

DEEPER

Daily Bible Study

2020, Quarter 2, Lesson 1

The Uniqueness of the Bible

This study guide contains additional materials to accompany the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide for the second quarter of 2020, titled How to Interpret Scripture. The Deeper Daily Bible Study develops the broad theme of studying and interpreting the Bible into some areas not covered by the Sabbath School Study Guide. While the general topic of each week's set of lessons corresponds to the Study Guide topic for that week, the daily focus will vary at times from the Study Guide. We hope that you will find this approach to be a valuable added resource in your Bible study.

The "Digging Deeper" section probes into the day's topic, and illustrates the study principle or tool being discussed. Suggested answers, if included, are provided in parentheses. Sabbath School teachers will find this section especially helpful in the Sabbath School setting. The "Apply It" section gives the student an opportunity to apply the subject at hand to his/her own study of the Bible, and the "Share It" section provides an opportunity for those in group studies to discuss and share their response to the day's theme.

The Uniqueness of the Bible

The world's most famous and best-loved book, the Bible, was written by more than 40 authors from three continents over a period of more than 1,500 years. The authors include kings, fishermen, prophets, shepherds, and statesmen. Portions of the Bible, such as the New Testament epistles, were written down before they were read. Other sections, such as the stories in the book of Genesis, contain history that was passed down orally for centuries before finally being captured in written form. The Bible contains many kinds of literature, such as genealogies, prophecies, laws, epistles or letters, parables, poetry, and history. In spite of this diversity of writing styles, its 66 books form a cohesive and organic whole.

Although people have studied the Bible for centuries, its message remains fresh and relevant to each new generation of scholars and students. Although its core message of the plan of salvation transcends time and space, the power behind that message continues to captivate and convict individual human hearts. Millions of people have found Bible study to be a fascinating, rewarding, and life-changing pursuit, and you can too! As the book *Steps to Christ* points out,

The Bible is our rule of faith and doctrine. There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts or give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God's word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose that are rarely seen in these times (*Steps to Christ*, 90).

Digging Deeper

The apostle Peter's second letter, or epistle, to the early Christian church opens with an explanation of several ways in which the Bible is unique and important. Read the passages below and write down, or discuss, what each one reveals about the uniqueness of the Bible:

- 2 Peter 1:3,4. (The Bible contains "great and precious promises" that, when claimed in faith, enable God to make us "partakers of the divine nature.")
- 2 Peter 1:16. (The Bible records eyewitness accounts of the gospel—the good news of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection.)
- 2 Peter 1:19. (The Bible includes prophecies that have reveal God's interaction with humanity through history, and reveal important truths for us today.)

- 2 Peter 1:20,21. (Men under the influence of the Holy Spirit wrote the Bible, and therefore it reveals the thoughts of God.)

Apply It

- Below are three of the Bible's many hundreds of promises. What does each one mean to you, and why?
 - Isaiah 41:10.
 - Matthew 11:28-30.
 - Romans 8:28.
- Read Romans 1:16,17. What practical difference does God intend the gospel to make in our lives?
- The Bible contains many prophecies about Jesus Christ's second coming. Read the prophecies below, and summarize what they say about this great event:
 - Matthew 24:30,31.
 - 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17.
 - Revelation 6:14-17.
- Read Matthew 12:31. Since the Bible was written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost), what does this verse reveal about the importance of reading, studying, and obeying the Bible's instructions?

Share It

- What type(s) of Bible literature have you found to be the most interesting, and why?
- In what ways has studying the Bible made a difference in your life, or in the life of someone you know?
- How significant is it to you that the gospels contain a firsthand, eyewitness account of Jesus Christ's earthly ministry? Does this make a difference in the Bible's trustworthiness?

