Diligent Bible Study

For the commandment is a lamp,

and the whole teaching of the law is light,

and reproofs of discipline are the way of life”

Proverbs 6:23, AMPC



By

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**Purpose of this book: The purpose of this little book is to guide you in studying the Bible diligently**. Why? because God says to. Besides, and like all things He tells us to do, it is for our good. We need God's peace to withstand the evil attacking our nation and our world today, and we must be ready to do our part in the world-wide revival that has already begun. We also need to know how to study the Bible for ourself, in our areas of need, with Holy Spirit directly teaching us.

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**INTRODUCTION**

**Redeeming the time.** “Oh, Father! This is Yours!  Help me get these ideas in order. This is the fourth revision. . . “ I looked at the marked-up pages spread across the desk, on top of an open Amplified and New International Bible and, once again, began at the first page. Thirty minutes later, the printer hummed, I stacked the fresh pages in the center of the desk, put crackers and a bit of chocolate into two baggies and headed out the door for pickup. In the car, I recited “Romans 3:23, 6:23, 5:8 . . . .”  At stoplights, I glanced at the index card I kept tucked in the console, my memory work this week while in the car. As I waited in the line of cars at the elementary school, I prayed. I prayed for salvation for the children and for Divine protection from Satan’s vicious attacks.

Are you feeling the same sense of urgency to be about our Father’s business? As godlessness increases day by day, desire to do my part in the battle intensifies. I hear reports of revival fires already springing up and I eagerly await the great outpouring of the Holy Ghost that prophets have said is coming soon. I want to be doing my part now, and I want to be ready for what is coming.

For months, prophets have urged us to draw closer to God—now. We need ears that hear Him clearly when He starts judging the evil and evil-doers now seeking to destroy all that is godly. Deep, diligent Bible study is essential to develop hearing ears, so I began writing about that. As usual, the topic expanded as I searched the Word for guidance, so this is the first of several writings.  Why, you may ask, is diligent Bible study so essential right now?

**We must study the Bible diligently now because:**

**[1] *God says to****.* That alone is far more than enough.

**[2] *We need God’s peace to withstand the evil attacking our nation and our world.***With lyin’ Biden, who stole the election, leaving hundreds, possibly thousands, of American citizens and allies behind in Afghanistan to be tortured and murdered by radical extremists; giving $85 billion worth of military equipment to terrorists; launching an all-government push to keep allowing millions of babies to be murdered; threatening to require everyone in the nation to wear face diapers and get an injection whether they want it or not while letting thousands of illegals—untested for covid---cross our southern border; with radical leftists seeking to pass legislation that would allow children as young as five to choose gender-changing surgery; with a homosexual choir singing “We are coming for your children”; with teachers embracing critical race theory. . . and I will stop there.

Can you truly say, and know in your heart, that—*even* *in all these things--*we are more than conquerors? (Romans 8:37) You can IF you have the peace that comes from knowing God is still in control, nothing has taken Him by surprise, He will preserve His children no matter what, and He WILL make all this “work together and fit into a plan for good to *and* for those who love God and are called according to [His] design *and* purpose.” (Romans 8:28, AMPC).

<<*Truths like that must be heart knowledge, hidden inside my
inmost being, so that Satan cannot steal, kill, or
destroy those truths and so that the world cannot twist or pervert them and
so that my own flesh cannot tarnish them. >>*

**[3] *We must be ready***. God has already begun the greatest world-wide revival of all time. He needs believers prepared to share Bible truths and His wisdom with fledgling converts and returning prodigals. To do that, we must have genuine faith, faith that comes from understanding what God says. And that understanding comes from the Word (Romans 10:17). We must be “. . . *made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.”* (2 Timothy 2:21, NIV).  We must be ready to explain why we believe and hope in God (I Peter 3:15), to explain how God wants us to live day by day, and to explain how to engage in spiritual battle. That requires diligent, persistent Bible study.

*<<Living by and skillfully sharing Bible truths is not
an option in our present world*.>>

I strongly urge you to read the book “Vessels of Fire and Glory” by Mario Murillo. You will understand what God is doing in our world and why we must get ready—now—to be used by God. We must have hearing ears, and we must let God make us holy, devoted to and prepared for His service. How? One essential step is letting Him wash us with water through the Word (Ephesians 5:26).

