

**Bible
Study:
Why?**

CURRENT

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*Equipping the church to reach the world
for the glory of God through Christ*

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Editorial note

The Bible. Why Study?

If you've been around the church for any time, you know you're supposed to read it. It's good for you, right? But maybe it feels as effective as taking vitamins—when you do it, you don't see a difference, and when you don't, you may not see any harm. So why read it, chew on it?

Why did God give us the Bible? To know Him, the Grand Storyteller of our lives and this universe. Where do we come from, and where are we going? Who better to answer than the Alpha and the Omega? How can we know the palpable reality of our union with Christ and the power of the indwelling Spirit?

What relief, that He has not left us to flounder, but has given us a rich and ready resource to know Him more intimately. What gift.

Ingrid Chung

Why I Love Bible Study: Kristie's Thoughts

By Kristie Koontz

1. Why did you choose to lead a Bible study for women?

I've been teaching kids for a while, and after Gail Arneson couldn't do it anymore, I stepped up to the plate and said, "I'll do it." And it was something God was saying to me, "Why don't you do it?" I prayed about it, and I did it! And I'm glad I did!

2. Why did you choose John for the last study? Why "Love and Respect" for the new one?

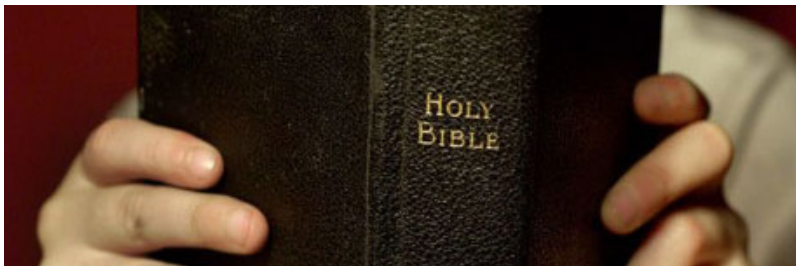
John I chose because I do CBS and I thought I could take it back to my home church, do the same study more thoroughly. And it kept me in God's Word every day, which is really good. I chose "Love and Respect" because it changed my marriage. I went to the seminar and it changed the

Lord. As long as I'm in a Bible study, I'm in God's Word. The closeness of walking with the Lord is worth it. And when you're not in a study, you're more worldly.

5. What's your method when studying the Bible?

- Read a couple translations--NIV, NLT
- Use commentaries.
- I also listen to several pastors on the text (Vernon McGee, John MacArthur).
- On Wednesday night, I open up with prayer. We have a questionnaire with 10-15 questions about the chapter, and go around the room with each person answering a question. We leave it open for discussion.

The closeness of walking with the Lord is worth it.



way I started respecting my husband. Once I saw how I was respecting my husband, I was given love. After 22 years of marriage, I saw the light, and I wanted to share it with others. If I had known in the beginning stages of marriage, it would have definitely been an asset if I had known and put into action. If I had put Ephesians 5:23 into motion, my marriage would've gone a lot smoother.

3. What do you love most about leading a Bible study?

You know what, I love the women--the openness, the spirit of the godly women who've been coming, the fellowship with the women.

4. What's something you've learned about God/the Bible/yourself through this?

Just being in God's Word more and more has enlightened me that life is so much better just walking with the

6. What do you do when you don't want to study the Bible and it's Wednesday night?

It's funny, I haven't really had times where I haven't wanted to do it. Once I commit to something, I stick to it, so I make a regimen to do it, and I just do it.

7. What's one difference between teaching women and teaching children?

Children are so open to the truth, where women will be more questioning and challenge you a little bit more. Children totally take your word as gospel truth, but they are harder in their attention span to control.

8. Any last words?

I just think it's really important for people to be in studies, and it can be a small group. I can't stress how important it is to be in God's Word--it's harder on our own, easier when you're committed to a group.

