

CAN WE TRUST *the* BIBLE?



Can We Trust the Bible?

For many people, the Bible can feel intimidating. It can feel:

Mysterious.

Too big.

Too old.

Too complex.

Too confusing.

Some people avoid it because they are not sure where to start. Others have tried before and felt overwhelmed. Some assume the Bible is meant mainly for scholars, pastors, or especially spiritual people. Others worry they might misunderstand it or get something wrong. And for some, the Bible feels distant, disconnected from real life, or simply inaccessible.

If any of that sounds familiar, you are not alone.

And yet, the central claim of Christianity is this: God has spoken.

Not vaguely. Not randomly. Not only to a select few.

God has spoken through his Word, and he desires to be known.

The Bible is not merely a religious book. It is God's revealed communication to his people. Through it, we learn who God is, what he has done, who we are, and how we are called to live. Scripture comforts us, challenges us, corrects us, and shapes us. It reveals truth, exposes error, and points us again and again to Jesus.

This study exists because God wants his people to hear his voice. Part of that means learning how God speaks and how we are meant to listen. God does not speak in confusion or chaos. He speaks with clarity, purpose, and intention through his Word. This study is meant to help us recognize that voice and grow more confident in hearing it.

The goal of this devotional is not to make you an expert. It is not to overwhelm you with information or technical language. It is not meant to replace the church, pastors, teachers, or Christian community.

Throughout these chapters, we will explore the posture Scripture calls us to have toward God's Word. We will look at what it means to listen, read, study,

trust, submit to, and live by Scripture. Along the way, we will also get practical. This study includes simple steps for engaging Scripture in ways that help us read it carefully, understand it clearly, and interact with it meaningfully. The study is structured in sixteen chapters. You could walk through it in sixteen days, sixteen weeks, or at whatever pace serves you best.

At its core, this devotional is about one simple movement:

Taking one step closer to Jesus by taking a step closer to his Word.

God has spoken and He invites us to listen.

If at any time you want to talk more about this, or how to take a next step in Bible reading and studying, please contact me at chris@catlinchurch.com

Chapter 1

Hearing and Receiving the Word of God

“Chris, you’re not listening.”

There have been moments where I’ve had to admit that’s been true. Sometimes my attention drifts. Sometimes my phone is nearby. Sometimes the TV is on. Sometimes my mind is simply somewhere else. And if I’m honest, those same distractions can show up when I open the Bible.

Maybe you can relate. When we come to Scripture, our posture and attitude matters. The Bible is not background noise. It’s not something we skim while multitasking. It is God speaking. And God has already spoken.

Scripture repeatedly calls God’s people to listen. To incline the ear. To pay attention. To receive. Before we ever act on the Word, we are first invited to hear it.

Hearing the Word is not passive. It requires intention. It requires setting aside distraction. It requires the humility to say, “God, I want to hear what you have to say.”

Throughout Scripture, listening is treated as an act of trust. When we listen, we acknowledge that God’s voice carries authority. That his wisdom is greater than ours. That his Word deserves our attention.

If we struggle to hear God in Scripture, the problem is rarely that God is silent. More often, it’s that we are distracted.

The invitation of Scripture is simple, but not easy. Come ready to listen. Come ready to receive. Come believing that God has spoken, and that what he has said matters.

Reflection

What habits or rhythms help you stay rooted in the Bible?

What does it say to you that God has given each believer both the ***ability*** and ***responsibility*** to listen to and receive his Word?

Prayer

God, help me to slow down and truly listen. Clear away distractions and give me a heart ready to receive your Word. Teach me to hear your voice and trust what you have spoken. Amen.

Check out the Text:

Romans 10:17

Hebrews 3:7

Chapter 2

Reading and Searching the Word of God

I don't pay much attention to lottery numbers. I might see them on a screen or hear about a large jackpot, but they don't occupy much of my time. Why? Because I didn't buy a ticket. Whatever promise is out there, whatever prize might be available, it doesn't really apply to me because I haven't engaged it personally.

