



A WONDERFUL DAY IN THE LORD

WITH PASTOR GARY GILLEY OF SOUTHERN VIEW CHAPEL

November 21, 2022

Thank you for joining us today for our Wonderful Day in the Lord broadcast. We are going to start some new things right now. We have been looking at the promises of God for several weeks together. Before that, we were looking at the commandments of God. We're going to maybe look at some odds and ends here for a little bit. This week, I want to go back to talking about the subject of reading and studying the Bible together. I preached a message just recently on this subject and it seemed to be helpful. It was a very practical type of message and I just wanted to put that out there for whoever else might be listening, and for those that heard the sermon, this is a bit of a review perhaps but also just a little more information and something you can put together and understand long term.

I want to talk about the Bible itself. What a great book this is. We love the song *Ancient Words* in our church. It sings *Ancient words ever true, changing me and changing you*. The Bible is God's communication to us. It's how He teaches us. It's how He changes us. We would know very little about God if it wasn't for the Bible. We have nature and our conscience. We can pick up some things, but **only** some things. We need to know God through His Word. We know very little about ourselves without the Word. Psychology and these different sciences try to understand humanity, but they fail in so many ways. The Bible is the perfect mirror and understanding for us. As we look at things like this, the Word of God is just so important, and we wouldn't know how to live to the glory of God without the Scriptures. Every Christian believes that to some degree, I think. Every Christian wants to know God through His Word and would say the Bible is important and it's a part of their lives and they want to enjoy that Bible and live out that Bible, but many, many Christians have a hard time reading the Bible and understanding the Word of God. So, I want to talk about that for a little bit here this week just to talk about how we can grow in that area.

First, let's start with the fact that there are two principal ways that most of us understand the Word of God. One of those ways is simply through the teaching of other people. We find, for example, as Paul writes to Timothy about the Word of God in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, he tells him that the Word of

God is that which changes us. He says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." So, he is saying here that it is the Word of God that changes us and causes us to be the kind of people that God wants us to be. Without that Word, we are not going to progress, be transformed, and we are not going to be changed.

Then he comes to 2 Timothy 4, and what does he tell Timothy to do? 2 Timothy 4:2 says, "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." He commands Timothy to fulfill his ministry by teaching the Word of God. So, he is going to do that and that's the picture that we see throughout Scriptures. The Lord has given teachers, gifted individuals, to the church. They go forth to teach the Word of God. So, we find, in churches across the world, pastors, teachers, and others who are equipped by God and gifted by God to be teachers of the Word. They also in turn study the Word. That's what Timothy is told to do in 2 Timothy 2. You study the Word hard. You make sure that what you teach is biblically accurate. You don't just get up and blow smoke. You don't just stand up and rattle off things. You study the Word and provide sustenance for those who are listening.

Most Christians probably get most of their understanding of the Bible from the public teaching of the Word of God. Hopefully you are going to a church that teaches God's Word. That's a starting place. There's radio. There are podcasts. There are some television programs that are good. There are all sorts of means in which you can listen to the Word of God being taught by gifted people. Sometimes very gifted people. Make sure you are looking for those that are systematically teaching the Scripture and are using a proper hermeneutic or interpretive approach where we teach the Bible in a normal, literal way, and let those people teach you and train you in the Word of God. So, that is paramount. That is not secondary. It's very important to be taught the Word of God by those who have studied it hard and know it well.

The second way that we know the Word of God is our own personal time with the Lord in the Word. That's what we are going to be talking about

the rest of the week. Some have called these devotions. Some call it quiet times. Some call it Bible study. There are various names for it, it doesn't matter what you call it. It is basically you getting along with God in His Word and let the Word of God begin to talk to you, teach you, train you and shape you. Most Christians would give lip service, at least, to the need to do that on a regular basis. In our church, we encourage people to have a time with the Lord like that every day. Some may not be able to succeed at that, but at least on a very regular basis, a number of times a week so that it's part of our life. It's part of our pattern of living. As a result of that, every day or at least quite often, we are personally in the Word for a period of time. There's nothing in Scripture that says how long you have to do this at a particular sitting. Whether it's 5 minutes or 5 hours; the Scriptures don't say. I think it varies. I think there are times when we don't have a lot of time and we get into the Word for a few minutes and other times when we are more relaxed and have some extra time and we get excited about something we're reading, and we stay with it for quite a bit of time. Those are joyful and wonderful times to have, but at any rate, it's a regular understanding and regular reading and study of God's Word that shapes us and changes us. If that is the case, then that's something you and I will want to do. The problem is that many Christians struggle deeply on doing that. Either because they have been told so many different methods that they can't figure out the right method, or because of time constraints or whatever. We want to try to look at that this week and give you four different approaches to the Word of God that might be very helpful to you in your own personal time with the Lord—a quiet time, devotions, or whatever you want to call it, we want to try to shape that with four different approaches this week.

