

*Walk with the Word:
Hearing God Speak
Through His Word*



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Chapter 1: Overview of Walk with the Word

God's Word is not just a book for Christians to read, but the only offensive weapon provided in our spiritual warfare arsenal:

*"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. **Put on the full armor of God**, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having **girded your loins with truth**, and having **put on the breastplate of righteousness**, and having **shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace**; in addition to all, **taking up the shield of faith** with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And **take the helmet of salvation**, and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**."*

—Ephesians 6:10-17

As the preacher said, "There's nothing new under the sun." Well, there's nothing new on this web site either; nothing that hasn't been suggested and advocated for a couple of millennia. Walk with the Word is but a reminder—as every generation is reminded by someone—that Believers need only commit themselves and their ministries to consistent immersion in the Bible to hear God speaking personally today.

Three times that we're aware of, God personally wrote instructions for man: The original tablets provided to Moses, on the wall for a king during Daniel's time, and in the dirt for over-zealous religious leaders during Jesus' time. This demonstrates that God *could* have personally

written and handed down the entire Bible without man as an intermediary but rather **CHOSE** to speak through man, through what has been captured as the books of the Bible.

As noted in the passage from Ephesians above, the Bible is not only the medium that connects God's mouth to our ear, but is the **ONLY** offensive weapon with which we wage spiritual warfare. If we don't pay attention to it—don't clean it, keep it sharp, practice wielding it—we're vulnerable to the persuasions of another voice not of God. Every successful "revival" or "movement" has been sparked by recommitment to wielding this weapon, to hearing God speak through His Word.

The Cultural Mandate for Walk with the Word

*"My zeal has consumed me,
Because my adversaries have forgotten Your words."
—Psalm 119:139*

Churches today exist in a culture of ethical relativism. The rapid moral decline of American society is entirely consistent with the erosion of Judeo-Christian values on which the country was founded. The only absolute tolerated by the culture today is that there are no absolutes. One's personal values tend to be acquired from the entertainment industry, truth is a matter of individual interpretation, and what is right is a matter of personal choice.

Josh McDowell and Norm Geisler clarify the problem in their book *Love Is Always Right: A Defense of the One Moral Absolute*:

"If you believe that the conscience of the Western world is still guided by objective truth, honesty, moral purity, and the Golden Rule, you need to take a close look at how the people around you are living. And if your Christian values have not been challenged or ridiculed as archaic or irrelevant by a neighbor, coworker, teacher, or student, then your lamp is under a basket or the people you interact with day by day are blind and deaf.



"...About three decades ago, we transitioned into what the late Christian thinker Dr. Francis Schaeffer termed the 'post-Christian era....' But in the last decade of the twentieth century, we have reached a new low. American society has entered a period that may well be called the 'anti-Christian era.'"

(excerpts from pages 18-21)

If there are really no absolutes, then truth is relative and subject to interpretation by the individual. One's religious beliefs are self-designed and self-serving, customized to the perceived needs of the individual at any given point in time.

Christians are not immune from the influences of society. Being "in" the world but not "of" the world is a narrow road that cannot be safely traveled without clear directions. Through a hedonistic entertainment media, through a justice system dominated by personal rights, and through public education ruled by humanism and liberalism, children in particular are subject to and will continue to be influenced by the secular ideologies of the day.

Like the culture, Christians can be lured easily into the errors of Israel at the time of the Judges:

*"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."
—Judges 21:25*

The context in Judges is one of civil law, but the principle remains the same. Without a source of absolute truth, every person—Christians not excepted—will believe and do what is right in his or her own eyes.

Evangelical Christian apologists are crying out for help from the local churches. One can hear over and over again the need to disciple believers, to teach the Bible, to teach sound doctrine, and to teach that the Word of God is the only absolute upon which spiritual truth can be based. It is also well documented that the average Christian is

woefully ignorant, if not illiterate, concerning knowledge and the truth of the Bible.

The proclamation ministry of the church is another area where in many cases secular influences have prevailed. In an attempt to stay in touch with an anti-authoritarian culture, and through the influence of liberal biblical scholarship, many mainline denominations and churches have demoted the pre-eminence, authority and relevance of the Word of God. The Bible is sometimes employed only pragmatically and in no less capacity than spiritual "consultant."

At the other end of the spectrum, many evangelical churches have dug in their heels with "meaty, expositional teaching" of the Bible. In doing so, however, some have become so "meaty" as to fail to communicate effectively the big picture of what the Bible is all about, or to make God's Word applicable to the believer's life.

Adding to the confusion of ministry and teaching focus for churches today is the impact of the Church Growth Movement. Though some church plants have found these strategies successful, many well-intentioned pastors have been left confused and frustrated, especially those in smaller churches which are desperately in need of greater numbers. They have attempted to implement church growth principles, only to find themselves with little or no growth and a lot of division within the church. It is no wonder that over 1,400 pastors leave the ministry every month.

A clear and effective biblically based plan is necessary to provide all its members with a personal knowledge of God and a practical understanding of His Word. A comprehensive, church-wide ministry is needed that centers around the Word of God and is taught at all educational levels of the church on a repeating cycle. The basic model is taken from Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, under the leadership of Pastor Chuck Smith who, from the beginning, has taught through the Bible every couple of years.

It is felt, however, that this plan can be easily adopted to fit just about any church ministry, large or small. For this reason, Walk with the Word may be implemented by any church without prior permission. As God's Word is freely given to us, so Walk with the Word is freely given to others. For it is our earnest desire that every believer who seeks to worship God "in spirit and in truth" will be able to say earnestly from the heart...

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

—Psalm 119:105

The Believer's Need for the Word

"My soul cleaves to the dust;

Revive me according to Your word...

My soul weeps because of grief;

Strengthen me according to Your Word."

—Psalm 119:25, 28

Many Christians have an earnest desire to know God's Word. Barely a Christian can be found these days who does not own and carry a "study" Bible. Christian marketing has seized upon this apparent hunger for Bible acquisition and presented the Christian community with a tantalizing array of study Bibles, study helps, and a multitude of versions from which to choose. Elaborate and complex computer Bible programs can be purchased and entire Bibles in a variety of versions are available for hand-held Personal Digital Assistants (PDA's). There is a Bible for every personal need.

Knowledge of God's Word is important; without it we would not know about God. However, facts, information, doctrine and theology do not always put us in touch with God; they do not connect us to God personally. Knowledge about God does not necessarily translate into knowledge of God experientially. Facts and information about God's Word may be one step to knowing God, but is only one step towards God.

God is not known or experienced fully until we connect with Him personally through His Word. Christians seek to experience God in a variety of ways. Some seek to experience Him in worship, while others attempt to discover what "God is doing," and then join in. Some seek to experience God through the expression of charismatic gifts, while others seek to experience Him through prayer, meditation, or encounters in spiritual warfare.

Walk with the Word is based on the belief that the best way to know God personally is to experience Him through His Word.

How does experiencing God personally through His Word happen? It happens when we allow Him to "speak" to us through His Word. It doesn't take a study Bible to make that happen, but it does take time. We believe that every Christian is capable of hearing God speak through His Word. Too few Christians today are truly experiencing God through His Word because they have assumed that the attaining of facts and knowledge about God's Word is sufficient.

[See "*Hearing God's Voice*" on the Walk with the Word web site.]

The Theme of Walk with the Word

"Your word I have treasured in my heart...."
—Psalm 119:11

As stated previously, simply having knowledge of the Bible and its content is not enough. There is a marked difference between knowledge of the Bible in the mind and having the knowledge of God through His Word in the heart.

Knowing God through His Word at the level of the heart implies that the Bible is one's personal source for all truth and meaning. To know the Bible means that the truths of the Word of God have infused every aspect of a person's being—the thought life, one's personal conduct and lifestyle, and in particular, relationships. It is not enough just to have a good knowledge of the Bible. The Bible is living and is to be "fleshed out."

Additionally, we believe that the "voice" of God these days is no different than it has always been—the voice of God is the Word of God. While many promote reliance upon practical approaches to Christian living, upon self-help sources, upon charismatic manifestations such as tongues, prophecy, healings and miracles, and even upon the very act or worship itself, at Walk with the Word we believe that the only reliable and trustworthy source for "hearing God" is through His Word. Therefore, it is our desire that every reader learn how to become intimately connected with God through His Word.

Walk with the Word provides a systematic method for reading through the Bible every 3 years. The program is designed to be implemented by churches on a church-wide basis, as a small group ministry, or for the individual. Teaching through the Bible every 3 years is not for the mere purpose of completing a noble task.

In summary then, Walk with the Word primarily focuses on three things:

- (1) ***to receive the Word*** (accurately understand the Bible and be able to interact with it on a personal level, to the point that God speaks to the heart);
- (2) ***to live the Word*** ("flesh out" God's Word to the point that the truth permeates every aspect of the believer's life, affecting decision-making, behavior and relationships); and,
- (3) ***to spread the Word*** (share the good news found in God's Word with pre-Christians, and help them to receive the Word and begin living the Word).

Reading Schedule

The Walk with the Word plan calls for studying the entire Word of God every 3 years in a variety of ways so as to make the Word a vital and living part of every believer's life.

Completing the Bible in 3 years requires a reading schedule that covers an average 3 chapters a week in the NT (there are 260 chapters in the NT) and an average 11 chapters a week in the OT (929 chapters in the OT). This 3 year cycle of reading through the Bible can be repeated going through the Bible left to right (Genesis through Revelation), chronologically, etc.

The question might be raised, "Why not go through the Bible every year?" The answer is this: a one-year-through-the-Bible plan calls for too much reading. It gets overwhelming for the average reader.

[See "The Reading Plan" on the web site for more information.]

How to Use Walk with the Word

On this web site is further information on how to use the foundation of Walk with the Word for:

- ***A Church-wide Program.*** Tie the Sunday School, pulpit and small group Bible study ministries in your church to the reading plan to guide every age group and maturity level through a coordinated study of the entire Bible.
- ***A Small Group Ministry.*** By using the Bible studies provided on this web site, small groups can learn together how to hear God speaking through His Word.
- ***An Individual Guide.*** Personally follow the reading schedule and subscribe to the Walk with the Word email newsletter that delivers a weekly study based on a portion of each week's reading.

As you read through each page as we've ordered them, you will see how the foundation is laid with the individual and how it is leveraged for small groups and even throughout the whole church.





Chapter 2: How to Read God's Word

There are basically four ways to read God's Word:

- *Informational*
- *Instructional*
- *Inspirational*
- *Incarnational*

The approach you select reflects the difference between the desire for more data about God versus building a relationship with Him.

Informational Reading

The first and most basic of all Bible reading is "informational"; that is, it is the gathering of facts. Informational reading provides information and knowledge, but it does not necessarily result in changed behavior. Based on the information, the reader is still able to choose whether or not to believe that information, much less make changes in lifestyle as a result of reading God's Word.

The world is full of scholars who have studied the Bible all their lives and can even translate it from the original languages. They may be able to quote large sections of Scripture but that does not mean that the Bible is for them the Word of God; they tend to see the Bible merely as a history or philosophy book of great interest.

Christians, particularly Bible teachers, can fall into the trap of reading God's Word simply for informational purposes and never allow God to

speak to them through His Word to the level of the heart. That is a great tragedy and not what God intended.

Instructional Reading

The second method of reading the Word of God is "instructional"; that is, God's Word is there to teach us.

*"How can a young man keep his way pure?
By keeping it according to Your word."*

—Psalm 119:9

*"Do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
For I wait for Your ordinances."*

—Psalm 119:43

*"I rejoice at Your word,
As one who finds great spoil."*

—Psalm 119:162

Instructional reading of God's Word is to seek knowledge that will change or strengthen what we believe. We go to the Word to learn truth. The difference between informational reading and instructional reading is that the latter tends to have greater personal value and can result in changed behavior.

New believers often immerse themselves in instructional reading. For the first time in their lives the Bible comes alive. This is the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit as He opens the Word of God to our minds. Suddenly spiritual things begin to make sense. For example, stories like Noah's ark and the Sermon on the Mount have a context; the person, teaching, miracles and works of Jesus begin to fall into place. For many new believers, discovering God in His Word is one of the most exciting things that ever happens to them.

Good Bible teachers always study the Bible on an instructional level, for the task of the teacher or the preacher is to explain to others the revelation of God through His Word, and not just convey facts and information.

Inspirational Reading

Inspirational reading is also called devotional reading. This approach to the Word of God is usually in conjunction with an emotional or personal need, such as grief. David wrote...

*"I am exceedingly afflicted;
Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word."
—Psalm 119:107*

*"You are my hiding place and my shield;
I wait for Your word."
—Psalm 119:114*

*"Plead my cause and redeem me;
revive me according to Your word."
—Psalm 119:154*

David knew that throwing himself into God's Word would revive his spirit and restore his soul.

