

THE FELLOWSHIP OF

THE BURNING HEART

INTRODUCTION

There is a high ridge in the Swiss Alps with a valley on both sides. Rain that falls on one side goes into the Rhine River and flows through Germany into the North Sea. Rain that falls on the other side flows to Lake Geneva to the Rhone River through France, finally finding its way to the Mediterranean Sea. These two drops start inches apart but end up worlds apart. In the same way, those who believe in the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, as THE message from God to humanity or God's love letter, will READ IT, STUDY IT and BUILD their very lives upon it. Those that don't believe the Bible is what it claims to be may read it, they may even study it, but they simply won't build their lives upon it, and they will end up worlds apart from the true believer. God has given His Spirit, His Word and His community, the church, to us to help us in the life long process of sanctification.

Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”

~ John 17:17

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

~ Romans 12:1-2

- *How does the raindrops illustration affect you? Where do you think you are at, in forming a commitment to studying the scripture?*
- *Why do you think the scripture is so vital to the process of sanctification?*

You may not be aware of it, but Jesus prayed for you, as recorded in John 17 (see 17:20), and His prayer was that God's Word would sanctify you. The scripture above is from Romans 12 could actually be used as a definition of this sanctification. Sanctification is the process of being transformed as we encounter God's will and then live it out in our lives, showing it to be good, perfect, and pleasing, but we are INUNDATED by our culture. Nearly everywhere we go, and almost at all times, culture is having an influence on us, whether we feel it or not. God wants to have a BIGGER influence; a much, much bigger influence. Kent Hughes said, ***"You can never have a Christian mind without reading the scriptures regularly because you cannot be profoundly influenced by that which you do not know."*** That's what this study is all about, learning how to let the scriptures profoundly influence you. We MUST saturate our lives with the Word of God; reading it, meditating on it, memorizing it, living it, and talking about it.

In this study, we're going to look at the heart, the eyes and the mind in studying the scripture. Then we're going to look at the ultimate priority in life and how to live a spirit-filled life.

How we got the Bible/ Inspiration from 101, The Scriptures

PART 1: THE HEART

The single most important factor that will determine what you get out of scripture is the state of your heart toward God, your Savior. This is for two reasons: the first has to do with us, the second with God. The first is simply this:

(1) People in love long to understand.

People in love will often spend hours just talking because they really yearn to understand what is happening in the other person's heart. What is it that they're feeling? In the same way, the scripture is God's love letter to us. Think of the degree in which we love Jesus. It is to that degree that we'll want to understand what He is saying to us. This is really, really simple, so simple that we just might miss it. We get used to saying words that they no longer sink in. Be sure to read this next sentence slowly for that very reason.

God loves you, wants to talk to you, and He wants to disclose His heart to you.

*“...he it is who loves Me...and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him.”
~ John 14:21*

This is why G.K. Chesterton said, “Let your religion be less of a theory and more of a love affair.” Reading the Bible isn’t the boring duty of Christians, it is an invitation to intimacy with the God of the universe.

*“But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from **the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.**”
~ 2 Corinthians 11:3*

*“Thy words were found and **I ate them**, and Thy words became for me **a joy and the delight of my heart.**”
~ Jeremiah 15:16*

May God grant you, my friends, the daily remembrance of the big picture. God crossed the universe for you. His Son hung on a cross for you. He didn’t do it just to save you but to know you, to walk with you, to offer you an intimate, life-giving relationship with Him. Remembering to simply love Jesus as a response to His passionate love for you is the key to the scriptures becoming a joy and delight. People in love long to understand, and...

(2) A God who is feared longs to reveal.

As we said, there are two important aspects of the heart; the first has to do with us and our desire to understand. The second has to do with God and His willingness to reveal Himself. God loves all His kids and wants to reveal Himself to us, but God is also just. He will not reveal Himself as intimately to those who don't really want to know Him.

*“Therefore the Lord longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.”
~ Isaiah 30:18*

Notice that God’s justice leads Him to pour out His grace and compassion on those who long for Him, who seek Him, and who want Him. In other words, God will reveal Himself to all, but His intimacy, His most precious truths, are reserved for anyone who really longs for Him.

*“The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know His covenant.”
~ Psalm 25:14*

The word secret is best translated to mean “intimacy.” In other words, God will reveal Himself. He will make His covenant relationship known to those who fear Him; those who have a deep seated reverence for God.

The fear of God is not being afraid that God is going to punish, especially when He has promised that we have passed out of condemnation. Instead it is a real respect for who He is. It is the knowledge that He is God and we are not. We long to be pleasing to the One who died for us! John Piper gave the illustration of wandering in a storm so terrible that you fear for your life. Then you find a cave, a shelter from the storm where you are perfectly safe, but you can still look at out and see the storm’s awesome fury. Salvation has put us in the cave. We are safe from God’s wrath toward our sin, but God is still to be respected. Theologian John Murray said, “The fear of God is the soul of godliness.”

“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

Here’s why fearing God is so important. The Word of God tells us that it is LIVING!

