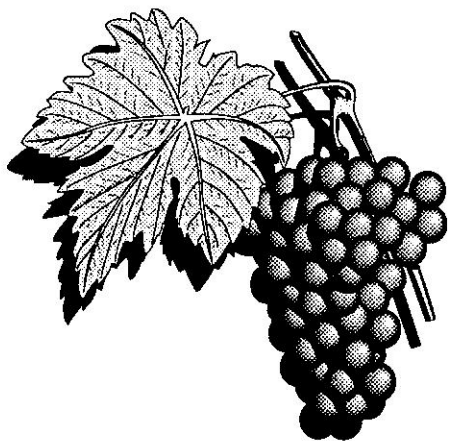


# The Word



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# The Word

## How to Study it

*"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."*  
John 5:39.

### *By Books, Chapters, Verses and Topics*

Study *by books* because many of the books of the Bible have a continuous story and you need to read the whole book to get it. The book of Ruth, the book of Job, the book of Esther all have a story that would be broken if you did not read the whole book.

So it is with *chapters*. There are a great many chapters that we need to read in their entirety. Take the great love chapter, I Corinthians 13; the great resurrection chapter, I Corinthians 15; the Shepherd Psalm, Psalm 23. All those should be read as a whole. They constitute an entire message.

Then again *by verses*. Many people think this a fragmentary way of studying the Word of God, yet I imagine every Christian man would say that the richest treasures of the morning watch are usually found in some single verse that goes with you all through the day to strengthen your heart, inspire your life, and stimulate your service for Jesus Christ. The riches of the Word of God for most of us, I dare say, cluster around single verses.

One of the most precious ways of studying the Word of God is to commit to memory single verses—a single verse a day for six days, then reviewing on the seventh day. In a year you would have more than 300 verses of Scripture hidden in your

heart, and you would be rich in the Word of God.

I recall a young man whom I used to meet at our Bible conferences. He was an illiterate man, but he had set his mind to this plan of getting a verse a day of the Bible. When I first met him he had been working on it for eight years. He had committed over two thousand verses of the Scripture to memory. His prayer was a marvel. It was like a rich brocade of silver and gold of the Word of God, interwoven with praise testimony and petition. It was a marvelous thing to hear that young man, a workman in a steel mill, give his testimony for God, and yet it all came from committing one verse of Scripture a day.

Then again, study the Word *by topics*. Some think topical study a poor plan. Yet it is one of God's richest. In my own life it has been one of the most precious. One thing I would like to say about topical study. Do not sit down and work and strain to get your own ideas about the topic you have chosen. Take your Bible and your marginal references and look carefully through the Word of God to find out what God says about your topic. Then when you are through, you have a rich collection of God's thoughts upon the theme you have chosen, instead of your own human opinions and ideas. Take a thought like atonement, love, faith, guidance, abiding—any of these—and just search the Word of God to find what God says. As you do so you will be growing constantly richer in that Word.

### *Seek the Literal Meaning*

Try to find the literal meaning in your Greek Testament, if you know that, or in your Young's or Strong's Concordance, or in your Rotherham's translation. The literal meaning of the Word is

always a blessing and help in your Bible study.

I remember when I first discovered the literal meaning of the word "chasteneth." I always associated it with the word chastise; most Christians do. I found it meant "child-train," to train as a child, and the whole passage changed. Chasten does not mean to chastise; it means to *make chaste spiritually*. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." He makes pure. He purges that we might be partakers of His holiness; God's whole purpose in child-training is a Father-purpose of love. It brings joy and comfort to your soul to know that "chasteneth" is not a proof of God's anger but of God's love.

Take that word in Hebrews 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus." The literal meaning of that word has no corresponding meaning in English. The word literally means "off-looking" in the Greek Testament and in Luther's Bible. It means off-looking from the things that disturb and distress and bother us, "unto Jesus." Looking *off* from these things, "Looking *unto* Jesus." You know how it distresses us to look at things and think and think and think until we begin to worry and be anxious. Christ warns us against that. The Psalmist has the same truth. "Mine eyes are ever unto the Lord and He will pluck my feet out of the net." That seems strange for a man whose feet are beset with traps and nets to have his eyes unto *the Lord*. But if "mine eyes are unto the Lord," He takes care of my feet.

"In my Father's house are many mansions" (John 14:2). The word "mansion" means "abiding place." It is the picture of a man lost in the gloom and the storm and the night, who comes to a cottage, knocks at the door and says, in response to the inquiry from within: "I want a place to *stay*." No longer the change and the shift and the wan-

derings of this life, but a place to stay. "They shall go no more out."

