

If you don't have a regular quiet time, I hope your time in these daily lessons will help you establish that habit.

Today you spent time studying Deuteronomy 6:1-12.  
How did God speak to you through this passage?

Ask God to help you be faithful in studying His Word  
and to help you live by its truth in your daily life.

## **Day 4** Benefits of Reading God's Word, Part 2

Psalm 119 is rich with promises about the benefits of God's Word. At first glance the psalm seems very repetitious. The chapter is made up of short prayers on the topic of God's Word, which is also called commands or laws. The psalm is an acrostic poem, each stanza beginning with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Within each stanza each verse begins with the same Hebrew letter.

Psalm 119 presents a combination of reflections on the benefits of God's Word, attitudes we should have toward the Word, and appeals to God about His Word. The fact that we have such an extensive psalm on the topic shows how much the psalmist valued God's Word. Reflect for a moment on the value we place on God's Word today. If I lost a sock in the dryer, it would mean very little to me. My dryer consumes a steady diet of socks! In contrast, if I lost my wedding ring, which symbolizes my relationship with my wife, that would be a much greater loss! There is a great deal of difference between a sock and a wedding ring. Is the value you place on God's Word more like the value you place on a sock or something you hold very dear? Be honest with yourself as you complete today's activities.

**Read Psalm 119:1-64 in your Bible, thinking about the psalmist's reflections on the value of God's Word.**

**Now go back and select verses that are especially relevant for you at present. List those verses under the following categories. I have made suggestions to get you started.**

**Benefits of following God's Word (for example, vv. 2,9,45):**

Attitudes toward God's Word (for example, vv. 5,14,40):

Appeals to God about the Word (for example, vv. 10,18,27):

As you read these verses from Psalm 119, what surprised you the most?

Maybe you were struck by the psalmist's sincere longing to understand God's Word, as expressed by His use of words like *understanding*, *teach*, and *instruction*. For example:

*I pursue the way of Your commands,  
for You broaden my understanding.  
Teach me, LORD, the meaning of Your statutes,  
and I will always keep them.  
Help me understand Your instruction,  
and I will obey it  
and follow it with all my heart (vv. 32-34).*

Like the psalmist, do you yearn and ask God for understanding as you read or listen to the Bible? Place a mark on the line below that represents your answer.

I never think about asking  
for understanding.

I constantly ask God for  
understanding as I read.



The spiritual attitude of longing for God's truth is cultivated. Peter wrote, "Like newborn infants, desire the pure spiritual milk, so that you may grow by it for your salvation" (1 Pet. 2:2). Peter instructed us to choose to turn our hearts toward God's Word, to choose to want it above other things. Pray that God will work this desire into you through the course of this study.

**Write one verse from Psalm 119:1-64 that relates to desiring God's Word. Memorize and meditate on the verse this week.**

**Now pray, using this verse as the content of your prayer.**

As you study God's Word, you need good tools that help you understand and interpret Scripture accurately. A good study Bible in an understandable translation is essential. A number of very good Bible translations are available. The chart on page 23 will help guide you to a suitable translation for your needs. A Bible dictionary is another tool that can be very helpful, providing articles on topics, books, people, places, and cultural practices in the Bible. Commentaries, handbooks, and atlases can also be very helpful. This workbook will occasionally recommend that you use particular Bible-study tools, such as a study Bible and a Bible dictionary, to complete some of the learning activities. You can find a number of good Bible-study tools at the Web site [www.mystudybible.com](http://www.mystudybible.com).

**What translation of the Bible do you prefer? Why?  
Be prepared to share the answer with your group.**

**Check the Bible tools you already own.**

- |                                              |                                           |                                       |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Study Bible         | <input type="checkbox"/> Bible dictionary | <input type="checkbox"/> Bible atlas  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bible handbook      | <input type="checkbox"/> Commentary       | <input type="checkbox"/> Concordance  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bible pronunciation | <input type="checkbox"/> Bible survey     | <input type="checkbox"/> Word studies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other:              |                                           |                                       |

**What tool would you like to add to your library next?**

# CHOOSING THE TRANSLATION THAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU



1. Choose a translation that uses the earliest and most reliable Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. Most translations available today, with the exception of the King James Version and the New King James Version, meet these criteria.
2. Consider what kind of Bible reading you want to do. Formal-equivalence versions seek to approximate word-for-word correspondence with the Hebrew or Greek text, while functional-equivalence translations seek to capture the sense of the author's intended meaning in highly readable language. In general, formal-equivalence translations are best for deeper Bible study, and functional-equivalence translations are best for extensive reading and more readily understanding the meaning intended by the original text. Some translations attempt to strike a balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought approaches.

