# **The Word of God for Everyone**

Joe Sutton

The Origin of Scripture

# Introduction and Recap

Our final session in the 5-part mini-series on Understanding the Bible.

If you’ve missed any, catch up on our sermons page or on our podcast.

1. The History of God’s Revelation - we saw that God has purposely revealed Himself throughout history, with the Bible being His “final word” to humanity. The key point: **GOD WANTS TO BE KNOWN**.

2. The History of Scripture - we spoke about how the Bible was written. We went through the compilation of scripture, the languages used, the key documents we have, and how they’ve been preserved. And there are *thousands and thousands* - a wealth of precious manuscripts available to us.

3. From Manuscripts to Modern - we talked about how we take those thousands and create a single - “this is the Bible.” The process is called Textual Criticism. Then we talked about the challenge of translating ancient Hebrew and Koine Greek into modern languages we can understand today. The key point here was that no English version can be perfect, so I gave my recommendations on what I use. We’ll come back to this today.

4. The Nature and Reliability of Scripture - last week we talked about the formalisation of the Canon - which books are inspired. The key point is that it was DISCERNED, not DECIDED. And then I showed you a few fun proofs of the supernatural nature of God’s word. It is simply impossible that it is the creation of mere humans!

Now onto today...

# Overview

Today’s message is entitled “The Word of God For Everyone.”

Scripture is PRIMARILY given for the purpose of relationship with its author, our Triune God. I’m hoping it will bring encouragement to us all that the Bible is for *us*. Not just the studious and clever; it’s for EVERYBODY.

First we’ll look at the interdependence of Jesus Christ and the Bible. They are inseparable, and as such the study of Scripture is a profoundly spiritual activity.

And so next we’ll look at the role of the Holy Spirit. What has He come to do with reference to our Bible study?

We will look at the Bible’s own testimony about itself. What does it claim it will do in our lives?

After that we’ll look at some practicalities around engaging with Scripture. What are the different ways we engage with the Bible? And I have a couple of study techniques I want to show you.

Finally, we will close with a word on the importance of our willingness to accept it.

• Study techniques, such as inductive study, word study.

# The Word of God and The Word of God

**John 1:1 NASB 2020**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

When John opens his Gospel, he calls Jesus “the Word of God.” Greek *logos*. It means a message, an expression, in same cases a part of what was spoken; in other cases it is the sum or the complete message.

And Jesus Christ is *the* Word of God. The definite article places Him as *the* message from God. *He* is what God has to say to mankind.

The Word being *in the beginning* shows His eternality, as does “the Word was God.” John deliberately recalls [Genesis 1](https://ref.ly/Ge1) where it is the spoken word that creates. Hence John goes on to say that that “all things came into being through Him” in verse 3.

So Jesus Christ has *always been* the Word of God. The message of God to humanity. Always.

Jesus said in [John 5:39-40](https://ref.ly/Jn5.39-40)

**John 5:39–40 NASB 2020**

“You examine the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is those *very Scriptures* that testify about Me; and *yet* you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

In our studies already, we’ve seen how interconnected Jesus and the Scriptures are. They come as a package.

• If we want to reject Moses or Isaiah’s authorship, we find ourselves rejecting Jesus because He confirmed them.

• If we want to reject Creation, we have to reject Jesus Who spoke of male and female *from the beginning*.

• The prophesies in the Old Testament prove for us that Jesus *is* the Messiah of God; and His coming at the right time, then using *only* those Scriptures validates them for us.

The *connectedness of The Word of God with the Word of God*.

### Spiritual Things are for the Spiritual

Now we have discussed how God wants to communicate with and be known by His creation. The Bible is God’s communication message to mankind.

However, we know that our sins have created a barrier. In [Isaiah 59:2](https://ref.ly/Is59.2)

**Isaiah 59:2 NASB 2020**

But your wrongdoings have caused a separation between you and your God,
And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear.

[Colossians 1:21](https://ref.ly/Col1.21) uses the word “alienated.” Foreigners.

Paul goes on to say:

**1 Corinthians 2:14 NASB 2020**

But a natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

**Romans 8:7 NASB 2020**

because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so,*

I’m going to go on to say that the Bible is intrinsically valuable, powerful, understandable, given to us ALL to build our relationship with God, increase our faith, instruct us on the way we should live.