But if I had purchased a ticket, my attention would probably change. If I had chosen numbers and invested something of myself, I'd be much more aware of what was happening. Engagement changes posture.

That same principle often shows up when it comes to Scripture.

The Word of God may not have been written directly to us, but it was written for us. God has spoken, and he invites his people not to remain detached observers, but to actively engage what he has said.

Reading Scripture isn't meant to be a casual glance or an occasional check in. It's a practice of seeking. Of searching. Of leaning in. When we open the Bible, we're not just reading words on a page. We're placing ourselves in a position to hear from God.

There is a connection between what we put into engaging Scripture and what we receive from it. The more we approach God's Word with attention, curiosity, and openness, the more we begin to recognize its depth, its clarity, and its relevance.

God has spoken. The invitation now is to search his Word with intention, believing that what he has revealed is meant to be known, understood, and lived.

Reflection

What does it look like for you to actively engage Scripture rather than remain a detached observer?

How might your attention to God's Word change if you approached it believing it was written for you?

Prayer

God, help me to come to your Word with intention and attentiveness. Give me a heart that seeks you and a mind ready to engage what you have spoken. Teach me to search your Word with trust and expectation. Amen.

Check out the Text:

Acts 17:11

Joshua 1:8

Chapter 3

Studying and Growing in Understanding the Word of God

One of the remarkable things about how God has made us is that he did not only give us the freedom to decide whether we would engage with his Word, but also the capacity to understand it. From the beginning, Scripture assumes that ordinary people, everyday believers, would hear, read, and grow in understanding what God has said.

That matters, because it means understanding the Bible is not reserved for experts, scholars, or religious elites. God's Word was given for all people. For common people. For men and women, young and old, new believers and mature ones. God did not design his Word to be locked away behind a gate that only a few could open.

At the same time, growing in understanding is a lifelong journey. We never reach a point where we have learned it all or arrived at complete mastery. One of the sad parts of finishing a favorite book is that the story eventually ends. You may reread it, but the story itself does not change.

Scripture is different. When we come ready to listen, humble enough to learn, and willing to submit to what it says, God continues to teach us. Through the Holy Spirit, we are often shown something we have not seen before. A connection we missed. A truth that meets us differently because we are in a different season of life.

As our understanding of Scripture grows, so does our understanding of God and of ourselves. We begin to see more clearly how God works, what he values, and how he is shaping us. This growth was never meant to be limited to pastors or teachers. It is the invitation and responsibility of every believer.

Reflection

What has shaped the way you think about who is able to understand the Bible?

How has your understanding of Scripture grown or changed over time?

Prayer

God, thank you for giving your Word to all people. Help me grow in understanding, humility, and faith as I study it. Teach me through your Spirit as I seek to know you more. Amen.

Check out the Text:

2 Timothy 2:15

Psalm 119:130

Chapter 4

Submitting Humbly to the Word of God

Before GPS systems were built into our phones and cars, people relied on maps. Paper maps. You had to know where you were, where you wanted to go, and then follow the directions laid out in front of you. That required honesty about your location and humility to follow the route instead of guessing your way forward.

Scripture functions in a similar way.

One helpful way to think about the Bible is as a kind of GPS, not a global positioning system, but a God positioning system. God's Word helps us understand where we are, where God is calling us to go, and how to walk faithfully in that direction. It provides orientation, guidance, and correction along the way.

But like any form of guidance, Scripture only helps us if we're willing to submit to it. That requires honesty. It requires acknowledging where we truly are rather than where we wish we were. And it requires humility to trust God's direction even when it challenges our instincts.

God's Word will often affirm and encourage us, but there are also moments when it confronts us. It may call us to stop doing something we enjoy or to step into something uncomfortable. In those moments, submission becomes the dividing line between simply knowing Scripture and being shaped by it.