## Day 5 A Doer of the Word

The Bible places a great deal of emphasis not only on hearing God's Word but also on practicing it. Consider the words of James 1:22-25:

Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man looking at his own face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but one who does good works—this person will be blessed in what he does.

**How does James say the Word affects us as we hear and act on it?**

James says we are fooling ourselves if we think merely being exposed to God's Word is sufficient for our spiritual lives. The Word was meant to change us. That's what happens when we look intently into the Word, persevere in it, and act on it.

**When you read God's Word, how often do you apply it in a concrete way to your life, in a way that puts into action what you have learned?**

- ☐ On a very consistent basis
- ☐ On a somewhat consistent basis
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Almost never

**Describe an experience in which you applied a specific Scripture to your life. How did God's truth affect the outcome of the situation? Be prepared to share the answer with your group.**

If you struggle with application, you are not alone. It seems we have been trained to be vague, mushy, and general in our treatment of Scripture rather than clear and specific. Jesus never dealt in vague, idealistic generalities in His teaching but demanded very specific changes in people's lives. Consider how specific many of Jesus' instructions are in the Sermon on the Mount: "Don't be angry" (see Matt. 5:22). "Don't lust" (see Matt 5:28). "Give up your coat" (see Matt. 5:40). "Go two miles" (see Matt. 5:41). Jesus meant for people to put His words into action in very specific, tangible ways. Our problem is that we think it is enough to grasp general concepts, as if taking in the Word of God is a mental activity. Jesus, on the other hand, meant our interaction with the Word to be a life activity. Rather than saying, "I need to love people more" in a noncommittal way, we should consider, "What am I going to do today or this week to demonstrate love to a specific person?" Instead of saying, "I need to have more faith," we should identify ways we can express our faith very specifically today. Application of Scripture should be tangible, measurable, and specific. At the end of the day or the week we should be able to look back and say, "I worked that Scripture into my life in this way." This is when we begin to see life change in exciting ways.

For example, in Matthew 5:41 Jesus said if someone demands that you go a mile, go with him two miles. In first-century Palestine a Roman soldier could demand that a Jew carry his baggage for one mile. Because the Romans were an oppressive occupying force, most Jews hated them, so Jesus' call to go two miles must have seemed radical, if not crazy. The principle is to go beyond what is expected in serving others—even your enemy. Don't do as little as possible. Embody servanthood even in a difficult situation, even for your enemies. You and I could apply this passage by picking up trash in the yard of a difficult neighbor. If an oppressive boss demands that we work overtime, we could volunteer to work additional hours to help get a job done.

**Read the following teachings of Jesus and write a specific way you could put each into action.**

**Matthew 5:16:**

**Matthew 5:23-24:**

**Matthew 5:39:**

**Matthew 5:44:**

At the end of each week's study I will ask you to identify something you have discovered during the week to listen to, understand, and respond to God's Word more effectively.

### **Listen**

Review this week's material and identify one thing you have learned that will help you listen to God's Word more effectively.

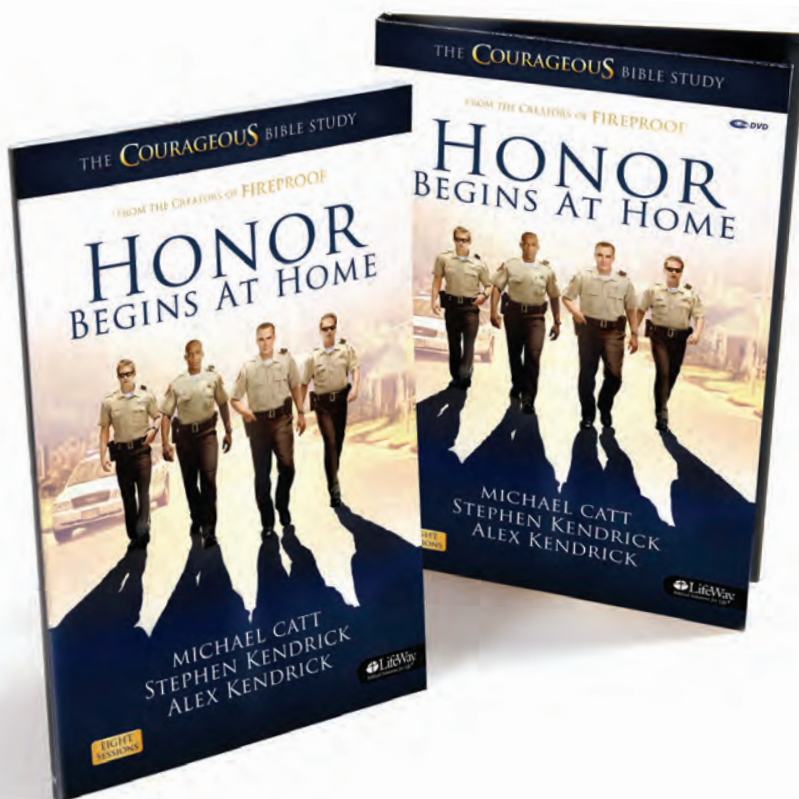
### **Understand**

Write one way you have grown in your understanding of God's Word this week.

