

GROWING IN GRACE

CEDAR CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH

How should we then live?
Practical Christian living in light of the Gospel.

WEEK 6: WALKING IN THE SPIRIT PART 4

INTRODUCTION

- We have come to know that the Word of God is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit moving men to write.
- It should then be no surprise that it's only through God's inspired Word to us that we are able to spiritually grow.
- As believers in Christ and those who have the Spirit living in them, our spiritual growth is directly connected to our reading, studying, knowing, applying, and sharing of God's Word.

THE BIBLE AS THE PRIMARY MEANS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- "A general faith in the truth of God's written Word is the primary foundation of the Christian soldier's character."¹
- The Word of God *is* in effect, how the godly person thinks, how they act, what they believe, how they navigate life, and the final and ultimate truth they cling to.
- We come to know God, know ourselves, and know God's desires for man through His Word.
- **1 Peter 2:2** "...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation..."
 - Here's the important part that you and I should not miss. Peter has just said his readers were born again through the Word **1 Peter 1:23** "...for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God."

¹ J.C. Ryle, *Holiness*, 79.

- Now he is connecting our salvation, which was through the Word, to our growth; which is also through the same Word.
- In effect, Peter is exhorting his readers to not just know God's Word for their initial salvation, but also to continue to long for it throughout their entire Christian life for their sanctification.
- There is a similar idea in the letter to the Hebrews.
- **Hebrews 5:12-14** "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. [13] For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. [14] But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."
 - Both Peter and the author of Hebrews give us the picture or metaphor of milk, our spiritual walk and our maturity.
 - Peter is saying *be like a baby in your appetite for spiritual truth and growth in God's Word*.
 - The author of Hebrews is saying *don't remain like a baby in your spiritual maturity*.
 - Then the author of Hebrews links maturity and the practice of discernment.
 - This means that maturity is merely about our spiritual knowledge or how much truth we hear on a regular basis.
 - Receive truth → Practice truth → Discern according to truth → Mature²
- Peter tells his readers to crave spiritual nourishment. Then the author of Hebrews tells us what that spiritual nourishment should be producing; namely discernment in our walk.

Preparation for Reading the Bible

- "Reading God's word is a habit, and its effects bring more joy and freedom than anything else we could do."³
- I hope that after all we have read concerning the Bible, it's inspiration and purpose, and how the Holy Spirit uses the Bible in the life of the believer, and how churches and Christians today are seeing fruit of a lack of biblical understanding...that your heart and desire is to know God's Word better than you know anything else in this life.

² I did not produce this chart but the author is unknown.

³ <https://www.crossway.org/articles/5-tips-for-creating-healthy-bible-reading-habits/?srsltid=AU7gw4XDfw0eqmTXpvzUTdKucqemyEFUiThjfeAH4l-bTKPV2OD2ZcQ1>

- Since the Bible is living, active, and feeds and nourishes believers spiritually, there are certain ways we can be prepared to read, study, and understand the Scriptures when we come to read them.
- Here are some thoughts on how to prepare your mind/heart for reading the Bible⁴:
- **Psalms 119:36** “Incline my heart to Your testimonies and not to dishonest gain.”
 - “Every day I need to be peeled away from my pathetic preoccupation with self. You do too. Thankfully, God loves to de-magnetize our hearts from what is worthless, and re-magnetize them toward what is priceless, all for the sake of our joy. This is where prayer comes in; we just have to ask. “
- **Psalms 119:18** “Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law.”
 - “In many ways, reading the Bible is like reading other books. We ought to approach it the way we’d approach any piece of literature, being sensitive to genre, setting, the author’s intent, and all that other good stuff. But there is one major difference. *The third person of the eternal Trinity breathed out its words.* And the Spirit loves bringing God’s words to life, day after day, in the hearts of those blinded by the tyranny of worthless things.”
- **Psalms 86:11** “Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name.”
 - “The Bible teaches us that the Devil is crafty. He knows the easiest way to keep us from God’s Word is to distract us, to hold up captivating shiny objects, to lure us into thinking about something—*anything*—else. We must pray earnestly for a *united* heart, lest it drift toward being divided, distracted, and distant from the words of the living God.”
- **Psalms 90:14** “O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.”
 - “Sometimes religious people can give the impression that happiness is unspiritual. You can be happy or you can be holy, but surely not both. Thankfully, the Bible has no patience for this kind of thinking. Every human being on the planet is seeking happiness. That’s not the problem; the problem is that we seek it outside of God. Right quest, wrong destination.”
- You can pray for just a minute or two before reading...Lord, incline my heart to Your Word, open my eyes that I would see what you have in Your Word for me today, unite my heart on this singular purpose to grow, and may I be fully satisfied and joyful.

