

Godly Motivations for Bible Study

Seven Reasons Why We Should Study the Bible



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Bible Study and the Energy of Faith

Strong and healthy faith is the production of the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures. According to St. Paul,

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

Considering the context, the word *hearing* here refers to listening to evangelistic preaching. Paul says, sinners are converted to Christ because the spiritual light of the glorious gospel penetrates into their darken hearts (Romans 10:13-17 cf. 2 Cor. 4:3-4). But in the general sense, it could also refer to heartfelt attention to God’s word.

Thus, when a believer reads and studies the Bible, his ability to trust in the Lord grows also.

But how is this happening? Is this just some sort of psychological conditioning made by positive thinking? No, rather, this is a spiritual work of the Holy Spirit in the heart.

We must understand that the Bible is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16); it is inspired by God. It is both a sacred and supernatural book because the Holy Spirit, who is the divine author of its grammar, propositions, logical relationships, literary style, and intention, is working through it.

Of course, people in the world are skeptical about the supernatural origin and nature of the Bible. They don't experience its supernatural truth because the Holy Spirit is not in their hearts (1 Cor. 2:12-14).

But to a Christian, the Bible is a holy and living book because through it, he hears the voice of God. So, every time he meditates upon its words, his faith is energized because the Holy Spirit speaks to his whole being.

Through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit can strengthen his affection (heart) for holy things (Eph. 3:14-17). When the affection is strengthened, then his attention (mind) receives determination to focus on spiritual reality (Col. 3:1-2).

And finally, when the heart and mind are energized by the Spirit, then the believer becomes evangelistically strong and healthy in living out his faith in Christ with confidence and intelligence. St. John said,

“...Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you,
And you have overcome the wicked one.” (1 John 2:14)



Bible Study and True Spirituality

The Bible is a revelation of God's redemptive story in Christ Jesus. When we read and study the Bible evangelistically, the Holy Spirit gives us true spirituality.

For example, when the believers in Galatians were deceived by the legalistic teachings of the Jews, Paul strongly reminded them that the Holy Spirit is not operating in a legalistic way (Gal. 3:1-14). The Galatians started to interpret the Scriptures and their Christian life based on religious *performance* instead of the *truth* of the Gospel. Paul says in Galatians 3:2,

“This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

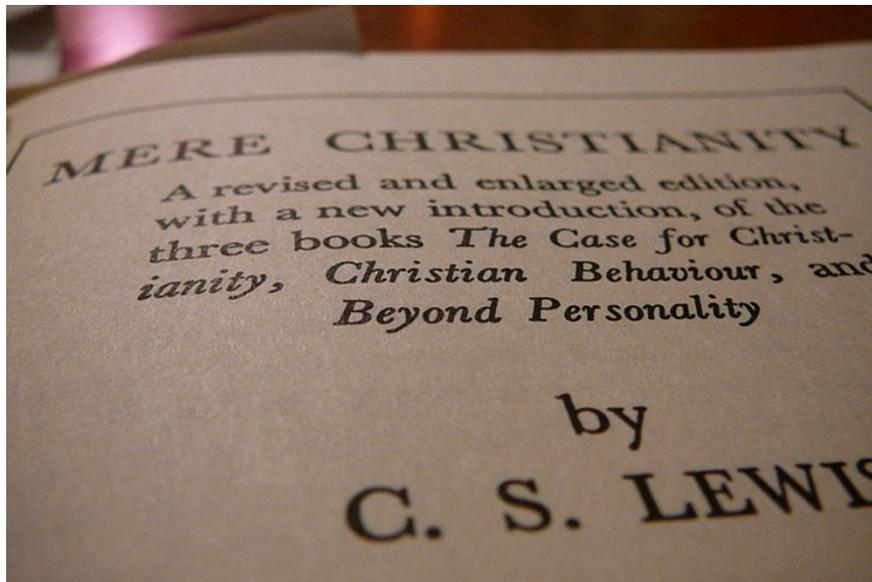
That's the dangerous ground that the Galatians brought themselves. Their perspective of spirituality became legalistic rather than grace-oriented. This happened because their scriptural reading was affected by Judaism. Therefore, it is very important that in Bible reading, we approach it with evangelistic lens.

Bible reading is not enough because we might read it on our own self-righteous way. The guiding light of the Gospel is crucial in our reading. The doctrinal liveliness and sweetness of biblical storylines from Genesis to Revelation unleashes its dramatic and dynamic impact to our lives when we read in light of the cross.

As St. Paul said, we receive the Holy Spirit “*through the hearing of faith.*” The *faith* that he’s talking about here primarily refers to objective faith – that is, evangelical Christian truths. Therefore, evangelistic reading of the Scriptures is essential because the Holy Spirit is coming to us through the mediation of the Cross.