The classic "quiet time" is often a time of inspirational reading. The purpose? To inspire us, of course; that is, to renew our spirits and restore our hopes.

Inspirational reading can be very important to us during times of crisis. We are not necessarily looking for information, and if truth be known, instruction is not desired. What is needed is a spiritual "lift," a word of comfort from the Father. Usually inspirational reading is not structured or methodic. More commonly, a believer is hurting and goes looking through the Psalms or prophets for a ray of hope.

The long-term benefits of inspirational reading are perhaps not as manifest as the short-term benefits which can be remarkable. In one's darkest hour, a passage of Scripture that would make no sense out of context may be the very source of inspiration that is needed to enable the believer to cope or endure, and as the missionary and author Elisabeth Elliot says, "Do the next thing."



Incarnational Reading

Incarnational reading is the most dramatic and enduring of all types of reading. Incarnational reading refers to taking the Word of God to the level of the heart resulting not only in changed living, but changed relationships. One form of a changed relationship comes in truly knowing God.

*"With all my heart I have sought You;
Do not let me wander from Your commandments.
Your word I treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You."
—Psalm 119:10-11*

*"The LORD is my portion;
I have promised to keep Your words.
I sought Your favor with all my heart;
Be gracious to me according to Your word."
—Psalm 119:57-58*

When incarnational reading takes place the reader believes without hesitation that God is speaking. He or she "hears" the voice of God.

The key to grasping incarnational reading is in understanding that the Bible is, in fact, the very words of God, relevant and applicable to the reader today. As the writer of Hebrews wrote,

*"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."
—Hebrews 4:12*

One of the best ways to attain incarnational reading is to journal one's thoughts as he or she reflects on the Word of God. [See "Journaling" under the "Individual Guide" section of Walk with the Word.]

Don't Get Discouraged!

It is the rare individual who can actually find time to sit down and read the Bible every day. Illness, crises, work schedules, babies, vacations, and a myriad other factors can interfere with our time in the Word.

Satan would love for you to feel guilty about missing your reading. In fact, he would love for you to get so discouraged as to give up altogether! He doesn't want you in God's Word even a little bit.

But Jesus prayed, *"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."* God loves you even if you miss reading His Word, and He's delighted for you when you pick it up again because He knows you will be blessed.

Don't get discouraged if you miss a day or more of reading. The plan is designed to keep you up with the rest of us. Therefore, if you miss a week's reading, just join back in the next week so you will remain at the same place with the rest of us.

Remember, the Walk with the Word Reading Schedule repeats every 3 years. Therefore, you will be able to pick up the missed portion of Scripture on the next go-around!





Chapter 3: Hearing God's Voice

We long to hear God's voice. What we often fail to realize is that God longs to speak to us.

If God desires that we "pray without ceasing," "be devoted to prayer," and cast "all (our) anxieties upon Him," would it make any sense that He Himself would not speak to us as well about anything? Many agree that God speaks to us today, but how? Here are a few common beliefs.

Hearing the Voice of God: "Let Me Count the Ways..."

"God speaks only through the Bible, and only to a limited degree."

This is a common theological position held by many conservative, mainstream evangelicals. God's revelation is complete and He speaks only through the theological truths of the Bible. Revelation—the disclosure of absolute biblical truth—was completed with the close of the New Testament canon. Illumination by the Holy Spirit helps believers understand and properly interpret truth. Practical application of biblical truth is less critical than proper methods of interpretation of Scripture. Personalization (personal, practical application in everyday situations) is dependent upon the believer's grasp and application of biblical truth and purely for purposes of sanctification. *"Sanctify them in Your word. Your word is truth."* (John 17:17) God speaks to believers through His Word, but His voice is limited to theological truths, and the personalization of Scripture is limited to the practical application of those truths.

"God speaks through the Bible, but also through believers with spiritual gifts such as prophecy, words of knowledge and words of wisdom."

This is what is commonly called a "Charismatic" view. Though the Charismatic view would deny that new theological truth can be given outside the Bible (new revelation), God can speak directly to believers through gifted people. Some believers have the gift of prophecy, others of wisdom, others of knowledge, others of tongues and still others the gift of interpreting tongues. These gifted believers can speak to the everyday concerns and problems of other believers because the so-called "sign gifts" of the New Testament did not cease when the canon was closed. All gifts of the Holy Spirit are as available to believers today as they were to the believers of the Early Church. Believers hear God's voice through gifted teachers (the teaching of the Bible) and through members of the body of Christ, the church, whom God has gifted.

"God speaks through the Bible, but also through extra-biblical sources."

For example, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that God speaks through papal decrees and church councils as well as the Bible. The doctrine of Apostolic Succession teaches that the Pope is the direct spiritual descendant of the Apostle Peter and therefore is the only one anointed by God capable of revealing new truth. In general, the believer receives all of his instruction from the church, including the proper interpretation and application of Scripture. As far as the believer is concerned, the presence of the Holy Spirit is purely for purposes of sanctification. This approach to hearing God's voice expresses itself in other denominations as well. Mormonism, for example, considers the extra-biblical writings of Joseph Smith to be equivalent to the Bible. Followers hear God's voice through *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price* as well as from the Bible. Another example is the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Followers believe Ellen White was a true prophet of God and her writing and teaching, though by SDA doctrine not equivalent to the Bible, should be heeded as if it were.

With all these conflicting views, how does a Christian hear God's voice today? What means has God provided that enables His children to hear His voice?

Walk with the Word takes the position that every Christian can hear God's voice directly through His Word. Hearing God's voice does not require a church hierarchy to speak to believers. Hearing God's voice does not require extra-biblical writings and does not require specially gifted believers. Nor has God ceased speaking directly to believers. To repeat, Walk with the Word takes the position that every believer can hear God's voice directly through His Word. The key is in the phrase "through His Word."

The Bible Alone is the Word of God

Walk with the Word takes the position that the Bible alone is the only source of revelational truth from God. When the canon of the New Testament was closed, no other revelational truth was required, delivered or needed. Extra-biblical writings and the doctrine of Apostolic Succession are not part of God's plan or revelation. Regarding the New Testament, God's truth came solely from Jesus Christ (John 14:6; 17:8, 17) through the apostles and prophets of the Early Church (John 16:13; Ephesians 2:20). In fact, the New Testament writers clearly warned against attempts—and predicted there would be attempts—by others to add to or change the truth as given to them directly from Jesus Christ (Acts 20:29-30; 1 Timothy 1:4; 4:1, 7; 6:3-4; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; Titus 1:1, 14; 2 Peter 1:12; 2:1-2; 1 John 4:1; Jude 17-19).

All true Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. This truth was prophesied in the Old Testament (Joel 2:28-32) and realized in the New (John 20:22; Acts 1:8; 2:4, 38-39; 10:44; Romans 8:9, 11; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 3:16; 6:9; Galatians 3:5). The presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer brings about, amongst other things, the assurance of eternal life (Romans 8:11; Ephesians 1:13), the fruit of

the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4, 7), a new identity as a child of God (Romans 8:16), empowerment for sanctification (1 Corinthians 6:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:12), and His leading (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18).

Additionally, the Holy Spirit speaks to and through the spirit of the believer (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 8:19; 10:19; 11:12, 28; 13:2; 15:28; Romans 8:16; Galatians 5:16, 25; Ephesians 5:18-19; 6:18). Though there are varying interpretations to each of these passages, this one thing is clear: there is the potential for dynamic interaction between the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the believer. At Walk with the Word we believe that it is this divine interaction between the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the believer that enables a person to become directly connected to God through His Word; that is, to hear God's voice. Is it an audible voice? No, it is a voice heard from the heart superintended by the Holy Spirit.

Only True Christians Have the Holy Spirit

Many people call themselves "Christian." The only correct definition, however, must come from the Bible. The term "Christian" was first used in a town called Antioch in Syria (Acts 11:26). In general, the term referred to those who were followers of Jesus Christ. Specifically, however, early Christians knew actually what the term meant: They had received Jesus Christ as the Savior from their sins and the only hope of eternal life. In gratitude, the obvious response was becoming a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ for the rest of one's life. For Jews, that meant acknowledging that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and announcing such through baptism (Acts 2:37-41). By accepting the fact that Jesus was the Messiah and receiving Him, they also acknowledged that their sins could be forgiven by Him. But God alone can forgive sins (Mark 2:1-12). Thus Jesus was the Son of God and therefore equal to God, the very reason for which He was crucified (John 5:18; 8:59).

Other portions of Scripture clearly indicate that Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Trinity, the Logos, the Son of God. John 1:1-5, 14; 19:7; 20:31; Luke 22:70 should end all discussion on whether or not Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. It stands to reason, then, that regardless of how good or sincere a person's faith might be, if they call themselves Christian but worship a Jesus other than He who is presented in the Bible, they worship a false god. The Jesus they worship is a Jesus of fabrication, not the Jesus of the Bible. Therefore, if the Jesus that is worshipped is not the Jesus of the Bible, then it is impossible for the Holy Spirit to dwell within the person, regardless of how good or morally pure that individual might appear to be. Therefore, to experience the divine interaction between the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the believer that enables him to become directly connected with God through His Word, the Holy Spirit must dwell within. If a Jesus other than the Jesus of the Bible is not worshipped or received, the Holy Spirit does not dwell within.

True Christians are those, and only those, who have, with a sincere heart by faith, received the Jesus of the Bible as the one and only Savior from their sins. The Bible teaches that when a person receives Jesus by an act of faith, the Holy Spirit comes to permanently dwell within the life of that person. Literally, a spiritual transformation takes place. That person is delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of God (Colossians 1:13), forgiven of all sins past, present and future (Colossians 1:14), seen by God as one of His children (Romans 8:15-16), made a co-heir of Christ Himself (Romans 8:17), and made a "new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Only the Holy Spirit Can Explain God's Word

Has it ever happened that a scholar has read and studied the Bible most of his or her life and yet not become a Christian? Does it happen that a person reads the Bible, even quotes verses from the Bible, and yet does not become a follower of Jesus Christ? Of course; it happens all the time. Why is this the case? How does this happen? It happens because the individual reading the Bible has not committed to

receiving Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior, and therefore the Holy Spirit does not dwell within.

Without the Holy Spirit in the life of the reader, the Bible is just another book; either an interesting history of the Jews, a book of philosophy, or an intriguing book of antiquity. Some may even receive inspiration from the Bible, such as the desire to have 1 Corinthians 13 read at a wedding, or Psalm 23 read at a funeral. But regardless, without the Holy Spirit it is impossible for the reader to appreciate the Bible as God's Word.

The Bible is more than a book of historical fact or a source of inspiration. It is literally the Word of God; that is, God's word to mankind, given to change him. God gave us His Word so that we might know Him, might order our lives around Him, and might learn to live by faith in Him. This can only be done if we hear His voice. The Old Testament was given, amongst other reasons, so that Jesus Christ might be recognized when He came. The New Testament was given so that the church might have a foundation for carrying the good news about Jesus Christ to all people.

Through the Bible all absolute spiritual truth has been given once for all with the closing of the canon. That does not mean the words themselves are no longer dynamic and available for personal application on a daily basis. The Bible is not just full of static spiritual truths to be applied as necessary by the believer.

For indeed, *"The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."* (Hebrews 4:12). While some apply this verse only to the act of justification of the unsaved, and still others to include the sanctification of the believer, Walk with the Word takes the position that the Word of God is applicable for all believers in all areas of the Christian walk at all times of the Christian's life.

The operative word, of course, is “all.” Not only does the Holy Spirit “explain” God’s Word to us—that is, help us understand its truths—He is always present in our lives to help us apply God’s Word to any given situation.

The Bible is not a book of static truths to be learned and applied; the Bible is literally God’s voice speaking to us in any given situation at any given moment in time. God wants his children to make the right choices and understand how to apply His principles in every area of life. Therefore, He has given us His Word as His Voice, heard by the heart, superintended by the Spirit. At Walk with the Word, we believe that personal application can be made from any portion of Scripture. That is because *“...the Word of God is living and active...”*

The Bible is very much like a two-way radio with the party at the other end, the transmitter always on the air. The listener can turn on his receiver and hear the words of the transmitter and just listen. Because the transmitter has a basic program presented in an infinite variety of ways, the listener can always learn something new each time he listens. But it doesn’t end with just listening. There are times when the listener has a specific question or need. The listener can call the transmitter and ask a specific question (prayer), and the transmitter is there to provide a specific answer.

Learning to apply God’s Word to one’s daily walk is only part of the process. Walk with the Word recognizes the value, for example, of the *Life Application Study Bible* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2000). The editors have done a superb work in providing practical application to all parts of God’s Word. But here again, it is the editors who have provided the application. Walk with the Word encourages each and every believer to learn to apply God’s Word on his or her own to everyday, personal situations, therefore taking application one step further: personally hearing God’s voice through His Word.