The Bible's Claims About Itself

What if you discovered a "magic pill" that is sweeter than honey, improves eyesight, improves cognitive function, raises the IQ, levels out unstable emotions, and is clinically proven to produce peace? Better yet, what if this pill were free and, quite possibly, already sitting in your home? Would you take this pill daily? Of course! The Bible does all of these things, and more—it shows the way to eternal life. Like our imaginary "magic pill," the Bible is already sitting on many people's shelves at home. And if it can't be found there, it is only a few clicks away on the Internet, available in literally dozens of versions. Let's take a closer look at some of the amazing claims the Bible makes about itself.

Digging Deeper

Read the following passages and summarize what each one reveals about the purpose of the Bible:

1. 2 Timothy 3:16. (The Bible contains God's thoughts and is of great spiritual value.)
2. Hebrews 4:12. (The Bible helps us understand our hidden thoughts and motives.)
3. Romans 15:14. (The Bible contains instructions for living life, not just interesting stories from the past.)
4. Isaiah 55:11. (The Bible is God's tool to accomplish His will in our lives.)
5. John 5:39. (Both the Old and New Testaments reveal Jesus Christ.)
6. 2 Peter 1:21. (The Bible does not contain human views or opinions.)
7. Isaiah 40:8. (The Word of God will last forever.)

Apply It

The following verses relate by number to the Bible passages in the “Digging Deeper” section above. After each verse give your answer to the question that follows:

1. Read Jeremiah 29:11. What does this verse reveal about God’s thoughts toward us?
2. Read Jeremiah 17:9. Why is it so important to receive the Bible’s help in understanding our hidden thoughts and motives?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 10:11. For which generation especially was the Bible and its advice on living life given?
4. Read Romans 11:27. What is God’s will for our lives?
5. Read Matthew 1:21. What was Jesus Christ’s mission in coming to this world?
6. Read 1 Corinthians 3:19. Why is it so important that we not rely on human wisdom in regards to spiritual things?
7. Read Psalm 103:15. Why is it important for us as human beings to rely on God’s Word, which lasts forever?

Share It

- What, that you are willing to share, has the Bible revealed to you about yourself recently? How has this revelation improved your life?
- Is it comforting to you to realize that the Bible contains God’s thoughts rather than human ideas, opinions, and viewpoints? Why?
- What, for you, is the strongest reason to believe in the authenticity of the Bible as the Word of God?

The Living Word of God

One of the Bible’s most important claims is that it gives spiritual life, and promises eternal life, to those who accept it and order their lives after its instructions and principles. As Revelation 1:3 states, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” The promise given here for the reading of the book of Revelation applies with equal force to the entire Bible. Shortly before his death, Moses impressed this same point upon the children of Israel, who were—finally—about to enter Canaan:

And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel: And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it (Deuteronomy 32:45-47).

Digging Deeper

The Bible, as we have seen, contains the Word of God that can give us spiritual life. The Bible claims that its words are alive and contain the power of spiritual growth. Read the following passages and summarize what each one teaches about the power of the living Word of God:

1. Mark 4:3-8, 14. (God plants His Word in human hearts like a farmer sows seed in the ground.)
2. John 15:1-4. (We are connected to Jesus through faith in His Word. The result of this union is that we bear spiritual fruit.)
3. 1 Peter 2:2. (Like a baby needs its mother’s milk, we grow as Christians through the nourishment of the Bible.)
4. Mark 4:26-29. (The kingdom of God and the entire plan of salvation is compared to seeds growing toward maturity and harvest.)

Apply It

The verses below correspond by number with the passages in the “Digging Deeper” section above. Read each passage below and answer the question that follows:

1. Read Mark 4:13-20. In the parable of the sower, what makes the difference between whether the Word of God grows in a person’s heart or not? What are some of the specific reasons that the Word may fail to grow?
2. Read Galatians 5:22,23. What are the fruits of the Spirit that will appear in a person’s life when God’s Word grows in them?
3. Read Hebrews 5:11-6:3. What is the main point of this passage? What does it reveal about the importance of continuing to grow in our study and understanding of God’s Word?
4. Read Revelation 14:14-20. What does this passage reveal about the “harvest of the earth” at the end of time? How many “harvests,” and how many groups of people, will there be when Jesus comes back?