**Are you being washed thoroughly? Daily?**  Letting God clean us up through the Word requires diligent effort. Does a three-year-old child get clean by sprinting through a garden hose once? No, that little child needs to sit in a tub of water—for several minutes--while the loving parent washes arms and legs as well as inside ears, between tiny toes and under chubby necks encrusted with dust and sweat. Little children need a serious bath. God’s little children need serious Bible study!

<<Life-cleansing Bible study requires diligence>>.

**GUIDELINES FOR DILIGENT BIBLE STUDY**

**One method of diligent Bible study**. If you already diligently study the Word – press on! You may not need this writing. But if not, know that diligent Bible study will help you: (1) draw forth meanings missed during casual reading or study, (2) see specific things God wants you to do, and (3) hide the Word in your inmost being.

The rest of this little book explains guidelines for the way of diligent Bible study Holy Spirit has taught me. I pray it helps your Bible study be maximally fruitful. Anything less than diligent, systematic Bible study--as I learned the hard way—deprives us of God’s best.

**The guidelines are:**

[A] Do read the Bible through each year.
[B]  But do not just read – STUDY.
[C] And do not just study---study FOR YOURSELF.
[D] And do not just study for yourself—study IN YOUR AREAS OF NEED.
[E] Let Holy Spirit teach you—DIRECTLY!

[F] Use a context net to study the Word, not just a cane pole.

**[Guideline A] Do read the Bible through--repeatedly.** I once heard a Bible teacher unintentionally downplay the importance of reading the Bible through repeatedly. The teacher was stressing that we must not merely read but study the Bible. I wholeheartedly agree!  I also believe, in addition, that it is essential to read the entire Bible through repeatedly, throughout your life. Each word of the Bible is put there by God--on purpose. You can find many different Bible-in-a-year plans, which I recommend if you are now reading through the entire Bible for the first time. Such plans include passages from the Old and New Testaments and, usually, the Psalms.  If you have never at least once read through the *entire* Bible, all I can say is GET BUSY!

I recall, as a new convert, referencing the beautiful nature passages in Job I had read for the first time and being stunned to hear that the person I was speaking with, who had known Jesus for decades, had never even read Job. Fortunately, God instilled a burning desire to study the whole Bible even back then so that particular believer’s disobedience did not lead me along a similar path of neglecting the whole of God’s Word. Yes, some books are hard to understand but God will teach you if you just try (as we will talk about later).

*****Getting the basics.*** One reason we need to keep going through the entire Bible is so that we hear the basic doctrines of our faith, at least briefly, once a year. Martin Luther required his pastors to “preach every biblical doctrine within a year.” (Vessels of Fire and Glory, p. 80). I know from experience it is too easy to stay in our favorite books or passages and, in so doing, greatly harm ourselves and grieve God. And unfortunately, I also know from experience that not every pastor follows Martin Luther’s requirement. Unless you plan for it, you will likely NOT hear or read the entire Bible in your lifetime, not even once.  How dare we neglect what so many have given their lives for, most of all, Jesus Himself!

After you have read the Bible through a few times, as the Lord leads, you could keep going with the same or a similar plan. You could also make your own plan to, for example, read some chapters from the Old and some from the New Testament each day as well as Psalms and Proverbs. You can quickly see, however, that you need a definite, written, systematic plan to keep you on track. Write your plan down and keep it updated.

*Read attentively.* Besides reading the entire Bible, it is essential to read attentively, not merely dashing through the daily chapters.  Develop the habit of pausing to reflect, while you read and after you finish that day’s reading. Reading lessons for children include reading comprehension exercises, where students must reflect upon what they read and answer questions about it. I need the same to help me focus.

<<*Stop and talk with God about what
He means in those verses you are reading.>>*

**It is certainly preferable to read through the entire Bible every year. Doing that as well as deep studying will take an investment of time, of course, and perhaps much more than you now set aside. I ask you: which is more important, hearing God or being entertained two or three hours each evening? If you have obligations like childcare or work that truly do take most hours of your day, ask and God will make time for your Bible reading and study. Perhaps you can do your Bible “reading” by listening during chores or driving time and do Bible study in the time God helps you carve out. You are asking for something in complete accordance with His will; He WILL answer, as He says in I John 5:14-15.