How gracious and loving it is that God would not leave us to wander aimlessly. He has given us his Word to guide us, not to restrict us, but to lead us into life. When we submit humbly to Scripture, we aren't losing freedom. We're learning to walk in the direction God knows is best.

Reflection

Where do you find it most difficult to submit to what Scripture says?

How does viewing the Bible as a God positioning system change the way you approach it?

Prayer

God, help me to trust your direction even when it challenges me. Give me humility to submit to your Word and honesty to see where I truly am. Lead me by your truth and shape my steps according to your will. Amen.

Check out the Text:

Psalm 119:105

Proverbs 3:5–6

Chapter 5

Submitting Humbly to the Word of God

James 1:21–22 reminds us to humbly accept the word planted in us, which can save us, and not merely listen to the word, deceiving ourselves, but to do what it says. Those words are simple, but they land hard if we're honest.

One of my personal struggles is being told what to do. If the instruction comes from someone I trust and know has my best interests at heart, it's easier. But when I'm asked to change direction, stop doing something I enjoy, or step into something uncomfortable, resistance shows up quickly.

That's not unique to me. It's human. It's part of our fallen instinct to prefer autonomy over submission.

When we come to Scripture, there will be moments of comfort and encouragement. But there will also be moments of correction. Moments where God's Word confronts us, challenges our assumptions, or calls us to change.

The question is not whether Scripture will speak clearly. Often it does. The question is what we will do when it does.

Will we stop at awareness, or will we move toward obedience? Will we acknowledge God's truth but keep our distance, or will we humbly receive it and allow it to reshape our lives?

Submission to God's Word is not about losing freedom. It's about trusting the One who knows us better than we know ourselves. When we humbly accept what God has planted in us, his Word does not crush us. It leads us toward life.

Reflection

Where do you most often feel resistance when Scripture calls you to change?

What might it look like for you to move from hearing God's Word to humbly doing what it says?

Prayer

God, give me humility to receive your Word honestly. Help me trust your wisdom more than my instincts, and give me the courage to obey even when it's uncomfortable. Shape my life through your truth. Amen.

Check out the Text:

James 1:21-22

Psalm 25:9

Chapter 6

Obeying and Living According to the Word of God

God's Word does correct us, as we've already seen, but it does more than that. Scripture is not only about warning us away from what is harmful. It is also meant to guide us toward what is good.

As we move through life, we are constantly faced with decisions. Some are small and everyday. Others carry lasting weight. In those moments, God's Word provides wisdom and direction if we are willing to seek it.

Through prayerful engagement with Scripture, we often find clarity for situations we're unsure how to navigate. God's Word may not always give us a direct answer, but it frequently shapes how we approach decisions, relationships, and conversations.

Scripture speaks into real life. It helps us respond with patience when emotions run high. It gives us guidance when conversations are difficult. It reminds us who we are and how we are called to live when circumstances are confusing.

Living according to God's Word requires listening and yielding. Obedience flows from trust, and trust grows as we learn to rely on God's wisdom rather than our own understanding.

When we choose to obey Scripture, we are not following a rigid set of rules. We are learning to walk in step with a God who desires our good and who has given us his Word as a faithful guide.

Reflection

Where are you currently seeking God's guidance in your life?

How might obedience to God's Word shape the way you approach everyday decisions?

Prayer

God, help me trust your Word as I make decisions each day. Teach me to listen, to yield, and to walk in obedience as an expression of trust in you. Guide my steps by your truth. Amen.

Check out the Text:

Psalm 119:33-35

John 14:23

Chapter 7

Being Corrected and Shaped by the Word of God

Hebrews 4 tells us that the Word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double edged sword. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. In other words, Scripture knows the real us.

The Bible has a way of exposing what lies beneath the surface. It reveals motives we may not want to face and patterns we may prefer to ignore. God's Word does not simply inform us. It examines us.

There is an illustration that helps capture this dynamic. Think about the idea of playing chicken. Two forces move toward one another, and eventually someone has to yield. Someone has to blink.