To put it another way, when you encounter the Word of God, you encounter God Himself! With such power, with such a God, we dare not trifle. We don’t judge it; it judges us. We don’t pick and choose what we like out of it. We allow it to speak to us, as if God Himself were speaking to us, because He is! We allow it to cut us, to convict us of wrong thoughts, actions, and values precisely because this is the Word of God, the One who loved us. As Soren Kierkegaard said, “When you read God’s word, you must constantly be saying to yourself, It is talking to me, and about me.”

- *Do you understand what “the fear of God” is?*
- *Why do you think “the fear of the Lord is the soul of godliness?”*
- *How did these two aspects of the heart, love and fear, affect your desire to read and respond to God’s Word?*

PART 2: THE EYES

The heart is vital to studying the scripture, but once the heart loves and fears God, the eyes must see what the text actually says, and not everyone has “eyes to see”. The real question is WHY are you reading? What is your goal? What are you hoping to get? Many people read the Bible to get knowledge. Though this seems good, this is a very dangerous and misguided goal. The Bible actually warns against knowledge alone as an appropriate goal, without obedience & love.

*“knowledge puffs up while love builds up.”
~ 1 Corinthians 8:1*

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”
~ James 1:22*

The problem with knowledge alone as a worthy goal is that God’s intention is for the scripture to be loved, treasured, obeyed and put into practice. Knowledge without obedience is like a relationship where there is merely a duty, without genuine love. This approach leads us to become deceived, being puffed up with arrogance, deceived about how mature we actually are. Even reading the scripture truly is an act of character because men and women who are becoming whole through the work of the Spirit refuse to let discrepancy between what God says and what they do.



In contrast, after having a Bible study with Jesus, the disciples “said to one another, ***‘Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?’***” (Luke 24:32). That is the kind of Bible study we desire at H2O. It’s the kind of community we want to be, a “fellowship of the burning heart.” So, HOW?

Scripture tells us that at least two things can open our eyes to what is in the scriptures:

(1) The Holy Spirit is the opener of eyes.

“9 Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.” 10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.”

~ 1 Corinthians 2:9-10

In other words, revelation is what God did when He inspired the writing of scripture; He revealed Himself and His truth. As verse nine (above) says, what God has done for us is beyond our imagination. We couldn’t dream it up, even if it we tried. As verse 10 says, the Holy Spirit illumines what God has revealed. Illumination is the Holy Spirit opening up the scripture to us when we prayerfully approach it, treating it as a spiritual book requiring spiritual eyes, rather than a common book that we can grasp without God’s help.

(2) Obedience is the opener of eyes.

“He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”

~ John 14:21

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments.”

~ Psalm 111:10

In other words, if the Bible is actually God’s Word, then the minimum standard for how we are to respond to it is RADICAL OBEDIENCE. When we do what the Word says, we gain the true knowledge that God intends, not the shallow intellectual knowledge that some people pursue. As simple as this point is, this point lived out is a game-changer! Like Soren Kierkegaard, we live in times where people pursue knowledge, described below as “Christian scholarship,” instead of simple obedience.

“The matter is quite simple. The Bible is very easy to understand. But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand, we are obligated to act accordingly.

Take any words in the New Testament and forget everything except pledging yourself to act accordingly. My God, you will say, if I do that, my whole life will be ruined. How would I ever get on in the world? Herein lies the place of Christian scholarship. Christian scholarship is the church's prodigious invention to defend itself against the Bible, to ensure that we can continue to be good Christians without the Bible coming too close. Oh priceless scholarship, what would we do without you? Dreadful it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Yes, it is even dreadful to be alone with the New Testament."

~ Soren Kierkegaard

We want you to approach the Word of God, not as a book to be mastered, or as principles to be understood, or as an interesting ancient text, but as an **invitation to encounter the living God of the Universe!**

- *What do you think of the Kierkegaard quote? Why do you think Christians often pursue knowledge alone?*
- *How do you think this emphasis on obedience and application might change a community Bible study, **our** community Bible study?*

ACTION POINTS

Since we've been talking more about incorporating prayer into our lives, let's take a few minutes to pray together before continuing this study.

PART 3: THE MIND

So, the heart is vital, but so are the eyes. The mind is the third focus of this study, learning how to accurately handle the text in a way that will unpack what is there. Hermeneutics is the big, fancy rule for Bible study rules or how to interpret the scriptures. This is thoroughly covered in the H2O seminar, God-breathed.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."

~ 2 Timothy 2:15

If the Bible is the word of truth, as this verse declares, then we need to be diligent! In other words, don't be **casual, reckless, careless** or **lazy**. One way we can express diligence and accurately handle the word of truth is to ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS of the text.

The Jesus Trifecta is a Bible Study method that approaches scripture from three different perspectives;

- **Orthodoxy** - means right doctrine, and it asks, 'What does it tell us to believe?'
- **Orthopraxy** - means right practice, and it asks, 'What does it tell us to do?'
- **Orthopathos** - means right feeling, and it asks, 'What does it invite us to feel?'



The Jesus Trifecta method is designed to keep us balanced by asking these three questions rather than letting one area become our exclusive pursuit. Since the goal of the Christian life is to be transformed into Jesus' image, this illustration above reminds us of that.