### *Use the Best Possible Translations*

There are many translations these days. What shall we do about them? Submit them to these two tests. Translations should be *accurate*. A good English translation should be in good English idiom, and the old King James was that at least. For musical, rich, beautiful Anglo-Saxon English, it has never been surpassed and probably never will be. Dr. Scofield chose this text for his marvelous Reference Bible, knowing there were inaccuracies in it, yet it was so exquisitely true to English idiom.

On the other hand, the revision is accurate, more so than the King James. Therefore, we should use the revision *with* the King James to combine accuracy and idiomatic English. Those two translations are still the finest combination, to my mind, for the Bible student. The Oxford people publish what they call "the two-version edition," with the King James in the text and all of the changes and corrections of the revision in the margin. That is a perfect Bible from the standpoint of text.

Often in the margin of your Bible you will see a *marginal translation*, an alternative rendering. Frequently you will find rich treasures in it.

Here, for example, is the picture in the Nineteenth Psalm: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." Listen: "There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." Margin: "There is no speech nor language. *Without these* their voice is heard." That is a beautiful translation. God, through His handi-

work, speaks a message to every devout heart, without speech or language or word being necessary. That was God's first revelation, through His Creation.

Here is another beautiful picture in Isaiah 59:19; "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." But the margin is also beautiful. It applies that thought of a rushing flood to the Lord and says: "He shall come in like a stream pent-in, which the breath of God drives." A picture of the Lord Jesus and of What? A picture of the Christian life, a rushing stream driven by the breath of God. Could we ask a finer picture than that of what we would like to be; the stream of the Spirit of God rushing through our lives, driven by that Spirit of God within us? The Word of God is full of such beautiful translations that will help you in your study of that book.

### *Use the Marginal References*

A friend of mine in St. Louis was rooming with a very godly newsboy, who loved to study the Word of God. One morning my friend awoke before daylight and heard a noise. He looked up and there sat this Christian newsboy with his head buried in his hands, studying the Word by marginal references. My friend got up, tiptoed across the floor, and laid his hand on his shoulder. The newsboy looked up with face alight with the blessing of the Word. My friend said: "How is it going, John?" John said: "It is *raveling out* beautifully!" That is the perfect picture of the way God's Word raveling out when you begin to study these *marginal references*. It unfolds and raveling out, just like an old stocking.

Sometimes one verse will give the definition

much needed in another. For instance, the word "abide," as used so often in John, is defined in I John 4:24: "He that keepeth His commandments, abideth in Him." And the preceding verse illuminates it still more: "This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another." That is abiding, to have faith in Christ and live a life of love toward those about you.

### *Watch for the Burning Heart*

You remember how on that walk to Emmaus they talked with Jesus, but they knew Him not. One of them made this striking remark to the other: "did not our heart burn within us...while He opened us to the Scriptures?" The test that Christ is opening to us the Scriptures, is not the inflated nor the entertained mind, but the burning heart. It matters not who is speaking to you, whether humble, learned or illiterate, plain or eloquent; if that messenger of God brings you the burning heart, it is clear proof that Jesus Christ is speaking through him. "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God." And these same words make other men's hearts burn when you pass them on to them. That was George Muller's method of studying the Word in his morning watch. He would read and read and read sometimes chapters at a time. Then would come a flash and illumination with its blessing, and he would get his message from God. Every Christian has had that experience and it will pay every one of us to cultivate that habit of reading the Word of God, watching and waiting for the burning heart.

### *Trust Christ for the Three Openings*



Listen to them (Luke 24:32): "Did not our heart burn within us while He opened to us *the Scriptures*?" If we study this book, trusting Him, He will open the Scriptures to you and me, however humble we may be.

But something else is needful (Luke 24:45): "Then opened He their *understanding*, that they might understand the Scriptures." It is one thing to have the Scriptures brought to us; it is another thing to have His touch upon our understanding, and thus open that understanding.

Then, the third opening (Luke 24:31): "And *their eyes* were opened and they knew *Him*." Christ's charge against the Jews was: "Ye search the Scriptures because ye think in *them* ye have eternal life—and ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." Why do the Scriptures tell of life? Because they tell of *Him*; of His eternal existence; of His incarnation; of His beautiful life; of His atoning death; of His resurrection; of His ascension; of His intercession; of His glorious coming again. The whole book tells us of Him whom we love, and whose we are, and we miss the very heart of Bible study unless we let Him open our spiritual eyes as He will, and show us that it is Himself, His Blessed Self, whom He wants to reveal to us.

### *Study for Your Own Life*

"Thy words were found and I did eat them," said Jeremiah. What is it to eat a piece of bread? It is to take it into your mouth and masticate and swallow and assimilate it until it becomes a part of you, and ministers life and strength to you.