But that is predicated on being a “spiritual person” rather than a “natural person.” Having a mind set on the Spirit, rather than the flesh.

To put it another way: you have to be *saved*!

We have to accept the free gift of salvation by believing Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection first. That He died to take away your sins, and that through simple faith you receive both forgiveness of sins and His everlasting righteousness.

When Jesus died on the Cross, that veil of separation in the Temple was torn, top to bottom. The symbolism is clear: it is Jesus’ death that removes the barrier to relationship with God.

You might remember this exchange between Jesus and His disciples: [Matthew 13:10-13](https://ref.ly/Mt13.10-13)

**Matthew 13:10–13 NASB 2020**

And the disciples came up and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” And Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Jesus used parables to *obscure* His teaching from those who had rejected Him.

Now, this does not mean that the Bible is totally impenetrable to the unsaved. Paul wrote to the young Timothy:

**2 Timothy 3:15 NASB 2020**

and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Paul says clearly that the Scriptures *lead to salvation through faith*. And many people come to faith through the simple act of reading and believing.

You **MUST first accept the Word of God - Jesus Christ - as Saviour** before the Word of God - the Bible - can be understood. Otherwise, it is foolishness.

Spiritual things are for the spiritual. A journey of knowing God through the Bible has to start with a conversion to faith, a passing from flesh to Spirit, death to life.

# The Holy Spirit’s Role

Next I want to look at the role of the Holy Spirit in our Bible reading.

Since the things of the Spirit of God are *spiritually discerned* and to those without the Spirit, they are foolishness.

Let’s look first at how Jesus introduced the Holy Spirit to His disciples in [John 14](https://ref.ly/Jn14). He was speaking of His imminent departure, and that after He has gone, He would send the Holy Spirit:

**John 14:16–17 NASB 2020**

“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, so that He may be with you forever; *the Helper is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know *Him; but* you know Him because He remains with you and will be in you.

**John 14:26 NASB 2020**

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and remind you of all that I said to you.

The word translated as Helper in our NASB is the Greek word *parakletos*. Literally the word means *one called alongside* and was used of a legal advisor, advocate or aide in court. Someone called to come alongside and to speak on behalf of the accused.

That legal aspect is seen in [1 John 2:1](https://ref.ly/1Jn2.1) where Jesus Christ is our advocate before the father when we sin.

So the Holy Spirit is called alongside us for the purpose of teaching us “all things” and reminding us of what Jesus said.

**1 John 2:26–27 NASB 2020**

These things I have written to you concerning those who are *trying to* deceive you. And *as for* you, the anointing which you received from Him remains in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you remain in Him.

The “anointing” is a reference again to the Holy Spirit, received from Jesus Christ again taking the role of teacher.

And one final passage:

**John 16:12–15 NASB 2020**

“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* at the present time. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take from Mine and will disclose *it* to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; this is why I said that He takes from Mine and will disclose *it* to you.

So again, the Holy Spirit as our teacher. He is the “Spirit *of truth”* here, and He is specifically teaching to glorify Jesus Christ.

He is our legal counsellor, whom we can call to come alongside; He is our anointing to teach us; He is the one Who glorifies Jesus Christ.

## Why We Need Him

We have seen in previous studies that there are significant challenges to our understanding the Bible.

All of the Bible text was originally written in an ancient language in an ancient and foreign cultural context.

And, as we have seen, its truth is to be “spiritually discerned.” Although there is a call to study and labour in the Word to seek understanding, in the end it is **a spiritual pursuit, more than it is an intellectual one.**

The Holy Spirit is God. He is the 3rd person of the Triune Godhead. He is the Spirit who *breathed out* the Word through its authors.

You can trust that HE understands the meaning and intention behind the text better than *anybody else*!

**1 Corinthians 2:10–11 NASB 2020**

For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among people knows the *thoughts* of a person except the spirit of the person that is in him? So also the *thoughts* of God no one knows, except the Spirit of God.

*That* is why we need Him to have fruitful study.

# The Bible’s Self-Testimony

As we consider how to engage with the Scriptures in the most fruitful way, we should start with what the Bible says about itself!

We will look at three key passages on this.

