

## How Your Bible Study Should Change You

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This file is a collection of notes and commentaries made from the podcast by Jen Wilkin titled How Your Quiet Time Should Change You. To access and listen to this podcast, please click on the following link:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/jen-wilkin-how-quiet-time-should-change-you/>

**Matthew 4:4, NIV** – Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

The issue of **Biblical illiteracy** is a serious one.

An article by Al Moeller titled The Scandal of Biblical Illiteracy: It's Our Problem stated that

**Fewer than half** of all adults can name the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John);

Many Christians cannot identify more than two or three of the 12 disciples;

**60%** of Americans can't name even five of the Ten Commandments;

**82%** of Americans believe that "God helps those who help themselves" is a Bible verse;

*Those who identify as 'born again' Christians did better in this regard...by 1%.*

Majority of adults think the Bible teaches that the most important purpose in life is taking care of one's family;

**12%** of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife;

**Over 50%** of graduating seniors thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife.

**We need to be men and women who know what we believe and why we believe it grounded in the Word of God.** So let's first identify how not to do this.

The Xanax Approach – reading the Bible with the intent to *feel* something. Going to Scripture in search of what it can do for me or how it can make me feel instead of studying to obey, glorify, and know the One whom it is actually about.

**Drawbacks.** You will inevitably avoid the hard Scriptures. You will cherry pick the satisfying verses rather than the confusing or 'not-so-encouraging' pieces of Scripture.

The Pinball Approach – jumping around book by book, verse by verse, to wherever you happen to land.

**Drawbacks.** You will never build a critical understanding of the Bible. You won't get the entirety of the Scriptures; only bits and pieces scrambled out of order.

The Magic 8 Ball Approach – approaching the Scripture with the hopes and expectations that it will help you make those 'big decisions.' Reading the Bible in order to see if the 'signs' point to yes.

**Drawbacks.** You are superseding the omniscience of God by using the Bible to provide future knowledge when such future knowledge belongs to God alone. This study approach seeks to understand 'what to do' rather than 'who to be.'

The Personal Shopper Approach – reading the Scriptures like a ‘how-to manual.’ Topical studies would fall under this category.

**Drawbacks.** This approach only builds a spot-knowledge of Scripture, not a big-picture knowledge. Topical studies are profitable, but they are certainly not foundational.

The Telephone Approach – reading anything and everything other than the Bible. This approach seeks Biblical wisdom from uninspired works rather than the inspired Word of God (i.e. reading Biblical commentaries, blogs, or scholarly works before first reading the Bible).

**Drawbacks.** We only get second, third, or even fourth-hand knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures. Though these opinions are valuable, they are not foundational. They are only beneficial when layered on top of a personal, foundational understanding of the Bible. **We have a responsibility as children of God to have our own understanding of Scriptural text. If we don’t know where we stand, we will be at risk of absorbing *anything* as truth.**

The Jack Sprat Approach – picky eating. We approach the Bible as if there’s blue portions and pink portions. 2 Timothy 3:16 explains that *all Scripture* is God-breathed, therefore we need *all* of it, not just the portions of our choosing. *The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) won’t hold meaning if not accompanied by a comprehensive understanding of the Old Testament.*

**Drawbacks.** You gain a very incomplete understanding of the Bible.

So how should our Bible Study change us?

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**Jeremiah 17:9, NIV** – The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

We can’t even understand our own hearts or motives. We are deceived by our own desires, therefore we cannot rely solely on the feelings and emotions of our hearts to gauge change.

**Romans 12:2, NIV** – Do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

We are instructed in **Luke 10:27, NIV** to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with **all your mind**.

You are instructed to seek God with you *intellect*.

You are smart.

You have the capacity for knowledge beyond understanding, as **Ephesians 3:17-19, NIV** says that we, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to **know** this love that **surpasses knowledge** – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

This is our responsibility as children of God, to get wisdom; to get understanding; to not forget God’s words or turn away from them. We are instructed to get wisdom. Though it cost all we have, we are to get understanding and cherish her...(paraphrased, **Proverbs 4:5,7**).

As **Romans 12:2, NIV** says, transformation goes from the head to the heart.

However, we tend to want an experience; an emotionally-driven experience before knowledge. “We cannot love what we do not know” though. So instead, those experiences and emotions should be sparked by an enhanced knowledge; an enhanced understanding and intellect of Scripture.

**“Ask more of your relationship with the Lord than to just have an experience with Him.”**

What is the better way?

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Devotional reading vs. Study reading

**Devotional reading** is a quick, short-term approach, whereas

**Study reading** is seeking deep understanding and knowledge of the Scripture.

*You need both devotional and study reading, as both are profitable. However only one is **foundational**.*

It is most important to remember that the Bible is a book about **God**.