Therefore we experience true spirituality...

1. When we read the Bible evangelistically – thinking of the person and work of Jesus for our lives. Then consequently...
2. When the Spirit comes into us, giving us grace-oriented perspective and ability to live the Christian life.



Bible Study and Literary Considerations

The Bible is both supernatural and literal. The Holy Spirit talks to His readers through its human authors and their literary style. Hence, when you read the Bible you somehow experience the literary-incarnation of God through the human authors. In your Bible study, you experience the words of St. John when he said,

“² the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— ³ that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1:2-3)

Unfortunately, within Christendom, the literary features of the Bible have been neglected and replaced with subjective or mystical approaches. The separation of the voice of the Holy Spirit from the literary features of the Word has created various forms of religious hocus pocus in evangelicalism.

The important question then that we must correctly answer is: Does the Holy Spirit speak to us today apart from the literary features of the Bible? Obviously, the answer is no.

As far as biblical theology is concerned, the Spirit is no longer giving extra-biblical revelation, just like of what He did through the Old Testament prophets and the

apostles of Christ. However, He is actively giving *biblical illumination* through the Bible.

Theologically speaking, there's a difference between *revelation* and *illumination*. Basically, *revelation* refers to receiving direct and fresh messages from God (Hebrews 1:1-2). This could be done through hearing God's audible voice, or through visions, dreams, angelic visitations and so forth.

But when it comes to *illumination*, it simply refers to the Spirit's work of applying the written Word in our lives. In other words, the Holy Spirit uses the content, statements, propositions, arguments, historical setting, and the story of the Bible "*for doctrine, correction, reproof, and instruction in righteousness*" so that we become "*complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*" (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

You see, the Holy Spirit is not ashamed of nor deemed it unspiritual to use the literary features of the Bible to speak to us. Indeed, the Bible is a supernatural book; but it's also a literal book. It presents the harmony of dual-authorship of God and men.

Therefore, don't be ashamed or hesitant to meditate upon it with logic and literary investigation. God is talking to you through its literary features used by its human authors. God is literary-incarnated through its pages so that He can talk to you personally, clearly, and visibly.



Bible Study and Spirit's Filling

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is an essential Christian truth. Biblically understanding His person and works is crucial both in Church's orthodoxy (doctrine) and orthopraxy (practice). When it comes to the Bible, He is both the author who speaks and the illuminator who enlightens. The Church's doctrinal soundness and practical goodness depends on Him. Therefore, the necessity of His infilling should never be neglected or misinterpreted.

According to St. Paul, Christians should “*walk in the Spirit*” and “*be filled with the Spirit.*” (Gal. 5:16 cf. Eph. 5:18). The mood and tense of these statements are in the imperative and present active. In other words, it is a daily discipline and pursuit of the believer to live under the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit.

By biblical analogy, it is compared to the Shekinah glory of divine presence during Israel's journey in the wilderness. The Israelites saw it as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 40:34-38). That's how the Christian should live under the guidance of the Spirit.

But the question is: how can a Christian walk in the Spirit? How can he experience the filling of the Spirit? Some answer this question in a mystic, monastic, and ascetic way. But by carefully reading the biblical data, we can find that the proper, practical, and spiritual way of walking in the Spirit is to be filled with biblical truths. St. Paul himself taught us the way when he said in Colossians 3:16,

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Most biblical scholars believe that this verse is parallel with Ephesians 5:18. In other words, being filled with the Spirit and being filled with the word of Christ are congruent. The Spirit and the Scripture are always connected. Therefore, when we read and study the Bible, the Spirit uses the truth of the Scripture to fill us with the reality of who He is and how He works in our lives. He can fill us truly because we know Him properly.

In the final analysis then, to walk in the Spirit simply means a life saturated and driven by the truth of Christ – biblical truth. Using the context of Paul’s letter to the Colossians; when the believer truly and duly reads the Bible, the Spirit empowers him to...

1. Have a proper and worshipful view of Christ as His Lord (1:15-23)
2. Follow apostolic example and ministry (1:24-2:7)
3. Refute errors with biblical teachings (2:8-23)
4. Live with good manners and right conduct (3:1-17)
5. Manage his family with godly wisdom (3:18-4:1)
6. Communicate with biblical intelligence and grace (4:2-6)
7. Value Christian friendship and environment (4:7-18)

That’s what happens to you when you read the Bible heartily under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.



Bible Study and Glorious Hope

St. Paul describes the spiritual condition of the unbeliever as “*having no hope and without God in the world.*” (Ephesians 2:12). A person can be religious but if Jesus Christ is not his Lord and Savior, the Bible still considers him as lost.

