

The Habit of Bible Study

The Power of Spiritual Habits #5 - Pastor Gary Combs - September 14, 2025 - 2 Timothy 3:16-17

INTRO: Good morning church! We're continuing our sermon series entitled: "The Power of Spiritual Habits." It's a study of Christian disciplines passed down from the early church.

I want to thank my son Stephen for preaching the last four Sundays. This sermon series was his idea and I wanted him to launch it for us. I think he did a great job and I know you've been blessed by his preaching. BTW, today's his birthday, so here's wishing my firstborn Happy birthday!

Series Theme: Ephesians 4:23-24 (NLT) ²³ Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. ²⁴ Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

This starts with a receptive heart, "letting" the Spirit change you, then leads to the action of "putting on," which is helped by the practice of intentional disciplines or habits. Dr. Whitney says that

"Spiritual disciplines are those practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are habits of devotion, habits of experiential Christianity that have been practiced by God's people since biblical times." — Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, p.3

Spiritual disciplines are behaviors or habits that help us yield to the Spirit's work of making us holy like God. They are training exercises in holiness. As the apostle Paul charged his young protégé Timothy:

1 Timothy 4:7 (NASB) ...discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.

Spiritual habits are means, not ends. The end goal is that the Spirit would continue to sanctify us, making us more like Jesus. Spiritual habits are a way of yielding to and cooperating with the Spirit's work in us for our sanctification.

Over the past four Sundays we've talked about the habits of #1 Daily Devotion, #2 Fellowship, #3 Service, and #4 The Habit of Rest. Today, we're going to consider a 5th spiritual habit, THE HABIT OF BIBLE STUDY.

Need: Americans today have more access to the Bible than any previous generation. Most us have several copies in various versions. We even Bible apps on our phones. Yet according to recent polls (Barna: *State of the Bible 2021: Five Key Findings*, <https://www.barna.com/research/sotb-2021/>):

- Only 11% of Americans said they read the Bible daily.
- About 34% read the Bible at least once a week or more.
- Roughly 50% of U.S. adults read the Bible fewer than two times a year — including never.

And "reading doesn't imply studying or deeply engaging. Many people may read occasionally or pick a passage here and there rather than following a plan or doing study." (<https://research.lifeway.com/2017/04/25/lifeway-research-americans-are-fond-of-the-bible-dont-actually-read-it/>)

Indeed, In a Pew survey (<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2010/09/28/u-s-religious-knowledge-survey-who-knows-what-about-religion/>)

- only 45% of respondents could name all four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)
- About 63% knew the first book of the Bible (Genesis)
- Only about 71% knew where Jesus was born. (Bethlehem)

Trans: Where are you when it comes to the spiritual habit of Bible study?

BODY: In the apostle Paul's second letter to Timothy, he charged him to remain faithful to the study and preaching of God's Word that God's people might be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We can practice the spiritual habit of Bible study that we might be thoroughly equipped for every good work. How can we practice the spiritual habit of Bible study? The text gives **three steps** on how to practice the habit of Bible study.

Read text: 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV) ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

HOW TO PRACTICE THE HABIT OF BIBLE STUDY:

1. **LISTEN** —Read God's Word as His life-transforming message to you.

EXP: (16a) "All Scripture is breathed out by God" Receive God's Word as His personal message to you, recognizing its authority and letting it speak life-giving transformation to your heart.

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“All Scripture” (16) (πᾶσα γραφή, *pasa graphē*) - *pasa* “all.” *graphē*, a writing(s); the Scripture.

“Breathed out by God” (16) (θεόπνευστος, *theopneustos*) - literally God’s breath or wind; divinely breathed in; given by inspiration of God. NIV rightly translates this, “All Scripture is God-breathed.”

ARG: **Hearing the Word and growing in faith are connected.**

Romans 10:17 (NKJV) So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The psalmist was determined to study God’s Word and reflect on God’s ways.

Psalms 119:15 (NLT) I will study your commandments and reflect on your ways.

ILL: I went on mission with CRU Summer of ‘78 and Robin wrote me letters. We had just gotten engaged and I couldn’t wait to read them. I read them over and over. Have you ever felt that way about God’s Word?

APP: Begin your Bible study habit by setting aside a daily time and place to listen to God’s voice in Scripture. Start with a reading plan. Pray, “Lord, open my ears to hear Your voice today. Speak to me by Your Spirit through Your Word.” [Join our OYB readers Facebook group.](#) [Follow my daily OYB podcast.](#)

2. **LEARN** —Apply God’s Word to guide and shape how you think and act.