That is the way we should study the Word of God, for our own life. For years I had sought to know the truth about the Holy Spirit until one day

I ate I Corinthians 6:19: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which you have of God?" I said: "God, you say that your Holy Spirit is dwelling in every child of yours. I am your child. I take that truth by faith today, and I am going to begin to live as though you were living in me"; and as I ate it, that became a transforming truth in my life.

I remember that for years I faced Romans 12:1, and notwithstanding the truth—"Present your bodies a living sacrifice"—I did not present it, and went on fashioning my own plans, moulding my own life, having my own way, until one day God, by His Spirit, burned that verse into my heart, and I yielded to it, ate it. Stumblingly and gropingly and weakly as it was done, I gave my life as best I knew, and that became a transforming truth in my life. What a wonderful book we have in this Book of God! Eat it, assimilate it and live it, and God will give you mighty power for the precious work that you are doing for Him.

### How to Teach It

*"We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God."*  
(John 3:2).

Do you realize there is a perfect way of teaching the Word? That there is a method which is one hundred percent efficient? That it is errorless and cannot possibly be improved upon?

Then, if you would know it, turn to the teaching method of our Lord Jesus Christ. For He is the perfect Teacher. Not only does He know all the truth—but He *is* the Truth. Not only does He know the human mind, but it is He who created it. Men said of Him that He was "a teacher come from God." "Never man spake like this man" was

the testimony of the people. Because He fashioned the human mind, and is Himself the Truth, He must know the method of imparting the truth as no other in existence. If we can search out the secret of Jesus Christ's teaching, we will master the perfect, flawless method of all teaching. Let us take one of His great messages, analyze it, and see if we can discover the perfect method of the perfect Teacher. It will be a matchless method to us, and a priceless secret when we find it is so simple that any earnest, prayerful, seeking child of God can master it and have the unspeakable joy and blessing of working it into the fabric of his daily teaching life.

For our study of the Master Teacher's method let us turn to one of His greatest and most beautiful messages. It is His warning against anxious care, found in the familiar passage of *Matthew 6:25-34*. The most casual reading of this great passage will show that our Lord's method of teaching was a marvelously simple, three-fold method. And it is this:—*State—Illustrate—Apply*.

First He *states* the great truth which He is about to teach, namely, an earnest warning against anxious care. Then His whole matchless message is made up almost in its entirety, of three wondrously simple *illustrations*—the fowls of the air, the cubit of stature, and the lilies of the field. Then He proceeds to searchingly *apply* the truth to the consciences and lives of His hearers. Let us take up in their order these striking high-lights of Christ's teaching.

### *State*

One of the South's greatest lawyers in the Supreme Court after the Civil War was of Jewish extraction. He was a man of brilliant parts and of

the highest type of legal ability and training. One of his strongest points was this ability to state truth with great clearness and simplicity. He was one day arrayed on the opposite side of a case represented by one of the greatest jurists of the century. When he arose to begin his case he introduced it with the remark "Your honors, I would like to make a simple statement at the opening of this case." Thereupon he proceeded to state his cause with such clarity, simplicity and logic that before he had even begun any argument in support of it one of the justices leaned over toward his neighbor on the bench and whispered, "the little Jew has almost stated B— out of court!" Such is the power and value of lucid, logical statement of truth.

Take for example, a great text like John 3:16—"For God so *loved* the *World* that He *gave* His *only* begotten *Son* that *whosoever believeth* in Him should not *perish* but have *everlasting life*."

Tear apart a text like this. State the separate truths it contains. Then note how rich are its contents.

God is love.

God loves the world.

Love gives.

Love gives it best.

Love gives its all.

Ours is a "whosoever Gospel."

Belief in Christ is necessary to salvation.

Men are perishing without Christ.

Faith in Christ brings everlasting life.

Take this analytic attitude toward the great texts of Scripture. State the great truths of the text as best you can phrase them. Not only will you thus clarify the truth to your hearers, but the practice of so stating truth will be a mental and spiritual discipline of the very finest type for yourself as a

teacher.

### *Illustrate*

You state your truth. But suppose it is not clear to your hearer. His mind does not grasp it. Then you must take the next great step in Christ's teaching method. That is—*Illustrate*. What is an illustration? What is its place in the Master's perfect teaching method? What does it do for the hearer? The derivation of the Word will greatly help us here. It comes from the words—"in," and the Latin word "lustrō," meaning "to shine." *An illustration takes an unfamiliar truth and makes the light "shine in" upon it by comparing it with a familiar truth.* The use of an apt illustration is like touching an electric switch in a dark room. It floods the whole situation with light. Illustration is the application by the teacher of one of the greatest laws of the human mind, that of association of ideas. By this great law we lay hold of an appropriate truth which is unfamiliar and unpossessed by linking it up with that which we already know and possess. This is one of the great laws by which a child's mind, as well as an adult's, acquires knowledge. Let us cite an example.

