

# “How Do You Read the Bible?”

## How to Study the Bible

Various Scriptures

The Rev. Ted Wood

July 29, 2022

**Ted:** The Lord be with you.

**Brave Men:** And also with you.

**Ted:** I want to talk today about how do you read the Bible? Jeff has been teaching on how to read the Bible. But I thought I would make it a little more personal.

I’m going to ask you to do something that may perhaps put you in your discomfort zone. Sig is going to pass out a little survey and I want you to fill it in now. And it’s going to require you to be very honest. It’s just going to take an instant, a quick moment to fill it in. And it’s going to ask about how often you read the Bible. And I want you to fill it in; you may be inclined not to. It’s going to be kept absolutely autonomous, anonymous and anacephalous. (*Laughter*)

And it asks, “Do you read the Bible more than once a day, once a day, four-plus days a week, once a week, only during worship service or Bible study or small group, a couple times a month, or once every few months?” I just want you to be honest.

Now as a point of disclosure this is what I’m talking about. It says, “Do I read the Bible once a day?” Well, that’s what my intention is. But in fact I probably read it four to five to six times a week. So there’s another thing under there where it says, “four-plus days a week.” So if that’s you, please go ahead and do that. Let’s just do this very quickly. Do not opt out; just do it. Nobody will see what your answer is, except God. And just fold it up and give it to Sig. Just fill it in, fold it up and give it to Sig.

**Matt Kail:** Except God and Sig. I’ll give it to Sig.

**Ted:** Bring it to a ceremony where we have the fire burning and everybody drops it into the fire. (*Laughter*) You know how those go. Okay; I’ll help pick them up. Okay, the class is over; go in peace. The Lord be with you.

**Brave Men:** And also with you.

**Ted:** Let us pray. Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that by the patience and comfort of Your holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which You have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Ted:** Thomas Cranmer who was Archbishop of Canterbury in the mid-1500s, when he was putting together *The Book of Common Prayer*; which became the praying book for the English people for several centuries, appointed a prayer for each Sunday service. So there were 52 prayers. They called them *collects* because they tended to collect the thoughts of the worship service that day. And this is the prayer for the second Sunday in Advent, which is the beginning of the Christian year.

Cranmer felt that it was so important that the English people hear and read and mark and learn and inwardly digest the Scriptures that he injected and thot through this entire book Scripture after Scripture after Scripture. He introduced the singing of the Psalms in tunes that the English people, the common person—as Wycliffe said, “the plowman, the

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most common person in the kingdom,” could sing along with. They were easy tunes, and he just put the Psalms to them.

And so it was very critical. He knew that if the English people were to be Reformed and come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ that they would have to get into the Word and study the Word. So that’s what we’re going to be talking about today. I’m going to be talking about “How to Read the Bible”; that’s Jeff’s title. But how do you read the Bible?

And the Scripture tells us how important it is to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Scriptures. I’ve just pulled out several Scriptures here.

Psalm 119:

*“Your Word is a lamp to my feet,  
And a light to my path.”*

*“Your testimonies”—that’s the word of God; what God says; what He testifies to—  
“Your testimonies are wonderful;  
Therefore my soul keeps them.”*

The unfolding—read, mark, learn, inwardly digest,—  
*“The unfolding of Your words gives light;  
It imparts understanding to the simple.  
I open my mouth and I pant,  
Because I long for Your commandments.”*

In Ephesians it tells us that *“the household of God”—that is, the church—“is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.”* Our church is built on the testimony of the apostles and the prophets. And that’s where our church and our faith begin.

Another Psalm, Psalm 119: *“I find my delight in Your commandments.”* The Hebrew word there is *order your charges*.

*“I find my delight in Your commandments, which I love.*

*I will lift up my hands*

*Toward Your commandments, which I love,*

*And I will meditate on Your statutes.”*

I will lift up my hands to the word of God in praise.

These are really powerful, heartfelt. It’s interesting that in some liturgical services, when they go to read the word of God, they stand for it and then they kiss it, as the Jews did with the Torah service when the Torah was brought out and paraded. People reached for their prayer shawls and touched it and kissed it. They kissed the Word. *“I lift my hands to Your commandments”* and Your word.