When it comes to Scripture, there is no middle ground. It is not a negotiation. It is not fifty fifty. God's Word is not meant to adjust itself to us. We are meant to adjust ourselves to it.

For those who follow Jesus, coming to Scripture always involves a posture of surrender. We do not approach the Bible asking it to affirm every instinct or preference. We come ready to be corrected, reshaped, and redirected.

That process can be uncomfortable, but it is also deeply formative. When we allow God's Word to confront us honestly, it becomes one of the primary tools God uses to shape our character and align our lives with his will.

Reflection

How do you typically respond when Scripture challenges your assumptions or behavior?

What might it look like for you to fully yield to God's Word rather than expecting it to bend to your preferences?

Prayer

God, give me a heart that is open to correction. Help me yield to your truth even when it challenges me. Shape me through your Word and align my life with your will. Amen.

Check out the Text:

Hebrews 4:12

Psalm 139:23-24

Chapter 8

Holding Fast to the Word and Guarding Against Error

One of the reasons God gives us his Word is protection. Not only protection for the church as a whole, but protection for individual believers.

When someone handles a hundred dollar bill, especially a cashier or a teller, they are trained to recognize the real thing. They don't start by studying counterfeits. They learn the genuine article so well that anything false stands out quickly.

Scripture works the same way. Acts 20 reminds us that false teaching is not just a distant possibility. Voices will arise, even from within the community of faith, that distort truth. Not everyone who teaches has evil intent, but not every voice is accurate either. Good people can still be wrong. Persuasive voices can still mislead.

In a world that often values feelings over truth and popularity over faithfulness, it has never been more important to be anchored to something solid and unmovable. God's Word provides that anchor.

Knowing Scripture helps believers recognize what is true and identify what is counterfeit. It equips us to hold fast to the gospel we have received and resist teaching that subtly shifts away from the full counsel of God.

God has not left his people defenseless. By committing us to God and to the word of his grace, Scripture gives us both clarity and courage to remain faithful in the midst of confusion.

Reflection

How well do you feel grounded in Scripture when you encounter conflicting teachings or opinions?

What practices help you remain anchored to God's Word in a noisy world?

Prayer

God, root me deeply in your truth. Help me recognize what is genuine and resist what is false. Keep me anchored to your Word as I seek to remain faithful. Amen.

Check out the Text:

Acts 20:29-32

1 John 4:1

Chapter 9

Teaching, Sharing, and Passing On the Word of God

Sometimes Christians struggle to remember the beauty and purpose of the Old Testament. It can sound foreign or outdated to us. But OUR story has roots in THAT story. In Deuteronomy 6 offers a powerful reminder of how seriously God takes his Word and how widely he intends it to be known.

In that passage, God speaks to all of Israel and then places special emphasis on parents, calling them to teach God's Word diligently to their children. This reminds us that Scripture is not meant to remain private or contained within formal settings.

Yes, God has given teachers, pastors, elders, and leaders to the church. Their role matters. But Scripture was also given to ordinary believers to be understood, lived, and shared in everyday life.

Our faith is meant to be personal, but it was never meant to be private. God's Word is meant to be passed on in natural, relational ways.

That might sound like saying to a friend, "I read something meaningful today. Can I tell you about it?" Or posting, "I was reading the Bible this morning and this verse really stood out to me." Or texting a family member, "This passage shaped the way I prayed today, and I wanted to share it with you."

Sharing God's Word doesn't require a platform or a title. It grows out of hearts that value Scripture and lives that are being shaped by it. When God's Word matters to us, it naturally finds its way into our conversations, our homes, and our relationships.

Reflection

Where has God given you opportunities to share his Word naturally with others?

What holds you back from talking about Scripture in everyday conversations?

Prayer

God, help me value your Word deeply and share it naturally. Give me courage and love as I pass on what you are teaching me. Use my words and my life to point others toward your truth. Amen.