Hearing God's Voice: How It Works

In Southern California, a young couple was preparing to go to the mission field. Their organization gave them the choice of going to Africa or to Central Asia. They were undecided. Obviously, they could be used mightily by God in either location. They desperately sought God's will in the matter. They wanted to know where, with their gifts, talents and personalities, they could best be used. They asked for guidance from the Holy Spirit whether they should go to Africa or to Central Asia. It was while reading Jeremiah 24 that their hearts began leaning toward Central Asia. They saw Central Asia as more the *"figs that could not be eaten due to rottenness"* (v. 2). Later, when asked why God would send them to a country where they could not openly evangelize and plant churches, Isaiah 58:6-11 spoke to their hearts. It would be their very presence, the testimony of their lives manifested through the good works of helping the poor and oppressed, that would serve as a witness of Jesus Christ and His love, and break down the cultural barriers against Christians. *"Then your light will break out like the dawn, and your recovery will speedily spring forth; and your righteousness will go before you; the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard"* (v. 8).

God's Word, applied in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, enabled this couple to make a difficult decision about where to go on the mission field. Here's another example.

The deacon of a church was very discouraged. It seemed that no one appreciated him, even his pastor. He just did his work, week after week, without recognition or appreciation. Recently, he had even come under criticism about some unpopular actions he had taken. He was about to quit his position and leave the church. One morning, during his private devotions, he read in the book of Judges about the Danites' inability to "drive out" the people in the valleys, forcing them to live in the mountains...not an ideal place for an agricultural people. He asked the Holy Spirit to open his eyes to see what the passage meant to him personally. Quickly he began to see that the reason the Danites had

been unable to drive out the people was because they lacked faith and failed to believe God. Instead of trusting God, they took matters into their own hands and, against God's will, left their designated home and migrated north. The journey was disastrous, resulting in the Danites introducing idolatry into Israel. The deacon realized that he needed to trust God, that God had given him a "land" to live in, and that to leave would be against God's will. He needed to trust that his work did not go unnoticed by the One who really counts, God Himself. He needed to learn to live by faith, unconcerned about the lack of appreciation of others. To leave against God's will would be to follow the pattern of the Israelites in Judges: *"everyone did what was right in their own eyes"* (Judges 21:25).

Here are two examples of how Christians "heard" the voice of God through His Word. They were, through the Holy Spirit, able to apply God's Word to their personal situations.

Is This "Spiritualizing" the Text?

In the many ways the Scriptures can be interpreted, the only correct method is the literal-historical approach. That is, the interpreter must assume verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible, that the writers were superintended by the Holy Spirit, that the biblical text is to be taken as literal until proved otherwise, that the text must be interpreted in light of the historical context, and that the interpreter must attempt to discern what was the author's intent in writing the biblical text. Such are the principles of correct interpretation of Scripture.

To spiritualize the text is to apply a method of interpretation that implies that the true meaning of the text is hidden, and that the text means something other than what it appears to say on the surface. Similar to allegorization, spiritualizing the text states there is a mystical, hidden meaning to the text, something that goes beyond the literal-historical meaning, and that is the true and only correct interpretation of the text. It is a mystical approach to interpreting God's Word.

Hearing God's voice through His Word is not spiritualizing a biblical text because it has nothing to do with the interpretation of Scripture. Hearing God's voice through His Word pertains only to application, not to interpretation. It is using the principles, the thoughts, and the words of Scripture to apply to an individual's given situation. This is nothing new in Scripture. In fact, God expects the believer to apply the principles of His Word. John 14:21 states, *"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me..."* God expects that those who say they love Jesus will apply His words to their lives and live accordingly.

Again, Galatians 6:7 states, *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap."* The *Life Application Study Bible* provides a general application:

"It would certainly be a surprise if you planted corn and pumpkins came up. It's a natural law to reap what we sow. It's true in other areas too. If you gossip about your friends, you will lose their friendship. Every action has results. If you plant to please your own desires, you'll reap a crop of sorrow and evil. If you plant to please God, you'll reap joy and everlasting life. What kind of seeds are you sowing?" (p. 2067).

The principles of hearing God's voice through His Word is nothing more than enabling every believer to make his or her own personal application to life situations from God's Word.

Pitfalls and Dangers

One objection raised to applying God's Word to one's personal circumstances is that the application will be incorrect or even unbiblical. There is the humorous story of the Christian who wanted to hear what God had to say, and so closed his eyes and opened to a verse in the Bible. He placed his finger on the verse that read, "Judas hanged himself." Finding that verse not very encouraging, he closed his eyes and picked another verse. It read, "Go thou and do likewise." Still unsatisfied with the results, he chose yet another verse. It read, "What thou doest, do quickly!" (Old anecdotal story; source unknown)

It is very possible that the Bible may be misapplied just like it is possible that the Bible may be misinterpreted. But because the Bible may be misinterpreted, should believers be discouraged from reading it? Of course not. Because the Word of God may be misapplied, the alternative of not making personal application is far worse and deprives the believer of one of the great blessings and intentions from God's Word. David wrote, *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."* (Psalm 119:105)

Here are some guidelines that may be helpful to correctly hearing God's voice through His Word.

- ***No application can be contrary to what the Word of God itself teaches.*** For example, the Bible clearly teaches, both in the Old and New Testaments, that adultery is a sin. Therefore, it is an incorrect application that a husband or wife should leave their spouse because "God's will is for me to be with this other person." It is impossible for that application to be the will of God. It is, most likely, the will of the flesh.
- ***The principles of the New Testament always take precedence over the principles of the Old Testament.*** For example, God gave the Israelites instructions to drive out, and sometimes destroy, wicked nations. This instruction from God's Word was applied incorrectly to support the Crusades. In recent years, similar misapplication has been used to bring harm to those who promote abortion. But God never gives that instruction in the New Testament. The progress of the kingdom of God is made by *"speaking the truth in love"* (Ephesians 4:15), not by violence. Nowhere in the New Testament is violence ever advocated. Therefore, any application that includes violence is not from the Holy Spirit, but from Satan.

- ***Sometimes there is more than one right application.*** For example, a young woman may be faced with the decision of marrying and raising a Christian family, or of remaining single and going to the mission field, or any combination thereof. Any of those choices are pleasing to God; that is, no one choice may be more God's will than another. In that case, God may leave it up to the believer to pursue the desires of her heart as long as, in the process, she seeks to please God in the process. God's will is that the young woman wants to please Him. How she does that may be left entirely up to her.
- ***If in doubt, ask.*** To avoid misinterpretations of the Bible, study Bibles and Bible dictionaries are available, as well as the teaching of pastors, elders, deacons, and Christians strong and experienced in the faith. Because of the nature of "hearing God's voice through His Word"—personal application—few "books" are available because they would have to be many volumes and would have to be about you! Learning to hear God's voice through His Word is a blessing that develops with experience and maturity. Therefore, for someone new at listening to God's voice, seek the counsel of a more mature and "seasoned" Christian. The best help would not be for that individual to "hear God's voice" for you, but to facilitate the process by which you yourself are enabled to hear God's voice.

Connecting with God through His Word means hearing God's voice personally. At Walk with the Word we believe every Christian who indeed has the Holy Spirit dwelling within is gifted and able to hear God's voice directly through His Word.

"The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple."

—Psalm 119:130



Chapter 4: Reading Plan

Whether opting for a personal study plan or for a small group or church-wide application, it begins with adopting a Scripture reading plan.

Believers need to immerse themselves in the **WHOLE** Word of God. In particular the truth is that the New Testament can never be fully understood without the foundation of the Old Testament. Jesus Himself used the whole of the Old Testament to explain to His disciples the meaning of everything He revealed in the New.

*Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.
Luke 24:27*

In fact, labeling the two parts "Old" and "New" is a misnomer. If we had our way, we'd rename the Old Testament to "The Beginning", the New Testament to "The Middle", and include a blank page at the end titled "The End". It's really all one seamless, integrated whole.

The Basic Purpose of the Reading Plan

*"Establish Your word to Your servant,
As that which produces reverence for You."
—Psalm 119:38*

The basic purpose of the "Walk with the Word Reading Plan" is to provide a structure by which participants can read through the Bible entirely every 3 years. The "Walk with the Word Reading Plan" covers approximately 11 chapters per week in the Old Testament (15 chapters a week through the Book of Psalms) and an average of 4 chapters a week in the New Testament.

The reading is purposely kept to no more than about 2 chapters a day at the most to not only make the volume of reading manageable, but to encourage each Believer in the pursuit of hearing God's voice by being able to concentrate on achieving quality over quantity. Although the reading plan cycles through the entire Bible, this is not a "race" to read the whole Bible but an exercise to read the whole Bible meaningfully.

Should Walk with the Word be adopted by your local church and the reading schedule coordinated with other ministries, by reading the assigned chapters on one's own during the week, the believer will already understand the context for the message from Sunday morning sermons which may be on the same plan. Parents will also be able to discuss Sunday School lessons with their children because the Sunday school ministry may also be following the same plan. Additionally, assisted learning for adults may be available through an Adult Sunday School and through small group Bible studies that meet in homes during the week.

The schedule for 2009 and beyond is available on the web site by clicking on the appropriate year.

The Ultimate Purpose of the Reading Plan

*"I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I wait for Your words.
My eyes anticipate the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word."
—Psalm 119:147-148*

The ultimate purpose of the Walk with the Word Reading Plan is not just to provide a structure for "getting through" God's Word every 3 years. As stated earlier, knowledge of God's Word is important and foundational, but knowledge alone does not necessarily change the heart.

The ultimate purpose of reading through God's Word is to change the heart, which in turn changes the mind, which in turn changes behavior, lifestyle and Christian walk, which in turn is destined to change relationships, the end goal being love:

"But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith"
—1 Timothy 1:5

In order to fulfill the ultimate purpose of the Bible study plan, believers are encouraged to meditate on God's Word and to approach God's Word with the understanding that God speaks to the heart through His Word. We at Walk with the Word believe that the primary means by which God speaks to believers today is not through prophets or teachers or pastors, or even through "impressions" from the Holy Spirit in prayer, but through His Word. We believe every follower of Jesus Christ who approaches God's Word with a sincere heart is capable of hearing God's "voice," as it were, through His Word.

*"Remember the word to Your servant,
In which You have made me hope.
This is my comfort in my affliction,
That Your word has revived me."*
—Psalm 119:49-50

One of the best ways for individual believers to get in touch with God through His Word, we believe, is by journaling. And the best way to shepherd the flock as a whole is to implement coordinated Bible study in as many local ministries as possible.

Master Reading Plan

Listed below is the master reading plan which goes through the entire Bible every 156 weeks. (3 years.) Although it is downloadable by year, this may be useful for implementing a reading schedule for yourself or an organization. It follows a loose chronological order except in the New Testament where the Gospels are purposely separated and covers an average of 11 chapters a week through the Old Testament (15

through the Psalms) and 4 chapters a week through the New Testament. The following table is organized in "week" order but also shows the current Walk with the Word schedule:

Old Testament			New Testament		
<u>Date</u>	<u>Week #</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Week #</u>	<u>Reading</u>
10/30/11	1	Genesis 1-11	7/25/10	99	Luke 1-6
11/6/11	2	Genesis 12-17	8/1/10	100	Luke 7-12
11/13/11	3	Genesis 18-26	8/8/10	101	Luke 13-18
11/20/11	4	Genesis 27-35	8/15/10	102	Luke 19-24
11/27/11	5	Genesis 36-41	8/22/10	103	Acts 1-7
12/4/11	6	Genesis 42-50	8/29/10	104	Acts 8-12
12/11/11	7	Job 1-7	9/5/10	105	Acts 13-20
12/18/11	8	Job 8-20	9/12/10	106	Acts 21-28
12/25/11	9	Job 21-31	9/19/10	107	James 1-2
1/1/12	10	Job 32-42	9/26/10	108	James 3-5
1/8/12	11	Exodus 1-6	10/3/10	109	Galatians 1-3
1/15/12	12	Exodus 7-12	10/10/10	110	Galatians 4-6
1/22/12	13	Exodus 13-18	10/17/10	111	Mark 1-5
1/29/12	14	Exodus 19-30	10/24/10	112	Mark 6-10
2/5/12	15	Exodus 31-40	10/31/10	113	Mark 11-13
2/12/12	16	Leviticus 1-7	11/7/10	114	Mark 14-16
2/19/12	17	Leviticus 8-17	11/14/10	115	1 Thessalonians 1-2
2/26/12	18	Leviticus 18-27	11/21/10	116	1 Thessalonians 3-5
3/4/12	19	Numbers 1-10:10	11/28/10	117	2 Thessalonians
3/11/12	20	Numbers 10:11-21	12/5/10	118	1 Corinthians 1-3
3/18/12	21	Numbers 22-36	12/12/10	119	1 Corinthians 4-6
3/25/12	22	Deuteronomy 1-11	12/19/10	120	1 Corinthians 7-9
4/1/12	23	Deuteronomy 12-26	12/26/10	121	1 Corinthians 10-12
4/8/12	24	Deuteronomy 27-34	1/2/11	122	1 Corinthians 13-16
4/15/12	25	Joshua 1-12	1/9/11	123	2 Corinthians 1-3
4/22/12	26	Joshua 13-24	1/16/11	124	2 Corinthians 4-7
4/29/12	27	Judges 1-8	1/23/11	125	2 Corinthians 8-10
5/6/12	28	Judges 9-16	1/30/11	126	2 Corinthians 11-13
5/13/12	29	Judges 17-21	2/6/11	127	Ephesians 1-3
5/20/12	30	Ruth	2/13/11	128	Ephesians 4-6
5/27/12	31	1 Samuel 1-7	2/20/11	129	Matthew 1-7
6/3/12	32	1 Samuel 8-15	2/27/11	130	Matthew 8-13:52
6/10/12	33	1 Samuel 16-31	3/6/11	131	Matthew 13:53-18
6/17/12	34	2 Samuel 1-6	3/13/11	132	Matthew 19-25
6/24/12	35	2 Samuel 7-12	3/20/11	133	Matthew 26-28
7/1/12	36	2 Samuel 13-24	3/27/11	134	Hebrews 1-4
7/8/12	37	Psalms 1-14 (Book I)	4/3/11	135	Hebrews 5-9
7/15/12	38	Psalms 15-28	4/10/11	136	Hebrews 10-13

