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House to House Heart to Heart

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God's Secret TO A GOOD LIFE

Allen Webster

Christians should love God, love each other, love their families, love their enemies, and love life.

What does it mean to love life? Two New Testament words are translated "life." *Bios* (βίος) refers to existence (physical life) (1 Timothy 2:2, 4); figuratively it can mean the way a person lives and the duration of earthly existence.[1] *Zoe* (ζωή) is higher. It is new life. It is spiritual life (cf. Genesis 2:7). It is abundant life (John 10:10). It may be stunted or strengthened, as grace is used or abused.[2] It is God's best gift.

God wants His children's lives to be full of good days—days filled with good things (Psalm 36:7–8; Proverbs 19:23; John 14:27). He even has a recipe for having a good day, every day. It reads, "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:10–11; cf. Psalm 34:12–14).

The way to find lasting happiness—what everyone wants—is to follow God's way. Peter gives five ideas formed as three couplets.

INTRODUCTORY THOUGHT: CHOOSE TO LOVE LIFE

He who wants good days must choose a positive mindset. "He who would love life" means, "He who deliberately sets out to love life." This is the opposite of Solomon's pessimism: "I hated life . . . for all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 2:17). We decide if *bios* is a burden to be endured, a danger to be escaped, or a journey to be enjoyed. *Zoe* makes *bios* worth living.

Scripture is largely concerned with character and conduct. Christianity is judged by outsiders by what it can do more than by what it teaches. An unbelieving world may be skeptical of a preacher's words but impressed by a Christian's selfless behavior. Peter urged servants to submit to unfairness, looking for a reward (1 Peter 2:18–20). He told wives

to pleasantly submit to unbelieving husbands to help convert them (3:1–7). Now Peter commands Christians to choose a positive attitude (3:10–11). All these are countercultural. What we are matters more than what we say—so we must work on the hidden person of the heart.

COUPLET 1: REFRAIN THE TONGUE FROM EVIL AND THE LIPS FROM DECEIT

He who wants good days must rule his speech. God requires constant watch over two things—the heart and tongue (Proverbs 4:23; 18:21; James 1:26; 3:1–10)—and the latter is a window into the former. "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3).

Couplet 1a: "Refrain his tongue from evil." Many of life's problems are caused by wrong words, spoken wrongly. Most of us have learned that the fastest way to a bad day is to open the mouth foolishly. Think how many misunderstandings, arguments, and hurt feelings started with hasty words. How often have we spoiled our day, and the day of another, by ill-chosen words? James wrote, "If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man" (James 3:2). Peter knew the sad consequences of hasty speech (Matthew 26:74–75).

The first step to ruling the tongue is restraint. Being "swift to speak" is a constant temptation for many (James 1:19). The psalmist pledged to heed his ways, not sin with his tongue, and keep his mouth with a muzzle (39:1–2). When it comes to words, incline to sparing. Many words tend to sin (Proverbs 10:19).

Couplet 1b: "And his lips from speaking deceit." First, limit your word quantity; next, improve your word quality. Christians must guard against these types of words:

- Corrupt—anger, blasphemy, filthy, wrath (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:8–9).
- Unkind (Ephesians 4:32)—speech that defames and disgraces, spoken in public or private. The first is cruel; the second is a pestilence spreading secretly.[3]
- Idle—filthiness, foolish talking, coarse jesting (Matthew 12:36; Ephesians 5:4).
- Murmured—discontent, complaint. If we take time to count God's blessings every day, we will not complain (1 Corinthians 10:10; Philippians 2:14).
- Untruthful—lies, double meanings. Christians must not speak guile or deceit (1 Peter 2:1, 22). A lie does not become the truth because it is dressed in professional language, printed on a résumé, or displayed in a store window. Falsehood remains falsehood whether it is whispered in private, spoken in public, or advertised for profit. God does not judge the appearance of a statement but the honesty of the heart behind it.