Join us tomorrow as we look at the first approach.

November 22, 2022

We are glad you joined us this morning. We are devoting this week to some of the approaches we can take in the study and reading of God's Word. I'm going to look at four different approaches the rest of this week. The first is reading God's Word.

Let's start with the reading of the Word. When we read the Word of God, we are simply doing exactly that. We are reading and we are not looking at unraveling all the mysteries or dealing with difficult passages or anything like that. We are just reading and observing. The key is observing.

Yesterday, when I came in for prayer time at about 6 or so in the morning, I was driving in and the sun had risen, and I saw that surrounding me in the sky were these clouds everywhere that were pink and purplish in color. It was beautiful. Everywhere I looked, these clouds were pink and purple and just beautiful peppering throughout the sky. I observed it. I enjoyed it. It was pretty. I enjoyed that drive to work that day into prayer time as I looked at those. That was observation. That's exactly what we do when we read the Bible. We are reading for an overview. We are reading for observation. We are looking at what is there. We aren't digging in deep at this point, we are just observing. It's good to do that sometimes. We need an overview of the Scriptures. We need to have the aerial view of the forest before we jump into the woods itself.

So, I think it's important that we become good readers of the Word of God. That is difficult for people. I don't know how many Christians have never read through the Bible and feel guilty about that. We ask why they don't read through the Bible, and they respond that they want to and have started many plans, but never gotten it done, and they still feel guilty about that. Let me give you some encouragement there and maybe some direction. I checked out some things about reading the Bible, even out loud, and found that you can read the epistles through Revelation starting with Romans and going through Revelation, you can read all of that in eight hours at a speaking rate. Eight hours. That's 1.3 minutes per day. That's not very much, is it? If you threw in the gospels and Acts, you would add some more. You would add another ten hours. So, you can read through the New Testament in eighteen hours or 3 minutes a day in a

year. So, if you wanted to read through the New Testament this year, you could do it 3 minutes a day from Matthew all the way through Revelation. That's not daunting if you just stay at it systematically. I want to encourage you to just do something like that and slowly, but surely read through the Bible. If you miss a day, read another extra few minutes and in a year, you will easily be able to read through the New Testament. If that's not enough for you, you could read through the whole Bible in a slow rate of 72 hours or 12 minutes a day. So, if you stay with it, 12 minutes a day for one year and you will have read through the Bible entirely. That's not a lot if you stay with it. If you get behind, you might read the Old Testament one year and the New Testament another year, but over time you want to have read through the whole Bible.

You may say that you're not a reader and I challenged the people when I preached a message on this that almost everybody reads what they like to read. I had at least one person come up to me after and say they don't like to read anything. Maybe that's your case. Maybe you just don't like to read. If you don't like to read, it's going to be hard for you to sit down and read the Bible even for a few minutes a day. But, if you don't read the Bible regularly, you're not going to be able to grow in Christ as you should. So, here's an easy method to use for those non-readers. Listen to the Bible. Today, there are all sorts of apps for your iPhone that you can go to. You can get a CD, if you don't have an iPhone, where the Bible can be read to you. If you have any kind of commute to work, or you are sitting around and waiting for the kids to get out of soccer practice, or whatever, you can have someone else read through the Bible for you in very quick order. If you have a 20-minute drive to work every day, rather than listening to old music, you could listen to at least 10, maybe 20, minutes a day of the Bible. In that fashion, you could read through the Bible numerous times throughout the year. That would be a wonderful use of time wouldn't it. Let me encourage you to be a reader of the Bible. If you don't read well or don't want to read, listen to the Bible and pay attention. Let it soak into your heart, so you get a big overview of what the Word of God says.

Tomorrow we will look at a second approach to the Scriptures.

November 23, 2022

We're looking this week at approaches to the reading and studying of God's Word. This is a personal time with God. As we think about that we find that we want to first start with reading the Bible. That's the recommended approach, just read through the Bible. Read sections. Listen to the Bible being read, and in very short order through a year, you can read much of Scripture, even all of Scripture in 12 minutes a day if you want to do that. If you just want to read through the New Testament, you can actually do that in 3 minutes a day. So, you can become better students of the Word, understanding the Bible, getting an overview by reading the Bible. So, reading the Bible is something we can do and enjoy. I hope that most of you do that on a regular basis.