Check out the Text:

Deuteronomy 6:6–7

Colossians 3:16

Chapter 10

The Spirit Who Gave the Word

If the Old Testament is sometimes treated as the forgotten half of the Bible, then the Holy Spirit is often treated as the forgotten person of the Trinity. Francis Chan once referred to the Holy Spirit as "*the forgotten God*," and that observation rings true for many believers.

Most Christians are comfortable talking about God the Father, who is over us, and Jesus the Son, who is with us. But the Holy Spirit, who is God in us, is often misunderstood, minimized, or quietly ignored.

The apostle Peter wanted to make sure that didn't happen. In his second letter, Peter reminds us that Scripture did not originate in human ideas or imagination. God spoke through human authors, but they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Scripture is not a collection of religious reflections. It is God revealing himself.

I sometimes say it this way. *Human authors recorded what the Holy Spirit revealed.* That means God was actively involved in making sure his Word was spoken, preserved, and passed on accurately. The same Spirit who moved prophets and apostles to speak is the Spirit who ensured that God's message was not lost.

That same Holy Spirit now lives in every believer. One of his ongoing roles is to help us understand God's Word. He does not give new teaching, He helps us understand what we have already been given. He will never contradict Scripture, instead, he illuminates what has already been given, helping us grasp truth and live it out faithfully. The Spirit's voice will amplify and clarify the Scripture, He will never take away from it.

Reflection

How often do you think about the Holy Spirit's role in understanding Scripture?

What difference might it make to approach the Bible with greater dependence on the Spirit?

Prayer

Holy Spirit, thank you for revealing God's Word and helping me understand it. Teach me, guide me, and help me live out what God has spoken. Amen.

Check out the Text:

2 Peter 1:20-21

John 16:13

Chapter 11

The Spirit Who Has Given a

Complete and Trustworthy Word

2 Timothy 3 is one of those passages that carries a huge amount of weight. It's a passage many have read, but we can easily miss that it's a true heavyweight. Paul reminds Timothy that from childhood he has known the Holy Scriptures, and that those Scriptures are able to make a person wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

That alone tells us something important. God has given his Word in a way that can be known, understood, and trusted by ordinary believers, not just scholars or leaders.

Paul then says that all Scripture is God breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Scripture is not lacking. God has not left gaps in what he has revealed. His Word is sufficient for forming faith, shaping character, and guiding life.

The Holy Spirit plays a central role in this process. The same Spirit who inspired Scripture works within believers to bring conviction, comfort, clarity, and courage. He shows us truth, convicts us of sin, comforts us in our hurting, and empowers us to live out what God has revealed.

What is especially beautiful is that God does not simply tell us what is right and then leave us on our own to figure it out. Through his Spirit, he equips us to live out what his Word calls us to do.

Reflection

How does knowing that Scripture is sufficient shape the way you approach God's Word?

In what ways have you experienced the Holy Spirit helping you live out biblical truth?

Prayer

God, thank you for giving a trustworthy and complete Word. Holy Spirit, help me understand it and live it out faithfully. Equip me for the good work you have prepared for me. Amen.

Check out the Text:

2 Timothy 3:15–17

Jude 3

Chapter 12

The Spirit Who Opens the Mind and Heart to the Word

Have you ever had that moment of panic when you realize you've locked yourself out of something? Your house. Your car. Somewhere you urgently need to be. You can see where you want to go, but there's something in between. A locked door. We actually had a dog who often rode with me on trips. She once locked the door from the inside when I stepped out to get gas. Think about all the dirty looks I got that day. I could SEE the keys but I couldn't get where I wanted to be. I had to call a locksmith. He was someone who specialized in getting people though, or passed, locked doors.

That image helps describe something Jesus addresses in Luke 24 when he speaks with his disciples after the resurrection. He points them back to the Scriptures, referring to the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, his way of describing the whole of the Old Testament.