7/22/12	39	Psalms 29-41	4/17/11	137	Romans 1-5
7/29/12	40	1 Kings 1-10	4/24/11	138	Romans 6-8
8/5/12	41	Proverbs 1-10	5/1/11	139	Romans 9-11
8/12/12	42	Proverbs 11-21	5/8/11	140	Romans 12-16
8/19/12	43	Proverbs 22-31	5/15/11	141	Philippians 1-2
8/26/12	44	Song of Solomon	5/22/11	142	Philippians 3-4
9/2/12	45	Psalms 42-56 (Book II)	5/29/11	143	Colossians 1-2
9/9/12	46	Psalms 57-72	6/5/11	144	Colossians 3-4
9/16/12	47	Ecclesiastes 1-8	6/12/11	145	1 Timothy 1-3
9/23/12	48	Ecclesiastes 9-12	6/19/11	146	1 Timothy 4-6
9/30/12	49	1 Kings 11-22	6/26/11	147	Titus
10/7/12	50	2 Kings 1-10	7/3/11	148	Philemon & Jude
10/14/12	51	2 Kings 11-14:20 & Joel	7/10/11	149	1 Peter
10/21/12	52	2 Kings 14:21-25 & Jonah	7/17/11	150	2 Peter
10/28/12	53	2 Kings 14:26-29 & Amos	7/24/11	151	2 Timothy
11/4/12	54	2 Kings 15-17 & Hosea	7/31/11	152	John 1-4
11/11/12	55	2 Kings 18-19 & Isaiah 1-12	8/7/11	153	John 5-6
11/18/12	56	Isaiah 13-27	8/14/11	154	John 7-10
11/25/12	57	Isaiah 28-39	8/21/11	155	John 11-12
12/2/12	58	Isaiah 40-48	8/28/11	156	John 13-14
12/9/12	59	Isaiah 49-57	9/4/11	157	John 15-17
12/16/12	60	Isaiah 58-66	9/11/11	158	John 18-21
12/23/12	61	Micah & Nahum	9/18/11	159	1 John
12/30/12	62	2 Ki. 20-21, Zeph. & Habak.	9/25/11	160	2 & 3 John
11/15/09	63	2 Kings 22-25 & Obadiah	10/2/11	161	Revelation 1-3
11/22/09	64	Jeremiah 1-12	10/9/11	162	Revelation 4-9
11/29/09	65	Jeremiah 13-25	10/16/11	163	Revelation 10-15
12/6/09	66	Jeremiah 26-35	10/23/11	164	Revelation 16-22
12/13/09	67	Jeremiah 35-45			
12/20/09	68	Jeremiah 46-52			
12/27/09	69	Lamentations			
1/3/10	70	1 Chronicles 1-9			
1/10/10	71	1 Chronicles 10-19			
1/17/10	72	1 Chronicles 20-29			
1/24/10	73	2 Chronicles 1-9			
1/31/10	74	Psalms 73-89 (Book III)			
2/7/10	75	2 Chronicles 10-20			
2/14/10	76	2 Chronicles 21-32			
2/21/10	77	Psalms 90-100 (Book IV)			
2/28/10	78	Psalms 101-106, 2 Chr. 33-36			
3/7/10	79	Ezekiel 1-12			
3/14/10	80	Ezekiel 13-24			
3/21/10	81	Ezekiel 25-32			
3/28/10	82	Ezekiel 33-39			

4/4/10	83	Ezekiel 40-48
4/11/10	84	Daniel 1-3
4/18/10	85	Daniel 4-6
4/25/10	86	Daniel 7-9
5/2/10	87	Daniel 10-12
5/9/10	88	Ezra 1-4 & Haggai
5/16/10	89	Zechariah 1-7
5/23/10	90	Zechariah 8-14
5/30/10	91	Ezra 5-10
6/6/10	92	Nehemiah
6/13/10	93	Psalms 107-118 (Book V)
6/20/10	94	Psalms 119
6/27/10	95	Psalms 120-135
7/4/10	96	Psalms 136-150
7/11/10	97	Esther
7/18/10	98	Malachi



Chapter 5: Walk with the Word as an Individual Study Guide

The common characteristic of all the people in the Bible standing as prominent spiritual examples is a strong, personal commitment in their daily walk with God of which God's Word was absolutely essential.

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

—Matthew 7:7-11

Concert pianists are created from 30 minutes of practice a day. In the lives of such spiritual giants as Abraham, Joseph, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Peter, John, Paul, etc., are the results of a daily commitment to God. Spiritual "giants" are made a day at a time from hearts that are determined to seek and submit to God in daily devotion to Him. It's an application of Christ's teaching in action,

"Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."

—Matthew 23:12

If you clear a few minutes each day from your schedule you'll find that God will bring your schedule under control and you'll be walking in all the right things.

Adopt a Reading Plan

At its most, the Walk with the Word reading schedule is a couple of chapters a day and often far less. Even a whole section of 11 chapters usually takes only 20 minutes to read in a single sitting. It's a decision that comes down to spending a half hour or so a day committed to God rather than something else. Consider Jesus' teaching that **nothing** can take precedence over Him:

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it."

—Matthew 10:37-39

When combined with prayer and meditation, the reading becomes 2-way communication between you and God and enjoins the process of finding new life in Christ. Especially when employing the *Inductive Bible Study Method* described in the next chapter, the ultimate result is the application of Scripture to your life on a daily basis. Spending 20-30 minutes a day in this manner is the critical first step to relinquishing **personal** control in favor of **divine** control that results in a Christ-led, Christ-inspired life.

Weekly Bible Study

The weekly studies available for download on this site can serve as a weekly, personal exploration of a section of the overall reading. You can subscribe to the Walk with the Word newsletter to receive them in your email inbox each week. These can serve as guides revealing how the Inductive approach can work for you. The main point is to **NOT** read for the sake of reading or just for information; read to hear God's voice speaking to you personally through His Word and seek how to apply it to your walk with Him.

If you come across a difficult passage, word, or phrase, go to your Bible dictionary. Follow the verse references printed within your Bible to examine similar passages or even check a concordance. First allow

yourself the opportunity to examine Scripture seeking the Spirit's guidance before seeking a mature fellow Believer's counsel. Use commentaries only as the last resort. This advice is intended to allow **you** to gain insight into God's Word with as few presuppositions—yours or others—as possible and to not hear what God has said to **other** people but what He is **now** saying to **you**.

Seriously consider keeping a journal as described in more detail later. Jot down just one thought a day concerning something in the reading that spoke to your heart and how you intend to use it to make a difference in your personal walk.

Enhance Another Study

The odds are pretty good that the Walk with the Word reading schedule and email Bible studies won't parallel activities in your local church. But if your pastor is, say, preaching through a particular book of the Bible, you can download Walk with the Word studies from the same general sections of Scripture to enhance such studies and make personal application of same. When you pay attention to the themes or sections of Scripture that are being covered by your local ministry, and supplement the study with personal application, the sermons and lessons you experience are enhanced and more personally meaningful because you're now *actively* involved in what the Spirit is communicating.

If you're not involved in a small group ministry, consider starting one to take your study to the next level involving sharing, fellowship, and accountability. Using the guidelines and studies available on Walk with the Word makes it very easy to facilitate a weekly Bible study at home, work, or school.

The Example of David

For believers it's an indisputable fact that the Psalms, the majority of which were written by David, are a tremendous source of comfort and connection with God. Have you noticed how often David refers to

God's Word, to meditating on His Word, to receiving joy and comfort from God's Word? (You might have noticed the numerous quotes throughout this web site that come from Psalm 119, a work wholly devoted to the benefits and blessings of God's Word.) But have you stopped to consider what "God's Word" exactly was in David's time?

As of David's time, none of the prophets were even yet born whose 17 books are part of our Old Testament. There were no books from Solomon (Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes), and the events of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther were many hundreds of years away. It's doubtful that during David's life there was much more than the first five books given through Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) , Job—a work handed down to each generation from around Abraham's time—and perhaps Joshua. David would most certainly be aware of the content that would become Ruth, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, but those sections of God's Word were most likely assembled after David's lifetime. He not only did not have the whole Bible as we have it today, but he didn't even have the whole Old Testament.

So the "testimonies", "way", "precepts", "statutes", "commandments", "judgments", "ordinances", and all the other terms David uses in the Psalms to describe God's Word are primarily from David's personal study of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament and Job!

If you're like most Christians, the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy in particular can be difficult on the surface. But consider that it's these very books into which David constantly gazed from which he created the Psalms, expounding the power, joy and comfort of "God's Word".

David's Psalms might be thought of as his own journals, detailing what God spoke to him through the Word. Further, we might not really understand the true nature and power of God's character that is

revealed to us through the Law given through Moses if the Psalms did not serve as the “commentary”, so to speak, of how the Law is supposed to change our life, bond us in love with our Creator, change relationships.

David’s legacy to us is the supreme example of what occurs when we daily and diligently look into God’s Word seeking to hear Him speak to us personally and then applying same to our walk.

*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.*

*The wicked are not so,
But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish.*

— Psalm 1

The key difference between the righteous and the wicked? One is committed to God’s Word, the other is not.



Chapter 6: The Inductive Bible Study Method

The Inductive Bible study method is applicable to every level from individual study, to leading a small group, to every level of Bible teaching from children's Sunday School to the main message coming from the pulpit.

Its goal is to provide a framework by which you can hear God speaking through His Word and make personal application to your life. It's how one becomes a *doer* of the Word and not just a *listener*. This brief introduction is essential to understanding Walk with the Word's perspective and approach to providing Bible studies and related materials to all levels of ministry. There are many books and web sites devoted to this topic that will provide much more detail. This discussion is provided as an overview.

At its simplest, the Inductive method employs three basic techniques:

- Observation
- Interpretation
- Application

Observation

Observation teaches you to see what the passage says and is the basis for accurate interpretation and correct application. It is vitally important to understand the context of the Scripture being studied and to not pull the words or sentences away from their true meaning. Observation answers the question, "What does the passage say?"

You don't have to earn a degree in Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic to figure out the correct context of any portion of Scripture. (It can't hurt,

either.) But it's essential that you keep in mind that language changes over time, and that speech patterns, writing styles, communication methods differ during the course of our own lifetime, much less over 2,000 years and many, many cultural hand-offs. The observation techniques that follow allow you to glean what is being said in the proper context as you study.

Begin with prayer.

If you want to "hear" what God has to say to you personally, you really need to enter into 2-way communication. Prayer begins the "conversation" and places your mind, heart and soul in the right relationship with Him.

Ask the 5 W's and an H.

The hardest thing to do is ridding ourselves of assumptions when we approach God's Word, whether it's a book ("Revelation is nothing but symbols and allegories.") or a familiar passage ("1 Corinthians 13 is all I need to know about 'love.'"). Presuppositions are the most common culprits leading to wrong interpretation and mis-application. Carefully observing who, what, when, where, why and how are the best assurances leading to correct interpretation. **DON'T RUSH PAST THIS.** Doing this on a chapter-by-chapter basis consistently places the paragraphs, sentences, and words in their proper context.