Now, we move today to a second approach and that is studying the Bible. That word is fearful to many people to think that they have to study the Bible. We remember studying back in school and we just don't want to study anymore. So, a lot of Christians just never get around to studying the Bible. Let me distinguish between reading and studying. I mentioned last time that when I came into a prayer meeting the other morning that the sky was beautiful, the clouds were pink and purple all around me. They were beautiful and I was observing the beauty and enjoying that drive into church. Studying would be to look at those clouds and ask, "What causes that coloration?" Then investigate and study various cloud formations and how the sun reflects, and things I probably learned in school, back in junior high school, but I don't remember it any longer. That morning I wasn't interested in that. I was simply interested in observing and that's okay, but if I wanted to investigate and I wanted to dig deeper and find out why that happens and the way it happens, then I would have to pull out some literature and go to google or something and begin to study. I could study a little bit or a whole bunch depending on what I wanted to do. That's the difference between reading and studying. Reading is observation. I am seeing what is there and appreciating what is there. Studying is investigation. I want to go deeper. I want to understand more about this. You might do that if you get sick. For example, you have some symptoms of an illness, and you want to find out what that is or whatever. So, you go on some of these websites, the Mayo Clinic, or whatever, and you look up your symptoms and you find out what you think you have. Or maybe

you've been diagnosed with a certain disease and so you go and look up all the symptoms, problems, treatments, and so you investigate now, and you investigate because you see the importance of investigating. That's what studying is. You see a problem, or an issue, or a passage of Scripture that you don't understand, and you dig in and start to study because you want to know the answer to that. I would encourage you, on this level, to get involved in a Bible study. Be involved with other Christians who are also investigating the same material you are investigating. Compare notes. Iron sharpens iron. That will encourage you to dig in a little deeper to a passage of Scripture, the Word of God, or a whole book of Scripture. Bible study is very helpful. It is at this point that you might also turn to commentaries. Do your own study and try to figure out what's going on, then turn to resources such as commentaries and word studies. One of the blessings we have today is that I have whole shelves of books on word studies and different things that help me understand the Bible, but most of that today is found electronically. You can have apps and computer programs that help find out the answers to those things ten times faster than I can do with my books. Take advantage of those. Find those apps that are helpful to you, and that you can put on your iPhone, computers, tablets or whatever. Those things can be extremely helpful to use. So, if you don't know what a word means in Scripture, you can find that in about two minutes by going to one of these apps, and now you have done a word study that is going to be helping you to study further. If you're looking at a passage and you are looking for more context or some different interpretations on a hard passage, go to good commentaries. If you don't know what a good commentary is on a book your studying, ask your pastor or another Bible student who studied these things and they can point you in the right direction. God has given us many scholars, many theologians, and Bible teachers who have spent hours and hours, a lifetime, of studying the Bible and we want to glean from them. So, those can help us in our study of Scriptures.

So:

Reading is observation.

Studying is investigation, digging in a little deeper to understand the Bible better.

READ YOUR BIBLE

Both are valuable, both we can do at different times and at different places, but those are two approaches to the reading of God's Word. We will look at a third one next time.

November 24, 2022

We have dedicated this week to understanding how we can approach the Bible better, so we can be better readers and students of the Word of God. I've given you two approaches this week. Reading the Bible, in which we are basically observing and looking at the big picture. Perhaps you listen to it through an app or CD or whatever. We have also looked at studying the Bible, in which we investigate. We go deeper and we look at the meaning of words. We've looked at the context of various arguments in Scripture or we're studying a difficult passage. I recommended that you might want to do that with some friends at a Bible study. It helps us to stay with it and to compare our own thinking with somebody else's. I would encourage you to do that. So, that's reading and studying.

Let me give you a third approach today. That's consuming the Bible. That's actually, perhaps, a combination of reading/studying, that you might find helpful. This is where you actually don't try to read big passages or read through the Bible in a year. You actually slow down and read smaller sections, but more often. Some people have called this *eating the Bible*. John MacArthur has kind of popularized this approach in some of his teachings. He talks about taking a short epistle, or a smaller section of a gospel or the book of Acts, and reading that section, maybe four or five chapters, over and over and over again for one solid month. So, for example, in the month of January, I read an epistle like Colossians every day for that whole month. You might think that's a lot of work or that's quite a bit, but it doesn't take that much time to read these small epistles. I think Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians can be read from 10-13 minutes out loud at a reading rate. That's not a lot of time, and you're not really, necessarily, digging in and doing deep study. You're simply reading and reading over and over. You can take a smaller book. If you want to try this for the first time and you've never tried it before and you want to try a small book, you could do Titus. I have Titus open in my Bible here. If you read it out loud at a normal reading rate, you can read Titus in 6 minutes. That would be a good place to start.