The Scriptures were already there. They had access to them. They had heard them read for years. And yet something still needed to happen. They needed (as do we) someone who can help unlock what is otherwise locked or hidden.

Luke tells us that Jesus opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. That detail matters. It shows us that understanding God's Word is not only about access or effort, but about illumination.

What Jesus did for his disciples in that moment is what the Holy Spirit continues to do for believers today. Sometimes the barrier to understanding is intellectual. Sometimes it's emotional. Sometimes it's resistance. But God, in his kindness, does not leave us locked out.

Through the Holy Spirit, God opens both our minds and our hearts to his Word. He helps us see what is true, softens what has grown hard, and removes barriers we may not even realize are there. This work is not about helping us better understand culture or opinions, but about helping us understand Scripture, because God's Word is what has the power to change us.

Reflection

Where do you sense resistance when you approach Scripture?

How might inviting the Holy Spirit into your reading change the way you engage God's Word?

Prayer

God, thank you for not leaving me locked out of your truth. Holy Spirit, open my mind and heart to understand your Word. Remove barriers and help me receive what you want to teach me. Amen.

Check out the Text:

Luke 24:45

1 Corinthians 2:12-13

Chapter 13

The Spirit Who Empowers Obedience to the Word

There have been moments when I have honestly told the Lord, “I can’t do that.” Not out of rebellion, but out of truth. I knew what Scripture said. I understood what God was asking. And I also knew that in my own strength, I did not have what it would take.

Most of the time, the challenge with Scripture is not understanding what it says. Generally speaking, when we read the Bible, we can see clearly what it calls us to do or avoid doing. The problem is often not clarity, but capability.

There was a season when someone who claimed to be a Christian said and did things that were deeply painful. In every practical sense, they functioned like an enemy. And then I came to Jesus’ words calling me to love my enemy and pray for those who persecute me. I remember telling the Lord plainly, “I can’t do this.”

What I had in that moment was truth. What I lacked was strength. And that is exactly where the Holy Spirit meets us. God never intended obedience to be powered by willpower alone. The Spirit does not lower the standard of obedience, but he does supply the strength to walk in it. When we reach the end of ourselves, dependence begins.

Sometimes obedience looks like a simple prayer. “God, I know what you’re asking. I want to obey. I need your help.” That posture is not weakness. It is faith.

The Spirit empowers believers to live out what God’s Word calls us to do, even when our humanity tells us we cannot. Obedience becomes an expression of trust, rooted not in self effort, but in reliance on God.

Reflection

Where do you feel most aware of your inability to obey God in your own strength?

What would it look like to rely more fully on the Holy Spirit as you seek to live out Scripture?

Prayer

God, thank you for meeting me where I am weak. Holy Spirit, give me the strength to obey when I cannot do it on my own. Help me trust you more deeply as I follow your Word. Amen.

Check out the Text:

Philippians 2:13

Galatians 5:16

Chapter 14

A Life Shaped by the Word of God

Bill Parcells, a famous NFL head coach, was once caught on camera saying to his players during a hard moment in a game, *“This is why you lift all them weights.” (There was also other, more colorful, language but you get the point.)* What he was getting at was simple but profound. The work done long before the moment of pressure is what allows you to stand when the pressure finally comes.

The author of Psalm 1 describes something similar when it comes to God’s Word. The person who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night is compared to a tree planted by streams of water. That image is not accidental. Strength, stability, and fruitfulness do not appear suddenly. They are cultivated over time.

God’s Word is meant to be ingested, internalized, and inculcated into our lives. Not so that we can say we have read it. Not so that we can check a box. But so that when temptation comes, when suffering arrives, when pressure mounts, there is something solid holding us in place.

We do not wait until the pressure is on to begin training. In the same way, we do not wait until a crisis hits to begin engaging with Scripture. God’s Word strengthens our minds to know what is true. It steadies our hearts when we feel alone. It gives courage when fear would otherwise drive us to retreat.