- **WHO** is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? **To Whom** is he speaking?
- **WHAT** is the subject or event covered in the chapter? What do you learn about the people, event, or teaching?
- **WHEN** do/will the events occur or did/will something happen to someone in particular?
- **WHERE** did or will this happen? Where was it said?
- **WHY** is something being said or mentioned? Why would/will this happen? Why at that time and/or to this person/people?
- **HOW** will it happen? How is it to be done? How is it illustrated?

Mark key words and phrases.

A key word or phrase is one which, when removed, leaves the passage void of meaning. They are often repeated by the author throughout a chapter or book in order to reveal the point or purpose of the writing.

However you decide to mark such things in your Bible, determine to be consistent in your use of colors, symbols, or a combination of both throughout in order to capture important themes that transcend just a single passage of Scripture. (e.g. "love", "covenant", "sin", "grace", etc.)

Pay attention to pronouns ("he", "she", "we", "they", "I", "you", "it", "our", etc.) as they often indicate a change of direction or emphasis. (e.g., when it changes from "He" says to "you" say.) And note synonyms which are different ways of referring to the same person, place, or thing. For instance, there are many names for "God", several names for "Jerusalem", and so on. These often hint at different character traits of the same entity, trying to teach us a little more about it.

Look for lists.

Trivia Time: In movies, books and everyday speech people often refer to "The Seven Deadly Sins" – where did that come from? One of Paul's epistles. (Looking it up would be good for you.) Lists are often additional words used to describe a key word, but are also what is said about someone or something or related thoughts/instructions grouped together.

Lists are something you should develop as you study a particular topic throughout the Bible such as "grace". Listing the characteristics of grace as provided by each use throughout Scripture will provide you with a much broader view of the whole meaning of grace. Such a list allows you see the bigger picture and avoid incorrectly interpreting it on the basis of just one Scripture in and of itself. Lists are the building blocks to developing something usually described in the much more intimidating terms "doctrine" and "theology".

Yes, keeping lists of the important topics provides you with the basis for personalizing doctrines and theologies that follow from studying a theme across the entire Bible. Essentially you are placing the foundation layers of your faith into their right and proper context.

Watch for contrasts and comparisons.

A *contrast* is a comparison of things that are different or opposite, such as light/darkness, proud/humble, good/evil. The word *but* often indicates a contrast to something just stated.

A *comparison* points out similarities and is most often indicated in the use of words such as *like, as, as it were*.

These small words are great eye-openers in the process of observation as they set the words on either side of them into their proper context.

Identify terms of conclusion.

Wherefore, therefore, for this reason, and finally are terms of conclusion that usually follow an important thought in order to tell you how to personally apply the teaching. They're a bridge between the "teaching" and the "application" and often clearly spell out the proper meaning and context of the passage with no guesswork as to what it means.

Develop your own chapter themes.

The printed chapter themes in most Bibles are more of an aid for finding a specific story or passage such as "Jesus Heals a Blind Man"; they're not very descriptive of the spiritual topic or theme that reveal the lessons God is directing to your heart. Nearly every Bible translation is available without such markings, usually in a "wide margin" edition conducive to making personal notes. *The New Inductive Study Bible* by Harvest House Publishers, for instance, builds this into several versions and even provides a place at the end of every book to record your personal chapter headings in order to see

patterns and development of themes. But this can also easily be maintained on a separate sheet of paper.

Note expressions of time

This is often the most-overlooked part of observation. A crucial part of attaining the correct context is understanding when something has/is/will happen.

Time is often directly indicated such as “during the reign of”, “on the tenth day”, “at the feast of”, etc., etc. Sometimes the context is as much about when, or its relationship to a past or present event, as it is the person, place, or thing mentioned.

Pay attention to words such as *until*, *then*, *when*, and *after* as they reveal the relationship of one event to another. This is of particular importance when studying the Gospels as you will begin to see that Jesus’ acts and miracles are often an extension of the teaching He gave just before or after them. Throughout the Bible these words help connect actions with teaching in the proper context.

These are the fundamentals and, to be sure, there are added guidelines for the proper observation applied to some of the different types of literature provided throughout the Bible such as psalms, songs, parables, allegories, etc. But this will serve as the baseline throughout. Proper observation takes the guesswork out of interpretation and application. As stated previously, don’t rush through observation because you want to get to interpretation or application more quickly. The latter are only properly achieved through patient and thorough observation.

Interpretation

Interpretation answers the question, “What does the passage mean?” Tons of books and web sites are available on this topic—not to mention hundreds of institutions providing degrees in related fields—so these are the basic rules. But don’t let anyone intimidate you in following their steps; God makes His knowledge and will known to **ANYONE**

who seeks. (There's a good topic for you to keep track of throughout your studies.)

1. **Context ALWAYS rules first.** Never take a Scripture out of its context to make it say what **you** want it to say. Look at context first from the perspective of the book being studied, the overall chapter, the paragraph, and the sentence. Try to stay away from giving individual words meanings that reinterpret sentences, paragraphs, and onward up.
2. **Always seek the FULL counsel of God's Word.** Never accept someone's teaching based on one or two verses; ensure that they're not taken out of context as they're employed throughout the whole Bible.
3. **Scripture never contradicts Scripture.** It's amazing how the best interpreter of Scripture is other Scripture. One of the best study aids is a good Bible dictionary which will show words and concepts as they're presented throughout **ALL** of Scripture. This is often the best use of footnotes in your Bible that indicate other verses utilizing the same words or phrases in other places so you can compare and contrast how it's used in *many* passages.
4. **Never base a belief or conviction on an obscure passage of Scripture.** You can always ask other Believers, go to Bible dictionaries or commentaries, or submit it to God in prayer and await His direction.
5. **Interpret Scripture literally.** Obviously there are no dragons and the Bible uses it and other symbols. But these are far and away the exceptions in the Bible as the vast majority are very, very literal. Beware of false teachers who teach that **all** the Bible is but allegory, such as Jonah and the big fish, or the Garden of Eden, etc., etc. These and all events, places and things in the Bible are real and not allegory. God is very clear in Scripture when He uses allegory, parables, or other literary devices to communicate His Word.

6. **Look for the single meaning of the passage.** Let the passage speak for itself. Seek to understand what the author had in mind. Flee from those that teach about things such as “Bible codes” or try to twist Scripture to support a meaning it never had in the first place. Making something complicated is usually an outward sign of someone that is going to great lengths to justify some kind of sin in their life or the choices they’ve made. Always remember that allegories and typology always *illuminate* what is already present in Scripture – they never create something new on their own.

Application

Application answers the question, “What does it mean to me personally? What truths can I put into practice? What changes should I make to my life?”

Paul states in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”* Paul provides the activities involved in application: Teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.

- **Teaching** is what the Word of God has to say on any topic or subject and is *always true*. Once you discover what the Word of God teaches, you are obligated before God to accept that truth and to live by it, dropping any false beliefs or teachings you may have previously held.
- **Reproof** is finding out where you have thought or behaved wrongly or have not been doing what God says is right according to His Word. It’s your personal acknowledgment that you were wrong in thought or behavior and now accept and agree with God’s truth, setting you free from sin and unbelief.
- **Correction** is the step wherein the knowledge gained from teaching and reproof are placed into action resulting in changed behavior. It’s converting knowledge into obedience.

- ***Training in righteousness*** can be thought of in terms of God's Word as a handbook for living, for how we conduct ourselves. It's continually returning to the source and consistently putting into practice the reproofs and corrections of His Word to build our character in Him.

In seeking to apply Scripture to your life, ask the following questions in light of your observation and interpretation:

1. What does the passage teach?
2. As I've studied this passage, do any errors in my belief or problems with my behavior come to mind?
3. Remembering that God is my Father and I am His child, what instruction is my Father trying to pass to me, His child?

Finally, in the process of applying Scripture, take note to beware of the following:

- Applying cultural standards rather than biblical standards
- Attempting to strengthen a legitimate truth by using Scripture incorrectly
- Applying Scripture out of prejudice from past training or teaching.

Conclusion

Observation, interpretation, and application lead to *transformation*. This is the goal at every level of Bible teaching whether in an individual's daily devotions or the Sunday morning sermon. This is the process of becoming more and more like the image of Christ that we might not only enjoy a deeper personal relationship with our Savior but reflect His image to the world rather than our own.

Or as Christ described it, becoming *doers* of the Law.

Ultimately, if you want to measure whether or not your Bible study time and method is effective or not, there is one measurement which conclusively proves it for you personally regardless of the techniques or methodology you employ. Remember two things Jesus taught:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 13:34-35

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."

John 14:15

The whole Law is fulfilled in Christ's commandment to love others and the proof of our love for Him is found in the quality of our obedience to His Word. Therefore, if we are putting His Word into practice in our life and being obedient to Him, the proof that our Bible study method is working will be revealed in our relationships with other people.

If we are becoming more loving, the Word is taking root as it should and therefore our Bible study method is working. But if we are the most intellectual Bible scholar on the planet yet continue to struggle in our love for others, our Bible study method is an utter failure. The proof is the degree that our relationships begin to change over time.



Chapter 7: Journaling

Learn to greatly enhance your study experience while leaving a spiritual legacy for future generations. Journaling adds yet another human sense to the overall effort of hearing God speak through His Word. The actions of listening, reading, praying, meditating, and seeking are enhanced when writing is introduced to each of these activities.

In fact, at Walk with the Word we believe the one thing that can make the most difference in the quality of one's Bible study time is to begin writing **something** down. One of the reasons preachers grow in the Word is because they are going beyond merely reading because of all that is involved in writing a sermon. Similarly, the average believer can greatly enhance their Bible skills by the simple act of jotting down even just a few simple thoughts each day on what they read.

The Challenge

"I will meditate on Your precepts and regard Your ways..."
—Psalm 119:11

Who among us does not experience a busy schedule?

Constant activities and pressing obligations make each day a challenge to read God's Word. Jobs, child care, homemaking, friends, family, and school impact our schedules in such a way that finding time to read the Word becomes a significant challenge. Because so many of us live in the "fast lane" these days, it's difficult for us to find time even to

read God's Word, much less find the necessary time to reflect and meditate on it.

Yet, reading and meditating on God's Word on a regular basis is exactly what He wants us to do. No matter how hard it seems, God wants us to rearrange our schedules and prioritize our lives in such a way that we find the time necessary to receive a blessing from His Word.

King David carried the weight of a nation on his shoulders. When he was not out fighting battles with Philistines he was in his Jerusalem headquarters making strategic plans for his country and his people. Yet, in spite of his busy schedule, he set aside time for the Word of God. Not only did he read and study God's Word, he meditated on it:

"My eyes anticipate the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word."

—Psalm 119:148

Meditating on the Word

If you have embarked on the *Walk with the Word Scripture Reading Plan*, you have no doubt been blessed with a simple, easy method for reading through God's Word entirely in 3 years. Most likely you are gaining valuable knowledge about the Bible from the numerous learning opportunities available through the church—the Sunday School study, the message from the pulpit, the midweek small group Bible study. It's astonishing how much we can learn about God and His plan for our lives simply by reading His Word!

Reading God's Word on a regular basis is a good thing to do. God's Word provides knowledge. Knowledge is important because it is the basis for knowing truth. Knowledge helps us to understand God's Person, God's ways, and God's interaction in human history. And God's Word helps to understand ourselves.

*But there is a difference between **reading** God's Word and **meditating** on God's Word.*

Reading for reading's sake can easily become nothing more than the accumulation of facts or a spiritual discipline that needs to be completed. One of the dangers of a Scripture reading plan which moves rapidly through the Bible is that little time will be given for reflection and meditation, much less personal application.

To meditate on God's Word means to reflect on it. To reflect on God's Word is to think something through in its entirety; to ponder, to scrutinize, to "knead" something through. It's during reflection that we come to the point of personalizing God's Word; that is, we begin to ask the question, "What does this mean to me?"

It's through meditation and reflection on God's Word that the knowledge and facts which come from our reading begin to take on real substance; that is, they become personally relevant to us. King David didn't just read God's Word. He wrote,

*"I will meditate on Your wonders"
—Psalm 119:78*

Overview of Journaling

Journaling is a splendid way to help us learn to meditate and reflect on God's Word, as well as make personal application.

Many people do not realize this, but David's psalms (songs) are a record of his meditation and reflection on God, His Word and His works. Throughout Psalm 119, for example, David frequently refers to God's laws, God's ordinances, His precepts, His ways, His testimonies, His commandments and His statutes. He used the gift God gave him for song by writing down his thoughts and insights. Some of the psalms are very personal, reflecting some difficult issues he was facing at the time. Other psalms are majestic and inspirational, reflecting on the wonders of God. All of David's psalms have one thing in common,

however; they reflect what the Holy spirit was putting in his heart. Through the divine inspiration of the Holy spirit, David's "journals" become Scripture.

Not everyone can write psalms like David. But most of us can write something. Most of us are capable of writing at least a sentence or two about what God is putting on our hearts.