So, you take Titus and you read the three small chapters. In my Bible here, I have half a page, a full page, and another half a page, so basically two pages of this Bible is the book of Titus. So, I can read that out loud in 6

minutes. I'm not looking for answers to questions at this point. If I find something I don't quite understand, I'm not worried about it. I'm not going to stop right now to figure that out. That's Bible study. Right now, I'm just reading it over and over. So, the first week you read Titus. As you read Titus, you start to observe a number of things. You begin to see words repeated. You see some themes that are showing up. You start to put some pieces together. You read it the second week and as you read and read and read, you not only see those same themes and those same words, but you begin to notice that it is coming together, and you begin to understand Titus like you have never understood it before. You may decide to put a little extra time into it and start jotting down some of the things you are finding. You might underline in your Bible, you might jot notes off to the side, or you may get a journal and just start writing them down. You are not looking in detail yet. These are things to go back and look at later, perhaps, but right now, you are just reading it again and again and it might help to write some things down. The next week, you do it again and now you are really getting into it. You think, *Wow! I'm really starting to understand Titus in ways I've never done before!* Not only that, but this is really something that you find is really applicable to your life. Then the fourth week you do it again and now you are becoming somewhat of an expert in the book of Titus. You've got a wonderful handle on that book of the Bible. You know the themes. You know the approaches. You know the theologies that Titus is talking about. You know about the church leadership and how he has described them and who they should be. You've got all this together and you've done that in one month. Next month then, you are ready for another book, or you might want to take a week and go back and look at the things you have learned in Titus and the things you've jotted down and actually do some studying with that. What is an elder? What is regeneration that he talks about in one of the chapters? What is all that about? You might do some extra study, and if you do it in a journal, now you have some real nice observations and some real nice interpretations. Then, the next month you go to another epistle like Colossians and do it all over again. If you did it that way, you'd go through about twelve books a year. It would take you a lot longer to get through the New Testament that way, but what a way to consume the Bible and understand it.

READ YOUR BIBLE

I highly recommend it, and I hope some of you try that. Give it a shot this year. Maybe a New Year's Resolution: read through Titus every day for a week and Colossians every day for a week until I have these things really under hand. You would enjoy that, probably far more than you can ever realize. Give it a try.

November 25, 2022

We're looking all week at some of the ways to approach the Bible on a personal level in our private time with God in His Word. Reading—simply observing and looking at the big picture. We can listen to the Bible and supplement our reading by listening to the Bible, or if we are not good readers and we don't like to read, simply let someone else read to you. There are numerous excellent readers found on these various apps. I would recommend, for example, an app called YouVersion. This app has 75 different translations and many of those have someone reading that translation for you. You might even want to read it in different translations. It would enhance your understanding. That's one approach. Studying – sitting down and investigating. We are not simply reading the overview. We are digging in now to try to understand various portions of the Bible. Consuming—reading a passage or book of Scripture over and over and over for several weeks or a month until we have saturated ourselves with that portion of Scripture, so that we know it well. We may have verses memorized without even trying to memorize them because we read them so often. We see themes and topics that we understand now from a book such as Titus.



Now we are moving on to one more thing and this is our last one for this week. That is loving your Bible. Many Christians know they should read their Bible. They feel guilty because they don't, and if they do read their Bible do it out of duty, and after while they get tired of doing that as well. Why is it that those things happen, and many Christians just don't persevere in their reading of Scripture? I think it's because they don't realize they are supposed to enjoy the Bible, love the Bible, and just sit back and let the Bible speak to them. It's God's love letter to you in so many ways. Just love the Bible!

I think that's why the Bible was written in so many formats. Some of the Bible, much of the Bible, was written in propositional form. It's the teaching of God's Word. We find that especially in the epistles. Much of the Bible, however, is in story form, narrative. We get the accounts of Jesus in the Bible. It tells us what He did, how He did it, and why. We have parables that Jesus gave us which are really a sermon in a story. He is making

important points and truths known through a story format. We have Old Testament stories and narratives. We have the wisdom literature of Job through Song of Solomon. Those five books are really Hebrew poetry that cause us to slow down, ponder, and think and enjoy what God has for us. All these things are there, and so as we look at these things together, we find that the Bible was written in so many ways. The Bible could be a much smaller book if the Lord just gave us the answers in very simple, clear form. Instead, He's gone about doing this in many different ways and approaches that we love and enjoy.

For example, when you approach the Psalms, don't just race through the Psalms and don't just look for the main points, go into the world of the Psalms. We did that last week with Psalm 23. Put yourself there. Let the Psalm speak to your heart. Let the Psalm speak to your emotions. When you're reading accounts of the Old Testament, the Fall of Adam, the murder of Abel by Cain, the life of the good times and bad times of some of the characters like Elijah, David, Solomon, and the prophets and all these pictures. As we do that, put yourself there. Allow your emotions to go there. Allow your imagination to go alongside these things and let them sink in. Enjoy! Don't be in such a hurry. Just sit back and enjoy the pictures of the Word of God.