**SPECIAL NOTE HERE**: If you are a new believer, I recommend the Bible reading plan Dr. Timothy LaHaye presents in his book "How to Study the Bible for Yourself."  Dr. LaHaye's plan points the young Christian to which  of the 1190 chapters in the Bible are especially important for new believers. The entire plan is given in Chapter Five.  I recommend getting your own copy of this book, because it is filled with excellent advice.  Pastor LaHaye passed away in 2016, at the age of 90, and I personally owe him a great debt for writing just this book alone. It pointed my newly-converted heart in the right direction regarding Bible study.  Below is his recommended Bible reading plan for the first year of a new Christian's life.

**FIRST YEAR**
> First John seven times
> John twice
> Mark twice
> Galatians through Philemon
> Luke
> Acts
> Romans
> The New Testament twice

Dr. LaHaye gives a plan for the second and third year as well. I say: GET THE BOOK! It also includes excellent chapters about how to *study* the Bible.

**[Guideline B] Do not just read – STUDY!** Make time for Bible *study* daily, if at all possible. We get out of anything according to what we put into it. We find more of God---His strength, His power, His love, His wisdom, and His presence-- in His Word—IF we give our utmost effort. God tells us in 2 Timothy 2:15:

*Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth.“* (AMPC).

This well-known verse tells me that I have reason to be ashamed if I do not do my very best to analyze, divide and handle the Word properly and skillfully – and I cannot do that if I only read.

<<*Actual studying—as opposed to mere reading--involves
a level of effort beyond mere reading*.>>

Beginning learners just read sentences and learn facts put in careful order by someone else. Successful high school students *study*. They concentrate and devote much time and effort to understanding sentences and paragraphs in their chemistry book. Why? They know they must conduct successful experiments in the lab to pass the course.

Even many superficial read-throughs will not earn a passing grade when the test requires application, wherein that student must understand why and how, when and where, etc.  Applying knowledge, or facts, requires study. It requires interacting with that knowledge, and how to use it, not just hearing or reading about it.

<<*We often fail tests in our walk with Christ if
we do not go beyond merely reading the Word.>>*

**ANOTHER SPECIAL NOTE HERE**: If you have never specifically done so, I recommend studying the chapters listed below (on page 86 of Dr. LaHaye's book.)  These chapters are essential for Christians to master.

* Ephesians 5
* Galatians 5
* John 14-17
* Romans 6, 8, and 12
* I Timothy 2
* Ephesians 4, 6
* And I would add Acts 1, 2 and 10

After these chapters listed above, if you have not identified more chapters to prioritize, Dr. LaHaye offers a second list as follows:

* John 1, 3-5
* Matthew 5-7, 13, 24-25
* Matthew 26-28
* John 11-12, 18-21
* Acts 23
I Corinthians 6, 15
* 2 Corinthians 4-6
* Proverbs 3
* Psalms 1, 27, 37

***Have you digested First John?*** And if you have never done so, regardless of how long you have known Jesus, I strongly urge you to first read the little book of First John straight  through seven times. And then thoroughly study it. One key purpose of the book is to reassure those who have eternal life that they are indeed saved from hell. It will also show you if you have not truly made Jesus your personal Lord and Savior.

It is a meaty book, it will enhance your discernment, and it will give you talking points of pure gold.

Be blessed, fellow pilgrim, as we press on, with the lamp of God’s Word illuminating  our path and the light of His Word illuminating the path ahead. (Psalm 119:105)

**[Guideline C] And do not just study--Study for yourself!** It is vital that you study for yourself, not just what other people have labored to unearth. I read many, many excellent books by sound Bible teachers about handling emotions, and I took part in Bible studies, but God did not heal me until I dug deeply into the Word for myself. Be warned especially if the study materials you rely on are strings of single verses, lacking the context of those verses and failing to show how those verses fit into God’s laws—His causes and effects, His conditional promises. If you are in a Bible study group or working through a Bible teaching book – good and very good! But you also need—as much as you need oxygen—to *study for yourself!*

But what if you just do not like studying, what if you do not have training in how to study the Bible, what if you cannot afford or do not know how to use computer programs or cell phone apps that provide commentary and exposition of Greek and Hebrew words? What if you are decades away from the classroom?