COUPLET 2: TURN FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD

Couplet 2a: Turn away from evil (Psalm 34:14; Proverbs 16:16–17; Romans 12:9; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 Peter 3:11). Removing sin precedes becoming good. The Old English word *eschew* means "to avoid something despised." Strong repulsion accompanies removing evil. As John Rogers wrote, the thought of sin is unpleasant to every good person. Since sin dishonors God (1 Samuel 15:23) and provokes His anger (Psalm 106:29), one who loves God, hates sin (Psalm 5:4).

Since God is everywhere, all people should avoid all evil at all times in all places. There is a time for all things (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8)—except for sin. Sin is never in season. Sin brought misery, shame, and confusion to humanity. It caused all this world's suffering and eventually leads to eternal destruction (Matthew 10:28).[4] Harboring sin shipwrecks happiness. At first, sin gives pleasure, but then it steals happiness (Proverbs 13:15; Hebrews 11:25–27). The result of sin is never good (Luke 15:20–24; 2 Peter 2:20–22).

Couplet 2b: Do good. Life can be lived on three levels:

- The Devil Level: Return evil for good, as the Jews did to Jesus (Mark 15:13).
- The Human Level: Return good for good and evil for evil (Matthew 5:38–48). When Peter pulled a sword, he was on the "evil for evil" level (Luke 22:47–53; John 18:10). This is sowing to the flesh (Galatians 6:7). An "eye for an eye" is the basis for justice, but God wants Christians to operate on the basis of mercy, as He does with us (Luke 6:36).
- The God Level: Return good for evil, as Jesus did (1 Peter 2:21–23) and the apostles (Acts 4:29). This is sowing to the spirit (Galatians 6:7).

The Bible is a book about doing: *Do*, *deed*, *deeds*, and *done* occur 589 times in the New Testament—more than twice per chapter. God is good (Matthew 19:17; Acts 14:17), and He wants us to be like Him (1 Peter 1:15–16). Jesus is good (Matthew 20:15), is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 32), and went about doing good (Acts 10:38). One of His best-loved characters was the good Samaritan (Luke 10:33). Christ is our example (Matthew 16:24; 1 Peter 2:21). A doer of the work is blessed (James 1:25). At Judgment, Jesus will not say, "Well said," "Well thought," "Well supervised," or, "Well criticized." He will say, "Well done" (Matthew 25:21).

Christians should:

- Let others see our good works so they can glorify our Father (Matthew 5:16).
- Overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21), abound in every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8), and do good even to those that hate us (Matthew 5:44).
- Out of the good treasure of the heart, a man brings forth good things (Matthew 12:35)—with both hands and tongue (Ephesians 4:28–29).
- Do good to all, given opportunity, especially God's family (Galatians 6:10).
- Follow that which is good (1 Peter 3:13); hold fast to it (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Women should be known for good works instead of just adornment (1 Timothy 2:9–10; Titus 2:3–5). Men desiring to be bishops must be of good behavior (1 Timothy 3:2). Those with money are to be rich in good works (1 Timothy 6:18).

Three groups in most churches include: Those who make things happen; those who watch things happen; and those who wonder what happened. Since it is a sin to do nothing (James 4:17), Groups 2 and 3 should move to Group 1. The Chinese say, "Be first in the field and last to the couch." A clockmaker observed, "Even a clock passes time by keeping its

hands busy."[5] We should do all the good we can, to as many as we can, in all the places we can, for as long as we can[6] (Psalm 119:6; Luke 1:6; 2 Kings 23:25).

Peter gives both positive and negative admonitions. It is not enough to avoid evil; we must do good. It is insufficient not to injure; we must heal. A person never remains neutral or empty for long (Acts 10:38; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 13:16). In Jesus' parable, the evil spirit's house that was left "empty, swept, and put in order" eventually became worse than ever (Matthew 12:44). When we sow nothing, weeds (sins) grow back. When we sow goodness, we reap happiness.