So I want to talk about us reading the Bible. I want to find out from you how you read the Bible. I want to talk about how I read the Bible. And then we can talk about how you read the Bible.

I just got the results for our survey; you might be interested to hear them.

**Sig Tragard:** Ted, did you vote? *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** Thank you, Sig. *(Laughter)* That’s good. Okay, this is interesting. Five of you said you read the Scriptures more than once a day. Once a day: five of you. Nobody put down once a week. Four-plus days a week: sixteen of you. So sixteen of you—which is over half of the folks here; 60-65%—are reading the Scriptures mostly—not every day, but mostly. I would include myself in that. For example, this morning I didn’t read them; I was rushing to get out of bed. But that’s a lot of excuses, isn’t it?

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**Sig:** The day is young, Ted.

**Ted:** Yes. Only during a worship service or a Bible study—one person said that. And then none said a couple of times a month, and nobody said once every several months.

So we have a group here that is very seriously reading the Scriptures. So thank God for that in your own lives.

I had breakfast this week with a friend. And I asked him the same question, about how often they read the Scriptures and how they do it. The friend told me, “I’m embarrassed. I should spend more time reading the Bible. But I don’t generally like reading.”

I would say that I should spend a lot more time praying, but I don’t like praying. So everyone is kind of wired a little differently. I mostly like reading books that have lots of pictures in them. *(Laughter)* That would make a lot of texts.

**Don Maurer:** Me too. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** Bishop Rodgers is always trying to pass off a book for me to read, and I ask how many pictures are in it. So I usually decline to read those books. That sun is coming in pretty brightly, isn’t it?

**Sig:** That’s what the white board is there for.

**Ted:** Well let’s do something about it, okay? No, we can’t do anything about it. When I studied in Israel in the early ‘70s we were admitted to a Jewish Torah school, a Yeshiva, where ultra-Orthodox Hasidic Jews would study the Word. And we were put up in the balcony; you’ve heard me tell the story before. We were admitted to a balcony. And that balcony had curtains in front of it because we were Goyim; we were Gentiles. We were not *kodesh*; we were not kosher. And so we couldn’t be down on the same floor as the men that were studying.

I would guess there were about sixty men there. And they were paired up and they argued with each other about what the Word said. But they committed themselves to eleven years; it was an eleven-year course of study for which they got no degree, no certificate. But it was a solid eleven years of worship—raising your hands to God’s commandments so that they would study His word for those eleven years.

And I asked “How did they make a living if this is all they do?” And the answer was that their families flipped the bill; they figured it’s that important. So when we say that we have difficulty getting every day to the word of God, here we have folks that don’t even know the Savior and are still hoping that He comes, that are committing eleven years of their lives to sitting there and arguing—not just reading but arguing! And they were arguing. They were either rocking forward in prayer as they read the Torah, or they would argue with each other on points. So read, mark, learn and inwardly digest.

So there are different ways that we can read the Bible. Some of us read the Bible and say, “I’m going through it in a one-year project. I’ve got a list and I check it off as I go through. So my goal is to read the Bible in an entire year.” And you can find plenty of check lists where you go through and you read, and I did this and this and this.

Or when we read the Bible we use a devotional book to go along with it. My friend who I chatted with over breakfast uses David Jeremiah’s devotional book. I tend not to do that because I don’t want that guy’s bias. *(Laughter)* And I know that everybody comes with a bias to the Word. I like David Jeremiah, but some of the stuff I think is a little weak. So I just don’t use a devotional, but if you’re using it, that’s fine. I think John Guest just put out a devotional Bible, didn’t he? Didn’t he have a Bible that they hand out at Christ Church? It’s a devotional Bible.

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Or you say, “What I’m going to do is that I’m going to read one chapter a day; that’s what I’m going to do. And I’ll get as far as I can get.” The *Book of Common Prayer* sets out a reading schedule where you can read the entire Bible in three years.