I remember when I was in high school, maybe a sophomore, and started really reading the Bible for myself. I remember reading in study hall one day, I had run out of things to study for school I guess, and I was reading a little New Testament that I took with me to school. I remember reading in the gospels of Jesus and how He just turned the tables on the Pharisees so often. As I read that, I laughed out loud in study hall just enjoying what Jesus did. Sometimes, now that I have spent my whole life studying the Bible, sometimes I'm almost envious of people who get to start over and haven't already read those stories hundreds of times and don't know how they end and it's new and fresh. What a joy to be able to enjoy those stories for the first time. Don't let it get stale to you. Maybe you've read them a hundred times but let them be fresh and let them speak to you once again. Let them come to you in ways that maybe they haven't before. Love your Bible! Enjoy your Bible! Let it be something new and fresh to you every day as you read it. So, these are approaches I am looking at with you: reading, studying, consuming, and loving your Bible.

READ YOUR BIBLE

As we get close to the first of a new year and you're thinking of New Year's Resolutions, take one of those approaches, or maybe more than one, and use them in the year to come; especially combining all the approaches with this last one. Love your Bible. The Lord has given you the Bible to enjoy. Enjoy it! I hope this has given you a wonderful day in the Lord.

November 28, 2022

Thank you for joining us for another week on our Wonderful Day in the Lord broadcast. We're having our first blast of winter right now here in central Illinois, so as you watch this recording, we are kind of laying back a little bit. I've got my hoodie on to keep me warm and, I've got my cup of coffee right here to help me, although to be honest, this is a prop. There's nothing in it, but I thought I would show it to you. I also have my Bible and my notepad; we are going to do something different this week than we have done in the past. We are going to give you an opportunity to interact with us as far as actually studying along with us.

If you have your Bible, I hope you do, grab it, get something to write with and maybe something to write on, that would be helpful. We will work together on a couple of projects. Last time we talked about studying the Bible in a kind of different way. Just a methodology that you might find helpful. You can do this in just a few minutes a day depending on what you want to do. We talked then about taking the Bible and going through a short text of Scripture, 2-6 verses or whatever, reading it over and over maybe three or four times until you get a really good handle on what's being said. You do that anywhere from 1-3 minutes depending on how much time you want to take or how much time you have.

Then, you take the next 1-3 minutes and jot down any observations you've seen. After you have read through the texts a number of times, you will see observations of one kind or another and they start standing out to you, and you jot them down on your notepad. There you may have a journal, just a simple journal. Anything from a piece of paper to a very fancy journal, whatever you think is good for you, and you can jot down those observations right there in your journal. That's a wonderful way to think through Scripture. Then the third step is to take 1-3 minutes and write down questions. One of the things I do all the time as I prepare for sermons and so forth is to actually ask the text questions. *What is he saying here? What does he mean by this?* That's a wonderful way to really engage your mind in the Word of God. Ask questions and jot those questions down as well.

The last step if you recall was taking 1-3 minutes and reflect upon what you have written down as far as observations and questions. If you have several observations and questions, instead of trying to do all of those, you might simply reflect on one or two items and spend 1-3 minutes doing that. I have found one of the best ways to reflect in this way is through prayer. As I look at this particular observation or question, I ponder for a moment and start thinking about what it means and how I can apply it to my life. It is a perfect gateway to prayer. It gives me the opportunity to sit back and pray about that which I have just learned in Scripture. Then, banking off of that, you could take more time to pray about other items that you would like to pray about. So, it's a starting point for prayer. I find for myself that it's better to begin with the reading of Scripture, that leads to prayer. Some people like it the other way around, I suppose, where they spend some time in prayer and then they turn to Scripture. There's no one right way to do these things, but the reading of Scripture gets my mind going and infuses my mind with thinking in biblical ways and then I can begin to pray about these things and how these things apply to me. This last step is largely a step of application. I'm thinking and praying through ways in which the Scriptures apply to me. You may have several observations, questions and so forth, and you can't necessarily ponder and pray over every one of them in a given morning, so you might just pick out one of those and go with it. Then if it's very pertinent and it's really speaking to your heart, you might go back the next day and look at the same passage of Scripture, read it again, and go through the same process and then pick out another reflection that you want to ponder on. It may be another set of questions or whatever and you apply that. So, in a given text of 2-6 verses, you might find a number of very key applications, observations, and interpretations of the text and you can really enjoy the Scriptures that way. It doesn't take forever to do this. Again, you can do this in 5 minutes, 15 minutes, or you can take longer if you want to. It's the process of slowing down and slowly going through the Scriptures and letting it speak to you.

Next time, we are going to try this out in the book of Ephesians 4. I hope you can join us with this project.