COUPLET 3: SEEK AND PURSUE PEACE

Couplet 3a: Seek peace. He who would have good days must maintain healthy relationships. He must be gentle, considerate, and loving. If one seeks trouble, then he can find it; if he seeks peace, he will generally find it. Jesus blesses peacemakers (Matthew 5:9; cf. Psalm 34:14; 120:7; Romans 14:17; Hebrews 12:14; James 3:17–18), so be a peacemaker, not a troublemaker. Take the chip off your shoulder. Do not be bothered by every slight. Is it worth giving up your good day because somebody breaks in line in front of you? Be willing to overlook many things. You will win in the long run.

Couplet 3b: Pursue peace. Peter uses two verbs (seek, pursue) for emphasis. Pursuit is the stronger concept. Peace does not come naturally—it is hard and must be maintained. Christians must work at it (Romans 14:19; Ephesians 4:2).

Since righteousness is the basis for peace (James 3:13–18), peace cannot be had at the expense of what is right. Ephesians 4:1–6 shows areas where unity is required among Christians:

- Unity of purpose: one hope
- Unity of organization: one body
- Unity of life: one Spirit
- Unity of authority: one Lord
- Unity of teaching: one faith
- Unity of practice: one baptism
- Unity of worship: one God.

It is not always possible to be both righteous and peaceful. The psalmist learned: "I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war" (120:7). Paul worded this carefully: "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

Pursue unity by prayer. Would your quality of life be improved if you began each morning with a request for a peaceful day and guidance into stress-free paths? Jesus sometimes—perhaps always—began days with prayer (Mark 1:35). Did He pray for peace?

CONCLUDING THOUGHT: TRUST THE LORD

He who wants good days must trust God to watch over him (cf. Matthew 14:22–33), answer his prayers, and defeat his enemies (Romans 12:17–21).

How do we know if a day is good or bad? A good day does not necessarily mean it is free from problems. Peter quotes Psalm 34:12–15 as God's idea of a good day. It speaks of fears (34:4), troubles (34:6, 17), afflictions (34:19), and a broken heart (34:18).[7] Thus, a good day is not sheltered or pampered; it simply has God in it. A good day magnifies God (34:1–3), receives His answers to prayer (34:4–7), tastes His goodness (34:8), and has God near (34:18).[8]

Even bad days turn out well with God's providence. Joseph had bad days —one day he was sold into slavery, another day he was falsely accused and imprisoned (Genesis 37:28; 39:17–19)—but in retrospect they were good days because God brought blessings out of them (50:20).

The next time you have a bad day, be sure to read 1 Peter 3 and Psalm 34.

Endnotes

[1] Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament,* 9th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1880), 91–92.

[2] *The British Weekly Pulpit: A Companion Journal to the British Weekly.* Vol. 3. Forgotten Books, 2018.

[3] Robert Leighton, "Comments on 1 Peter 3:10–11," qtd. in *The Biblical Illustrator Commentary,* ed. Joseph S. Exell (New York: Baker, 1905–1909), https://www.studylight.org/ commentaries/eng/tbi.html.

[4] John Rogers, "Comments on 1 Peter 3:10–11," qtd. in *The Biblical Illustrator Commentary,* ed. Joseph S. Exell (New York: Baker, 1905–1909), https://www.studylight.org/ commentaries/eng/tbi.html.

[5] Evan Esar, source unknown.

[6] John Wesley, "Sermon 36: The Law Established through Faith: Discourse 2" in *Sermons on Several Occasions,* new ed. (Leeds, England: Edward Baines, 1799), 486.

[8] Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary,* vol. 2, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 413.



Plan for Worship

Come: Never miss a worship service that you can attend (Hebrews 10:25).

Come early: Rushing into the assembly at the last minute is not conducive to worship (cf. Habakkuk 2:20).

Bring the entire family: The worship hour is not a convention where you simply send a delegate (Joshua 24:15).

Be reverent: We come to worship God. The worship service deserves our utmost attention (Hebrews 12:28–29).

Be considerate of others: Be helpful to their worship, not a hindrance (Philippians 2:3–4).

Participate: Don't just be a spectator (Psalm 95:1–2).