Do you pray before you read the Bible? I don’t normally. I should, but I don’t. I pray; usually nowadays I pray when I wake up in the middle of the night; that’s kind of my prayer time.

When I read the Bible I try to make a practice of reading it first thing in the morning when I get up; it sets the day. But my wife reads it in the evening. So everybody is a little different.

I’m just wondering about how you read the Bible. If you would just kind of share with me, what is your Bible reading practice? This came on you suddenly, but not that suddenly because I kind of warned you I was going to do this. Jim?

**Jim Hamilton:** I bought an NIV Study Bible; it’s a huge Bible.

**Ted:** Yeah.

**Jim:** And I read through it in about three months.

**Don Maurer:** Wow!!

**Jim:** *(Unclear)*

**Ted:** You mean that you read not only the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but all the commentary.

**Jim:** All the footnotes.

**Ted:** The footnotes. Well I think that Jim is guaranteed to go to heaven as a result of that. *(Laughter)* Because I’ve never done it. Okay, so that’s how you did it, Jim. Thank you. And it was a powerful experience for you, wasn’t it?

**Jim:** It was; I enjoyed it.

**Ted:** Yes?

**Brave Man:** I’m trying to establish a routine where I read two chapters in the Old Testament and two chapters in the New Testament with overlap when I find that I need content. So whenever I would first start I’d read the introduction to the first chapter. The next thing is that I’ll read chapters 1 and 2, and so forth. I start reading them out loud. *(Unclear)* The routine is going past what my goal is. And I find that I have to refer to my *Reformation Study Bible* because if I read the hard copy to recognize data, I have no idea what has been fulfilled.

**Ted:** Yeah.

**Brave Man:** For things like that I need additional guidance.

**Ted:** Okay, good. Okay, how else do the rest of you read the Bible? If you’re reading it four-plus days a week, how do you read it? Rich has his thoughts.

**Rich Clark:** I read one chapter from the Psalms, one chapter from the Old Testament, and one chapter from the New Testament. And a simple prayer as I open up my reading is from Psalm 119:

*“Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law.”*

**Ted:** Beautiful, beautiful. John Piper, the Reformed Baptist theologian and thinker and writer—that is his verse. So you and John Piper are like this. *(Laughter)* I was just thinking, Rich, because you read the Psalms, the Old Testament, the Epistles and the Gospels, that you’re going to become an Anglican, because that’s what they do. Okay, how else do you read the Bible?

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**Brave Man:** I use an app. You refer to the Bible and it gives you the verse of the day and a chapter of the day. It’s convenient on my phone or my tablet; it’s nice.

**Ted:** Okay. How else do the rest of you read the Bible? Come on; fifteen or sixteen of you said that you read it.

**Sig:** Everybody responded.

**Ted:** I know, really.

**Roger Myers:** I frequently read one of R. C. Sproul’s commentaries. It gives you a big chunk of Scripture.

**Ted:** Yeah. So you read the commentary and that leads you to the Scripture versus the other way around right?

**Roger:** Yeah.

**Ted:** That’s very interesting. Yes?

**Don Maurer:** Mine is similar to Rich. I’ll read one of the historical or prophetic chapters in the Old Testament and a Psalm or a chapter in Proverbs, and then a portion from a Gospel and then an Epistle.

**Ted:** Wow! You are an Anglican, aren’t you? *(Laughter)*

**Don:** No.

**Ted:** You really are, Don; you’ve just been resisting it. Okay, how else do the rest of you read it? We’ve got others here. Yes?

**David Miller:** I go to Bible Gateway to their verse of the day and their chapter of the day. And also I’m teaching from 1 Peter in my Christian ministry. Of course I’ll read that, but I also read commentaries just so that I have more information. *(Unclear)*

**Ted:** So you’re doing a personal Bible study plus another Bible study related to your ministry.

**David:** Right.

**Ted:** Right; okay. Yes?

**Brave Man:** It’s always in connection with a Bible study.

**Ted:** Okay. You read the Scripture in connection with a Bible study you’re doing?

**Brave Man:** It helps just to sit down and read the rest of the text.

**Ted:** Okay, we had some others. Mike?

**Mike Davis:** Over the years there have been times when I don’t read at all. Other times I’ll get into a book of the Bible after I talk to the Lord and I say, “Where do you want me to go?” I get into a book of the Bible—let’s say Ephesians or Colossians, or whatever it is—

**Ted:** Mm-hmm.

**Mike:** It’s usually in the New Testament. I will speed read; I will skim the entire book as fast as I can go, at one setting in ten minutes. I’m trying to get the overarching theme of what it’s talking about. Forget the details; get the overarching theme.