Writing what God is putting on our hearts—particularly as it relates to His Word—is what journaling is all about.

Recording one's thoughts in a journal is unlike writing in a diary. Diaries provide a detailed record of daily activities and events, what good or bad things happen to us, or what experiences we're having. Journaling is different, however. Journaling is a method of recording one's thoughts, one's feelings, one's insights into things. Whereas diaries are event oriented, journals are thought oriented. Of course, an absolute distinction between a diary and a journal does not need to be mandated. Journal entries often record events, and diary entries, thoughts.

Church history provides us with numerous examples of those who journaled: Augustine, John Wesley, David Livingstone, Amy Carmichael, to name a few. One contemporary model is Jim Elliot.

The Journals of Jim Elliot

In 1949, Jim Elliot graduated with highest honors from Wheaton College in Illinois. He was someone who journaled extensively. His complete works may be found in *The Journals of Jim Elliot*, compiled and edited by his wife and author Elisabeth Elliot.

On October 28, 1949, Elliot wrote these prophetic words in his journal:

"One of the great blessings of heaven is the appreciation of heaven on earth. He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Six years later, at the young age of twenty-eight, Jim Elliot and four missionary comrades were martyred by Auca Indians on the Curaray River in the jungles of Ecuador. Though Elliot was only twenty-eight when he died, he left for his wife, his only child Valerie, and all the world a legacy of how God moves in the heart of a man through His Word.*

Perhaps most revealing in *The Journals of Jim Elliot* is a man in whom the Word of God permeated every thought. Not a decision was made that did not resound with the counsel of God's Word. It is through his journals that we gain insight into the spiritual character of the man.

Most of Jim Elliot's journal entries were brief and reflected his thoughts about a particular section of Scripture. For example, this entry from September 9, 1948:

"A verse stands out this morning in 1 Chronicles 12:8: Men who wish to do great things for a rejected king must be 'separated,' 'shielded' (in the hold), 'strong,' 'skilled,' 'fearless' (as a lion in face) and 'swift.' This makes for a good outline (for teaching)."

And this entry from December 10:

"Psalm 62. Thankful for two new aspects of truth shown me this morning, Father. Oh, that every day brought something new. Make it so, I pray. Psalm 62:1,2 and 5,6: The first describes the rest of the soul's waiting in silence upon God, who is my salvation. The second beseeches the soul to rest so upon God, who is my expectation. The first is settled; rest in salvation is secure and that is enough. 'I shall not be greatly moved' (perhaps a little wavering). The insertion of expectation has removed any question of being moved.... Teach me what that means, Lord Jesus."

And from December 13:

"Psalm 65: Immanuel! Oh, the glory of a God who can come to those He loves. Struck just now with the tremendous meaning of the incarnation. Think of it, thy God a wizened, weak babe in a manger of

straw. The Almighty Jehovah—all of Him, in swaddling clothes. And there is not the aura in that stable which the artists paint there. No, it was dark and the straw was prickly; the night, chill, God, born of woman! O Jesus, my Immanuel, how grateful I am that Thou art no less with me in common places than in more elevated ones."

Because Jim Elliot journaled his thoughts as he poured over the Scriptures, a legacy was left for generations of how God "spoke" to him through the Word. From his journals, a living legacy was left for us to know the inner thoughts of a deeply committed Christian.

Journaling is a time-tested and proven method of recording how God interacts with us in our everyday lives, as well as how we ourselves interact with Him. Journaling can be for the purpose of recording observations in Scripture, reflecting how God is dealing with us, or for recording our prayers. Regarding Scripture, journaling serves the useful purpose of assisting us in taking time to reflect and meditate on God's Word.

*(The entire story of the mission and martyrdom of the five missionaries in Ecuador is vividly told in Elisabeth Elliot's *Through Gates of Splendor*.)

Creating a Word Journal

Journaling is an excellent way to get in touch with what God wants to teach us personally from His Word.

When we sit before the Word of God, we come with an expectancy that God has something to say to us. We pray beforehand asking, "Lord, what do You have for me from Your Word today?" There is the expectancy that the Holy Spirit will reveal to our spirits some truth the Word has for us personally, beyond simply gaining information or insight. This process of personal revelation (theologically referred to as "illumination") through the Word is facilitated by journaling, for the reader purposes to write down that which the Spirit is speaking to the heart through the Word. (For more information about how to hear God speaking through His Word see the page so titled on the web site.).

(Some Bible scholars and teachers object to this approach to Bible reading. They contend that it is improper for the reader to ask the question, "What does this mean to me?" when reading Scripture. They argue that to interpret Scriptures correctly, we must instead ask the question, "What was the author's intent in writing this?" and we must take into consideration to whom the author was writing before making an interpretation. This objection is a valid one if the discussion involves proper methods of interpretation of Scripture. But interpreting Scripture is quite different from personally applying Scripture. The Bible was written for us; for each and every believer who comes face-to-face with the Word of God. Exodus 12:26 states, *"And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?' you shall say..."* [See also Exod. 13:8, Deut. 4:9; 6:20.] That someone might make an inappropriate application is possible, but because there is a risk does not mean that no attempt at personal application should be made at all!)

Sometimes God speaks to us concerning personal issues we are dealing with, or emotional struggles that overwhelm us. Other times, the Lord provides a specific answer to a problem we are dealing with. Or, the Word may open our minds to something we're failing to do as a Christian, or as a parent, or as a son or daughter. One of the benefits of journaling is that it slows the reading process down, allowing time for meditation and reflection, recording what God is telling our hearts through His Word.

Journaling does not have to be pages and pages of stream of consciousness, although for some, that may become a wonderful source of inspiration or creativity. Most people, however, have tight schedules and can afford to write only a brief paragraph or two. Even one sentence is worthwhile if it reflects what the Word has inscribed on the heart.

The key to good journaling from the Word is to record what God's Word is saying to your heart.

The point in journaling, however, is write **something** down. That way, more thought will be given to a key word in the chapter or a particularly meaningful verse. The secret to journaling is to find the verse or phrase that has particular meaning to you at the moment, and write about what it means to you.

By doing this, the Word of God becomes personally meaningful and applicable and the reader comes away with the rightful impression, "God spoke to me today."

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path."
—Psalm 119:105*

Leaving a Legacy

*"The unfolding of Your words gives light;
It gives understanding to the simple."
—Psalm 119:130*

A "legacy" is defined as "a gift...left to someone..." and "anything handed down from the past, as from an ancestor." Jim Elliot's journals are a legacy for generations to come. Any believer who journals leaves a spiritual legacy, and parents can leave a lasting spiritual legacy for their children.

Take, for example, a Christian parent. Children learn most of their spiritual values from their parents; therefore, parents are to be role models for the way they want their children to grow up spiritually. As the child grows and learns spiritual truths from the parent, they also learn about the Bible. As they grow older and desire to learn more about the Bible on their own, they have an abundance of commentaries, dictionaries, encyclopedias and other helps to explain the Bible.

There is an abundance of commentaries on the Bible, but there are no spiritual commentaries on you, the child's parent.

Thus, a child is left without a written record of how God and His Word touched the lives and hearts of his or her parents.

Practically speaking, parents and children are not together enough for the child to know how God is working in every facet of the parent's life. Even families who have daily devotions together are rarely exposed to the parents' inner thoughts. Children are usually not aware of their parents' personal struggles, tough decisions, burdens of prayer, and occasional crisis that the parent must endure, much less how God provides answers, guidance and comfort from His Word. Children are often protected from such trials and afflictions, as well as personal temptations that the parent might face. Therefore, children rarely have an opportunity to see how exactly and in what manner the Word of God is "fleshed out" in the life of the parent. In other words, there is no recorded spiritual commentary on the parent.

This is where leaving a legacy through journaling comes in. As parents journal daily how God's Word speaks to the heart, a legacy is left for their children. Wouldn't it be a surprise—and a great value—if on graduation day, or as a wedding present, parents presented to their son or daughter a spiritual commentary on how God spoke to them over the years of their growing up? Done consistently through the Bible, a complete commentary could be presented that would remain long after the parent passed away.

And what about future generations? What a blessing it would be for that son or daughter to show the journal to their own children and say, "Here is a spiritual commentary on the spiritual life of my parents and how God spoke to them through the Bible."

For the next Christian generation, few things would be of greater treasure than the spiritual legacy of their parents' walk in the Word.

Leaving a legacy through journaling is not difficult. Here's how one parent describes his habit of journaling:

"I get up before anyone else in the house. I help myself wake up by fixing a fresh cup of coffee and taking a shower. Then I spend some time praying for my family, my work, and special prayer needs. Then I open my Bible and read one chapter of the Old Testament. I then pick out one subject or one verse or one phrase or even one word that touches my heart, and then I write about it. (I sit at a computer which makes editing easy.) Sometimes I do a little commentary on the verse, and add my own insights into what it means. But then I make sure I explain why the verse means a lot to me personally, and how it touches my heart. (Time is short before I go to work, so I only write a paragraph or two, except on weekends when I have more time.) Then I repeat the procedure from the New Testament and do the same thing. I'm about halfway through the Bible now and I've written over 500 pages! I always back up my work, and every month I print out a hard copy so I'll have that just in case. (One day, I'll put it all on a CD.) I plan to present it to my children on their wedding day, in the form of a bounded book. There may be three or four volumes!"

This man's children are going to receive a great blessing some day that will be with them for the rest of their lives!

Sample Journal Entries

Sample journal entries by others who have journaled through Walk with the Word (initials fictitious):

"Someone said something to me yesterday that really hurt me. Then God spoke to me through his word. Genesis 45:7: 'And God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance.' There is so much in this verse. Joseph could have been justified by the world's standards to have them killed or even thrown into prison. But what did he do? He forgave them. Why, the truth is that he forgave them a long time ago. This is what God calls me to do. When I harbor bad feelings about someone I only hurt myself."

SR, February 3

"Today I read that 'David inquired of the Lord.' I suddenly realized how many decisions I make every day, really important ones, without inquiring of the Lord. No more just saying 'Yes' when someone asks

me to do something. First I'm going to inquire of the Lord! Is it something he wants me to do?"

RR, January 6

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Chapter 8: Walk with the Word as a Small Group Ministry

Overview of Small Groups

For most people who want to host a Bible study the most difficult issue to overcome is who will lead and guide the study.

First, don't think of a small group ministry as something that has to be organized like a congregation gathered to hear a sermon. You will see that the suggestions offered here look upon a small group more as an informal gathering of fellow believers focusing on how God's Word is changing each life.

Second, the Bible studies on this web site—and sent weekly directly to your inbox if you've subscribed to the newsletter—are designed to lead a small group discussion line by line through a passage of Scripture. In other words, formal preparation for the study has already been provided. These studies are mostly organized around reading a section of Scripture together and the leader asking questions about what was read. Although answers are provided as suggestions to move the conversation along so to speak, you will find that the group's answers really move things along in the direction of the Spirit's leading rather than your own. [Hint: It's "OK" if the group's answers and discussion digress from the written lesson—that's the point.]

If you haven't done so recently, you may want to review the *Overview of Walk with the Word* material to be reminded that the goal is not to become an encyclopedia of theology but to share how God is speaking to you through His Word. Small group Bible studies are really about sharing this with others who can then provide prayerful support and

accountability in our walk with Christ. All you really need is a place to meet, a Bible, and a study guide from this site.

For those desiring to develop deeper skills as a small group leader the basic information is provided on how to apply the studies you've personally developed.

The Basic Structure of a Small Group Bible Study

There are five key elements that should happen during any small group meeting. These elements are summed up in the acrostic TASTE:

Teaching
Application
Sharing
Touch
Extra

Take note through each of these points that the emphasis is facilitating discussion of what God is saying through His Word rather than attaining intellectual information. The word "seminary" is conspicuously absent from the entire Bible. From Genesis through Revelation God has repeatedly demonstrated that He speaks directly through His Word to those who seek Him. Leaders must always bear in mind Jesus' definition of "leader":

"Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."

—Matthew 23:10-12

"And He said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.'"

—Luke 22:25-26

The salient point is that we are to be facilitators, servants that point towards the Master, careful not to allow the focus to rest on us. It's far

more important to have the desire to **host** a small group than to desire being a **leader**. Christ's requirements for a leader are simply someone willing to serve others.

Teaching

The purpose of the teaching element is for the leader to guide the group through one main point the leader has learned from the selected portion of Scripture and to facilitate group discussion. This main point may be a practical spiritual lesson, a story line or even a theological concept.

When using Bible study guides developed by Walk with the Word this concept can be observed in action. Suggested questions are placed in parallel with each section of Scripture to facilitate group discussion while guiding everyone point-by-point towards a greater lesson.