Be thoughtful of strangers: They are our guests (Hebrews 13:2).

Contribute generously: God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).

—Author Unknown

"Worship God."

REVELATION 19:10

God's Plan for Saving Man

Watch on youtube

Divine Love: John 3:16
God's Grace: Ephesians 2:8
Christ's Blood: Romans 5:9
Holy Spirit's Word: 1 Corinthians 2:12–13
Sinner's Faith: Acts 16:31
Sinner's Repentance: Luke 13:3
Sinner's Confession: Romans 10:10
Sinner's Baptism: Acts 22:16
Christian's Love: Matthew 22:37
Christian's Work: James 2:24
Christian's Hope: Romans 8:24
Christian's Endurance: Revelation 2:10



The Preacher and His Horse

A circuit-riding preacher trained his horse to go when he said, "Praise the Lord," and to stop when he said, "Amen." The preacher mounted the horse, said "Praise the Lord," and went for a ride in the nearby mountains.

When he wanted to stop for lunch by a mountain stream, he said, "Amen."

He took off again, saying "Praise the Lord."

The horse started heading toward the edge of a cliff on a narrow mountain trail. The preacher got excited and said, "Whoa!" Then he remembered and said, "Amen," and the horse stopped just short of the edge. The preacher was so relieved that he looked up to heaven and said, "Praise the Lord!"

"He will yet fill your mouth with laughing."

JOB 8:21



From a Child's Mind

Dear Preacher, I think a lot more people would come to your church services if you moved it to Disneyland.

—Loreen, age 9, Tacoma

"A time to laugh."

ECCLESIASTES 3:4

To watch videos, read articles, answer Bible questions, and more go to housetohouse.com



The Importance of Fathers

Why are fathers so important to the family? The short answer is God designed the family with the husband and father as its head (Ephesians 5:23).

In a country that has nearly 20 million fatherless children, can it be that the importance of fathers has been forgotten? We might ask, "Can't a family function well without a father?" Yes, there are cases where a father is absent, taken away by divorce or death, and the family recovers, then thrives; but there is a definite, powerful influence missing. To see the importance of fathers, as well as attributes to imitate, consider our Heavenly Father. God is a Father who:

- Provides children's needs (Matthew 6:25–34)
- Is compassionate/comforting (2 Corinthians 1:3)
- Shows sacrificial love (Romans 5:8)
- Is patient (2 Peter 3:9)
- Lovingly disciplines (Hebrew 12:5–11)
- Is faithful and just to forgive (1 John 1:9)
- Does not hold sins against children (2 Corinthians 5:19)
- Grants a great inheritance (1 Peter 1:3–5)

The Lord's divine design for the family and the importance of fatherhood cannot be stressed enough. We must continue to teach our younger generations that God's way is always the best way.

—Jay Launius, Maud, Texas

Just for Fun — Noah and the Ark (Genesis 6–8)

Draw a line from each question to its answer.

The sign of God's promise never to flood the earth again.	600
How many of each unclean animal were on the ark.	950
How many of each clean animal were on the ark.	40 days and nights
How many years old Noah was when the flood started.	1 year and 10 days
How many people were saved (1 Peter 3:20).	8
The animal first released to find dry ground.	7
The animal that brought back an olive branch.	2, male and female
How many years Noah lived.	45 ft (30 cubits)
How many windows the ark had.	450 ft (300 cubits)
How long they stayed in the ark.	75 ft (50 cubits)
How long it rained.	1
Height of the ark.	Raven
Length of the ark.	Dove
Width of the ark.	Rainbow

New Testament Christianity

Nineteen centuries ago, Christ and His apostles began a system that circled the earth and blessed the world. Daniel 2:44 affirmed the perpetual status of the kingdom, and Matthew 16:18 promised its glorious establishment. In spite of persecution by Rome, the jealousy of the Jews, economic poverty, and a startling message, the gospel swept the ancient world by storm.