EXP: (16b) ... profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness

“Profitable” (16) (ὠφέλιμος, *ōphelimos*) - helpful or useful, advantageous; profit(-able).

“Teaching” (16) (διδασκαλία, *didaskalia*) - instruction; doctrine, learning, teaching.

“Reproof” (16) (ἐλεγχος, *elegchos*) - a proof, evidence, reproof, rebuke.

“Correction” (16) (ἐπανόρθωσις, *epanorthōsis*) - correction, straighten (*ortho* - like setting a broken bone)

“Training” (16) (παιδεία, *paideia*) - the whole training and education of children, includes the training and care of the body; whatever in adults also cultivates the soul, esp. by correcting mistakes and curbing passions. Instruction which aims at increasing virtue.

“In righteousness” (16) (δικαιοσύνη, *dikaioσύνη*) - the condition acceptable to God; integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking feeling, and acting.

ARG: **Study the Word of God so that you can “rightly” apply it to your life:**

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

First listen to God’s Word and then obey it:

James 1:22 (NLT) But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.

Memorize it.

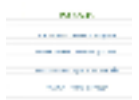
Psalms 119:11 (NIV) I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Meditate on it.

Psalms 1:2-3 (NIV) But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

ILL: The Hand illustration. How to get a grasp on your Bible: hear, read, study, memorize, meditate, and we always add, “apply or obey” in the palm.

APP: Don’t just read the Bible—apply it. Each time you study, ask: “What is this teaching me about God? What is it teaching about me? What should I start, stop, or continue doing?” Keep a journal. [Try using the SOAP method of Bible study.](#)



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3. LIVE —Remain in God's Word to be equipped for every good work.

EXP: (v.17) ... that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

"Man of God" (17) - "...designates the Christian generally, who is striving, with his Master's help, to live a life pleasing to God." (Ellicott)

"Complete" (17) (ἄριστος, *artios*) (*hapax legomenon*) - fitted; fully prepared, competent, complete.

"Equipped" (17) (ἐξοπρίζω, *exartizō*) (Perf.Pass.Part.) - Lit., "equipping/equipped." The perfect tense conveys an action completed in the past with continuing results into the present. The Word is able to thoroughly and completely equip the believer. The passive voice means the subject ("man of God") doesn't equip himself; rather, he is equipped by something else. That something, in context, is the Scripture.

"Good work" (17) (ἔργον ἀγαθόν, *ergon agathon*) - useful; good, ... deed, doing, labour, work.

ARG: Jesus said that we are to live on God's Word:

Matthew 4:4 (NIV) Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

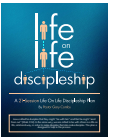
The habit of Bible Study is a way of working out what God is working in us:

Philippians 2:12-13 (NIV) ¹² ...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

ILL: Medical experts tell us that working out doesn't actually build muscle—it breaks it down. When you lift weights, you put stress on your muscles, creating tiny tears in the fibers. At first, the muscle is actually weaker. But here's the miracle of God's design: during rest and recovery, the body repairs those fibers, making them thicker and stronger than before. Growth doesn't happen in the gym—it happens in the recovery, as the body adapts.

The same is true spiritually. When we study God's Word, it sometimes stretches us, convicts us, even tears down wrong ways of thinking and living. But if we remain in the Word and let the Spirit apply it, we grow stronger in the Lord. Bible study equips us—not instantly, but over time—to be complete in Christ and ready for every good work.

APP: Will you commit to making the habit of Bible study a lifelong pursuit? Just as physical exercise and proper nutrition is important to your body, so Bible study is necessary for your spiritual life! Need a personal trainer? Sign up for Life On Life Discipleship. Or attend our How to Study and Teach the Bible seminar this coming Friday, 9/19 - Saturday, 9/20.



CONCLUSION: The Bible is not just another book. It is the God-breathed Word that makes us wise for salvation, grows us in maturity, and equips us for every good work. But it will not transform your life if it stays closed on the shelf. We must open it up and study it!

So here's the call. Will you...

1. Listen to God's Word daily?
2. Learn from it by applying it to your thoughts and actions?
3. Live in it so that you are equipped for every good work?

When you make Bible study a spiritual habit, you are cooperating with the Spirit in becoming more like Jesus. And growing more like Jesus is the goal of all the spiritual habits.

Let's pray.