⁴ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/4-things-pray-bible/>

- Some other ways that we can practically be prepared for reading the Bible:⁵
- **Anticipate** that the Spirit is going to give you illumination to God’s Word when you read it.
 - It is only through the Spirit’s work that anyone can know the truth of Scripture.
 - One may be familiar with and even know the Bible, but unable to understand and apply it.
 - “Believers, on the other hand, have been made alive by the Spirit of God, who now indwells them. Thus Christians have a resident Truth Teacher who enlightens their understanding of the Word—enabling them to know and submit to the truth of Scripture (cf. 1 John 2:27). Though the Spirit’s work of inspiration applied only to the human authors of Scripture, His ministry of illumination is given to all believers. Inspiration has given us the message inscribed on the pages of Scripture. Illumination inscribes that message on our hearts, enabling us to understand what it means, as we rely on the Spirit of God to shine the light of truth brightly in our minds.”⁶
- **Set aside time** and have a plan to read the Bible during that time.
 - **Psalm 119:15-16** “I will meditate on Your precepts and regard Your ways. [16] I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.”
- **Decide** to get the most out of your study time.
 - “...if you skim the Bible, then your application of it will also be superficial. But if you dig deep, your application will be rich and more helpful. Take the time to study the Bible.”
- **Choose to meditate** on one verse throughout the day or a theological truth that was visible from the reading.
 - **Psalm 1:1-2** “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! [2] But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.”
- **Pray for application** to what you have read and understood.
 - “God’s Word encourages, confronts, and loves in such a way that often a specific response is very appropriate. Sometimes application means simply to be still and worship the Lord. But sometimes God wants us to do something specific like confess sin, serve a spouse, encourage a friend, or submit to an authority.”
 - A good rhythm is to pray for illumination, read, pray for application, apply.

⁵ Ideas from <https://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/making-the-most-of-your-bible-reading/>

⁶ <https://www.gty.org/blogs/B160725/how-does-the-spirit-work-through-scripture>

- Are there any other ways that you practice being prepared for reading God’s Word?

What Bible do I choose to read?

- While this is largely a preference question, there are some points to consider.

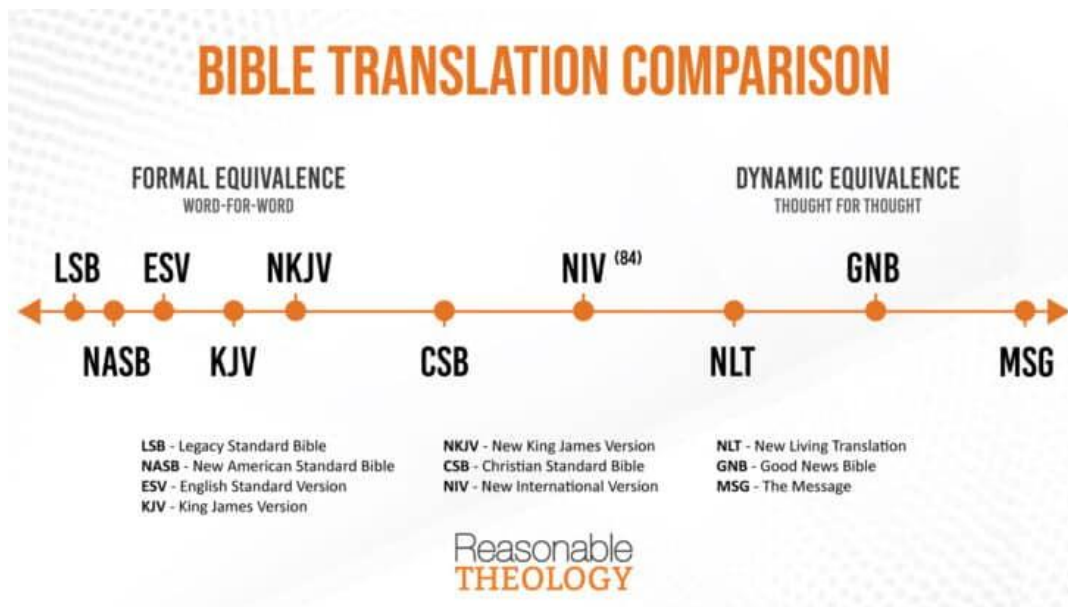


*chart from <https://reasonabletheology.org/why-we-have-different-bible-translations/>

- From left to right, this chart is laid out from the most literal translation of the Bible to the translation of the Bible that is “dynamic.” Meaning that instead of using one theological word, the translators define the word in the sentence.
- **Example in the Bible of one verse:**
- **Romans 8:9** WOODEN LITERAL – You all but not are in flesh but in spirit, if indeed spirit of God lives in you all. If but anyone spirit of Christ not have, this one not is he.
- **Romans 8:9** NASB95 – [9] However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.
- **Romans 8:9** NIV – [9] You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.

- **Romans 8:9** AMP – [9] However, you are not [living] in the flesh [controlled by the sinful nature] but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God lives in you [directing and guiding you]. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him [and is not a child of God].

What differences do you see?

Are there any differences that would hinder or help one's growth in godliness?