## [2 Timothy 3:16](https://ref.ly/2Ti3.16) — The Authoritative Word

First this verse:

**2 Timothy 3:16–17 NASB 2020**

All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man *or woman* of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work.

This is what ALL Scripture is, and what it is *beneficial* for.

Now we’ve already talked a little about that phrase “inspired by God” in the 2nd message in our series. A single Greek word meaning “God-breathed.”

God through His Holy Spirit moved and worked through the authors, not taking over like a ghost writer but rather using their gifts, skills and personalities to produce Scripture.

Even though God worked this way, and the character of the author is apparent, it is all nevertheless 100% the Word of GOD. The Word that will never pass away.

“Beneficial for teaching, rebuke, correction, and training in righteousness.”

Scripture is beneficial! The word of God is *profitable*, useful, valuable.

When we read and study God’s Word, there is a benefit. Every time. In [1 Tim 4:8](https://ref.ly/1Ti4.8), Paul uses the same Greek word speaking of godliness more generally, and he says “it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”

Thus, reading God’s Word, obeying God’s Word, there is a **benefit** today, in this life, and there is a benefit for the *life to come*. Wow!

What is it going to be like in the life to come?? Very little is revealed to us, but NOBODY is going to think, man, I spent a little too much time in the Bible!

In what ways is it beneficial:

1. For teaching - that is, clarifying and confirming what is TRUE.

2. For rebuke - that is, showing what’s false and wrong.

3. For correction - that is, a “restoration to uprightness” - getting us back on track.

4. For training in righteousness - the word for training is linked to the Greek for *child*, and means the training that a child receives as part of their maturation. When we receive the Bible as a child, through it God becomes our schoolmaster and we grow into maturity.

So these things are true of ALL Scripture. These are the characteristics of inspired Bible text, and these are the things that generations of godly people have discerned throughout history. And this connects to last week’s key point: the Scriptures were *discerned* not *decided*. People have observed the reality of Scripture being beneficial in these ways.

The Bible is the Authoritative Word: it is authorised to speak into our lives in these ways, for our benefit.

## [Hebrews 4:12](https://ref.ly/Heb4.12) - The Active Word

This verse is written in the context of sin and disobedience. The Exodus generation are used as an example of those who “heard the good news preached” - there is a rest available for you! - but they did not mix the hearing with faith. They hardened their hearts rather than believed the word.

Don’t be like them, the writer says. We have a greater promise of rest, so somewhat paradoxically he says “strive to enter it” he says. Believe what God says - only believe - and enter His rest.

And in that context he writes this verse. [Hebrews 4:12](https://ref.ly/Heb4.12)

**Hebrews 4:12 NASB 2020**

For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

God’s Word - what God says to us and what He has written - is “living and active.” It is able to **perceive** our hearts. Our thoughts and intentions. Do we believe? To what extent do we embrace that gospel message and cease from trying to win God’s favour through our own efforts, or to save ourselves? The Bible reveals this.

For today, what I want us to understand is the dynamic, living aspect. God’s word is **active**, not passive. It’s transformative. It’s intrinsically powerful and effective. While we do have a call to study it, we mustn’t depart from the simple truth that it is to be read and believed.

[Romans 10:17](https://ref.ly/Ro10.17) declares that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” The simple act of hearing God’s word - or reading it - stirs up faith. It gives us the opportunity to believe God’s truth. And the writer to the Hebrews urges us to believe it, being confident that it is God’s Word that brings us into His rest through its intrinsic power.

## [Isaiah 55:11](https://ref.ly/Is55.11) - The Certain Word

We could read the wonderful context to this passage. It’s the passage I alluded to last week where we have God calling out “come, buy wine and milk without money!” It’s one of the chapters about salvation by grace through faith! “Let the wicked abandon his way … let him return to the LORD and He will have compassion on Him.”

And then he says [Isaiah 55:10-11](https://ref.ly/Is55.10-11)

**Isaiah 55:10–11 NASB 2020**

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth
And making it produce and sprout,
And providing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
So will My word be which goes out of My mouth;
It will not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding *in the purpose* for which I sent it.