Share It

- Have you ever struggled with some of the hindrances toward spiritual growth that Jesus mentioned in the parable of the sower? How have you experienced victory over these things?
- Why are the fruits of the Spirit such a convincing and powerful evidence of God’s work in a person’s life? Can these fruits be faked?
- By using the metaphor of “milk” and “meat” in a person’s spiritual growth, the passage in Hebrews highlights how Bible truth builds on itself the longer we study God’s Word. Why is this important to remember? Would it be confusing or dangerous if Bible doctrines and prophecies were not connected to each other in a logical and understandable way? What does this metaphor imply about our spiritual condition if we still only understand and experience Christianity as we did the day we were baptized?

The Importance of Bible Study

The Word of God, of course, contains much advice for living life. Included in this instruction is the invitation—and the command—to study the Bible. Consider, for example, Isaiah’s counsel to “Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read” (Isaiah 34:16). The same verse continues with a promise that “no one of these [who study the Bible] shall fail.” Isaiah’s counsel was given in the context of judgments being pronounced on the nations, but we don’t have to be facing such dangerous and drastic circumstances to benefit from Bible study.

The book of Acts describes a group of Christians in the city of Berea that were known for their consistent and intense Bible study, making room for this most important activity in the midst of their normal daily lives. Acts 17:11 states of the Bereans, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Apparently the Bereans had discovered that regular Bible study gave them a peace and power in their lives that could not be experienced any other way.

Daily Bible study is just as essential for Christians today as it was for the Bereans in the early church. Consider this statement from the book *The Great Controversy* about the importance of studying God’s Word:

The Bible was designed to be a guide to all who wish to become acquainted with the will of their Maker. God gave to men the sure word of prophecy; angels and even Christ Himself came to make known to Daniel and John the things that must shortly come to pass. Those important matters that concern our salvation were not left involved in mystery. They were not revealed in such a way as to perplex and mislead the honest seeker after truth. Said the Lord by the prophet Habakkuk: “Write the vision, and make it plain, ...that he may run that readeth it.” Habakkuk 2:2. The word of God is plain

to all who study it with a prayerful heart. Every truly honest soul will come to the light of truth. "Light is sown for the righteous." Psalm 97:11. *And no church can advance in holiness unless its members are earnestly seeking for truth as for hid treasure* (The Great Controversy, 521, emphasis added).

God's blessing accompanies the study of His Word. If we want spiritual power in our lives, we must commit to regular and habitual reading of the Bible.

Digging Deeper

The Bible explains many of the reasons why Bible study is important for a Christian's spiritual growth. The passages below are just a sampling of the many reasons the Bible gives about why its study is important. Read the passages below and summarize the reason given in each:

1. 2 Timothy 2:15. (God is pleased when we study His Word, and studying one part of the Bible helps us understand other passages as well, especially those that might be harder to understand.)
2. John 5:39. (Bible study reveals the historical and prophetic authenticity of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and enables us to understand His work for us.)
3. John 17:17. (Bible study is one of God's agents for sanctifying people.)
4. John 12:48-50. (Our standing in God's judgment is linked with our acceptance of His Word.)

Apply It

The verses below correspond by number with the passages in the "Digging Deeper" section above. Read each passage below and answer the question that follows:

1. Read Isaiah 28:9,10. What principle of Bible study is revealed here? Why is it important to compare Scripture with Scripture?
2. Read Luke 24:25-27. What principle of Bible study does Jesus reveal here that can help us understand all parts of the Bible?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 6:11 and John 14:15-17. In addition to the Bible, what other Agent does God use in accomplishing our sanctification? How do the Holy Spirit and the Bible work together to bring us closer to God?
4. Read Revelation 12:17; 14:12; and 22:14 (KJV). How important is understanding and keeping God's commandments for us today, who live near the end of time?