For example:

- An overemphasis on **Orthodoxy** can produce *intellectualism*, an elevation of doctrine over emotions and application.
- An overemphasis on **Orthopraxy** can produce *legalism*, an elevation of practice over emotions and doctrine.
- An overemphasis on **Orthopathos** can produce *emotionalism*, an elevation of our feelings and experiences over doctrine and application.

The Jesus Trifecta method is designed to keep Jesus as the goal of our lives. Remember, 1 John 2:6 says, “the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.” As we read and study the scripture, we seek application to our minds, hearts and lives. We can ask ourselves, ‘How does this enable me to live more like Jesus?’

- *Have you experienced churches where intellectualism, legalism, or emotionalism, was produced? How did that affect you?*
- *Do you see how we need all three to be healthy?*

PART 4: THE ULTIMATE PRIORITY OF LIFE

Christians need to put first things first.

“Christians have spent their whole lives mastering all sorts of principles, done their duty, carried on the programs of their church...and never known God intimately, heart to heart.”

~ John Eldredge

“I am persuaded that all of our problems are conceived and born in the sinful belief that something or someone other than Jesus Christ can give in the thirst of our souls.”

~ C. Samuel Storms

The story of Martha and Mary is so instructive that Luke felt it was important enough to record in his gospel. At first glance it is merely a description of Jesus visiting some people in their home. A deeper look, however, reveals that it is an image of one of life’s most important questions: Will I take the time to learn about God or will I fill my life with other things? It is so easy to be like Martha, distracted and busy, anxious and upset. Keep in mind, it was an excellent thing she was doing, waiting upon Jesus, yet Jesus praised Mary, not Martha, who was simply sitting at His feet learning from Him.

“Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.” 41 But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

~ Luke 10:38-42

What is even more remarkable is Jesus’ words about this incident: “Only one thing is necessary.” Think about this statement for a minute; only one thing in life is so important, so weighty, that if you did this one thing (sitting at Jesus’ feet) your life would work out fine. “For Mary has chosen the good part.” It is a choice. It is a decision we can make to prioritize knowing God above all the other things that demand our time. When we open up the pages of scripture and ask God to direct our lives with His words, we are following the pattern of Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet to learn from Him.

How to Spend Time with God

*“If you want to spend time with God in the morning; you’ll find a way;
if not, you’ll find an excuse.”*

~ Howard Hendricks

As a young believer, the idea of a personal devotional was emphasized to me. I was taught to spend time reading the Bible and praying before I did anything else with my day. I continue to do the same thing today. Whether it is 15 minutes, or 30 or 60, spending time listening to God’s Word is the good part, the life priority that is above all others. How you do this is simple, though difficult. The simple part is recognizing you need to get to bed by a certain time if you are going to carve out time to study and pray in the morning. The hard part is becoming willing to make it happen. Once you make this a habit in your life, it’s doubtful you’ll ever regret it.

1. Plan when it will be. Start off the week by planning when and where you will spend time with God, treating it as an appointment with a friend. Plan for 15-30 minutes.

2. Begin by praying to God, preparing your heart to hear and obey what you read in scripture. Ask God to open your eyes to His truth.

3. Read through one section of scripture, asking yourself how it relates to your life and what the Bible is telling you to do.

4. Thank God for what He showed you, what He has done for you, and commit your day to Him, remembering to obey the truth that was shown to you from the Word.

- *Where are you, personally, with the idea of a personal devotion? If you have this habit in your life, when do you do it? How do you do it?*
- *If you haven't formed the habit of having devotionals, what would prevent you from doing so? What is a game plan for starting this?*

PART 5: THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

The Spirit filled life does not need to be mysterious or confusing. It is essentially living a life of dependency on God, allowing Him to live through us. It is a life of obedience to God's Word. Two passages shed some insight to us.

“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

~ Colossians 3:16-17

“be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father”

~ Ephesians 5:18-20

These two sections of scripture almost exactly parallel one another, except that in Colossians, Paul says, “let the word of Christ dwell richly within you,” and in Ephesians, Paul says, “be filled with the Spirit.” **The point is that Christ's word richly dwelling within us is basically equivalent to living a Spirit-filled life.**

This doesn't merely mean we read the Bible to one another. It means we incorporate the Word of Christ richly into our lives. We read it, apply it, share it and live it. The more His Word shapes our thoughts, motives and actions, the more we'll be inclined to live in dependency on God through the power of the Holy Spirit. **The fellowship of the burning heart is not a church where they study the Bible. It is a community that lives the Bible.**

SUMMARY

This is the most revolutionary book ever written, inspired by a revolutionary God. It was recorded by the world's greatest revolutionaries, men who "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6) in order to make us revolutionary in our own little way, as we get to know God and encounter Him in the scripture.

ACTION POINTS

1. This week, we want everyone to set a goal for how frequently to do a personal devotional. If you haven't been doing this at all, set of goal of maybe 3x this week.
2. Before spending time in the Word this week, we encourage you to spend MORE time in prayer, asking God to open your eyes and trusting God to speak to you through the scriptures.