Like the rain, which waters the earth and brings life and growth, so is God’s word. The Word of God is certain, and it is about accomplishing **God’s desires** specifically. It’s not about man’s desires - of course - it is about God’s wonderful desires. In context, His desire to save by grace through faith.

And the Word *will* accomplish God’s desire; it will succeed.

It is a certain word! And again, it is intrinsically capable. The only requirement to make it effective for the listener is to believe. To mix hearing with faith.

And of course, this links to our discussion last week on the Bible’s inerrancy and infallibility.

## Summary

God’s word is authoritative, active and certain.

Those things are true, however we engage with it. It is uniquely authoritative to instruct, guide and even rebuke us. It is active and perceptive, meeting us where we are, and it is certain: that which God has decreed to do, will be done. Our requirement is not to strive but to submit.

Protestant theologians use 4 words to summarise what we believe concerning the Bible. These are **necessity**, **sufficiency**, **clarity** and **authority**. Maybe fruitful to look those up.

Authority, necessity, clarity, sufficiency

# How To Engage with the Bible

Let’s turn our attention to this crucial topic.

As I see it, there are five ways we can and should engage with the Bible.

## Read

First, simply read it!

Jesus, while tempted, quoted Deuteronomy and said:

**Matthew 4:4 NASB 2020**

But He answered and said, “It is written: ‘man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes out of the mouth of God.’ ”

The sense is that regular Bible reading is as essential as daily food.

We do well to cultivate in our hearts a sense of *need* for it.

Daily reading plans are a great way to build a good habit of regular reading. Personally, I quite like plans that provide daily readings that are from different sections. For example, a daily reading from Old Testament, New Testament, and Psalms.

I like to think of the different genres as different food groups, and a balanced meal has all the different food groups! Some narrative, some poetry, some wisdom, some words of Jesus Christ, some admonition from the Apostles… delicious.

Now depending on the time of life and the pressures on you, daily reading may be a challenge. Certainly when my children were younger, when work is demanding, etc, it can be difficult. Slipping into legalism … “I *must* complete my reading!” became otherwise I am a failure. This isn’t what we’re call to!

The Bible is an *invitation* to come and know God more. To hear from Him, about His great redeeming love for you.

And these days we also have the audio Bible option. Tons of apps, and audio services like Spotify provide the Bible in spoken format, so you can listen on your commute or while working.

We mustn’t get stuck into an unhealthy legalistic approach, but rather see daily Bible reading as a wonderful, glorious invitation to approach God and hear from Him.

Remember: for the vast majority of history, this kind of daily reading and daily fellowship with God was simply not possible. Only since the printing press was invented has the concept of a personal Bible been a realistic possibility.

[John 6:63](https://ref.ly/Jn6.63) Jesus says that His words are “Spirit and *life*.” It’s good for us to treat regular reading of God’s word as *life itself*.

## Memorise

Memorisation of Scripture has been a key discipline of God’s people for … forever.

When Jesus quoted [Deuteronomy 8](https://ref.ly/Dt8) in the last example, do you think he pulled out a scroll? Of course not; it was memorised.

**Psalm 119:11 NASB 2020**

I have treasured Your word in my heart,
So that I may not sin against You.

Similarly [Ps 40:8](https://ref.ly/Ps40.8)

**Psalm 40:8 NASB 2020**

“I delight to do Your will, my God;
Your Law is within my heart.”

The Hebrew word translated heart is *lev*.

The concrete meaning is the beating heart within, but the abstract connotation is the consciousness, the inner person or soul. It’s the place where:

• our desires and inclinations are found - see [Exo 35:5](https://ref.ly/Ex35.5), [2 Kings 10:15](https://ref.ly/2Ki10.15) for example.

• our emotions are based - see [Exo 4:14](https://ref.ly/Ex4.14), [Is 35:4](https://ref.ly/Is35.4) for example.

• the conscience is - see [Job 27:6](https://ref.ly/Job27.6) and [2 Sam 24:10](https://ref.ly/2Sa24.10) for example

• knowledge is stored - see [Deut 8:5](https://ref.ly/Dt8.5)

• understanding and discernment happens - see [1 Kings 3:9](https://ref.ly/1Ki3.9), [4:29](https://ref.ly/1Ki4.29) for example

And, of course, Jeremiah speaks of it being “desperately wicked” in the natural person, and how we need a *new* one from God. Not healing, but a replacement.