I had a college classmate who was the father of a sweet, bright little girl. Visiting once in his home this incident occurred: Grandma was out in the kitchen shelling peas. Helen's mother did not know her whereabouts, so she inquired: "Helen, where is Grandma?" "She is out in the kitchen, mamma." "And what is she doing?" "She is *unbuttoning the peas.*" Helen was not familiar with the word for shelling or podding peas. But she had often noticed that when pea pods were opened, the peas lay therein exactly like the buttons along the edge of her shoes after she had unbuttoned them. So Helen took that which was

familiar to her and with it described exactly a term which was unfamiliar. Then when mamma explained to her that "unbuttoning peas" meant "shelling" or "podding" peas, the child immediately understood the new term. This was, in germ, a fine illustration. For it used the very principle needed for an illustration by using that which she did not know to describe that which she did know.

Here are some suggestions about illustrations:

First—*Illustrations vary in value.* Naturally for the teacher of the Word the most valuable illustrations are those from the Word itself. For when your message is made up not only of statements from the Word, but also is illuminated by illustrations from the same Word, it immediately multiplies its value and preciousness to the hearer of that Word. Therefore, in teaching the Word of God, seek first to strengthen your message by illustration from the inspired Word.

Second—*Illustrations should be simple.* How marvelously true is this of those used by the master Teacher Himself. The sky, the sea, the shore, the pearls, the treasure in the field, the lost coin, the wandering son, the fishes of the sea, the fowls of the air, the lilies of the field, all these are so amazingly simple that the mind of any intelligent child can grasp them with ease. Other things equal, the simpler an illustration is, the more valuable it is, for it enters the mind with the least measure of friction and, therefore, becomes that much more valuable an instrument for the clear conveyance of thought to the listener.

Third—*Illustrations should be familiar.* That is, they should not only be simple in themselves, but they should be familiar to the class of people to whom they are being given. It would not be good teaching to use a group of railroad illustrations when

speaking to an audience of seafaring men. Neither would it be wise when addressing railroad men to use illustrations with which only sailors were familiar. The choice, therefore, of an illustration which is adapted to the mind and the experience of the hearer is of great importance to the teacher.

I once knew a man who was a great teacher of the Word and an earnest, persistent worker for souls. He was off on a vacation by the seashore one summer and made the acquaintance of some fishermen. One of these men was not a Christian, and my friend took occasion to cultivate his acquaintance especially and to press upon him the claims of the Gospel as opportunity offered. One day he was walking along the shore and came across his fisherman friend busy with his nets. "John," said he, "what fish are the hardest to catch?" "Mullet," promptly replied the fisherman. "Why?" said our friend. "Because they back out of the net," was the reply. "Well, John, don't be a mullet" was the quick thrust from the lips of this keen observer of men and things. And the thrust went straight home to its mark and was used of the Spirit to bring the man to a decision for Christ. For he had for a long time been halting and vacillating and the mullet illustration was exactly the truth he needed to bring him conviction of his mistake. Drawn as it was right from his own fisherman life, it fitted his case perfectly and did its work.

### *Apply*

What is the use of mixing up a remedy unless you take it? What is the use of sharpening a sword unless you use it? What is the use to state, and illustrate, unless you also apply it to the conscience of the reader? Here we reach the last point

in Christ's method of teaching. In this great sermon of His on anxious care note how searchingly he applies it to His listeners. See how constantly He plays upon those two personal pronouns "You" and "Ye." Here also we should imitate Him, and not fail at the close of every message to press home tenderly, searchingly, yet lovingly, to the heart and conscience of every listener the great truths which we have been permitted to teach—remembering always that the spirit of God is faithfully witnessing in the hearts of our hearers to the words of God which we have been permitted to speak.

The other day I heard a gifted preacher. He was preaching a sermon to children. It was only five minutes long. But it was a masterpiece. And it was such because this particular preacher had mastered the master's art of preaching. His statement was that we had to put something in to get something out of life. His illustration was perfect. he cited the old country well. Sometimes a child goes to it with a pail for water. He pumps and pumps but no water comes. The leather valve of the pump socket has grown dry and the water leaked out. So the child's mother comes out and pours in a can of water. Then a few strokes of the handle and the water spouts out. Then he admonishes the children whenever they saw an old well to ever remember that they must put something into life if they would get anything out. That five-minute message will linger a lifetime in the memories and hearts of not only the children, but the grown-ups who heard it. Why? Because it perfectly followed the Master's art of teaching-preaching. It stated with simplicity; it illustrated with graphic familiarity; it applied with direct earnestness to the lives in the speaker's presence.