The spiritual army of the Lord made many valiant conquests for the Captain of their salvation (Hebrews 2:10). Shining as lights in the midst of a dark generation (Philippians 2:15), early Christians took seriously the task of "living soberly, righteously, and godly" (Titus 2:12). Christ's church is simply organized with an autonomous government. Self-governing by the New Testament (Acts 14:23; 20:28–30; Titus 1:5–6; 1 Peter 5:1–4), there was no need for an earthly headquarters or hierarchy.

It was composed of elders, deacons, and saints (members) (Philippians 1:1). Worship was conducted in "spirit and truth" (John 4:24). The body of Christ "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). The first day of the week was set aside for the Lord's Supper and the contribution (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1–2). The church that Christ established by His shed blood was strong in its exposure of error (2 Timothy 4:2–4), as well as its proclamation of truth (1 Timothy 3:15), and especially diligent in evangelism.

Daily teaching caused the word of God to grow and multiply (Acts 5:42; 8:4; 12:24). Christians of that era prayed boldly and fervently (Hebrews 4:16; James 5:16); they joyously sang praises unto God (Acts 16:25; Colossians 3:16–17). Christianity was not a way of life to them—it was life! Paul said: "To me, to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21).

Today, many live short of the standards of New Testament ideals. Some coast along with a convenient facsimile of Christianity that really does not demand much. A building, a pulpit, a classroom, a teacher, and a preacher pretty well sum up the modern concept of what Jesus died for. But conversion, conviction, commitment, dedication, loyalty, and sincerity demand much more.

An enriching life awaits those who want to be New Testament Christians. When we submit our identity into the greater cause of salvation, our songs become richer, our prayers more spiritual, our influence more meaningful, and our lives more heavenly. Men notice that we have been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

—Author Unknown

"Pure and undefiled religion."

JAMES 1:27

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.



Bible Quiz

VOLUME 31:9

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark. We will grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark "Chapter to Chapter – Joshua" as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

Answers to Previous Quizzes

V. 31:7 *Marriage and Family:* 1. One flesh (Genesis 2:24); 2. Christ (Ephesians 5:25); 3. Good thing (Proverbs 18:22); 4. Obey (Ephesians 6:1); 5. Understanding (1 Peter 3:7); 6. Bitter (Colossians 3:19); 7. Rubies (Proverbs 31:10); 8. Mother (Exodus 20:12); 9. Tenderhearted (Ephesians 4:32); 10. Kind (1 Corinthians 13:4); 11. Undefiled (Hebrews 13:4); 12. Divorce (Malachi 2:16); 13. Go (Proverbs 22:6); 14. Unbeliever (1 Timothy 5:8); 15. Wrath (Ephesians 6:4); 16. Need (Philippians 4:19); 17. Wife, husband (1 Corinthians 7:4); 18. Hatred (Proverbs 15:17); 19. Subdue (Genesis 1:28); 20. Separate (Matthew 19:6); 21. Children (Psalm 127:3); 22. Love (1 Peter 4:8); 23. Admonition (Ephesians 6:4).

V. 31:8 *They Saw Him Alive:* Questions from Pages 1–2: 1. F; 2. F; 3. T; 4. F; 5. 515, 12, 40; 6. T. Questions from Page 3: 1. Love; 2. Christ; 3. F; 4. Hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized, stay faithful. Questions from page 4 (7): 1. T; 2. F; 3. T.

How Well Do You Know Noah and the Ark?

Try to answer from memory. Find the answers you do not know in Genesis 6:5–9, 13–22; 7:1–24; 8:1–22; 9:1–17, 28–29; 1 Peter 3:20–21. *Questions are taken from the New King James Version.*