**Ted:** Mm-hmm.

**Mike:** Then I come back and begin to read one chapter at a time over the course of however long it takes me to read a book of the Bible.

**Ted:** That’s good.

**Mike:** That helps with the details.

**Ted:** Yes; that’s good. I do that when I’m preparing a Bible lesson; I skim the whole thing and then go back. You know, what’s it all about?

**Mike:** To help see the context.

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**Ted:** Right, exactly right. Yes?

**Brave Man:** We have a yearly Bible. So my wife and I sit down every evening.

**Ted:** Oh, wow!

**Brave Man:** There are a couple chapters in the Old Testament; there is the New Testament; there's a Psalm and there's a Proverb.

**Ted:** So is this like a reading program?

**Brave Man:** Yes.

**Ted:** And you do that with your wife?

**Brave Man:** Yes.

**Ted:** Go ahead, please.

**Don Bishop:** I use “Table Talk.”

**Ted:** Oh, yeah.

**Don:** It's very good. This year it's going through the book of Exodus. And sometimes I'll just pick a book of the Bible and go through it more in depth.

**Ted:** For those of you who do not know, “Table Talk:” is a devotional booklet put out by Ligonier Ministries, is that right? There is a Scripture, a Bible reading, and then a thought or a meditation or a commentary, right?

**Don:** Yes.

**Ted:** Yes.

**Jim:** Every publication deals with specific subjects. It comes out once a month.

**Ted:** Really? Okay. What else? Yeah, here we go. See, I'll tell you; nobody raises their hands and then everybody is getting in.

**Brave Man:** It sounds like a lot. I usually try to get up first thing and have a cup of coffee and read at least a chapter or two. I kind of bounce around; I've gone pretty much through the Bible a few times. I just get into the Old Testament and I just go through that. Then if I'm reading a Gospel I might go back to Proverbs. And typically I'll sometimes read a Proverb for the day that it is. If it's the 15<sup>th</sup> I'll read chapter 15 of Proverbs. In my study of Proverbs there is all kinds of stuff that I can draw from.

**Ted:** All right. I try not to read Proverbs; it's a little too convicting for me. *(Laughter)* It starts off the day as a bummer. It's interesting, talking about reading the Scripture with your wife. We sit down for a meal. I'm kind of semi-retired and she is retired. And we certainly have more time to get on each other's nerves during the day.

But what we do at meals is, I got tired of saying grace, because I just couldn't come up with anything very interesting. God bless Grandma and Grandpa. It almost started to sound childish.

So I said, you know, I'm going to jettison my cleverness and my originality and my ability to come up with something interesting in the prayer. I'm going to read the Scripture instead. So every time when we sit down for a meal we read the next section of Scriptures. Right now we're in Luke.

And it's amazing what it does! I mean, it is such an improvement over my grace or the prayer I might say; it is such an improvement. Sometimes we'll read a section, and then we'll just stop arbitrarily at the end of the paragraph. And we just kind of sit there silently because the Scripture is so wonderful.

That's what we started to do. And so if you get tired of saying a prayer: “O Lord, thank You for the opportunity to be here and for this meal. And we thank You that we're privileged while others are not, and so we Thank you.” This kind of stuff; you go on and

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on; I think it’s just words. But when you read God’s word it is the Word! We were talking this morning. As Bishop said,—get the Scripture that we were saying, Bishop.

**Bishop Rodgers:** As Jesus says, *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.”* If that isn’t a declaration of divinity, I don’t know what is.