The basic structure for these studies follows what is known as the "Inductive Bible Study System". In its simplest form, it's the process of studying Scripture by first observing (who, what, where, why and how), interpreting (what does it mean), and application (how does it apply to my life). The question and answer style of the studies facilitates group discussion to observe, interpret and, most importantly, actually apply biblical truth.

After the leader has focused the group with opening prayer, he or she:

- Provides context for the main point (lesson, theme)
- Introduces the main point
- Traces the main point through the Scripture portion
- Includes appropriate facts of information gained from personal study
- Supports the main point with cross references as appropriate

Walk with the Word Bible studies follow these points but also highly encourages you to develop your own studies as you delve deeper into God's Word.

Application

The purpose of application is to help group members identify personally with the main point. Without personal application, the study never goes beyond the dissemination of facts and information. Application should be taking place throughout the entire study!

The leader may facilitate application by:

- Encouraging group members to share how they might apply the main point to their lives personally. It's often just a simple manner of opening it up to the group by asking, "What does this say to you personally?"
- Sharing a personal testimony. If we are to become the type of leader Jesus has defined (a servant of others) we may need to inspire confidence in the group by personally relating how a particular lesson has changed/is changing our walk with Christ.
- Sharing a story or illustration. Often we'll come across testimony or situations that parallel the main point of the lesson being taught.

The commonality of all three points is an emphasis on faith rather than knowledge, of how Scripture is changing our heart more than our mind.

Sharing

The purpose of sharing is to allow other members in the group to share ideas, insights, knowledge, facts and themes they themselves learned by reading the selected portion of Scripture.

Always seek every opportunity to open up the meeting to any member of the group who wishes to share. As long as discussion continues to focus on personal application of Scripture, don't worry if things aren't moving point-by-point according to the study outline. Trust the leading of the Spirit in the sharing of the application of the Bible.

However, a key responsibility in leading the group is to ensure that no single member takes all the time or dominates the group. Such a member, however, may have a gift of teaching and may be a possible candidate for becoming a leader of a future small group. Discernment must be made between a member who is teaching and someone who is merely talking.

Touch

The purpose of this next element is to allow members to share how God "spoke" to them personally from the portion of Scripture. This is different from sharing a fact about the text, and it is different from making application (although it is close to the latter). ***This is one of the most critical elements of a small group, and is paramount to enabling a believer to get "connected" to God through His Word.*** This element must be taught by the leader.

The leader can simply open this element by asking, "Does anyone want to share how God spoke personally through His Word this week?" This is sometimes an intimate time of personal sharing and vulnerability. Not everyone in the group grasps the concept or is willing to share. Little comment needs to be made by the leader when someone shares how God spoke to them personally through His Word, but affirmation and encouragement should always be extended. Thank members for sharing and don't be afraid to pause for prayer whenever appropriate.

Extra

The purpose of "extras" is to allow the leader to share or bring to light other observations from the text that are interesting, fascinating or thought-provoking, but not necessarily relevant to the main point. These "extras" are usually the result of the leader's study and research and are a subtle way of encouraging the group to look deeper into Scripture in the course of their reading.

This can be a very fun and entertaining conclusion to the study—or even introduction—as the leader knows the answers to the "mystery" question and the members have to try to figure them out.

As an example referring to 1 Samuel 17:40, the leader might ask, "Why do you think David picked up FIVE smooth stones when he only needed ONE to defeat Goliath?" (Possibly to kill Goliath and all his brothers in anticipation that they might come to avenge Goliath's death.)

This is positive reinforcement to the group that the observation part of studying Scripture is often critical to making the right interpretation and personal application.

Summary

As you've figured out by now, a small group meeting regularly under these guidelines will build deeper and deeper skills in the observation, interpretation, and application of Scripture in their life. In other words, they'll begin to hear God speaking to them personally through His Word.

The basic mechanics of leading a small group are:

- Provide a reading schedule so each member has the opportunity to come to each meeting having read and considered the passage to be studied.
- Use or develop an outline of the passage to be studied that emphasizes a main point you've learned or want to convey.
- Help group members identify personally with the main point.
- Allow other members in the group to share ideas, insights, knowledge, facts and themes they themselves learned.
- Encourage members to share how God "spoke" to them personally from the portion of Scripture being studied.
- Make an extra effort to find ways to lovingly encourage members to go further in their study and application of God's

Word. Always remember Christ's instruction to be a servant to them.

It's not difficult at all to effectively accomplish all these things in a one-hour meeting. If you're blessed with a group that can allow more time, consider first expanding the areas of prayer and fellowship rather than adding additional Scripture study. Even in a small group setting you want to achieve a balance of the things that make meeting in His Name the most life-changing. Structure the time to include sharing of personal life events, prayer for individual needs, prayer for your church at large, and time to genuinely fellowship with each other.

If at all possible, set out at least one more chair than people attending the group at any given occasion and lead the group in asking God to send someone to fill that chair next time you meet.

Pray that you encounter the "worst" small group "problem" imaginable: The group becomes too large and must split to form more than one small group.



Chapter 9: Walk with the Word as a Churchwide Program

The best way to encourage the sustained, consistent efforts of individuals and small groups to commit themselves to the Word of God is to provide a churchwide framework.

We're not talking about wholesale, overnight change that demands razing everything in favor of building something completely new. It's more about enhancing the goals and efforts of ministries that probably already exist within your church, or addressing a gap you're probably well aware of. Just about every traditional church activity has a component of emphasizing the importance of the Bible. It may not have occurred to you that all those different emphases can be leveraged, even coordinated to have a multiplying effect for individuals, ministries, and the local church as a whole.

God has blessed your church with people, gifts, and goals to impact its immediate surroundings for the kingdom of God. The coordinated dedication to hear God speak through His Word is not a replacement of those gifts and goals but a concerted effort to use them more effectively.

Adopt a Reading Schedule

The first place to start is to publish a Scripture reading plan, samples of which you've probably already seen on the Walk with the Word web site.

A reading schedule can be listed on your web site, handed out as a bookmark, inserted in the Sunday bulletin or even mailed. And as will

be discussed further below, the easiest justification for publishing a schedule is so others can specifically read the passages each Sunday's main sermon will cover as well as the teaching for adult Sunday School.

This is a very non-threatening, low-change inducing first step towards coordinating all the ministries emphasizes on Bible study as well as providing a stepping stone towards introducing new opportunities if they don't already exist, such as implementing small groups.

The Pulpit Ministry

It cannot be over-stressed that without the full support of the pulpit, organization-wide success will be difficult.

Some individuals get intimidated because they think the style of sermon has to change to produce a weekly exegesis of consecutive passages of Scripture. If you think about it, even exegetical teaching takes one to other places in the Bible in the course of a sermon. If your current style is more "topical" than "exegetical", consider the fact that you can follow the reading plan by *starting* the sermon from a passage within each week's assigned reading even if covering the topic moves to other places in the Bible. You're still encouraging the congregation to read through the Bible without having to make material changes to your personal approach.

With a little encouragement and occasional plugs from the pulpit (e.g. *"There were so many wonderful things in this week's reading, weren't there?"*) you'll create an ever-increasing participation to connect the Word with the weekly message.

You can even effect this approach if you have multiple services that minister to different levels of believers. For instance, you may have a Sunday morning service that is oriented as a "seeker sensitive" service. Even though the sermon may be geared a little more towards the seeker than the mature believer, your lessons can still start from

each week's reading plan; and by making it known each week that a schedule is available, you're providing them direction as to where to get more information between Sundays. They won't understand everything at first, but they'll have already read the main text you're going to proceed from.

You may have a separate service – on Sunday or mid-week – that caters to mature believers. Those lessons can come from the same schedule and overall will have the benefit of focusing multiple levels of believers in different phases of their personal walk on the same area of study. This facilitates a stronger bond of sharing between these groups as they respond not only to God but to each other from the different applications they experience hearing God speak to them through the same portion of His Word.

Adult Sunday School

Because the weekly schedule covers many chapters, the pulpit ministry will probably only focus on a particular passage or just a few points or themes. Attempting to provide a more general overview of the entire week's reading should be the focus of Adult Sunday School.

Having encouraged attenders to do the reading the week leading into each Sunday School lesson, this is the place people should be encouraged to bring any general questions and where an overview is given to help everyone place the reading in the right historical and theological context.

This is the time to go over maps, the meaning of names, the timeline of Israel's or the early church's history, and so on, to provide a framework. It's great that a whole congregation reads the entire book of Isaiah, and even receives specific teaching on it from the pulpit, but the context of Isaiah's ministry, the setting for God's words, the historical events in parallel with his ministry are crucial to making the reading understandable and even enjoyable at all levels.

Consider that you may not necessarily need a seminary graduate to teach Sunday School in this manner because the local Bible book store is *bursting* with books, lesson plans, etc. It may simply be a matter of choosing materials that parallel the reading schedule. The various study aids available for download from Walk with the Word are oriented to address this need as well.

Small Groups

Whereas the pulpit provides concentrated spiritual guidance from a small portion of the reading, and adult Sunday School provides a more general overview, small groups are the venue where personal interaction, fellowship, and sharing of the Word takes place; the place where God's Word really becomes personal.

The Bible studies available on the Walk with the Word web site and emailed weekly in our newsletter are formatted to address the need of small group and individual Bible study, greatly emphasizing the application of God's Word to each individual's walk. Using this format, a small group "leader" is really more of a "facilitator". After reading through a specific portion of the reading (rarely more than a chapter and often less), the small group leaders guide the discussion through the Scripture point by point by asking questions that elicit the group's participation to jointly observe, interpret and apply the passage to their personal lives.

Having heard a sermon from a very small portion of the reading and received a general overview of the entire reading, the small group setting is the opportunity for personal sharing, exploration and mutual support in the study of a section of the reading. People tend to feel a little less inhibited in their participation at the group level having had reinforcement from their pastor and Sunday School teacher the previous Sunday. This creates the necessary bridge from passive listening to lives that begin to experience behavioral and heart changes. It is the final step of making all that they've learned to apply

to their personal life and heed the call of God's voice to become more committed not just as *hearers* of the Word, but *doers*.

Youth and Children Programs

You really need some talented people in order to create Youth and Children's Ministry's study materials that precisely follow the reading plan. When you develop a meaningful 6-week course through Isaiah for 1st Graders, *please* share it with us. [Insert big grin here.]

Teen ministries are less challenging and, in fact, have proven to be able to follow the exact reading plan as adults, especially when implemented in small groups is tailored for them. But the point to consider here is close to the one made for adult Sunday School: Rather than invent materials, be flexible and work on coordinating the materials you plan to buy or use. In other words, already published materials can be loosely tied to the reading schedule so that entire families are basically going through the same portions of Scripture at the same time.

Just the benefit of the family driving home together Sunday and being able to relate different aspects from the same portion of Scripture cannot be understated. Parents and children are bonded through their sharing of what they each learned from the same reading. What occurs in children's and youth ministries is no longer considered by adults to be disconnected or detached from their own experience each Sunday.

You're already securing materials for these ministries so this isn't a huge change. It's really a matter of matching the schedule and content of those materials with the reading plan. This small effort yields a tremendous pay-off as it not only connects many different ministries together, but builds a natural thirst for a deeper commitment to God's Word as children transition to adulthood.

Tie Everything Together with a Coordinator

Everything's probably not going to happen overnight all at the same time – publish a reading schedule, tie in the pulpit ministry and Sunday School, get small groups going, coordinating children's and youth ministries; but at some point you're going to need coordination and this is a burden you want lifted from the Pastor so he can concentrate on *his* ministry. You're going to need a coordinator.

Practically speaking, if you *don't* have a coordinator you run the risk of the Sunday morning message, the Sunday School lesson and the small group study covering the exact same topic over and over again. The first duty of the coordinator is to act as the communicator between these ministries to enable each area to compliment the others and avoid unnecessary redundancy or overlap. The coordinator talks with the Pastor about the focus of upcoming sermons and is self-informed as to what the small group study will cover that week. Then he can communicate to the pastor, Sunday School teachers and small group leaders these intentions so that each will avoid covering to any depth the same material.

This is most beneficial to the Sunday School teacher because it's always near impossible to provide even the most general overview of the chapters in each week's reading, so knowing what will be emphasized from the pulpit and in small groups reduces the material needing to be reviewed. While going through the overview the teacher can plainly state, *"We'll skip chapter 5 because that is the focus of this morning's sermon and chapter 7 because that's reserved for small groups this week."* It doesn't mean anyone's absolutely prohibited from teaching from those passages, but they'll be aware to not emphasize them too greatly for the benefit of the pulpit and small groups. In fact, it's a great "marketing" tool for those who attend Sunday School that are not yet enrolled in a small group that subtly says, *"You need go to a small group to get the rest."*

Ideally this should be your “Small Group Coordinator” who oversees the creation of small groups, placing new members, recruiting new hosts and leaders for new groups, and distributes the weekly small group Bible study to the leaders of the groups. In this role this person will have dual ministry tasks in the area of teaching to coordinate the weekly study and working closely with the small group leaders, but also in the area of enfolding as they encourage people to join existing small groups or to create new ones.