1. Noah was a _____ man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with _____.
2. Noah built an ark of _____ wood.
3. It was covered in and out with _____.
4. The length of the ark was ____ cubits.
5. The width of the ark was ____ cubits.
6. The height of the ark was ____ cubits.
7. God said, "The earth is filled with __."
8. Noah was _____ years old when the floodwaters came upon the earth.
9. Noah was to bring _____ of every unclean animal into the ark.
10. Of clean animals, Noah was told to bring _____.
11. Why did God decide to destroy the world with a flood? _____
12. What covenant did God establish with Noah? _____
13. How long did it rain? _____
14. How many days did the waters prevail upon the earth? _____
15. On what mountains did the ark come to rest? _____
16. What bird did Noah first send out from the ark? _____
17. What bird did Noah send out three times afterward? _____
18. What sign did God give of His covenant never to flood the earth again? _____
19. Who were Noah's three sons? _____
20. How many were saved in the ark? ___
21. What sacrifice did Noah offer after leaving the ark? _____
22. Noah lived ____ years after the flood.
23. According to the New Testament, what does the flood account teach us about salvation? _____



OUTLINE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Christ came to give us abundant life (John 10:10), and this life is in the Son of God (1 John 5:11). The four accounts of His life were written that we may have eternal life in Him (John 20:31). The Old Testament, in 39 books, had pointed to the coming of the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), and on the cross of Calvary peace was made through His precious blood (Colossians 1:20).

An outline of the 27 books of the New Testament helps in ascertaining its message and purpose:

Matthew–John: The Life of Christ
Acts: How to Become a Christian
Romans–Jude: How to Live as a Christian
Revelation: The Hope of a Christian

The first four books proclaim the birth, life, teachings, sufferings, and victorious resurrection of the Redeemer. The Lord's authority is stressed in Matthew; His majesty in Mark; the perfection and loyalty of the Man of Galilee in Luke; and the personal touch of Jesus is the beautiful impression that lingers after reading John. If there is one verse in those four dynamic books to sum up their message, it would be John 14:6, when Christ announced, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

The tremendously powerful section known as Acts is the history book of the New Testament. It contains the background for many of the books that follow, including Galatians, Philippians, Thessalonians, Corinthians, and Ephesians (especially Acts 13–20). The spread of the glorious gospel of Christ is stated vividly in Acts 8:4: They "went everywhere preaching the word."

Salvation in Christ alone is the cardinal teaching of this fifth New Testament book (Acts 4:12). God is glorified in the church by Christ (Ephesians 3:21), and the book of Acts demonstrates how. The establishment of the Lord's church is found in Acts 2. Cases of conversion—how men became Christians—give excitement to this book.

The next section is composed of 21 letters regarding the conduct of those who belong to the Savior (Philippians 2:5; Galatians 5:22).

Finally, the book of Revelation closes the New Testament with the radiant joy of Christianity displayed in spite of intense persecution at the time. "Be faithful until death" is a major theme (2:10). The word *overcome* is found 13 times in 22 chapters. When saints of God overcome the devil by God's Word and the blood of Christ (12:11), they can come over to spend eternity with the One who died to set them free (1:5).

How deeply grateful we ought to be for the clarity and challenge of the New Testament. —Author Unknown

"Your word I have hidden in my heart."

PSALM 119:11

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Chapter to Chapter
1 SAMUEL

This chart is part of a memory system for learning the key people, events, topics, and verses of all 929 Old Testament chapters.

INTRODUCTION

In the Hebrew Old Testament, 1 and 2 Samuel are one book, but it was divided by the translators of the Septuagint. The book seems to have been written by Samuel, along with sections by the prophets Nathan and Gad (1 Chronicles 29:29). First Samuel concentrates on the time period of around 1100–1010 BC, from the birth of Samuel to the death of Saul. It records Israel's transition from the judges to the monarchy through three men: Samuel, the faithful prophet; Saul, the disobedient king; and David, the chosen king. The book emphasizes prayer, obedience, leadership, and that God looks upon the heart.