**Ted:** Yeah, right.

**Bishop:** When reality as we see it disappears, Jesus gets it done.

**Ted:** *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”* Man shall live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. We want to take the Word and kiss it, and as it says in the Psalms, raise your hands in worship. So—

**Sig:** You’re including Numbers in that?

**Ted:** The book of Numbers? *(Laughter)* That’s good. You know, I forced the adults that I teach at my church through a year-and-a-quarter of Exodus. It was great. I tell you, they knew the God of Israel by the time they finished that study, which is very important. I made the point that 76% of the chapters in the Bible are in the Old Testament, yet we spend so little time there.

My friend and I were at a gathering the other day with a next-door neighbor to see another neighbor off. And we’re a pretty neighborly neighborhood. We had this gathering and they had a kind of a cookout for this neighbor that was going. And we started telling stories to one another. And one of the stories I told was stories of raising our children.

And I said, “When my older daughter was young we put her to bed, and we hear this crying from the other room.” Have I told you this story? So she’s crying. At this point Sarah is about six or seven years old. She’s crying and I come in and say, “Honey, what’s wrong?”

And she says, “I’m scared of the dark.”

And I said, “Well honey, Jesus is with you. Just think that Jesus is with you and cares for you and will comfort you and protect you.”

“Okay.” I go off. A few minutes later, “uh! Uh!” I go back in. I said, “Sarah, what’s the problem?”

She said, “I’m scared of Jesus.” *(Laughter)* As she should be. *(Laughter)* But I told this story at this gathering. And my next-door neighbor is pretty active in his church. They switched between a Catholic church and a nondenominational church for flavor. And when I made that comment she said, “I’m scared of Jesus.” And then I thought, and she should be. And the guys said to me, “Oh, that’s the Old Testament Jesus.” *(Sighs)* And you hear this all the time, don’t you? It’s the Old Testament versus the New Testament—the bad, mean God versus the caring, loving, good God. Yes?

**Brave Man:** How about Jesus in Revelation?

**Ted:** Well, that’s the problem. I’ve stored that up and I’m ready for our next discussion. *(Laughter)* Except the only problem is that I need him to watch our house while we’re away, so I don’t want to irritate him; that’s always the compromise.

**Bishop:** Ted, there’s another ending to that story that’s similar about the little girl who was crying. “Jesus is with you.” She kept crying. The father went back and said, “Why are you crying?”

She said, “I want someone with skin on.” *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** Oh, yeah. And he wants someone with skin in the game. *(Laughter)*

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**Sig:** Ted, don't you find for those of us who have children who have grown up in the church, that our reading habits have changed? You know, I read to my son every night. We had prayers together; I'd read him a short passage. We'd do it at the dinner table.

**Ted:** Yeah.

**Sig:** And as I got older I got more intense about things. You know, we had these grand ideas about learning the Bible in new way. We'd go to a Bible study. I don't know about you men, but I bet we all go to at least one if not three Bible studies a week, if we're serious about our faith.

**Ted:** Jim Hamilton goes to ten. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** I'm only joking.

**Jim:** Three.

**Ted:** Three. Well, there you go; you see.

**Sig:** And then we're changing shifts. And then after a while most of my Bible studies have been with Don Maurer on the phone when we challenge each other about Scripture.

**Ted:** Yeah. I hope you're listening—

**Sig:** Don't challenge Don Maurer about Scripture. *(Laughter)(Unclear)* Anyway,--

**Ted:** Anyway, back to my discussion with my friend over breakfast. He says he has difficulty reading the Bible because he really doesn't like to read anything but how-to books. And the Bible is really two parts, isn't it? It's a how-to book, but it's a who-is book. And the who-is part is often missed. We've kind of dumbed down our preaching in the last couple of decades because we have a few key who-is points the preacher makes: Who is God? Who are you? And then he promotes the how-to application very pragmatically.