- Just for reference, the KJV would be about grade 12, the NASB would be 11, the ESV 10, the NIV 7-8 and then down from there.
- It has been said that the best translation of the Bible is the one that you read.
 - While a relatively minor choice, we should choose a Bible that we are comfortable with, both reading to ourselves and with others out loud.

READING THE BIBLE FOR ALL THAT IT'S WORTH⁷

- When reading Scripture, we want to make sure that we are not just using it as the end but as the means by which the Lord fills us with His Spirit so that we can live according to His will.
- Remember **Colossians 3:16** “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”
- We must remember that we can't know what the text means *to us* until we know what the text means *to the original audience*.

⁷ For our study we will focus on habits of devotion and study. There are, of course, other ways of reading the Bible. It can be done for reference, leisure, or even to study genres and literary differences.

- No matter how we approach the Bible to read it, this must be in our minds in first.
- “The Bible can’t mean today what it never meant when it was written.” (Sproul)

Format for Bible Study and Devotion: The Book of Jude

- Before reading Jude, we want to make sure that we answer some basic questions.
- Most of these questions only need to be answered at the beginning of the study. But they will be the lens through which the whole letter is read.
- Who wrote the book and to whom was he writing?

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- When was the book written and where was the author when he was writing it?

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- What is the occasion for writing this particular letter to this particular people at this particular time?

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- Did the author have any other input when he was writing? For example, other apostles or other writings that he may have used? (example: Titus 1:12)

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- Was there anything that happened in history when this letter was written?

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- Are there any direct OT quotes or allusions?
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- “The letter of Jude warns against those who, having gained admission to the church, were perverting the grace of God, denying "our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" ([v. 4](#)). Jude used Old Testament examples to warn of these "blemishes" on the church. He wrote multiple denunciations of these ungodly people who "defile the flesh" and "reject authority" ([v. 8](#)). He urged Christians to continue in godliness and love toward such people, in some cases reasoning with them, in other cases "snatching them out of the fire" ([v. 23](#)). Jude closes with one of the most beautiful doxologies in all of Scripture ([vv. 24-25](#)). Jude was the brother of James (probably "James the Lord's brother," [Gal. 1:19](#)). He likely wrote sometime between a.d. 65 and 80.” (ESV Introduction to Jude)
- As we read each section of Scripture, think about the “then and there” before the “here and now.”
- Look for key words / phrases (for, because, but, so that, therefore, etc.). Look for repeating words / phrases that may point to emphasis. Look for figures of speech (they paint pictures for us to gain a better understanding) and ways the author contrasts and / or compares.
- Recognize verbs (passive / active...imperatives...present / past / future), pronouns and where they are pointing to (identify the antecedent or postcedent).
- Pay attention to if / then conditional clauses (biblical writers did not always include the *then* part).⁸

Class	Idea	Example	Translation
First Class	Assumed true	Romans 8:31	"Since..."
Second Class	Contrary to fact	1 Cor. 2:8	"If...but it isn't"
Third Class	Real possibility	1 John 1:9	"If this happens..."
Fourth	Remote possibility	Rare in NT	"If perhaps..."

- Is the author assuming this is true? (First Class)
- Is the author presenting a real possibility? (Third Class)
- Is the author assuming it is false? (Second Class)
- **Romans 8:31** “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?”

⁸ This is where many Bible readers get confused and misread / misinterpret passages. In the Bible, there are 4 types of if / then conditional clauses. This is why knowing authorial intent and context is so important! Other great examples to work through: Colossians 1:21-23; John 8:31; 10:9; 1 John 1:9; Matthew 4:3; Galatians 3:29.

Jude 1:1-25 NASB95 – [1] Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, **to those** who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: [2] May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you. (*remember who keeps you*)

[3] Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. [4] **For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who** turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and **deny our only Master and Lord**, Jesus Christ. (*fight for what matters*)

[5] **Now** I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of **the land of Egypt**, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. [6] **And angels who did not keep their own domain**, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, [7] **just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them**, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. (*learn from those who fell 5-16*)

[8] **Yet in the same way these men**, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. [9] But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" [10] But **these men** revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. [11] Woe to **them**! For **they** have gone the way of **Cain**, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of **Balaam**, and perished in the **rebellion of Korah**.

[12] **These are the men** who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; [13] wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, **for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.** [14] It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, [15] to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." [16] These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.

[17] **But you, beloved,** ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, [18] that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." [19] **These are the ones** who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. [20] **But you, beloved, building** yourselves up on your most holy faith, **praying** in the Holy Spirit, [21] **keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting** anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. [22] **And have mercy on some,** who are doubting; [23] **save others,** snatching them out of the fire; and **on some have mercy with fear,** hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. (*strengthen your own soul*)

[24] **Now to Him** who is able to keep you from stumbling, **and** to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, [25] to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, ***before all time and now and forever.*** Amen. (*rest in God's keeping power*)