Share It

- Our busy lives can make regular Bible study a challenge. What have you found helpful in your life to keep your study of God's Word a consistent part of your daily schedule?

Prioritizing Bible Study

I remember, as a child, the first day I put toe clips on my bicycle. I had been riding a bike for years, but suddenly, when the toe clips went on, everything changed. I made it home from that first toe-clipped ride, but it wasn't a smooth one. My attention to the toe clips resulted in a face-first slip-and-slide attempt on the sidewalk and, a short time later, a head-over-heels vault onto the trunk of a parked car. Of course, I quickly learned how to ride effectively with the toe clips, and soon realized that they made riding my bike much easier than it had been before.

In today's lesson we will look at two important keys to experiencing effective Bible study. Without these keys in place, your trip through the Word of God is bound to be as rough and dangerous as my first toe-clipped bike ride. Once they are implemented consistently, however, you will wonder how you ever studied without them. The first key to effective Bible study is to prioritize your study time.

Digging Deeper

As with any area or pursuit of life, Bible study takes time, and that time must be planned and protected. Read the following passages and summarize their counsel regarding the importance of prioritizing Bible study in our life:

- Proverbs 8:17. What principle of Bible study, and of our devotional life in general, is brought out here? (The author of this proverb found the early morning to be the most productive time to spend with God, and many other people have discovered the same thing to be true for them. It is an issue of prioritizing our study of the Bible.)
- Exodus 16:13-26. In the Bible, the manna that fell from heaven represented several things, including the Word of God. What time of day did the Israelites collect the manna? (They collected the manna in the morning.) What happened to the manna that was left uncollected until late in the day? (It rotted.)
- Acts 6:1-7. What conclusion did the apostles reach regarding their study of God's Word? (It was the most important thing they did and they re-organized and re-prioritized their lives so that they could devote themselves to understand and teach God's Word.)

Apply It

- Read Revelation 12:17 and 14:12. These prophetic passages both describe God's faithful people at the end of time. What do both passages reveal about the attitude this group of people has toward the importance of God's Word in their lives? What does this imply about the decisions we should be making every day?
- Read Revelation 20:4. This passage describes those who were willing to die for Christ, and, after the second coming, reign with Jesus for a thousand years. What "prerequisite" for this amazing job—connected with their attitude toward the Bible—is mentioned earlier in this verse? Again, what does this imply about the decisions we should be making every day?
- Identify one to three things that you regularly do each day, or at least most days, that could be moved in your daily schedule, or stopped altogether, in order to make room for Bible study.
- Select a fixed time each day when you can dedicate at least 15 to 20 minutes of protected time for Bible study. Let nothing interfere with this study time for one week, and at the end of the week write down the blessings that God has given you as a result of this consistent, regular Bible study.

Share It

- What benefits have you experienced in your life from regular, scheduled time in God's Word?

Prayer and Bible Study

Praying before beginning Bible study is essential. When we fail to do this, we leave ourselves open to misunderstanding and even deception. Consider the following warning from the book *Steps to Christ* regarding the importance of praying before opening God's Word:

[W]ithout the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them. There is much reading of the Bible that is without profit and in many cases a positive injury. When the word of God is opened without reverence and without prayer; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God, or in harmony with His will, the mind is clouded with doubts; and in the very study of the Bible, skepticism strengthens. The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct. Whenever men are not in word and deed seeking to be in harmony with God, then, however learned they may be, they are liable to err in their understanding of Scripture, and it is not safe to trust to their explanations. Those who look to the

Scriptures to find discrepancies, have not spiritual insight. With distorted vision they will see many causes for doubt and unbelief in things that are really plain and simple (*Steps to Christ*, 110.)

In this lesson we will take a closer look at the connection between prayer and our understanding of God's Word.