I just think about the importance of meditating on the who-is part of the Bible. That's probably where I am. As the Psalmist said:

*“I lift up my hands toward Your commandments which I love,  
And will meditate on Your statutes.”*

I think about the times I've been out in nature, out in the West particularly, in amazing places, gazing and meditating on the beauty—the breathtaking landscape, the beauty—a sunrise, a sunset, before a thunderstorm, after a thunderstorm. I can gaze on nature and meditate and be in a state of worship and praise. And God wants the same reaction to His word—to gaze on it, to meditate on it, to just worship in the presence of His word.

Bruce Bickel's approach has always been kind of a how-to approach. Remember his two famous sayings: “Learning is for living, and living is for loving.” Remember that?

Well, that's absolutely true. But it doesn't give me much gazing time and much worship time. Okay, I've presented it; I've done the study. Now guys, learning is for living; living is for loving. Now go on and do something. Or, as he would always say, “What am I going to do with what I've learned?” That's another Bickelism, right?

You know what? I often felt a little chilly after that because I said, “I have no idea what I'm going to do with it. Or I don't want to do it.” And if that's the case with my own attitude, then I need to spend more time meditating on God and who He is, because that will lead to the how-to and the pragmatic application. That's my understanding. And it raises the whole question of how behavior and attitude change is best achieved for the Christian maturing in Christ.



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Actually you can say, “What are you going to do with what you’ve learned today?” But how does that actually happen? How does that actually work itself out day to day, minute to minute? Okay, Matt.

**Matt:** So this is one of the challenges because we’re so action-oriented in our culture. But meditating on the word of God can be an end unto itself.

**Ted:** Do you mean a dead end?

**Matt:** I don’t necessarily need to say, “Okay, now I’ve meditated upon that Word, and now I’m going to do something.”

**Ted:** Mm-hmm.

**Matt:** For instance, Revelation. So just meditating on the word of God is already doing something.

**Ted:** That’s interesting; that’s good.

**David:** Ted?

**Ted:** Yes.

**David:** Things are always happening in your life. When things go wrong it gets you into His word. It builds your relationship with God. It shows what He wants you to do.

**Ted:** And once again you kind of wrapped it up by saying what we’re to do, and that’s good. But I think there is a more important thing—that is, to meditate on who He is, because I’ve found that meditating on who God is, learning that in this gathering.

I started at Brave Men with the 28 attributes of God. Were there 28 or 26?

**Sig:** Bruce found 28.

**Ted:** Okay. Well then, it’s written in heaven. (*Laughter*) The 28 attributes of God. I started that group right in the middle of the process and I thought, this is going to be boring. I mean, I’ve studied; I’ve been to seminary. I know the attributes of God.

Well, it changed me completely. It was one of the most transformative experiences I’ve ever had in my Christian faith to sit through that course under Bruce, and meditate and think on and read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the attributes of God. And the focus was not on what I was going to do, so much as on who God is.

And I think that yes, we need to focus on the how-to. But that’s now where we’re hurting. We’re hurting in the area of who God is and who we are.

I want to talk a little bit more about my approach to reading the Bible. And this has evolved, and there’s no kind of method to it, except that this is just what I’ve found. That’s why I’ve asked everybody here how they read the Bible. Your ways are as valid as mine; I’m not claiming any authority here.

But I thought about that passage in 2 Corinthians 3:18; I think I put it there. *“We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”*

Well how do I behold the glory of God? Well, I behold it in the face of Jesus. And I find out about Jesus in this book. So I with unveiled face am beholding the glory of God, and it’s changing me. And that was the point I was just making.

So with that in mind there are three foundational questions I always ask, and you’ve heard me talk about these. I think these are the three foundational questions to any study, any discussion, any evangelism. And that is who is God, who am I?

**Transcriber’s Note:** Someone’s Bible app on his phone speaks.

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**Ted:** That was a word from God; thank you. (*Laughter*) I didn't know He used that method. Who is God? Who am I? And what does God expect of me? Those are the three questions. I find that in all the political and ideological turmoil today that those are the questions that really need to be asked, because people come up with presumptions and ideologies and political systems and beliefs without asking who God is. We're down the road here about oppression and violence, and we haven't even talked about who God is and who you are. We're already on the subject of what we're supposed to do.