CHAPTER/TOPICS	VERSES
Samuel and Saul	
1. Hannah's prayer and promise; the birth of Samuel.	1:10–11, 27–28
2. Hannah's song; Eli's wicked sons.	2:1, 12
3. God calls Samuel.	3:9–10, 19
4. The ark is captured.	4:10–11
5. Dagon falls before the ark.	5:3–4
6. The ark returns to Israel.	6:12–15
7. Israel repents; Ebenezer raised.	7:3, 12
8. Israel demands a king.	8:5, 19–20
9. Saul meets Samuel.	9:15–17
10. Saul is anointed king.	10:1
11. Saul delivers Jabesh Gilead.	11:11–13
12. Samuel's farewell address.	12:23–24
13. Saul's unlawful sacrifice.	13:8–14
14. Jonathan attacks the Philistines.	14:6, 14–15
15. Saul spares Agag and is rejected.	15:22–23, 26
Saul and David	
16. God looks at the heart. David is anointed.	16:7, 12–13
17. David defeats Goliath.	17:49–50
18. Saul becomes jealous of David.	18:7–9
19. David escapes Saul.	19:10–12
20. Jonathan warns David.	20:41–42
21. David flees to Nob and Gath.	21:1, 10–15
22. Saul kills the priests of Nob.	22:18–19
23. David saves Keilah.	23:2–5
24. David spares Saul in the cave.	24:6–7
25. Abigail prevents David's revenge.	25:32–33
26. David spares Saul again.	26:9–11
27. David lives among the Philistines.	27:1
28. Saul consults the medium.	28:7
29. David is dismissed from battle.	29:4, 9–11
30. David recovers Ziklag.	30:18–19
31. Saul and Jonathan die.	31:2–6



The Teachings of Jesus

Jesus taught with authority and clarity. Crowds were astonished because He spoke unlike the scribes, but like God (Matthew 7:28–29). His teachings range from the Sermon on the Mount's ethical demands to simple, everyday parables that reveal kingdom realities.

Central themes recur: love for God, self, and neighbor (Matthew 22:37–39), humility, forgiveness, obedience, and the coming kingdom. Jesus commanded Christians to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33). Jesus taught that true religion is heart-oriented, not ritualistic, but also done according to truth (John 4:24)!

He called His followers to practical holiness, sacrificial service, and complete trust.

His teaching still shapes Christian discipleship: It calls for repentance, obedience, and a transformed heart. The teaching of Jesus is meant to first change us (Romans 12:1–2), and then to change those around us (Matthew 28:18–20) as we share His message. —Matt Wallin

The Bible Saves

Ellis Cowart was an American soldier fighting in WWII. He and his comrades were in a fierce gun battle against the German army. "Bullets were flying everywhere … We were in the middle of a crossfire," he said. One bullet hit Ellis in the arm, another grazed his forehead, a third hit his helmet, and then one bullet hit him squarely in the chest. Ellis had a small pocket New Testament in the front of his jacket, and this little Bible prevented the bullet from penetrating his chest. "The Word" had literally saved his life. (The bullet stopped in the middle of Revelation.)

"Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."

JAMES 1:21

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How Do I Study the Bible?



The Bible is no ordinary book. It is the very word of God—living, powerful, and able to transform lives (Hebrews 4:12). But many people do not know where to begin. How do you study a book written by God?

Start with the right heart. The psalmist prayed, "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law" (119:18). God reveals His truth to those who seek it humbly. "On this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:2).

Then, start simply. You do not have to read the whole Bible in a week. Begin with Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John and look for what Jesus says, what He does, and how people respond to Him. Read Acts and make a list of what people did when they went from lost to saved. Write down what you learn and how it applies to your life.

Ask questions of the text. Notice details. Write down words, phrases, or cities you do not know. Take time to learn them. Look up definitions, background, and cross-references. It is often better to fully understand a few verses than to rush through a long passage without comprehension. Depth leads to transformation.

Let Scripture interpret Scripture. The Bible explains itself when we let all of it speak. "The entirety of Your word is truth" (Psalm 119:160). No single verse stands alone; God's message is revealed in its entirety. A difficult passage can be explained by other verses that shed light on it.

Be careful not to read the Bible only to confirm your opinions. The goal is not to prove ourselves right but to discover God's truth (Psalm 119:105).

Finally, study in community. The early Christians "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). God designed His church to help us learn together.

If you would like to understand the Bible better, we would love to open it with you. —Matt Wallin

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