So when we memorise Scripture, we are placing the Word inside, which will impact our desires, emotions, our conscience, and build our knowledge and understanding to make better decisions.

I think that sounds pretty good!

The scripture that you memorise can never be taken away from you. It cannot be stolen, and it’s available for you to ponder 24/7.

Memorisation of Scripture is a great discipline, and one I personally need to get back into and take more seriously.

I have a couple of thoughts to share with you on it.

First, practically, how. Flash cards is a good analogue way to do it. If you’re digitally inclined like me, I recommend this app: Remember Me.

Second, and I know this isn’t for everyone but I want to share it...

Obviously, you’re going to memorise Scripture in English. I’m going to take that for granted. Bearing in mind what I’ve previously said about English translations - there is no perfect Bible - it is worth seeking to understand the verse and find the best exegesis, find out what the most accurate English rendition is, and then memorise *that*.

So read a few English versions. Read the footnotes, a commentary or other exegetical guide. Which English translation is the best presentation of God’s word?

Meditating from just one version of the Bible is simpler, sure. Many strongly prefer it and that’s fine. What I am saying is, understanding the verse, understanding the key Hebrew or Greek words, and memorising based on that understanding, that is super-powerful.

**Colossians 3:16 NASB 2020**

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Let it *richly* dwell in your heart indeed.

## Meditation

Next a very related concept: meditation.

**Joshua 1:8 NASB 2020**

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will achieve success.

Other key verses include [Psalm 1:2](https://ref.ly/Ps1.2), [Psalm 77:12](https://ref.ly/Ps77.12), [Ps 119:15](https://ref.ly/Ps119.15)

The Eastern definition of meditation, where one empties one’s mind, is not at all what is in view. It’s not an emptying of the mind, but a filling.

There are two different Hebrew words used in these passages for meditate. The one in Joshua means to *mutter* or read in an undertone. This sense connects to memorisation, and is the act of verbally repeating it to oneself to help embed it. In fact, the NET Bible translates as memorise in that verse.

The other word similarly means rehearsing or repeating, either internally or verbally. You know when you had a bad or frustrating conversation, or perhaps when you’re anticipating a difficult one, you rehearse it in your mind. How you wish it had gone, or how you wanted it to go. The things you could have said, etc.

That seems to be what the word means. Hence in [Psalm 55:17](https://ref.ly/Ps55.17) it’s translated “complain.”

So Bible meditation is repeating the word of God, again either internally or verbally. Sometimes when I am alone, I will speak it out loud when I’m trying to really get to grips with it.

This is meditation.

Scripture doesn’t have to be memorised for you to meditate on it, but it sure helps.

I believe God intends our meditation on His word to be a key way He speaks to us. I’m convinced Paul was thinking about this when he wrote that we should “be transformed by the renewing of” our minds in [Romans 12:1-2](https://ref.ly/Ro12.1-2).

We’re transformed when our old thoughts and ways are replaced by God’s.

Consider reading [Proverbs 6:20-23](https://ref.ly/Pr6.20-23)

**Proverbs 6:20–23 NASB 2020**

My son, comply with the commandment of your father,
And do not ignore the teaching of your mother;
Bind them continually on your heart;
Tie them around your neck.
When you walk, they will guide you;
When you sleep, they will watch over you;
And when you awake, they will talk to you.
For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light;
And rebukes for discipline are the way of life

The commands of your Heavenly Father will similarly guide you — even TALK to you — when you practice this kind of meditation on the Bible.

## Discussion

Next, discussion. Discuss the Bible!

Meditation is talking to yourself; discussion is talking to others.

We’ve previously seen verses that show the instruction to repeat them together. I think we looked at [Deut 6:6-7](https://ref.ly/Dt6.6-7). But I want to use this verse:

**Acts 17:11 NASB 2020**

Now these people were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so.

This verse is often used to show the commendable heart to validate what they’re being taught in the Bible for themselves. True, definitely.

But I want you to observe that they are examining the Scriptures *together*. A present, active *plural* verb meaning to examine and analyse the Bible.

I can only imagine the fruitful conversations they shared as they discussed the Old Testament text together and found that Paul indeed spoke truthfully about the Messiah!

