

Bible Study Tips

This chapter taken from the book *When Faith Came* by Franklin Whittenburg © 1998-2006

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After I realized I had spent my whole “Christian” life, lost in the study of end time prophecy, I dug deeply into the Bible to find some answers for myself in day-to-day living. All I found was more questions. You don’t ever want to get to the point that I did where I not only realized I was not saved, but I also started thinking that I might have done something and could not be saved. When you are in this fallen state, you will search the Bible desperately for help of any kind. But until I came to a point of total surrender to Jesus, the eternal truths that I was seeking were sealed and no preacher could open them for me as Isaiah the Prophet taught.

And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: (Isaiah 29:11-13).

It wasn’t until the Holy Spirit entered into me that I now had an interpreter. It takes the same Holy Spirit that gave the apostles and prophets the knowledge to write the Bible to interpret the deeper spiritual truths. We know by scripture (2 Peter 1:20) that prophecy came spiritually and not naturally.

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:20).

Paul reaffirmed this and explained the spiritual interpretation of the scripture plainly in 1 Corinthians 2.

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God

knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:16).

This spiritual understanding is essential to understanding the deeper truths. Jesus said, "these words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life". Paul exhorted us to "rightly divide the word of truth".

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame (1 Corinthians 15:34).

And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly (Acts 18:24-26).

If the word of truth can be "divided" as Paul claims, then that would mean that the word of truth could be understood in two ways "naturally" and "spiritually". Some religions interpret the scriptures naturally and some interpret the scriptures spiritually and some religions use a mixture of both. That is why you have so many different denominations out of only one truth. But which way is the correct way to interpret scripture, so we can be profited by it?

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it (Hebrews 4:2).

In Hebrews 4:2 it says that the only way that the gospel will profit man is if they "mix it with faith". Is faith then "natural" or "spiritual"?

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear (Hebrews 11:1-3).

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit (John 3:6-8).

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27).

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:17,18).

When you read the scriptures do you hear stones of condemnation or the bread of life? If you are reading the scriptures while still “in the flesh” (naturally) you should be receiving condemnation from them, because Jesus Christ condemned sin “in the flesh”!

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8:3-6).

But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself (Titus 3:9,10).

And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles (Acts 13:44-46).

If you are reading the scriptures “in the Spirit” (spiritually), then they should be edifying and feeding you.

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are SPIRIT, and they are life (John 6:63).

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, (Ephesians 1:17,18).

As we can see by this verse John 6:63, Jesus even said that these words are “spirit and life”. Paul said the “carnal mind” equals death and the “spiritual mind” equals life and peace.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8:5,6).

Why then do pastors that interpret the scriptures “naturally”, call Christians that interpret the scriptures “spiritually” as evil and label them Gnostics? The word Gnostic simply means “one who knows”. Agnostic means “one who doesn’t know”. I know why.

But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now (Galatians 4:29).

I believe that all true Christians can understand the things I am sharing in this book with the assistance of the Holy Spirit and not just a select few “super” Christians. If someone can understand the scriptures “spiritually” then that just means that they have the Holy Spirit revealing it to them. It doesn’t get any more complicated than that. The Bible says that no man can receive anything except it be given him from heaven (John 3:27).

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (2 Corinthians 4:1-7).

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice (John 18:37).

The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck

Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so (John 18:19-22).

I am going to share with you some of my Bible study practices that have helped me, but first you need to have some tools. I am going to assume that you already have the Holy Spirit as an interpreter, because this is a critically necessity. Without the Holy Spirit, you never will understand it as Peter warned, even if I explain it to you.

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16).

This may sound legalistic, but I only use the King James Version Bible in my studies. In spite of what some pastor's say, I have found that all Bible translations are not the same. Some translations have been reinterpreted so the natural man can "understand it easier". Jesus said, "If the gospel is hid, it is hid to those that are lost". If you cannot discern spiritual truth in one version, then you will not be able to understand it in another man's interpretation of it.