So you've jumped the line. And you've based all your thinking on assumptions that are simply not true, because we as Christians start off with who is God, and then who am I?

I have kind of a five-part Bible reading routine. I told you #1—I have it there—that I start in the middle of the night. And I'm also in kind of a mindset of praise and gratitude during the day when things happen. Thank You, Lord, for the parking space; thank You for small favors. So I start with prayer at some time, although I don't pray often.

And then I sit down and journal. And I brought my journal. I must have thirty of forty of these journals; I've been keeping them since 1986. I've shared this with you before.

But I journal. And in that journal it has three parts. #1., I write what basically happened the day before—spiritual and unspiritual, worldly and heavenly. Then that's followed by reading Scripture. And then I pull a verse out of Scripture and write a thought about that.

So I actually write what happened to me the day before. Then I write down this Scripture verse that grabs me. I may read five verses and one clause grabs me; maybe one verse grabs me. Maybe verses 1, 3 and 7 grab me. And I write all those out long hand; it's a discipline, writing out the word of God. And then I make a comment.

So I'm going to read you my entry for Thursday, July 21, 2022; I'll just pick this. I'm reading through 1 Samuel. “Presented with an associate to the Erie Habitat for Humanity. The associate contributed and presented himself very well.” This is a new fellow I'm trying to work into my business. “The Habitat board voted to contract with me to do this study. PTL. I'm very pleased; now it's a matter of getting the contract signed.” That's always a problem, right? “Yeah, we want to do it.”

“No, you need to sign the contract before we can move ahead.”

“I'm very pleased. Now it's a matter of getting the contract. After stopping briefly at the other client's I drove back to Pittsburgh, getting home about 12-20 p.m. On the way home I talked with a pastor about the sermon coming up and his future in the ministry. It was warm and humid yesterday and promises to be so today.”

Life, just living life, right? But kind of thinking about it. What was going on yesterday, and whether that needs attention from God.

Then I read 1 Samuel 14, verses 15-23. So that was eight or nine verses, right? And verses 15 and 18 grabbed me.

And here's what it says; I wrote it out.

*“The panic struck the whole Philistine army. It was panic sent by God.”* Now this is Saul as king, leading the armies of Israel against the Philistines.

*“It was a panic sent by God. Saul said to Ahijah, the high priest of the tabernacle at Shiloh, ‘Bring the ark of God.’”*

So that is the end of the Scripture I read—parts from verses 15 and 18. So I asked the question. I'm reading that. There's something off center here, and so I wrote it down.

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“Why did Saul command the ark of God to be brought to the battle?” Why did he do that? The chaos is in the Philistine camp; they’re slaughtering the Philistines. And Saul calls up the ark of the covenant. Why would he have done that? I mean, that’s the question I’m asking myself.

To improve on what God was so already ably doing? God is throwing the Philistines into chaos. But maybe we ought to bring the ark up too. Maybe we can improve on God’s performance.

Think about that. The Israelites found the Philistines in total confusion. Was Saul trying to improve his chances of winning the battle, improving on what God was already doing? “If so, Lord, I don’t want to be found improving on Your actions.”

So you see, it’s just the ordinary things of life followed by the Scripture reading—pulling out of the Scripture, writing down two verses, half a verse, two verses, half of one, half of another, putting them together. What’s going on, and then please, Lord, don’t let me find that when You’ve thrown my enemy into chaos, don’t let me ask for more. You’ll bring more troops to the battlefield.

So that’s how I do it. I like the discipline; I like writing. And I want to say one last thing about the whole idea of what grabs me. How much Scripture do I read? I may read one or two verses and something grabs me. I may read twenty verses and nothing really grabs me. And then I have to go back and read it again. “Did I miss something, Lord?”

So God stopping and grabbing me is something that I read that might be glorious. It might be heavy and deep; it might be subtle and nuanced. It might be out of place; it might be odd. It’s like I read it and wait a second; that doesn’t sound like God to me. Why is that happening? It doesn’t make sense or it’s disturbing, or I’m just curious about it. So one of those things is going to grab me.