And indeed, discussing the Bible together is a wonderful way to engage with God. We could revisit [Col 3:16](https://ref.ly/Col3.16) where the Word dwells richly, so that we teach and admonish *one another* - the community aspect of Bible study.

## Study

Finally, study proper. The studious pursuit of truth in God’s Word. The Bible says of itself that there are some things that are hard to understand (see [2 Peter 3:16](https://ref.ly/2Pe3.16)). A key verse is [2 Timothy 2:15](https://ref.ly/2Ti2.15)

**2 Timothy 2:15 NASB 2020**

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

There is a call for diligence, and to *accurately* handle God’s word.

[Proverbs 2](https://ref.ly/Pr2) urges “incline your heart to understanding” and to seek wisdom as silver, as for hidden treasures.

There is a call to study!

### Inductive Bible Study

The heart behind inductive Bible study is to have a simple, step-by-step approach to the Scripture so that the Bible speaks for itself.

Inductive means that, as far as possible, we try to let the Bible speak for itself, rather than using it to support our own beliefs.

The goal is to first understand what’s going on, then interpret why it’s going on and what the lessons are, and finally apply those lessons to yourself in our days.

A good inductive study guide will help you with the process.

**Step 1** is observation. It involves asking and answering questions. So think: who, where, when, what, why

• Who? Who is the author, who is he writing about, who is he writing to?

• Where? Where was the author writing from?

• When? What was going on when this was written? What was the culture like at the time? When in Paul’s life, or Peter’s life, did he write this letter, for example.

• What? What are some of the key words used? What precisely do these words mean? What are the key events that happen? What appears to be the primary message the author is conveying?

**Step 2** is interpretation. In my mind, this is where we start to ask “why.”

• Why did the author write this? The intent of the author is critical to try and establish to avoid misapplying the text.

We should not be seeking to find new, novel understandings; rather, why was this written, what was the purpose for those first readers of it, and why did GOD see fit to put it in the Bible for us.

**Step 3** at last is application.

This is where we say “so what.” What does this mean for me, personally? What does this mean for my church and my community? How should I live as a result? This is the most difficult to say much about in a general sense, and perhaps the one most heavily dependent upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Again, the Word of God is living and active, still completely applicable and relevant today. The Holy Spirit is the author, Who is not constrained by time. Prayerful seeking His wisdom and council is key to correctly applying the text.

Precept Ministries is a publisher that has produced a range of guides and materials designed to guide inductive study.

### Word Study

I wanted to show you how you could conduct a word study, too. A word study can be super important to correctly observe the text.

Those of you in the home group recently, looking at [Genesis 16:12](https://ref.ly/Ge16.12) recently found a discrepancy in how the last clause reads in different Bible translations. Will Ishmael live “to the east of all his brothers” as NASB1995 puts it, or “in the presence of his brethren” as KJV put it?

Finding a discrepancy like that is a prompt to conduct a word study and find out!

Another prompt to conduct a word study is when you identify a key word in a passage. Let’s imagine you’re reading [Ephesians 2](https://ref.ly/Eph2) and you’re struck: *by GRACE I am saved*. What is this grace? Let’s study the word!

You can do a word study for free using the Blue Letter Bible. No need to log in, no account or personal details are required.

https://www.blueletterbible.org/

[SLIDE 1]

It defaults to KJV, and you can choose the NASB or your preferred Bible translation easily enough.

Once you’re at the verse, [Ephesians 2:8](https://ref.ly/Eph2.8), you can click on Tools to open the Study view.

[SLIDE 2]

Here you get a view of the original language, the “lemma” which just means the dictionary word, without the conjugation.

In this case, there’s a little **G5485**. That’s called the **Strong’s number**.

James Strong published a concordance based on a novel reference system, where each Hebrew and Greek lemma was carefully indexed and given a Strong’s number.

Thousands of words in each language!

What it does is provide a systematic way to look up the original language word and find all the passages that use it.

It was called the “Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible” and it’s exhausting just to even *think* of the work he put into it!

It was published in 1890, which means it’s long out of copyright and freely available now online, such as here on BlueLetterBible.

His numbering system became standard, and now many Bible dictionaries, concordances etc all use his system. It’s just easier!