I use four main sources in my studies, the Holy Spirit as my "spirit guide", a King James Version Bible, a Franklin computer pocket KJV Bible, and a Strong's exhaustive concordance that lets me know what each word in the Bible means in Hebrew or Greek. I also use the Old and New testament in KJV on cassette tapes for studying while I am asleep, which is one study practice that has worked surprisingly well for me, which I will explain now. It will be a good starting point, after you receive the Holy Spirit.

One of the first things the Lord showed me was a little passage in the book of Job. I have heard that the sub-conscience mind never sleeps so at night while sleeping, people play recordings of subliminal messages to absorb in their minds. Everyone thinks that "new age" practitioners, scientists, or some psychiatrist dreamed up this practice, but the truth is, this concept was revealed in one of the oldest books of the Bible. This is how God would speak to man through their sub-conscience mind when man's conscience was shut down during sleep and it would not be able to inject error or man's natural judgment into the message.

For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword (Job 33:14-18).

When God revealed this passage to me, I went out and bought the KJV Old and New Testament on cassette tapes and played them on my tape player while I slept at night. I did this for six years, over and over. I just turn on the tape player and go to sleep. I was utterly amazed at what revelations would surface during the day when I was awake. Scriptures would assemble together in ways that I had never even imagined they would

fit, and I would be stunned at what was being revealed. I can safely say in my experience, that the wisdom that is in the Bible is not of this world. I also could talk to somebody and a scripture would come to mind that was perfect for the situation that I would need to apply it to. Because of the technology advancement of recording devices, this is a study tool that mankind never had access to until the past several years. The only way anybody that was living in the past could have experienced this type of study, is if they had someone read the Bible to them while they slept.

One of the first things that the Lord showed me after my spiritual conversion was the vision of what my future would be and what life and immortality was all about. I knew where I was going now and my life now had purpose, but I didn't know how to get there from where I was. God always declares the end from the beginning.

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: (Isaiah 46: 9,10).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: (Ephesians 1:3-9).

I now want to share with you what I have experienced in Bible study using a jigsaw puzzle as an analogy. The Bible to me was like a big puzzle. God had shown me what the "picture on the cover of the box" (life and immortality) is suppose to look like (2 Timothy 1:10), but how must the verses be arranged to match the "picture on the cover of the box"? It is one thing to have a vision, it is quite another to watch that vision come to pass. The Word of God brings the truth to light; the Spirit of God brings the truth to pass.

When I first started studying the Bible, I could assemble some of the simple familiar verses that fit neatly together. This is like assembling all the side and corner pieces in a puzzle. Now I would take other scriptures and start meditating on them and trying to connect them to other verses until they finally fell into place. This brought me stunning revelations. I would also come to verses that would not fit in my understanding anywhere, and after awhile of studying them, I would set them to the side and find other verses to meditate on. This is very important! When you come to a verse in your Bible studies that you have no idea where it fits in the bigger picture, LEAVE IT ALONE! The last thing the world needs is another denomination. The reason why you have so many different denominations, out of one Truth, is because when people come to verses that they can't make fit anywhere, they trim the verse to fit into a spot where it was not designed to fit. Because of this, every verse that is then tied to that one would also be in

error. When you get done learning the doctrine, then the denomination looks nothing like the “picture on the box”. The reason that the verse may not fit now is because not enough of the puzzle is completed for it to fit perfectly. The verse that it is suppose to connect to is not in place yet in your understanding! The Bible says that God builds line upon line and precept upon precept. What I do is set the verse aside until more of the other scriptures fall into place as I grow in understanding. Then every so often, I will pull out the verse and meditate on it. Eventually it will finally fall perfectly into place. If it doesn't, I put it to the side again and wait for more of the puzzle to be completed. Some verses it took two years of revelations before they finally fell into place in my understanding.