Digging Deeper

Read the following passages and summarize what each one says about the importance of praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance in Bible study:

- John 16:13. What is the job of the Holy Spirit? (The Holy Spirit's job is to guide us into truth.)
- John 17:17. What is the truth? (God's Word is the truth.) What, then, is the Holy Spirit's role in Bible study? (The Spirit guides us into an understanding of Bible truth.)
- 1 Corinthians 2:9-12. What kinds of things does the Holy Spirit reveal to us as we study the Bible? (The Holy Spirit reveals things about God and the spiritual realities of life that we would never "see" or understand ourselves.)
- 1 Corinthians 2:13. What method does the Spirit use to guide us in our Bible study? (He leads us to compare "spiritual things with spiritual," or verse with verse.)
- 1 Corinthians 2:14. How much hope do we have of understanding the Bible on our own? (None!)

Apply It

- Make a commitment to never open the Bible, whether for devotions or for deep study, without first praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance.
- Make a commitment to pray every day for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Share It

- In what ways has God helped you understand His Word better since you first became a Christian?
- In what way(s) was your spiritual growth connected with Bible study and prayer?
- Has the Holy Spirit ever helped you specifically understand a passage of Scripture better? What was the Scripture and how did it happen?

Placing Jesus Christ in the Center

Although we will look at many keys for effective Bible study in the course of these lessons, there is one principle that must never be lost sight of. That key is to place Jesus Christ in the center of your study. Jesus said in John 10:9, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Not only is Jesus the door to salvation, He is also the door to understanding Scripture. As we will discover in these lessons, His parables, prophecies, prayers, illustrations, and His life reveal powerful tools for interpreting and understanding the Word of God.

This doesn't mean that every single story or prophecy studied must explicitly link to Jesus, but it does mean that everything studied and every conclusion reached should be placed within the context of the plan of salvation that centers in Christ and His ministry for us. Without this constant focus, Bible study will quickly become boring, theoretical, burdensome, ineffective, occasional, frustrating, or even spiritually dangerous.

Digging Deeper

- Read John 1:1-5. What name is given to Jesus here? (He is called the Word.) What is revealed about the Word? (He is God, and has always been God. He made all things, and is the source of life. Furthermore, we as human beings are incapable of comprehending Him on our own.)

- Read John 1:14. What else is revealed about the Word? (He became flesh and lived among us.) What does this imply about the relationship God wants us to have with His written Word? (He wants it to become an integral part of our lives, even as Christ has become an integral part of the human race.)
- Read Luke 24:25-27,44. What did Jesus say about the focus of the Old Testament writers? (They all focus on Him in some way.)
- Read John 5:39. According to Jesus, what is the only way that studying the Bible can lead us to eternal life? (We must let our study of the Bible lead us to Jesus Christ. If we fail to do this, our study will lead us into legalism, or self-deception, or some other similar error, but it won't lead us into life.)

Apply It

Several simple questions can help keep your Bible study Christ-centered. Asking them frequently during your study time will help keep your study focused on Jesus and His work for you:

- Is this passage or story explicitly prophetic of Christ? If so, what aspect or part of Christ's work of salvation is prophesied?
- Is this passage or story typical of Christ? Does it use symbols or themes that are reflected in Christ's life and/or work for us?
- How does this story reveal humanity's need for a Savior more clearly?
- Imagine that this story or passage is the only fragment of the Bible that you have, and that you must use it to explain the gospel to someone with no background in the Bible. How would you proceed?

With these questions in mind, prayerfully study the passages below and search for ways in which they point to or reveal Jesus Christ:

1. The manna from heaven: Exodus 16:4,13-15.
2. The law of the servant: Exodus 21:2-6.
3. The anointing of priests: Leviticus 8:6-12.
4. The marriage of Boaz and Ruth: Ruth 4:1-10.
5. The widow's pot of oil: 2 Kings 4:1-7.

Share It

- Have you discovered Jesus Christ recently in what at first seemed to be an unrelated part of Scripture? What did you learn, and how has it augmented your understanding and appreciation of Jesus Christ?
- Select a favorite story from the Old Testament, and prayerfully study it until its Christ-centered message becomes clear. Share what you learn with others in your family, class, or study group.