**“The Bible is not about you. The Bible, from beginning to end is a shameless and glorious declaration of the nature and character of God before it says anything about who you are.”**

You cannot put the things the Bible says about you in their proper places without first asking what the text says about God.

Therefore, read the Bible with an approach that is seeking to understand more about the **subject** of the text (God) in order to then see oneself in relation to that subject.

**“Your fears and doubts will never be banished by a knowledge of who you are but only by an understanding and knowledge of the Great I Am.”**

It is very important that you **stay put**. Pick a book of the Bible and stay there. Don’t jump around.

Read through the entire book before you ask questions or take notes.

Get it going through your head. Read it again. Then again. And again. Let it dwell within you richly.

**Hebrews 5:14, NIV** – But solid food (i.e. sound understanding, knowledge) is for the mature, **who by constant use** have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Maturity only comes from constant use of the Scriptures; from reading and re-reading again and again the Word of God.

**Honor the context.** Ask the important questions before you start studying the book; questions such as what the context is, who the author is, what the style is, who the audience is, when it was written, and in what theme it was written.

You do not have the right to impress meaning into Scripture. It does not matter what the verse personally means to you without you first understanding what the verse actually **means**.

**Your experience with that verse has no meaning without the foundation of its actual, intended meaning being established first.**

**1 Peter 1:25, NIV** – the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever. This means that the text has the same meaning to you as it did to that person who read it three thousand years ago.

*You do not get to impose your own, personal meaning onto the inspired, God-breathed Words of Scripture that endure forever. Understand meaning.*

**Know the genre.** Know what you're reading and how it was intended to be read; the rules of the text.

<b>Old Testament</b>	<b>History</b>													<b>Poetry</b>									
	The Laws of Moses																						
	Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy		Joshua	Judges	Ruth		1 & 2 Samuel	1 & 2 Kings	1 & 2 Chronicles		Ezra	Nehemiah	Esther		Job	Psalms	Proverbs	Ecclesiastes	Song of Solomon
	<b>Prophecy</b>																						
	Major Prophets									Minor Prophets													
	Isaiah	Jeremiah	Lamentations	Ezekiel		Daniel	Hosea	Joel	Amos	Obadiah	Jonah	Micah	Nahum	Habakkuk	Zephaniah	Haggai	Zechariah	Malachi					
	<b>New Testament</b>																						
	<b>Biography</b>				<b>History</b>				<b>Paul's Letters</b>														
	The Gospels																						
	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John		Acts		Romans	1 Corinthians	2 Corinthians	Galatians	Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians	1 Thessalonians	2 Thessalonians	1 Timothy	2 Timothy	Titus	Philemon			
<b>Other Letters</b>									<b>Prophecy</b>														
Romans	James	1 Peter	2 Peter	1 John	2 John	3 John	Jude		Revelation														

## What does the text say?

Your first question when studying Scripture should be - *'what does the text say?'*

Read the verse.

Pick out terms.

Compare and contrast to other translations.

Use the English Dictionary.

Once you've read the text, start annotating.

*Just because you don't have a degree in Theology or Bible Study doesn't mean you can't annotate, interpret, and mark up the text.*

**Just remember** – meaning is determined by the author and discovered by the reader. You don't get to put your own meaning into a verse, but you can work out the meaning by processing it through annotations and notes.

\*tip – type out the text on a double-spaced, wide-margin document in order to give yourself plenty of room to write. If you do this right, you won't have enough room in the margins of your Bible.

## Study all of it.

Study the Old Testament and the New Testament; the Genealogies, Gospels, Histories, Poetry, Prophecy, and Letters.

*All Scripture is God-breathed and all Scripture is beneficial (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV).*

## Pray.

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you (James 1:5, NIV).*

If you want to have the knowledge of the Scriptures, *ask God.*

## Final Thoughts –

Feel. Dwell in the extent of what you do not know, for this will lead to that 'ah-ha' moment.

Avoid commentaries until you have earnestly fought to gain understanding on the text first. Get lost and then find your way out. When you do this, you will guarantee that you'll never get lost in that Scripture again.

*After listening to this podcast several times and taking extensive notes on it (of which I am sharing with you now), I came up with a step-by-step Bible Study process.*

1. **Decide on a book.** A great way to do this is to think of a book that you know nothing about.
2. **What is the context? Author? Style? Audience? Timeline? Theme?**
3. **Read the book all the way through without taking any notes or asking any questions.**
4. **Read it again and underline/highlight.**
5. **Read it again and annotate.** This is where you'll want to type/print the text on a double-space, wide-margin document to give yourself enough room.
6. **Read it once more and supplement the text with other trusted annotations, commentaries, and outside resources.**
7. **Be sure to document your progress.** Take notes. However you process information, do that. If it's writing, note taking, color-coding, note cards, whatever. Whatever method helps you process information, do that.