What I see is many pastors today that cannot work the puzzle (The New Testament) so they change the “picture on the box” instead, and claim that God is doing a “new thing” or a “new paradigm shift”. Some are just simply giving up on the New Testament and writing a whole new Bible. This practice is becoming more and more prevalent. This is why I don't believe these “new thing” people fully understand what the New Testament is offering mankind, because if they did truly understand the big picture, then they would not want a “new thing”. In fact, if they did get a glimpse of what the New Testament really was offering, they would gladly run back to the cross like I did, but this time they would truly die (forsaking all). Paul said that through his preaching the church might know the manifold wisdom of God! How can you add more knowledge to the “manifold wisdom of God”?

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, *that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, (Ephesians 3:8-10).*

I now want to visit the topic of meditation for a minute. The Bible says to meditate upon the scriptures. The Christian type of meditation is different from the world's type of meditation that is popular in today's culture and different religions. Like I explained earlier in the puzzle analogy, Christian meditation is pondering on a revealed Bible truth until it fits into its proper place in the bigger picture. The world's idea of meditation is trying to attain a knowledge and thought process “higher” than themselves, by an act of themselves. This is an impossible task, because the most they can ever accomplish with this type of meditation, is attaining the highest knowledge of ones self. The problem is man is limited by, and can go no farther, than his imagination. This type of meditation is great if the answers you are looking for are in yourself, but I realized one day that I did not have the answers in myself. Mankind has hit the “self-barrier”. Please read the chapter “Understanding Eternal Life” and “The Spiritual Wisdom, Knowledge and understanding(WHO ARE YOU?)” on how to overcome this self-barrier. The true Christian does not have this problem of restriction to knowledge and thought processes that are higher than man is capable of thinking. We have found a way through the “self barrier” to the higher wisdom and knowledge of God. The true Christian goes through a mediator that has already went before us, which is Jesus Christ.

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; (1 Timothy 2:4,5).

John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven (John 3:27).

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: (Colossians 3:9,10).

I want to take a moment and address a very dangerous trend that is growing in “the church” today. Many pastors and teachers, and now apostles and prophets are trying to take the place of the Holy Spirit (Spirit of Truth) concerning the deeper revelations in a disciple’s life, instead of being a supporter of what the Holy Spirit is showing the disciple. I can teach people some of the things I know according to the purpose of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), which is what I am doing with this book, but unless you have the Holy Spirit you can never understand what I am sharing. That is why the Bible says that it is God that teaches you. The pastors, teachers, prophets, etc. are to work with God they do not replace God. The pastors and prophets and teachers have no power to make you understand what they are saying, all they can do is speak the words.

And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: (Isaiah 29:11-13).

Just because a pastor speaks the Word of God doesn’t mean they have the power to make you understand it. If they are faithful godly pastors, then it is acceptable to show them respect and minister to their needs also.

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon (1 Corinthians 3:5-10).

But never forget!!! **John answered and said, *A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven (John 3:27)***

No matter how good they are, the pastor or teacher doesn't have the keys to your understanding, only God can unlock the scripture for you.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, (Ephesians 1:17,18).

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life (1 John 5:20).

Even Jesus himself didn't teach his disciples everything, but left the deeper spiritual teaching to another source!

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come (John 16:12,13).

The main goal of the church should be to exhort and edify the believer and make sure that every member in the body was hearing from the Head (Jesus). God will grow the believer.

Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand (1 Corinthians 1:23,24).

The Bible says, **“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Romans 8:14)**. If your “spiritual leader” is a human being, then the best in life that a disciple can hope for is to become like their “spiritual leader”. If I had trusted my spiritual teaching to a pastor, apostle, prophet, or cell group leader, then my relationship with my heavenly Father could never be any closer than my spiritual leaders relationship with God. Now that in its self is a scary thought! The Bible does speak of being under governors and tutors until the time appointed of the Father, but never forget that the true Christian is still a creation of Christ (Ephesians 2:10).

Now we come to the most important study tool of all. Prayer! If you do not understand something, then ask God.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him (James 1:5).

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints (Ephesians 1:15-18).