Scripture is also meant to be a light. Psalm 119 reminds us that God’s Word illuminates our path. It shows us where to step and where not to step. Just as it is wise to make sure a flashlight has batteries before the storm arrives, it is wise to let God’s Word dwell in us before confusion, uncertainty, or hardship comes.

There is no better time to begin engaging Scripture than now. Whether life feels calm or chaotic, God’s Word is ready to shape us, strengthen us, and guide us. The question is not when to start. The answer is now.

Reflection

In what ways has God's Word strengthened you during difficult seasons?

What habits or rhythms could help Scripture become more deeply rooted in your daily life?

Prayer

God, help your Word take deep root in my life. Shape me through it so that I may stand firm when pressure comes. Strengthen me by your truth. Amen.

Check out the Text:

Psalm 1:1-3

Colossians 2:6-7

Chapter 15

Why We Study the Word Personally (and How to Begin)

There is a reason Scripture repeatedly calls God's people to read, hear, meditate on, and dwell in the Word. God never intended engagement with Scripture to be a responsibility we outsource. While teachers and leaders are a gift to the church and play an important role, our relationship with God's Word is also meant to be deeply personal. The Bible is not something we only hear explained by others. It is something we are invited to read, wrestle with, reflect on, and respond to ourselves. God speaks to his people not only through sermons and classes, but through personal moments of listening, reading, and prayer.

That personal engagement does not mean isolation. Scripture assumes community. It assumes learning together, asking questions, sitting under faithful teaching, and growing alongside other believers. But it also assumes that individual believers will open the Word themselves. That we will listen. That we will engage. That we will seek understanding.

Many people feel unsure where to begin. They believe the Bible is important, but they feel overwhelmed by its size, its structure, or their lack of experience. That hesitation is understandable. But God did not give his Word only to scholars or specialists. He gave it to his people. Ordinary people. Working people. Parents. Teenagers. New believers. Long-time believers.

One of the simplest and most helpful ways to begin engaging Scripture personally is through a framework many believers use called **SOAP**.

SOAP stands for **Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer**. This is not a formula and it is not a requirement. It is simply a guide. This kind of personal study does not replace deeper study or learning from others. It complements it.

Try a practice run with any of your favorite passages or one of these:

Psalm 1:1–3, Colossians 2:6–7, Psalm 119:97–99, John 8:31–32

Scripture: Select and read a short passage carefully.

Observation: Notice what the text actually says. Write it down along with thoughts, questions, or follow up study to do.

Application: Ask how it shapes my life. Where does it encourage, challenge, instruct, or convict me?

Prayer: Respond honestly to God about what you've read.

Chapter 16

Studying the Word More Deeply

As we grow in confidence reading Scripture personally, many believers reach a natural next question: How do I go deeper? Not just reading the text, but understanding it more fully. Seeing how it fits into the larger story of Scripture. Learning how to handle difficult passages with care and humility.

This desire is a good thing. God does not call us merely to skim his Word, but to know it, to treasure it, and to grow in wisdom through it.

A deeper approach to Bible study includes asking questions of the text: Who wrote this? To whom? What was happening historically? How does this passage connect to the rest of Scripture?

Study Bibles and commentaries can help bring clarity. Many faithful men and women have studied God's Word carefully. Their insights serve the text but do not replace it.

The Christian life is meant to be personal, but not private. God designed us to study Scripture in community. From the earliest days of the church, believers gathered to hear the Word read, explained, and lived out together. We need teachers, pastors, elders, and trusted Christian friends.

Studying Scripture within a Bible-believing church brings encouragement and protection. It helps us ask honest questions and guards us from misunderstanding.

Community never replaces personal responsibility but *healthy Christian community helps us hold Scripture faithfully.*

Reflection:

Where do you want to grow?
Who helps you think clearly?
How can community strengthen your understanding?

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for your Word and your people. Shape us together in truth.
Amen.

Check out the Text:

Proverbs 11:14

Hebrews 10:24-25