SO WHAT!!!! Are you going to believe that God can do anything (Job 42:2) or not? Are you going to let the devil or fear or laziness rob you of constant peace and of the strength to overcome temptation? Will you let self-doubt rob you of the wise counsel of the LORD, of knowing the deep, inner meaning of His covenant, as He promises in Psalm 25:14? Will you let Satan steal the healing God has for you? Will you refuse God’s call to prepare yourself to share the Bread of Life with starving souls He wants you to nurture? Certainly not!

<<The key point here is--- I must do my own
digging--just me, my Bible and Holy Spirit.
Further, I must dig for what I, as an individual, need. >>

**[D]  And do not just study for yourself—study IN YOUR AREAS OF NEED.** You will never find wheat in the apple orchard. If you need potatoes, you do not go to the cornfield! If I wander around through acres and acres and acres of rich farming country, I will  perhaps find the specific fruit or vegetable, nut or berry that I need, but it will take a looong time! And I will likely give up and just eat what is convenient, although I really need something else.

We all must understand the basics of our faith and then keep learning—all of the Bible. It is wonderful to follow a planned curriculum that will cover the entire Bible but it could take years before that curriculum followed by your church focuses on conquering fear, anger, depression, lust, or whatever you most need. Even then, that curriculum will not be personalized for you, as Holy Spirit will personalize it. Nor will books specifically devoted to those subjects be personalized for you. Some books are good starting places but they are just that – a point from which to start your own study with God as your teacher.

So, how do you study strategically, in your area of personal need? Here are four steps.
[1]        Identify what you need God’s help with.
[2]        Use a concordance to find verses about that subject.
[3]        Study those verses.
[4]        Meditate on those verses constantly.

**[Study for yourself-Step 1]**  Identify what you need God’s help with. You likely already know what your greatest struggle is. If not, ask God to show you. How will He do that? If I lose my temper in traffic and an obscenity pops out of my mouth. Hmmm. I need to study self-control. What if I see a romance novel, but I see the cover indicates the book is really pornography. Hmmm. God says to study temptation and purity.

[**Study for yourself-Step 2]**  Use a concordance. Most Bibles have at least a small concordance in the back. You can start there or use another concordance. I suggest saving for later the exhaustive concordances—which list every time a word appears in the Bible. Smaller, compact concordances and those in the backs of Bibles list just the most important occurrences in the most common verses.

Do not get bogged down trying to decide which concordance to use—just start! Holy Spirit is right there with you and He will guide you.  If you are humbly seeking God, God will “guide you in what is right and teach you His way.” (Psalm 25:9) Yes, YOU!

**[Study for yourself-Step 3]** Study those verses! Later sections will cover more about studying but, briefly, a*t a bare minimum*, *please,* read the verses before and after and preferably the entire chapter. Read the verses slowly, phrase by phrase, thinking about what the words mean. Rewrite the verse by hand, adding underlines and arrows, using all capitals or circling the words and phrases as Holy Spirit emphasizes—for you---what He meant when He moved on people to write His words.

*<<Sit there a while. Just look at the verse. Think about it.
Give yourself time to hear what God wants to tell you.>>*

Consider this: does a good classroom teacher rattle off rapid-fire explanations of complicated concepts? Does she yell her most important points at students zipping up backpacks, eager to go on to the next thing? No! She waits for the full attention of the class and then speaks slowly and clearly. And she is entirely willing to answer questions.

So, take your time. Rewrite the verse in your own words. Look up other verses in your list and see if they help you understand better. If you vaguely remember a verse that seems relevant but cannot recall where it is in the Bible, skim the rest of your list for that verse, but if you cannot find it, return to the verse you are studying. God will arrange for you to find that verse later. Yes, He will! Just try Him and see.

**[Study for yourself-Step 4]  Meditate on those verses constantly.** To meditate is to roll something over and over in your mind so as to understand it. A cow chews cud to render the food digestible. We are commanded to meditate constantly and promised tremendous blessings if we obey. It is NOT an option! We must meditate, taking time to think deeply, while we are studying, and we must also keep thinking about God’s Word all day.  Because this is vital, detailed suggestions are provided in Guideline G on how to make that a habit, but for now, let’s look at another key to diligent Bible study—letting Holy Spirit Himself teach you.