QUOTABLE: WHY

A loving Personality dominates the Bible, walking among the trees of the garden and breathing fragrance over every scene. Always a living Person is present, speaking, pleading, loving, working, and manifesting himself whenever and wherever his people have the receptivity necessary to receive the manifestation.

~ A. W. Tozer (1897-1963), *The Pursuit of God* [1948]

I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without a Bible.
~William Phelps

For some years now I have read through the Bible every year. If you picture the Bible to be a mighty tree and every word a little branch, I have shaken every one of those branches because I wanted to know what it was and what it meant.

~Martin Luther

No man ever did, or ever will become more truly eloquent without being a constant reader of the Bible, and an admirer of the purity and sublimity of its language.

~Fisher Ames

STUDY THE BIBLE?

Wonderful is the depth of Thy words, whose surface is before us, gently leading on the little ones; and yet a wonderful deepness, O my God, a wonderful deepness. It is awe to look into it, even an awfulness of honor, and a trembling of love.
~St. Augustine

Read whatever chapter of Scripture you will, and be ever so delighted with it--yet it will leave you as poor, as empty and unchanged as it found you unless it has turned you wholly and solely to the Spirit of God, and brought you into full union with and dependence upon Him.
~ William Law (1686-1761)

The Bible contains more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence than can be collected from all other books, in whatever age or language they may have been written.
~Sir William Jones

This month @Taft Avenue...

India Summer Team

Thursday, June 28–Tuesday, July 10

Communion Sunday

Sunday, July 1

Independence Day Celebration

Sunday, July 1, 5:00-8:00pm

Youth Car Wash

Saturday, July 14, 7am-11am

Compton Clean-Up

Saturday, July 21, 6:15am-1pm

Elder-Hosted BBQ

Sunday, July 22, 5pm

Business Meeting

Sunday, July 22, 6pm

Hume Lake for Youth

Sunday, July 29–Saturday, August 4

By Jen Wilkin

Why Bible Study Doesn't Transform Us

"When all your favorite preachers are gone, and all their books forgotten, you will have your Bible. Master it. Master it." --- John Piper

I meet with women all the time who are curious about how they should study the Bible. They hunger for transformation, but it eludes them. Though many have spent years in church, even participating in organized studies, their grasp on the fundamentals of how to approach God's Word is weak to non-existent. And it's probably not their fault. Unless we are taught good study habits, few of us develop them naturally.

Why, with so many study options available, do many professing Christians remain unschooled and unchanged? Scripture teaches clearly that the living and active Word matures us, transforms us, accomplishes what it intends, increases our wisdom, and bears the fruit of right actions. There is no deficit in the ministry of the Word. If our exposure to it fails to result in transformation, particularly over the course of years, there are surely only two possible reasons why: either our Bible studies lack true converts, or our converts lack true Bible study.

I believe the second reason is more accurate than the first. Much of what passes for Bible study in Christian bookstores and church resource libraries just *isn't*: while it may educate us on a doctrine or a topic, it does little to further our Bible literacy. And left to our own devices, we pursue a host of unsavory (and un-transformative) self-constructed approaches to "spending time in the Word." Here are several that I encounter on a regular basis.

The Xanax Approach: Feel anxious? Philippians 4:6 says be anxious for nothing. Feel ugly? Psalm 139 says you are

fearfully and wonderfully made. Feel tired? Matthew 11:28 says Jesus will give rest to the weary. The Xanax Approach treats the Bible as if it exists to make us feel better. Whether aided by a devotional book or just the topical index in our Bibles, we pronounce our time in the Word successful if we can say, "Wow. That was touching." **The Problem:** The Xanax Approach makes the Bible a book about us. We ask how the Bible can serve us, rather than how we can serve the God it proclaims. Actually, the Bible doesn't always make us feel better. Quite often it does just the opposite (feeling awesome? Jeremiah 17:9 says you're a wicked rascal). Yes, there is comfort to be found in the pages of Scripture, but context is what makes that comfort lasting and real. The Xanax Approach guarantees that huge sections of your Bible will remain unread, because they fail to deliver an immediate dose of emotional satisfaction.

