

Just A Minute! With Scripture

The King James Bible is used for all references. Verses may be made bold or numbered for emphasis.



Take a moment to think about your goal as a Christian. Is it to gain more Bible knowledge, specifically more about Paul's gospel? Scripture teaches that it is not 'just' to be about acquiring knowledge: "...Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." (I Cor. 8:1) Also, recall: "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." (I Corinthians 13:2)

We are to know the Truth, but knowledge isn't the goal. Rather, it is to learn godliness (God-like-ness). This includes charity: "...godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (I Tim. 4:8) **A new goal:** To gain practical understanding of sound doctrine, causing charitable thinking, so we can edify others and labor together with the Father.



How is this to be done? We need to know where to begin in this godly training. God is teaching directly to the Body of Christ in Romans-Philemon. Basically, rightly dividing the Word is realizing the context of what is written. (II Tim. 2:15) This tool is a key to help us understand God's Word, but it is to be just the beginning when learning how to study.

For example, another aspect of this tool is to know that God set Paul's epistles in the perfect order to edify or mature our inner man with His 'form of doctrine.' (Rom. 6:17) Each book, chapter, and verse builds on the one before: "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." (Is. 28:10) Romans is first, providing foundational teaching to establish us.

What is your personal responsibility in this process? Begin reading Paul's epistles; start in Romans. Proceed slowly to study & meditate on what is said. This gives you understanding to help you apply it. Choose to be led by the Spirit, listening to what God is teaching. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. 8:14) This develops trust to live godly, deepening your intimate relationship.

Does your goal for the Christian life need adjusting? This article is to stir up this question for your reflection. Think about what Scripture says and whether you are doing it. We all are to be fully persuaded by the Word to set goals, live as a believer, and serve to minister to others: "...Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." (Rom. 14:5)

Christ on Display...in Us?



Such an amazing thought! When we allow the Spirit to lead by the Word formed in our inner man, Christ will be manifest: "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also **Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.**" (Philippians 1:20) Glorious!

Christ is written in our hearts as we understand and believe. (II Cor. 3:3) When difficulties come, we're to rely on His wisdom/power, so Christ is manifest in decisions & life details: "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, **that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.**" (II Cor. 4:11)

What is actually seen in us, and by whom? Your circle of influence observes: family, friends, saints, unbelievers, and also the angels. (Eph. 3:10) They will see Christ's love and godliness on display, as He lives in and through you. This is the outworking of the gospel and a result of having the mind of Christ. (I Corinthians 2:16) You are being conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ's image as you believe and walk by faith in the doctrine: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be **conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.**" (Rom. 8:29)

Christ's life is on display in our weak, clay vessels as we are quickened (Rom. 8:11) by the Word: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.**" (Gal. 2:20)



Study Approach: Topical Study



The 'Topical' method is a common approach when studying the Scriptures. It examines the various components of a subject found in the Bible. This study help is on p.35 of "Exploring the Bible Using Study Skills," available on Amazon or free on our website. (located on top of p.1)

1. Select a subject: Decide on a topic, like 'prayer,' and examine how it is used in Scripture. Brainstorm related words and find places the Bible deals with the subject. Be sure to look at the context and consult a concordance. Allow time to meditate upon what is learned.

2. Refine the topic: Focus on one aspect of 'prayer,' such as what Paul teaches and how he prays. Narrow the focus to study one of his prayers, like Romans 1:8-14, or examine the topic in one epistle, like Ephesians.

3. Miscellaneous suggestions: Search the context to define a word. Then, use a dictionary to further clarify understanding. Look up new words you encounter. It's helpful to recall words have more than one meaning.

4. Ask questions: "Do I pray in the way Paul instructs?" "Am I keeping separate what is written to me (the Body of Christ) from the instructions written to Israel?" (This is called Rightly Dividing the Word - *II Tim.2:15*)

Do I Pray From the Heart?

Sometimes prayer doesn't come from our hearts. At times, we may find ourselves praying the same things over and over. So then, do we believe He is the Living God and our Father, a real being who truly listens to us? Would we talk to a physical person the way we speak to God? Do we relay our heart or use repetitious, sing-song phrases spoken to a distant, invisible entity someplace in the heavens?

So what is prayer to be? We will narrow this big topic to address 'praying from the heart.' There are many things that describe prayer: a devotion, intercession, appeal, expression of thanks, but it is also worship to God. Simply, it is how a believer communicates with God, expressing thoughts, feelings, and needs. However, it is also a time for us to listen to God. The Spirit helps us pray (*Rom. 8:26*) by teaching us the Word. (*I Cor. 2:10*) As we think (meditate) on the Word in us, verses come to mind, which often relate to decisions or problems, providing opportunity to realize how to live what we are learning. Heartfelt prayer is one that involves intimate communication from our inner most being, not a tradition or mere habit. God has provided guidance for us to ponder; a few things we can consider:

- 1) **Philippians 4:6:** Talk to God, "...in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known."
- 2) **I Thessalonians 5:17:** We have such opportunity to pray, "without ceasing"
- 3) **I Corinthians 11:1:** Paul is your pattern for prayer: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."
- 4) **Romans 8:26:** Do you know the way? "...for we know not what we should pray for as we ought."
- 5) **II Corinthians 1:11 & II Thessalonians 3:1:** Pray as one Body: "Ye also, helping together by prayer..."
- 6) **Romans 12:12:** In our day-to-day living we are to be, "...continuing instant in prayer."
- 7) **Ephesians 6:18:** We are able to pray in the Spirit: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit..."