I was listening to a podcast of Bishop Robert Barron, a leading conservative Catholic bishop who was having a discussion with Jordan Peterson. And he made an interesting observation. Bishop Barron said, “The gospel is the most compelling option.” With all the things that are going on in the world, all the different ideologies and claims to the truth and where we ought to go, the gospel is really the most compelling option. Of all the options that’s the most compelling. And he said, “It has the quality of a grab-you-by-the-shoulders message.”

I was driving the car and I stopped and wrote this down. The gospel has the ability to grab you by the shoulders as you read it. And it’s the same thing I’m looking for as I read the Scripture. I want God to grab me and say, “This is what you need to be thinking about at this point.”

So for instance, under the glorious category was from Exodus 15:11. There the Israelites have just triumphed over the Egyptians. The Egyptians have been drowned in the sea. And the Scripture is: “*Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?*”

When I first read that verse it grabbed me because it asked a question. “Who is like You, Lord? Looking at all the things You have done, Lord, is there any comparison?” And that question was something that haunted me; that very question haunted me. So that became a major thinking point for me and thinking about it.

What are the other options? Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? And then I spent time studying where else this question is asked. Deuteronomy 3:24: “*O LORD*

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*God, what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours?”*

Psalm 71:19:

*“Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the high heavens,  
You who have done great things.  
O God, who is like You?”*

Psalm 113 verse 5:

*“Who is like the LORD our God  
Who is seated on high,  
Who looks far down on the heavens and on the earth?”*

So that just grabbed me, and that question always occurs to me. Considering everything else that’s going on in life, who is really like You, God? Is there any God like You at all that has done what You’ve done, who is as amazing as You are?

If I had time I would have gone into Psalm 39. I read Psalm 39, a very disturbing Psalm, because it ends up by saying, “God, quit looking at me; get out of my life.” So I had to break that Psalm down. That grabbed me. Wait a second; why is it saying this?

I mean, David says lots of other nice things to God. But in the end he’s very angry with God if you read through the Psalm. And he’s angry with God because God is making him suffer the consequences for his sin. And I’ve been there. You know, God, it’s enough; time out. You’ve made me suffer the consequences long enough. So just quit doing it.

And then when God doesn’t seem to quit doing it, then David ends up saying in verse 13: *“Look away from me that I may smile again, Before I depart, and am no more.”*

“God, look away from me.” Another translation: *“Look away from me so that I can start living again.”* Is that an amazing thought, that David would say, “God, quit paying attention to me so that I can start living.” I mean okay—bzzz! You could be zapped for making a comment like that to God.

But the point is, I read that and I said, “Wait a second; what is going on here?” And that grabbed me.

One more thing; I talked about it in my last talk. I got very curiosity-driven about the content and the subject matter of the sermons and teachings in the book of Acts. I wondered what they were talking about in Acts in the first thirty years of the church. What was the message about? What was the focus of it? Does it sound like what we’re teaching today, or is it something else?

So those are just examples of where it’s all going. There are other things that I would love to talk to you about—doing word studies, using a concordance, cross-references, actually getting into Greek and Hebrew, which you can actually do without much difficulty. I may pick up on that if I talk again. But the fact of the matter is that studying the Scripture—reading, marking, learning and inwardly digesting the Word—is tough work; it’s very hard work. It’s a wrestling match with the text and a wrestling match with God, to come up with the correct understanding and the right understanding that helps you—asking hard questions, challenging yourself. It’s like a Rubik’s Cube; you keep moving it and moving it and moving it until it becomes clear.

But I have a confidence that I can discern what Jesus is saying because I immerse myself in His word. And after a while you begin to know what God sounds like; you know what God’s voice sounds like. The faithful, loyal dog has been with the master long enough that he knows the master’s voice. And they know what God sounds like and what

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He doesn't sound like. And that stops you from kind of picking and choosing the verses you want, but picking the verses that God says are important and that you need to hear.

So that concludes what I wanted to say. Thanks for waiting a little longer. God bless you. God give us wisdom, and God give us the courage to dive into His word and have our lives changed, about how we think about Him and ourselves and what we're to do. Go in peace. (*Applause*)