### **Respond**

Identify one way you have responded meaningfully to God's Word this week.





## IT'S EASY TO BE INSPIRED AT THE MOVIES. BRINGING IT HOME IS ANOTHER STORY.

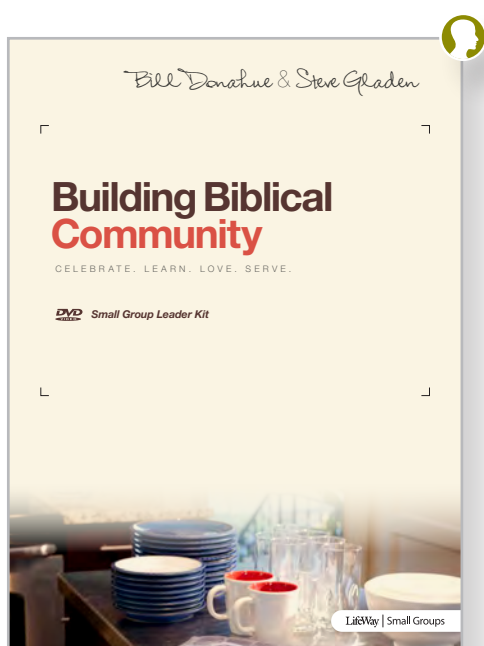
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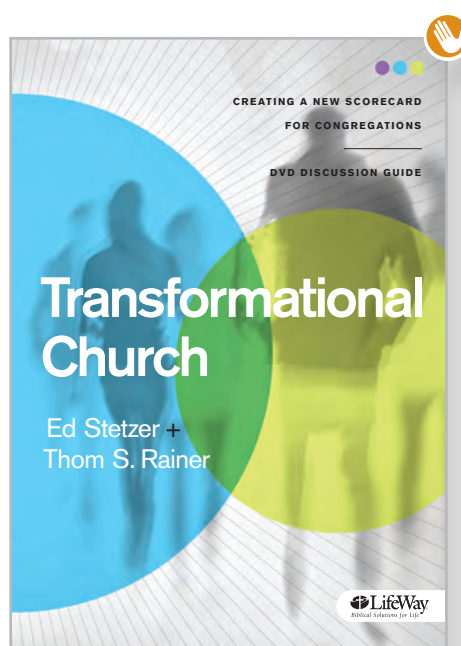
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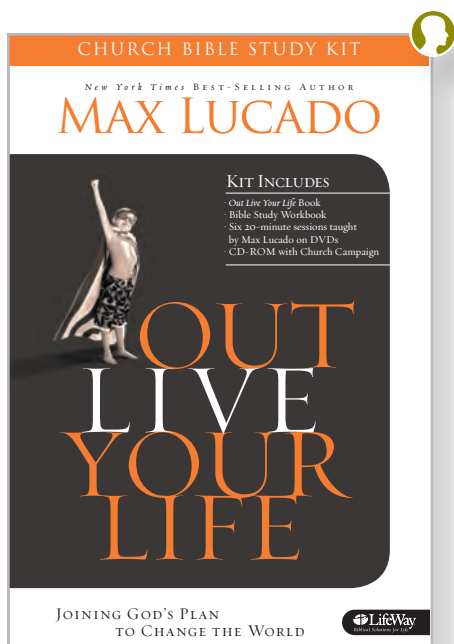
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# ible for Life will benefit ut these other studies:



## Outlive Your Life

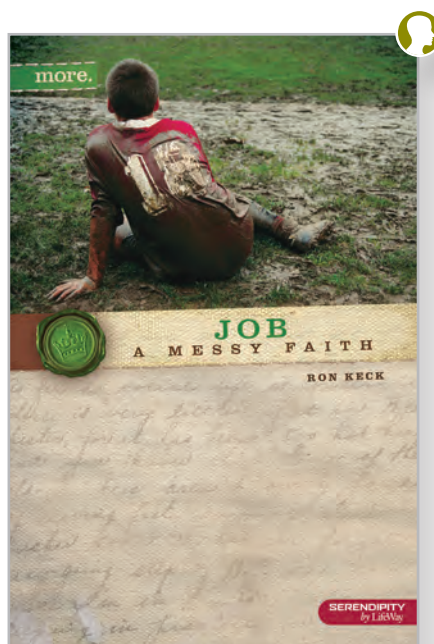
by Max Lucado

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