November 29, 2022

Welcome once again to our Wonderful Day in the Lord broadcast. We are doing something very different this week. Something not quite like what we have done in the past. We are actually going to ask you to engage with us in the study of the Bible in which you are actually making the observations with us and jotting some things down. I went over what we are planning to do yesterday. So, let's try it and actually do it in the Bible today. I hope you have your Bible with you, your writing instrument and something to write on, maybe a journal or whatever, and you join with me in this project.

We will try this in Ephesians 4, and we will begin by looking at verse 12. We find in verse 11 that the Lord has given us certain gifted men to do something for the church. Our job today is to read a few of the verses here starting with verse 12 and just read this verse, once, twice, maybe three times and that gives us the direction the passage is going and a good overview. Let's read these verses together, these gifted men have been given as Ephesians 4:12-14 says, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming." You'll notice that as I stop right there at the end of verse 14 that the sentence is not complete, so if you wanted to go a little further, you could go ahead and read verses 15-16 to go along with that. But these three verses might be enough for your observations today. Having read that, if you are watching a recording of this broadcast, I might encourage you to actually stop this recording and take out your Bible and your pad and now open it up and go ahead and read the passage of Scripture we just gave you, Ephesians 4:12-14, and make some observations of what you find there. Take 1-3 minutes, whatever you want to do, and jot down some of the observations from Ephesians 4:12-14. Obviously, stopping doesn't work out really well in a live broadcast, so I will continue on now and begin to look at some observations with you.

If I was doing this, and I of course have done this before, what would I observe in these passages that I would have jotted down in my journal? I really enjoy jotting these things down in a notebook or journal. Starting with Ephesians 4:12, we notice that the gifted men are to “equip the saints.” So, I’m going to jot that down that their job is to equip. Their job is to enable other people to do something. What is that? It talks about the saints. Observe that. It talks about Christians here, “to equip the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.” The gifted men are equipping, enabling, or helping you and I to be able to do something, and that something is the work of service. That is the ministry of Christ. It leads to something, I observe, “the building up of the body of Christ.” So, this, equipping, this ministry, builds up the body of Christ and the body of Christ, observe, is the church itself. How long do we continue to do this? How long are gifted men going to be given to the church to equip the church? Well, looking at Ephesians 4:13, notice the observation, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” Gifted men are going to be given to the church until something is accomplished. That something is, “the unity of the faith.” There are several things here, the unity of the faith, the full knowledge of the Son of God, the mature man, maturity, and the nature of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ—that’s the measurement of our maturity.

There’s also another side of these things that we could observe, we might call this a warning in Ephesians 4:14, “we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.” We look at verse 14 and we realize that by growing in Christ and becoming equipped to mature, we are not pushed about here and there by every wind of doctrine. The false teachings that infiltrate our world system and the church need not shove us here and there and toss us about because we have been equipped by the Word of God.

So, that’s the observations, and I’ve written them down. Tomorrow, I’m going to take this same passage of Scripture and go back and take step three with you so that we can now bombard the passage of Scripture with questions. Join us tomorrow as we once again return to these three verses.

November 30, 2022

Last time you might recall that we started observing the text of Scripture in Ephesians 4:12-14. We are using this Bible study method that I think to be so very productive and valuable to us, where we can slow down for 5-15 minutes a day, depending on your time schedule, and give some mediation to the Word of God. So, we are looking at these four steps.

We take a passage of Scripture, usually a short passage, I recommend no more than 6 verses, so it doesn't get too big. If you're going to reflect on the Word of God, it has to be manageable. So, we are doing that, and we started with these verses 12-14 of Ephesians 4. We read it several times over and then we had observations of the things that were there.

Now we go to step three in this process, and we are going to bombard the passage with some questions. As I said a couple days ago, this is really valuable to me as a pastor. As I am working through Scripture and looking at what to teach and preach, I want to ask the text questions. These are the questions that are on my mind because questions lead to understanding and interpretation. So, as I ask questions about the text and its meaning, I am asking it for myself. I want to know. I want to know what the Word of God actually says at this point and then I want to be able to hand that off to those that I am teaching and preaching to so that they can understand what the biblical text says as well. So, this is just a methodology that we can use in our private time with God, but it's also a methodology that I think is very handy and I highly recommend it for those that teach the Word of God. Ask the questions that you want answered that the text logically leads us to ask, and then determine what they mean. Then you're ready to teach God's Word as He gives you opportunity. Let's take a look here.