So, we click on the Strong’s number for our word..

[SLIDE]

And we get a TONNE of useful content!

We’ve got links to various dictionaries, a super-helpful **outline of Biblical usage** - that is, how the word has been used throughout the New Testament. You can see in this case there are four broad uses.

[SLIDE]

We have the concordance results, which show us ALL the places where the word is used in the Bible. The first usage of *charis* is in [Luke 1:30](https://ref.ly/Lk1.30), where the angel tells Mary: you have found *favour* with God.

What this process allows you to do is see what professors and super-smart people have concluded, but you can also do your own review, see the verses and check the context.

You might next do the exact same thing for the word “faith” for example.

Using this tool, you can do your own study for free. I urge you to check it out.

I personally use Logos Bible Software, and have done for many years, well over a decade. It is not cheap, but it is a great investment for computer-aided Bible study.

# A Willing Heart to Understand

Here is the fifth and final part of the message.

We have to be willing to understand.

And by “understand” I mean this - to *stand under* the teaching of the Word.

There’s this brilliant picture in [Nehemiah 8](https://ref.ly/Ne8). The Jewish exiles have returned from their captivity to Jerusalem, ready to rebuild it. But first, they gather in the public square where a wooden podium has been constructed. Ezra the priest and scribe stands upon the podium, he opens the Torah of Moses, standing above all the people.

**Nehemiah 8:5–6 NASB 2020**

Then Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was *standing* above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” with the raising of their hands; then they kneeled down and worshiped the Lord with *their* faces to the ground.

Understanding. They stand under the Law of God, and their hearts are inclined to hear and obey.

That needs to be our disposition, too.

True understanding of the Bible means true life change.

James famously says:

**James 1:22–25 NASB 2020**

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who has looked intently at the perfect law, the *law* of freedom, and has continued *in it,* not having become a forgetful hearer but an active doer, this person will be blessed in what he does.

The Bible is God’s message to mankind. To YOU and to me. It is given for us to KNOW Him, not merely know about Him.

What that means is the desire to believe and obey is *far more important* than the desire to understand some new deep mystery.

There are deep things. There are mysteries. [Proverbs 25:2](https://ref.ly/Pr25.2)

**Proverbs 25:2 NASB 2020**

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter,
But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

And remember that I showed you [Matthew 13](https://ref.ly/Mt13) how Jesus used parables to *conceal* truth from those who were not prepared to believe and obey.

Jesus also said:

**John 7:16–17 NASB 2020**

So Jesus answered them and said, “My teaching is not My own, but His who sent Me. If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know about the teaching, whether it is of God, or I am speaking from Myself.

A willingness to *do* His will is what leads to the knowledge of the teaching from God.

If you want to UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE, you must be prepared to STAND UNDER IT as the authoritative, active and certain Word of God.

# Summary

I have been unsure how best to conclude today. I feel like have covered so much material in these five sessions, so much of it just skimming the surface.

But what I hope I’ve done is the following:

• Reinforce that God *wants you to know Him.* He loves you, He wants a relationship with you, and He wants that relationship to continually grow deeper.

• God’s given us the Bible as His primary method to communicate to us. The Bible is a miraculously preserved library of sacred books, containing the very words of God even though they are written through the saints, using their gifts and abilities.

• While we don’t have the original documents, we have every reason to be confident in what we have today. The questionable areas are nearly all trivial, and God has cleverly distributed doctrine throughout the whole book.

• The main challenge to understanding is the translation aspect. This is why I recommend only using formal equivalence Bibles for study, and getting into things like word studies. Dynamic equivalence is fine for devotional reading, sure. Commentaries are great, too. But these resources are interpretations.

• The Bible is spiritually discerned, and Jesus left His Holy Spirit as our advocate, helper and teacher. He’s given to all of us, and as such we can ALL seek God’s truth for ourselves. God raises up Bible teachers, sure. But you should not fully outsource your Bible study!! And you don’t need to; there’s a blessing in *personal* study.

• Read and study to understand: *stand under* the authority of the Bible. Let it change how you live, how you prioritise, how you think!

May we indeed, as the Psalmist says, ask:

**Psalm 119:18 NASB 2020**

Open my eyes, that I may behold
Wonderful things from Your Law.