Prayer reflects where we are functioning in our intimate relationship with the Father. Do we trust Him and are we fully present as we pray? A rote (mechanical) prayer lacks a genuine investment of our thoughts and feelings. (God is great, God is good, and we thank Him for our food.) Christ provides a few interdispensational issues: "...when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men...But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking...your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." (*Matt. 6:5, 7-8*)

To Do: Ponder your own prayer habits to determine if God can renew your mind in some areas. Examine Paul's prayers for yourself. Jot down what he includes, what he does not, how God uses Paul to answer his own prayers, and observe the basic components of his prayers. This simple study may open your eyes to new insights, which can help you on your prayer journey. The foundational book of Romans is a good place to begin. *Romans 1:8-14* is Paul's first prayer.



It's no secret that these current times have been troubling for us all: sickness, death, natural disasters, and bodies deteriorating as we grow older. It's the age old story of humanity. With mortality comes trials and tribulations; all thanks to the sin fallen world of which we are a part.

So despite all that we face, what comfort can we look toward? The answer is simple, God and His Word. *"Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."* (Joshua 1:9) God has shown comfort and encouragement to many throughout the Scriptures and it's no different for us today. The Bible is where we should go to in our times of trouble. When we read and study His Word, we have a direct line to God to give us strength and comfort.



We must also remember who we are in Christ and where our true home lies. *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."* (Romans 8:18) *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28) We are so much more than just this current world or our earthly bodies and all that

comes with it. No matter what we must face in this world God gives us everything we will ever need. *"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:19)



Question 1: As a Christian, is it possible to fall away from my faith? Yes. Though still saved, recall the Ephesian saints who knew advanced doctrine: *"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."* (Acts 20:29-31) How can this be prevented? In Vs. 32, Paul entrusts them to God and the Word of His grace, which can make them strong to enable them to use the spiritual armor and weapons God provided. (Eph. 6, II Cor. 10)

Question 2: Can I know the Word, yet not know how to live it? Over the years, saints can learn much in the Word, yet never understand how to practically live it. A lack of conviction to stay separate from the world or to read and meditate upon the Word by faith can affect our walk. Strongholds of the mind (II Cor. 10:3-5) can blind us to sin areas or the need to live as who we are in Christ. Knowing many things (head knowledge or data), even about Paul's grace message, doesn't automatically enable us to apply it. We need to make it our own (be fully persuaded) to gain heart understanding. Practice in using the Scriptures in life details helps us learn how it works in various situations. Prayerful meditation on passages also helps. Thankfulness for all Christ has done can motivate: *"For the love of Christ constraineth us..."* (II Cor. 5:14) It takes time/maturity to stay focused thru life temptations.

Question 3: I try so hard as a believer to live differently, but a consistent, godly walk seems so elusive. Why is this?

'Trying hard' to live godly is doing it by fleshly efforts and is called legalism. Focusing on 'your behavior' leads to putting yourself under a burden to perform. Focus rather on 'your mind.' Read by faith and think about how you can yield to apply what you learn in life details. This will bring fruit unto God. Minding spiritual things leads to thankfulness and the desire to let God do the work in you. *"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."* (Romans 8:6) This is Christ in you.

Question 4: How can I be a good son to my elderly Mom? Pray and meditate on the Word, thinking about her needs: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Then choose to do actions of love toward her. Stay in the Word daily to renew your mind, live what you know, and develop 'godly love' for your Mom. This process develops Christ's mind in you to care for and prefer her over yourself. Without renewing the mind, you can easily default back to living in the flesh, doing what feels good/convenient, and putting yourself under the law. This results in feeling you 'have to' help or do things for her, which is the Law. This works wrath. (Rom. 4:15). Finally, the Word matures us to develop a love motive (charity): *"...but faith which worketh by love."* (Galatians 5:6) Agape love fulfills the law. *"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love they neighbour as thyself."* (Gal. 5:14)

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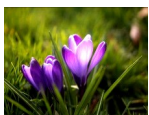
To:

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...” (Romans 3:24)

A Personal Testimony

Psalms 46:10a – “Be still, and know that I am God:”

My name is Gene. I’m a 58 y/o Caucasian male. I retired from the U.S. Air Force after 24 years of service. About the same time, I was diagnosed with Generalized Anxiety Disorder w/ panic attacks, OCD, and depression. For the first 10 years, it was well controlled with medication; I almost didn’t know anything was wrong, except for a few minor medication side effects. About 5 years ago it started getting worse. About two years ago, I “lost it” – medication no longer controlled my anxiety/panic, which ramped up to an “11+” on a scale of 1 to 10. I awoke daily to anxiety/panic attacks. It was a monumental fight every day just to get ready for work. I was still able to function



well at my job, but it was so difficult. I started having suicidal ideation, and almost went through with it, but for a dear Christian brother that got through to me in time. I started life coaching with Deborah about 1½ years ago, which has made all the difference. I still struggle, but daily life is continuing to get better. I’m not defined by my diagnosis, thinking, feelings, or actions. I’m defined by God, who states that I’m a saint of the Almighty God, an ambassador for Christ, a minister of reconciliation, a soldier of God, a servant of righteousness, an adult child of God, an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ. God’s Word is powerful to change my life; I can’t live without it. Whenever I have an attack, I run to His word for comfort. I can’t tell you how or why this works, but it does! And learning to pray to our Father in Heaven, in me, as I would talk to a dear friend across the dinner table is precious!

Request subscriptions/past issues or forward questions to the writers and editors, Brian & Deborah Johnson.

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