Looking at Ephesians 4:12-14, we looked at a number of observations yesterday, but here are some questions that I might ask the texts. It says in Ephesians 4:12, that the gifted men are to equip the saints "for the work of service." One of the questions I would have is *how do the gifted men go about equipping the saints? What is their methodology? What is the structure? What does it mean to train, teach, or equip God's people with the Word of God? What would that look like from a leadership perspective? What would that look like from the receiving end of that? What is needed?*

What is the best methodology? Those are good questions. Remember that as you look at passages like this, you might be thinking of other passages that will help you in understanding the answers to those questions, but right now we are simply going to stay with the passage of Scripture. Then it says, "to the building up of the body of Christ." Most of us probably know that the body of Christ is the church of Christ. If you don't know that or you're not sure what that means, you can do some other cross-referencing, but you want to know what he's talking about. He's talking about building up the church and building up God's people who are part of a local assembly who come together to serve and worship Him.

Then it says, "until we all attain to the unity of the faith." I want to know what that means too. *Does that mean that all of us have to agree on every issue of Christianity and that we can't get along unless we have every area of doctrine 100% agreed upon?* Is that what he says? Well, I don't think so, but I want to ask that question. There has to be some form of unity that he is concerned about here and there's a full knowledge of the Son of God. I've got a question there too. *At what point will I have the full knowledge of the Son of God?* The answer to that one is very important because I don't think I will ever get there in this lifetime, right? One day when the Lord comes back, I will see Him as He is, and I will know Him as He is. So, this tells me as I ask this question, that the answer is that I will never get to the full knowledge of the Son of God, but hopefully I'm progressing and I'm going that direction and hopefully I can enable others to do so as well.

Then, it says, "to a mature man." *What does it look like to be mature?* The next line seems to answer that. "The measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." What could be the answer to this maturity? Perhaps Christlikeness. That's my goal. That's what I'm aiming for. So, I've asked these questions. Ephesians 4:14, "As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming." Here's a question, *why is the Lord so concerned, not only here, but throughout the Scriptures, with not being deceived by the trickery of false teachers? Why is that so vital to the Lord? Is doctrine important at all? If it is, as this passage seems to indicate, why is it so?* So, those are some of the questions I would bombard the text with.

READ YOUR BIBLE

That leads us to step four which we will look at tomorrow and that step is how to reflect upon or ponder the observations and questions that we have jotted down. We will look at that tomorrow and I trust you can join us.

December 1, 2022

I trust you are enjoying the study of God's Word with me. We are in Ephesians 4 and looking at this meditative style of studying the Word. We're not reading through the Bible right now in big sections, we are instead looking at a very small section and trying to get down to the understanding and application of that section. We have been using the book of Ephesians 4:12-14 as our text that we are studying together. The four steps we are taking are:

1. Read and re-read the passage. We've done that. Once again, if you are just joining us, I encourage you to stop the recording, step back and re-read this passage several times.
2. Make observations. We stopped and went back and made observations of things that are in the text of Scripture. Things that stand out. If you re-read the passage many times, a number of things will stand out to you. It won't be that difficult.
3. Ask questions of the text. We want to know what certain things mean. For example, what does it mean to equip the saints? Or how do you go about equipping the saints for the work of ministry? After all, what is the body of Christ? When am I going to have the full knowledge of Christ? Why is it so important to God that we not be tossed about by every wind of doctrine? Why is warning us about the deception of false teaching important? Especially when we live in an age when people tell us that doctrine is not important at all, and that it doesn't matter what you believe about this or that or the other thing, and that you can believe whatever you want to believe. Why do Scriptures indicate that is not the way to go?
4. Reflection on the passage of Scripture. Especially look at the observations and the questions we have jotted down. That will be our guide to deeper reflection.

I'm going to look at various things in the passage and I'm going to step back. I can't look at all these questions and observations too much. Especially if I'm going to try to do this in a short period of time of like 1-3

minutes. So, if I'm doing that, I want to take one or two of these things and reflect upon those things. So, let's take a look and see what we can look at here. As a pastor, I want to reflect on verse 12 and the equipping of the saints, what that means, and how it ought to be done. In that reflection, I'm looking not at application necessarily to everyone else, but application to myself as well. So, again as a pastor and being one of the people indicated in verse 11—someone who has been given the task by God to equip the saints, it's vital for me to know how I go about that. How does God want me to equip the saints? I want to ponder and reflect on that a little bit and consider what that might mean. As I think about this, I want to jot down some ideas. First, to equip the saints, I must know the Word of God. We could look at other passages of Scripture, for example, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that says that it is the Word of God that the Lord uses to equip His people for the work of ministry and for the Christian life. That helps me a great deal to know that if I want to help people be equipped, I must do so through the instrumentality of the Scriptures. I don't train people or equip people in the Word of God by methodologies from the world. I don't do so through metaphysics, psychology, or things like that. I am able to equip people only through His Scriptures—the Word of God. If that's the case, then I must know the Scriptures. Then I would reflect on: *how well do I know the Word of God and how well do I know whatever Scripture I am teaching/preaching on?* That's vital. It's vital that I know that in order to help people to walk with Christ. So, I'm going to reflect on that.