**[Guideline E] Let Holy Spirit teach you – directly!** In looking up verses about Holy Spirit as teacher, I found an excellent writing by R. A. Torrey, world-renowned pastor, evangelist, educator and writer. Pastor Torrey referenced I John 2:27:

“*As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit-just as it has taught you, remain in him.”*

Amen, Pastor Torrey! Amen! Pastor Torrey eloquently states that the humblest believer has the privilege of being taught by God directly. And, although we do learn from others who have been taught by Holy Spirit, we “never truly know the truth” until we are taught directly by Holy Spirit. Further, he says that those who are taught by Holy Spirit will have better understanding of the Word than those who know Greek and Hebrew thoroughly and have studied diligently but without being taught by Holy Spirit. (See <https://freeurlshortener.net/BDx>).

Paul tells us in I Corinthians 2:13 that God’s Holy Spirit reveals the deep things of God to us “*not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught word”* (NIV).

I cannot urge you strongly enough:

<<L*et Holy Spirit--Himself!--teach you directly,
in your areas of need,
as you sit alone with just Him and His Word.>>*

In March 2019, depression and fear made me desperate enough to finally take advice I had heard repeatedly from Bible teacher Joyce Meyer: to study the Bible, for myself, in my personal areas of need. Having made growing with God my priority for 38 years and loving Bible study, I thought I was doing okay, hearing sermons each week, reading the Bible, doing Bible studies and reading Christian books. No! No! No! I was trying to hear God second-hand.

I cannot explain why anointed, root deep understanding that changes hearts, was withheld until I came to God as my Teacher directly—rather than second-hand. But I unintentionally proved that to myself through personal experience. Perhaps it is like trying to experience a hug using someone else as a go-between, or your beloved pouring out his heart to a mutual friend who then writes a love letter to you.

Would the words that mutual friend chose hit the mark as well as those of your beloved? And would the actual presence of that mutual friend be as satisfying as that of your beloved? Could you discuss a problem as well with that mutual friend as you could with your beloved, who knows all your past, who knows how you feel, who knows how you think, and who knows just what to say and when and how to say it? Could you trust that mutual friend as deeply as you trust your beloved?

<<Would you want to hear whispered words of love
through a mutual friend, or from your beloved?>>Would it not be better—and the desire of the Lover of your soul—that the actual sound of His very own words fall on your ears? What if, dear friend, what if that mutual friend and your beloved were both in the room with you. Would you not wound your beloved deeply if you turned away from His outstretched arms and embraced the mutual friend instead?

From the moment I turned my heart to the Lover of my soul directly, from that first morning when I prayed, then sat at my desk, one Bible opened to the concordance in the back, looking up verses on peace in my copy of the Amplified Classic Bible, and taking notes on a clean stack of paper, Holy Spirit--Himself!--began teaching me what the Word meant *for me*. And He started with what I needed most which was how to find and stay in His peace that He describes in Isaiah 26:3-4.

No, I did not hear an audible voice but I read those verses, over and over, copied them in long-hand, and I kept looking at them, asking God “Lord, I believe You will teach me. Please show me how Your Word can heal this depression and fear. I believe Your Word is true. Help me see how to have this constant peace You promise . . . “

As I studied, I also paused often to look out the window and pray in the Spirit, which means to pray in tongues. I do not understand it-and do not have to!—but many times as I pray in tongues, God puts fresh, just-what-I-need thoughts in my mind. This will be the subject of a future writing, soon

And He did teach, on that morning and countless times since. God revealed, directly, yes, to little insignificant me, the deep truths of those verses. Using just the plain Word and His Spirit-----no commentaries, no fancy Bible app, no human Bible teacher--He gave understandings that I had never heard taught before, understandings that gave the first measure of true peace I had experienced in years, peace that has settled a velvety blanket over my soul every single day since.

<<Holy Spirit longs for you to ask Him
to teach you – personally>>

**[F]** **Use a context net to study the Word, not just a cane pole**. If you want just one fish, a cane pole might catch a fish. But what if you want all the fish you can get? What if you hunger and thirst for all the fish in an area? In that case, you would use a cast net.