Yet, as a Christian, you may not enjoy socio-political privileges as an effect of your commitment to Christ. You understand that your relationship to Jesus will not make you popular in the world. It does not promise you earthly wealth, power, and influence. At the same time, the world sees your faith as a handicap and hindrance to play with the world, in its terms and offer.

The Bible is not a popular book in the world as their value-system. They don't want to read it. People usually think that the teachings of the Bible will make them weak and weird. Of course, this perspective and attitude is because of unbelief.

But to a Christian who embraces the truth of the Gospel, he believes that the presence of Christ in the heart is “*the hope of glory.*” (Colossians 1:27). He knows that true and lasting advantage is the eternal security of the soul. Moreover, when he reads the Bible, he also sees the surety of the spiritual blessings that the Lord has stored for him in glory (Ephesians 1:3). St. Paul said,

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Romans 15:4)

Bible reading and meditation open our eyes to future reality. Its testimony of God's power and goodness in the history and experience of God's people throughout generations gives us assurance that God will never fail us. It is for this reason that as we read the Scriptures we need to pray like Paul. We need to ask God to illumine the eyes of our heart,

"...the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." (Ephesians 1:18).

When our affection is firmly attached to our glorious hope, materialism and worldliness cannot set their foothold on our lives. Therefore, Bible study is crucial to maintain our focus to our glorious future.



Bible Study and Intimate Knowledge

In Bible study, *loving* and *knowing* are inseparable and corresponding elements. Jesus said,

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
(John 8:32).

Bible study gives you spiritual freedom – that is, freedom from the slavery of sin and freedom from the deception of Satan (John 8:34, 43-44). But for us to experience the liberating power of the Word, we must notice that Jesus connects freedom with knowledge.

This kind of knowledge is intimate; it is faithful to the person whom truth comes – the Lord Jesus (John 8:31). Therefore, spiritual freedom is the result of commitment to Christ.

It is not enough that you read your Bible. It is not enough that you study it. There are Ph.D. theologians who labored to study the Bible in a scholarly level but ended up denying its power. The liberal theologians deny the supernatural nature of the Bible. They don't believe in miracles and deny its divine inspiration. For them, the Bible is just another literature.

Of course this is not surprising, considering that the Devil himself knows the contents of the Bible and yet twists it to deceive people (Matthew 4:6).

So when Jesus said, “*You will know the truth*” (John 8:32), it is the result of “*If you continue in My word*” (John 8:31). True knowledge of the Scripture is a result of intimacy or commitment to Jesus Christ. The word “*continue*” in verse 31 implies consistency and discipline.

The constant and firm affection and attention are there. Yet it is not mere self-determination but expression of love. In other words, you continue in the words of Jesus because you love Jesus. You study His words not because you aim for academic excellence but because you love Him.

The essence of Bible study is love for Jesus. Jesus said, “*If you love me, keep my commandments.*” (John 14:15). Love is the root or the fountain source of liberating knowledge.

Spiritual freedom happens when you are in love with Jesus. Therefore, if you want to become a good student of the Bible, love the Source of the word and you will understand His liberating word.



Bible Study and Answered Prayer

Bible study is the key to answered prayer. This may sound weird to some, considering that they usually view answered prayer in behavioral perspective. Terms like trust, submission, and patience are typically associated to effective prayer. Of course these are behavioral ingredients for answered prayer but they are not the key that unlocks the door of heaven. Mark this very carefully, Jesus said,

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” (John 15:7).

Intimacy with Jesus and Bible study are inseparable. You do not love Jesus if you are not studying His words. You will not study the Bible if you don't love Jesus. Bible study and love for Jesus show us the harmony of devotion and discipline. They are two sides of the same key that unlocks the blessings of God upon our prayers.

When we love Jesus; when we value the majesty and goodness of His person above all else, our perspective to answered prayers becomes radical. That is to say, we view God's "No," "Yes," and "Wait" to our prayers as all good, wise, powerful, and blessed answers. This is the essence of *“not my will but Your Will be done.”*

On the other hand, Bible study enlightens us to know and understand *why* and *how* God's *no*, *yes*, and *wait* to our prayers are all good answers to prayers. Thus, if you will think about it carefully, *there is no such thing as unanswered prayers* in the Christian life. God's no, yes, and wait are all good, wise, and powerful answers to our prayers.

Nonetheless, our human nature still pulls us to be curious of how we can get God's "yes" in our prayers. When Jesus used the phrase "*what you desire*" (John 15:7), it is reasonable to think that it refers to the desires of our hearts.

The answer to this is simple: As long as our requests, dreams, wishes, aspirations, and goals are in lined with the words of Jesus and will give glory to Him, He will answer that prayer with yes, that is, "*it shall be done for you.*" Therefore, always examine your desires through faithful Bible study. The Bible guides us to *God's* desire.