If you’re just starting a small group ministry in your church, a person more gifted in enfolding is more desirable than a theologian as Bible studies are available not only from Walk with the Word but literally thousands of web sites and books; but a person who can make people comfortable joining a group or recruiting new hosts and leaders will increase the size and depth of the ministry many times over. If you become *really* successful you’ll be delighted to have a “Small Group Coordinator” and a separate person to write or coordinate the weekly Bible study guides.

The Ministry Incubator

This is an especially important concept for the pastor who might, in the beginning, be on his own, the sole advocate of this new emphasis on reading the Bible: This is a tremendous opportunity for you to identify, encourage, and train for higher service the people in your organization who are currently more passive than active in their ministry participation. This is a ministry incubator.

NO ONE – at least no Believer with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit – can long engage in the pursuit of hearing God speak to them personally through His Word without being **CHANGED** more and more into the image of Christ. The gifts God has given will arise and be noticed. More teachers, more helpers, more witnesses. Your future Sunday School teachers, small group leaders and so on will emerge if you pay attention and provide them the opportunity and encouragement to serve. The burden of the pulpit and church becomes

much lighter when borne by so many more shoulders than just your own.

Probably one of the most important factors to keep in mind is that not everyone is in the same place in their walk. Some are more mature, some may have never seriously read the Bible in the 30+ years they've gone to church every Sunday. The eggs in this incubator will hatch chickens, so to speak, that are at many different stages of growth. This is a blessing, not a problem. Coordinating the Bible study efforts of all ministries within your organization will allow everyone the opportunity to grow into ministry at the same time they're provided accountability and fellowship with others. It works both collectively and individually.

To conclude, let's go back to one of the opening observations of this section, that nearly every activity in your church already provides some kind of emphasis on the Bible. Obviously the sermon highlights the Bible. Lessons for children's, youth and adult ministries all have a current emphasis on the Bible. If there are already small groups connected with your ministry there's most likely a strong Bible-emphasis. Missions, outreach, etc., etc. all emphasize the importance of the Bible in one way or another. So the suggestion for your consideration is that these can all be coordinated and leveraged with a manageable-sized effort without huge, massive changes. Can you see the benefits of coordinating the focus of all your ministries' Bible emphases? Bible teaching will continue in all these activities regardless, so why not tie those separate efforts together to compliment each other? Unify the individuals and groups within your organization into the body of Christ through God's Word. It's called "discipleship."



Chapter 10: Supporting Materials

Walk with the Word does not see itself as some kind of “store” or central place that you have to be dependant upon in order to succeed.

We see ourselves as a starting point; hopefully the beginning of a transition in which **you** are generating everything to meet your ministry's needs. “Success” for us means that you and/or your local ministry or organization becomes completely independent, making your own Bible studies in concert with a reading plan, generate your own study aids, and in general develop everything as a result of your own study of God's Word. The materials provided on Walk with the Word should be thought of as a way to help get things started. They can be used immediately and for as long as you like, but we strongly encourage you to think of them as examples that you can pattern your own ministry tools after. As you study through the Bible personally, and you discover gifts in other members of your local organization, you will want to eventually develop and disseminate these things yourself.

Bible Studies

All of the Bible studies available on the Walk with the Word web site are actual small group and/or Sunday School lessons that were either used in real life while following the reading plan, or continue to be added as we cycle through the entire Bible time and time again.

Because the emphasis is on application, you can't miss the fact that the format we choose to use most often is “question and answer”. The passage of Scripture to be studied is usually read completely through

by the group and the leader then facilitates group discussion by going through the passage point by point.

This is a group application of the *Inductive Bible Study Method* that employs observation, interpretation and application. By asking questions of the group, the leader is, in reality, training people to stop and thoroughly observe the particulars of the passage, make an interpretation as to what it means within the context of the passage, and finally to share how it applies to them personally. Rather than using the model of a lecturer and audience in which there is limited interaction, the measure of success of this approach is that the participants actually contribute more than the facilitator. This is why it is not difficult for you to eventually develop your own, similar materials because you'll see how easy it is to put a little formatting behind your own study of the passage that results in sharing your personal observation, interpretation and application while guiding group discussion of same.

Email Newsletter

Most studies will initially be transmitted via our weekly email newsletter in concert with the reading plan. The newsletters themselves are archived and available on the web site but each study is also formatted and published as a Bible study and available for download from the web site.

Subscribing to the newsletter ensures that you get a Bible study that comes from the proscribed reading for that week. This not only keeps you in the habit of studying every week but provides an example of what you can accomplish with small groups or other local ministries.

The newsletter is easily re-distributable to others but also serves as an example of what you can do yourself. It doesn't take a lot of skill these days to generate and disseminate an email newsletter. For those that have Microsoft Office 2000 or later, you can create your study in Word. Change the view to "Web Layout" and the document is converted

instantly to a web format without you having to do a thing. Graphics, colors, etc. are all handled in the background. While still in Word, select File | Send To | Mail Recipient and you will see the message in the body of an email message in which you choose to whom to send it using your email address book. If you can write it/format it in Word, the tools are built in to automatically convert and send it via email.

When your Bible studies become much sought after and your distribution list starts getting into the hundreds you'll have to employ a more sophisticated solution to distribute your studies, but that's probably a "nice" problem to have to deal with, eh?

"How To" Study Guides

Again, in the spirit of wanting to help "jump start" interest in personal Bible study and taking it to the level of hearing God speak through His Word, the study guides on Walk with the Word are oriented towards these goals.

It's important to note that we're not saying this is the only way or the only approach. We're merely suggesting that of all the available approaches and methods that this is one of the best **STARTING** points. We absolutely want you to go deeper, maybe even learn Greek and Hebrew and attain a much higher set of Bible study skills. We've identified what we believe is not just the starting point, but the reference against which all further, deeper study should be measured. In other words, even should you go on to attain a degree in theology, all the skills and methods you acquire must ultimately focus back on the application of what God is saying through His Word. As Jesus said, it's "the doers", not "the hearers".

Graphical Study Aids

This is an area where we strongly encourage you to share with us so that we in turn may share the benefits with others. Visual aids, charts, graphs, maps, tables, timelines, etc. are extremely effective ways of

grasping the context of a passage of Scripture or to clearly communicate complex concepts of doctrine/theology.

The materials provided on Walk with the Word have been developed in the course of actual teaching. We're not ashamed to admit we scour Bible dictionaries, Bible atlases and a myriad of web sites and books for ideas. (Why re-invent an already well-constructed wheel?)

While our emphasis is ever on application, we all need to realize that there's a minimum level of information or education that needs to take place in order to understand the context of any given book or passage within the Bible. So our aim is to provide the basic historical, cultural or linguistic information that best aids in the observation, interpretation and application of the passage.

For instance, it's helpful to visually show how the first half of Daniel is completely different in content from the last half of Daniel. It's interesting to visually represent the 6 different types of people in each of the opening chapters that struggle in their knowledge and relationship with God, whereas in the last half of Daniel it's valuable to see and compare the images resulting from God's revelations to him. It's interesting to note how strongly connected readers become to the first half of Daniel as they see examples of varying degrees of handling a relationship with God and contrast it to their own walk. And then in studying the prophetic portions of Daniel to realize that God keeps coming back to the issue of relationships with Him.

You will find a number of bookmarks available on the web site that we've been developing for each book of the Bible. On one side are highlights, sometimes even outlines of the book, and on the other side reminders of applying the Inductive principles to that particular book.

Book Reviews

We're not specifically in the book review business. It's not like publishers are sending us books in the hopes that a review provided

on our site will generate sales revenue for that book. The less grandiose truth is that we're providing reviews of books that we just so happen to have actually read in the pursuit of enriching our own walk. You will find that the assessments we provide hope to convey the type of person for which a particular work may be best suited.

For instance, *Let the Reader Understand* by McCartney and Clayton is a book we recommend for the person that really wants to acquire deeper Bible study and interpretation skills at an intermediate level, but short of the detail of study associated with a seminary textbook. While we want to convey that a book, overall, is doctrinally sound, we also want to provide an evaluation of the levels, differentiating between text books versus primers versus "pop" theology.

Reviews of Internet Resources

You really need to be careful. Most of the time it's extremely difficult to effectively discern who is operating a web site, their true beliefs, even the validity of the doctrine they're trying to convey. While it isn't fool-proof, one of the advantages of books is that publishers themselves filter out many things due to the nature and costs of the publishing and distribution system, and there are numerous independent book review resources to give you a good idea not just about the content but the background and point of view of the author. It's not 100% effective, but far more so than for the Internet.

It takes only a few dollars a month these days to put up and run a web site. There are no "filters" and rarely is there Christian accountability. Many web site reviewing services have come and gone and continue to attempt to provide information about new sites but it's extremely difficult.

Our focus is to identify Internet-based resources that may assist in the pursuit of hearing God speak through His Word. But in the end we need to heed Jesus' admonition, "Do not be deceived." You need to be discerning of **ALL** that is presented on any given web site to firmly

know who is a good shepherd and who is a false one. (If you're not doing this with Walk with the Word then you've flunked out already. Simply providing this advice does not exempt us from your scrutiny.)

The Costs

In case you haven't noticed the disclaimer at the bottom of each and every page at the Walk with the Word web site, here it is again:

"Permission for personal and/or not-for-profit use freely granted."

There are no costs for using any of the Bible studies or materials on this site within these parameters.

As to financial support for personnel behind the scenes at Walk with the Word, the "Donation Policy" on the "About This Site" page clearly states:

"Your prayers and support are much coveted but monetary donations for Walk with the Word are neither sought nor desired."

"Please contribute first to your local church, then if able to a ministry spreading the Gospel in your local community such as the Gideons, and finally if able to an international missionary organization such as MAF or Wycliffe. This is an application of Jesus' command in Acts 1:8, "'..and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.'"



Chapter 11: Final Commentary on the Need for Walk with the Word

Whether or not you believe we're living in the shadow of the End Times, we face what every generation of believers faces:

Deception from within and without.

Throughout the entire Bible the problem of deception has repeatedly reared its ugly, Satan-inspired head in the form of false shepherds, false teachers, false prophets, and the progressive dilution of believing in the Truth of God's Word. It began in the Garden of Eden with the twisting of God's words to Eve and is the most common warning given concerning the End Times by every prophet, apostle and even Christ Himself. The primary weapon of spiritual attack is to dilute and change our view of the Truth just enough to render us ineffective and open to ever-widening changes in our view of the Truth.

In Ephesians 6:11-12 we're advised,

"Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

Yes, we need to pray. Yes, we need to have faith. Yes, we need to live a balanced Christian life. But it all begins with our foundation in the Truth to recognize what is of God and what is not.

If you carefully study Jesus' own words expounding the signs of the End Times, you will find that He spends far more time warning us not to be deceived more than any other thing.

In Paul's, Peter's and John's own teachings about the End Times they spend far more time warning us not to be deceived than to obsess over signs and wonders.

Jeremiah, Ezekiel and other prophets experienced and expressed the dismay of providing God's Truth to people who even in the face of the events transpiring before their very eyes chose to believe otherwise.

The Magi visiting at Jesus' birth were given the exact location of the Messiah's predicted birth, yet those providing this information did not actually believe it themselves or they would have joyfully accompanied the Magi.

In Revelation we're told that many will reject Christ even though they personally experience and witness all the signs and wonders predicted in advance. Knowledge in and of itself does not prevent deception. Many times Jesus would make this very point by preaching, "It's not the hearers, but the doers." For believers, it's not a test of **knowledge** but of **faith**.

The Truth must be accepted not just in the mind but in the heart. For when it's accepted in the heart, it changes our very character and thoroughly resists deception. It's the working of the seed in the good soil described in the Parable of the Sower:

*"But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have **heard the word** in an honest and good heart, and **hold it fast**, and **bear fruit with perseverance**."
—Luke 8:15*

Yes, the Truth is certainly obtained through the sustained study of the Bible. But it's really more than that. It's the Living Word of God, His very thoughts and instructions made plain to us. It's not about obtaining information from the Bible; it's about hearing God speaking

personally as we accept the Word in our heart, hold it fast, and through perseverance show the results.

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

—Hebrews 4:12

Finally, consider the ultimate reason that deception is the number one weapon of attack. Why does Satan prefer to attack the Word more than any other thing?

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."

—John 1:1-5

The Word (Logos) — ***the Truth*** — is Christ Himself.

This web site's modest goal is simply to encourage believers to make a reasonable, daily commitment towards allowing the Word of God to take root in their heart and so build an even stronger bond with the Logos Himself, Jesus Christ. Amen.