I also want to reflect on the idea of maturity. We should all be growing in maturity, so how am I doing in that area? I don't just want to think about people that I might talk to and preach to. I want to think about my own life because my maturity is vital. I can't help others grown in Christ if I am not growing in Christ as well. So, maturity is a key and I want to think about what that is like because it says here that maturity is defined by Christlikeness in the next passage. So, what does it mean to be like Christ? I might think of other passages such as the fruit of the Spirit or others like that passage. I want to look carefully at my own life with that in mind. I then go to prayer and turn these things to the Lord. I ask the Lord to reveal to me my blind spots, areas or ways I need to grow. I then turn to the Lord in prayer and pray for those things.

READ YOUR BIBLE

That's one way to do that. You adjust that to your life and your circumstances, but that's one way. We will look at one other Scripture passage tomorrow that we can just jump into, and you can look at in the week ahead.

December 2, 2022

We've been enjoying together the study of God's Word in Ephesians 4:12-14 as we have been using this four-step reflective method of studying and reading the Bible. First, you read a passage of Scripture, a short passage, many times, 2-5 maybe. Then, you jot down observations that are now appearing as you read and re-read. After that, you jot down some questions you are asking the text. Finally, you reflect or ponder on that which you have been looking at and make application in the process, and as I said on the first day earlier in the week, you can do that sometimes at the best by praying. Pray through these observations and these applications.

Let's jump on and just very quickly do the same thing with the next two verses. Looking at Ephesians 4:15-16, "but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." These are the two verses we will look at today.

As I look at that, especially verse 16 is a little more complicated than the earlier verses, so I might need to re-read that several times to get the flow and see where He is going. It's kind of a run-on sentence, so I want to get a good handle on that. As I think about that, I have read it several times, and again if you're watching a recording of this broadcast, turn off the recording for about 1-3 minutes, depending on your circumstance, and re-read this passage to yourself 2-3 more times. Then, when you're done with that, come back and I will guide you through some observations that we can make together.

Now that you have come back and we are looking at these verses, I'm going to look at verses 15 & 16 and jot down observations. Ephesians 4:15 tells me that speaking the truth in love is vital, very important. So, again, he is coming from the idea of those who are the leaders of the church, the gifted men given to the church. How are they going to equip people for the work of the ministry and for maturity? Verse 15 is important because we can only help people mature in Christ and grow in Christ as we speak the

truth in love. So, He is talking about the ministry from one to another. We speak the truth to one another, and by this it's talking about biblical truth, and we do it with love. We don't do it with a hammer. We do it with grace. We do it with love. So, here is the truth of God's Word presented to someone with love, because we love and care for them. By doing that, he says, we all grow up. "We are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ." As we speak the truth in love to one another, we are growing in Christ. We are becoming more like Him because we are challenging one another and encouraging one another to actually understand the truth and live truth. How vital is that? It's in this atmosphere of love. So, I'm jotting all of this down and thinking of these observations. It's speaking the truth in love that causes us to grow. More observations would be verse 16 where he turns away from, at this point, the gifted men who are equipping the body to how the body itself functions. He says, "the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies," and so forth, so now we have a picture of a physical body and how a physical body functions, and he is using that metaphor concerning the body of Christ. So, how is the body of Christ supposed to function? I'm looking at these observations. It would appear that the body of Christ functions in a very similar way as a physical body. If some of my body parts don't function properly, it affects all of my body. If my body is going to be healthy and function properly, all the body parts need to be working in coordination. As it does, my body works properly and functions as it should, and it builds itself up. So, those are observations.

Then I go back now with the questions I want to ask: *How is it that I can approach people in love and speak that truth to them? What is my role in the body of Christ? How am I to play my part so that the whole body is healthy?* Those are questions I would throw at the text.

Finally, we back off to reflection. As I think about this, there are two or three things I could jump on. I want to think about how I can actually speak the truth in love and what that means. How can I love people even as I speak the truth to them, sometimes that truth is difficult? I want to think about that, and I want to reflect on that. I want to really reflect on my role in the body and I want to pinpoint one or two areas where I need to function properly so that my local church is healthy and growing in

Christ. As I think about that, I turn to Him in prayer, and I pray about those things and ponder those things.

So, this is the methodology we have been looking at this week. I hope this is helpful to you. Give me some feedback if you want to, those of you that are watching this broadcast on a regular basis and let me know if this was helpful to you. We might do it again in the future if it is.

God's blessing on you and may you have a wonderful day in the Lord.