A cast net is a fishing net with weights on the side that help it sink so as to catch whatever creature is in the netted area. You catch few or no fish if you do not know how to cast the net properly because it will not open up and cover the area you are focusing on. Your net will hit the water in a wadded-up, probably fish-less tangle.  Watch any video on using a cast net. A person knowing the basics of cast netting makes the net unfurl just right and cover the area he wants it to cover.

But suppose you have never seen a cast net properly used. You make toss after toss of your wadded up net, you catch one small fish, and stop. Or, suppose you often catch nothing but you keep casting that net, day after day, because other people say they catch many fish. You grow discouraged and feel something must be wrong with you but you keep trying. And you survive on the occasional fish you catch yourself and the abundance that others share with you from their own fishing.

<<God means for you, too, to be a successful fisher for His truths.
That requires casting a net wide enough
to pull the context of a verse into your thoughts.>>

**Are you catching the context?** Just reading one verse is like overhearing one single sentence of a ten-minute conversation. To correctly interpret one or two sentences you hear requires hearing the entire conversation, in other words, *catching* *the context*.  God wants you to correctly understand His “conversations”, or discussions, in the Bible. So, at bare minimum read verses before and after the one you are studying. Preferably, at least glance over the entire chapter and an outline of the book of the Bible you are studying or a short summary (both of which are often included in the front of each book of the Bible and always in the front of study Bibles).

**What is context anyway?**If we think about Webster's 1828 online dictionary definition, we see that context means the general sense or structure of a discussion, specifically the parts of a discussion coming before or after the sentence quoted,  or “the passages of Scripture which are near the text, either before it or after it.”

If we still read the Bible on scrolls, we would nearly always at least skim the context. Think about it. Back in those times, suppose you were a cruel husband and wanted to justify how you treat your wife. If you heard that Paul’s teaching on marriage was “toward the end of the Ephesians scroll”, you would have to at least skim through many sentences to find the passage. And if you were looking for that specific statement that wives are to submit to their husbands (what we label today as Verse 22 of Chapter 5), you would need to read that entire passage slowly and carefully.  In so doing, you would at least be exposed to the context. And if your heart was right, God would use that entire passage—not just one isolated statement—to guide your conduct.

Do you see how the modern convenience of grouping verses into sections and assigning chapter and verse makes it easier to take God’s Words out of His intended context and misuse them? No, God did not “accidentally” let us put His Word into this format. Using a book format, with section, chapter, and verse designations is helpful but God’s Word—and simple common sense—tell us that studying the Word correctly involves more than plucking a sentence here or there.  Would you approach a college chemistry textbook that way, or a recipe for lasagna, or the instruction manual for assembling playground equipment?

We cannot take one isolated verse here, one there and another fifty pages away and think we have “studied”, for example, what God means by righteousness. If we get the correct context of each of those three verses, and then study them, however, we might have a little bit of a start on understanding righteousness.

*****Another example.*** To further illustrate this point, suppose you want to find some verses about safety because you travel often.  You find a list of verses and start with Deuteronomy 28:6: “*You will be blessed when you go in and blessed when you go out.” (*NIV). It would comfort your soul to rest in that promise but wait. Do you know to whom God is making that promise? This promise and those following apply to those who fulfill the conditions of the first two verses of Chapter 28. Hear verses 1 and 2: *IF you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. 2All these blessings will come on you and accompany you IF you obey the Lord your God*:” (emphasis added)

But suppose you are not really interested in what God thinks about this subject, and you do not take time to reason with Him and see His perspective. No, you only want to get something for yourself., not really study the Bible.   So you do not cast that wide context net and you fail to see what is around that one little blessing you want to grab. Instead, you claim that blessing and go on to the next verse on your list.

What if Holy Spirit is right there, longing to correct you, to convict you of sin, true righteousness and the consequences of disobedience? What if Holy Spirit wants you to remember one instance where you have not fully obeyed Him. What if, for example, you recently stopped tithing because finances are tight and someone you trust said “God will understand”. What if God wants to use this verse to convict you for your good—so that you can correct your behavior and He can bless your finances.

Suppose, that in this same time of Bible study, after claiming Deuteronomy 28:6, you read another verse on the list--Psalm 91:11---where God says He will *“command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways*” but again, you fail to catch the context.