The Pinball Approach: Lacking a preference or any guidance about what to read, you read whatever Scripture you happen to turn to. Releasing the plunger of your good intentions, you send the pinball of ignorance hurtling toward whatever passage it may hit, ricocheting around to various passages "as the Spirit leads." **The Problem:** The Bible was not written to be read this way. The Pinball Approach gives no thought to cultural, historical or textual context, authorship, or original intent of the passage in question. When we read this way, we treat the Bible with less respect than we would give to a simple textbook. Imagine trying to master algebra by randomly reading for ten minutes each day from whatever paragraph in the textbook your eyes happened to fall on. Like that metal pinball, you'd lose momentum fast. And be very bad at algebra.

The Magic 8 Ball Approach: You remember the Magic 8 Ball---it answered your most difficult questions as a child. But you're an adult now and wondering if you should marry Bob, get a new job, or change your hair color. You give your Bible a vigorous shake and open it to a random page. Placing your finger blindly on a verse, you then read it to see if "signs point to yes." **The Problem:** The Bible is not magical, and it does not serve our whim. The Magic 8 Ball Approach misconstrues the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the Word, demanding that the Bible tell us *what to do* rather than *who to be*. And it's dangerously close to soothsaying, which people used to get stoned for. So, please. No Magic 8 Ball.

The Personal Shopper Approach: You want to know about being a godly woman or how to deal with self-esteem issues, but you don't know where to find verses about that, so you let [insert famous Bible teacher here] do the legwork for you. **The Problem:** The Personal Shopper Approach doesn't help you build "ownership" of Scripture. Much like the Pinball Approach, you ricochet from passage to passage, gaining fragmentary knowledge of many books of the Bible but mastery of none. Topical studies serve a purpose: they help us integrate broad concepts into our understanding of Scripture. But if they're all we ever do, we're missing out on the richness of learning a book of the Bible from start to finish.

The Jack Sprat Approach: This is where we engage in "picky eating" with the Word of God. We read the New Testament, but other than Psalms and Proverbs we avoid the Old Testament, or we read books with characters, plots, or topics we can easily identify with. **The Problem:** All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable. All of it. Women, it's time to move beyond Esther, Ruth, and Proverbs 31 to the rest of the meal. Everyone, you can't fully appreciate the sweetness of the New Testament without the savory of the Old Testament. We need a balanced diet to grow to maturity.

Discipleship Defined

Why do these six habits of highly ineffective Bible study persist in the church today? Why does biblical ignorance continue to dog the church, despite the good intentions of leadership to obey the Great Command to make disciples? I believe the answer lies in our definition of a disciple.

A disciple is, literally, a learner---one who follows another's teaching. But the modern church has tended to define a disciple as a "doer" instead of as a "learner." We have been asked to do service projects, join home groups, find an accountability partner, get counseling, fix our marriages, sing on the worship team, get out of debt, help in the nursery, hand out bulletins, go on mission trips, give to the building fund, share the gospel at Starbucks---but we have so rarely been challenged to pursue the most fundamental element of discipleship---earnest study of the Word. Yes, a disciple does, but we're motivated to act by love for the God revealed in the Word.

Stop waiting for your community of believers to call you to be what Christ already has. Be a student. Be a good student. Read repetitively and in context, line by line. Keep the God of the gospel at the center of your study. Strive for comprehension before interpretation. Give application ample time to emerge from a passage. Watch ignorance flee and transformation flourish. Study the Word. Master it, master it.

Jen Wilkin is a wife, mom to four great kids, and an advocate for women to love God with their minds through the faithful study of his Word. She writes, speaks, and teaches women the Bible. She lives in Flower Mound, Texas, and her family calls The Village Church home. You can find her at jenvilkin.blogspot.com.