Sadly, you do not hear God explain that the astounding promises in Psalm 91 are for those who fulfill the conditions in the first two verses--verse one that requires us to dwell (which means to make our permanent home) in His very presence, and verse two, which requires us to say God is our refuge and our fortress and that we trust in Him. *If we have not done that, we sit in a parked car, spinning the wheel and making “Vroom vroom” sounds.*

*<<Like a child engaging in fantasy,
we deceive ourselves into thinking we are going somewhere
but we never activated the engine.>>*

I simply cannot read part of an operator’s manual for a complex machine and expect to operate the machine correctly.

***How do you know how wide to cast your context net?*** *One way is to look for connecting words and phrases.  Pay attention to* connecting words, such as because, for, therefore, whereas, accordingly, etc. Words like these link statements or ideas together where the second statement or idea depends on the first. Connecting words show you the if/then nature of God’s laws and promises. They show what we must do to have the uncountable blessings He has prepared for us. Just as you cannot correctly understand what you read without understanding the context, you also cannot understand how God’s laws and promises work if you only grasp the end of a chain of thought.  You will not see God carefully, lovingly telling you what obeying and disobeying do and what will be the effect of your actions.

**Verses 1 through 6 of Psalm 119 start explaining how to live an upright life, a life pleases God. Verse 7 says I will be able to praise God with an upright heart “*when I shall have learned [by sanctified experiences] Your righteous judgements [Your decisions for and against particular lines of thought and conduct’].* (AMPC) We learn when we experience consequences for our actions, when we experience God’s judgements for what we think and do, when we see the results or effects of breaking or keeping His laws. If we search out the Word, seeking to understand how God’s laws work, we will see that our action was the cause that led to the effect, or result, we experienced.

As you become more keenly aware of context, you will start going backward and forwards as a habit, seeking to see where the condition for a promise was stated, and you will find yourself reading bigger and bigger segments of Scripture.  Woohoo! Keep going!

<<God’s Word NEVER fails, although
it APPEARS to fail
when WE FAIL to handle the Word correctly.>>

**A pause to reflect**. You might be saying, “This is getting complicated, and it will take a lot of time!” As for the former, with persistence these things will become as automatic as driving a car. As for the latter, yes, following these suggestions you are reading about requires time and steady, focused effort.

Dear fellow pilgrim, please hear me. I dare not presume to explain exactly how God works, but I can, with trembling and reverence, put forth some Bible truths. (1) God rewards obedience and He loves those who approach Him with sincere, pure motives. So, I believe He rewards any sincere effort at Bible reading and Bible study.  (2) However, God also says—many times in His Word—that we get what we deserve. *“I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”* (Jeremiah 17:10, NIV). God does just give us many, many things, but He does require us to labor for some things. Would it be fair if I rarely even read my Bible yet received the same deep understanding as someone who reads the Bible daily and studies diligently several times a week?

<<Little effort studying the Word, yields little reward.
Great effort produces great reward. >>

**God will teach you how to study better.**  And let’s demolish another sinister lie from the enemy that so often provides excuses for not studying the Word. God WILL teach you His Word, if you make the effort, no matter your situation or circumstance. Would God be fair if He withheld the riches of His Word from those of lesser means or education? No! He longs to open the storehouse of His Word to you—if you ask Him to! It does not matter if you “never were a good student” and/or have no formal training in Bible study. If you whole-heartedly ask God to help you, He will—somehow, some way—teach you how He wants you to study better.

**God will give you the gift of wanting to do Bible study**. Enjoying the act of studying is a great blessing. But whether it comes naturally or not, God will give you **great** pleasure in studying His Word. He did it for me and millions more. Proverbs 2:11 says “*For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul (*NIV). When we look at the verses before this one--when we unroll the scroll, when we cast that context net--Holy Spirit teaches us that this enjoyment of the Word is but one blessing that comes when we do what He lovingly urges us to do in Verses 1 through 4.

All these guidelines for Bible study require no formal training or costly resources, just a sincere heart, sincere effort, and faith—like a little child--that God WILL teach YOU, directly, through His Word. He wants you to catch lots of truth when you go fishing with Him! And He wants you to go fishing – every day!

Diligent meditation is part of diligent Bible study. I hope you will read the little book “Diligent Meditation” also available on [www.wordsofhopeandhealing.com](http://www.wordsofhopeandhealing.com).

May God speak to you clearly through His Word as you study – diligently!

Love and prayers,

Freda