

# 8 Devotional Study

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Devotional study is very personal. Its purpose is to draw you close to God and bring you into contact with deep spiritual truth. As you apply the Word of God to your life, the devil will fight you. He wants to make you discouraged. He wants you to doubt God. He creates spiritual conflict within you.

Jesus showed us how to deal with spiritual conflict. When the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus resisted him. (See Matthew 4:1–11.) Jesus fought back by using the most powerful weapon in the world. He quoted the Scriptures. The devil fled because God’s Word is truth and life. In Ephesians 6:17, the Word is called “the sword of the Spirit.” With it you will be able “take your stand against the devil’s schemes. . . . so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand” (6:11, 13). The Word of God brings cleansing, healing, and victory when you hide it in your heart.

## ***The Plan***

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- A. The Value of Devotional Study
- B. Guidelines for Devotional Study
- C. Application of Devotional Study

## ***The Goals***

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- 1. Discuss the value of devotional Bible study.
- 2. State the guidelines for devotional study.
- 3. Describe how to apply devotional study to your life.

## **A. THE VALUE OF DEVOTIONAL STUDY**

### **Goal 1.** Discuss the value of devotional Bible study.

You may learn much from the Bible by using the skills you have studied so far in this book. But to fully understand God's Word, you must study the Bible with devotion. Devotional study is gaining knowledge of the Word for personal spiritual reasons.

The word *devotion* means "strong love" and "attachment." It also means "an act of prayer in which one asks humbly and earnestly of God." Devotional study demands the full attention of the student. To be in Christ and to have Christ in us is our goal as Christians. Jesus said,

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." (John 15:7-11)

Devotional study creates unity between Christ and the believer. In devotional study, we read a short passage of Scripture slowly, several times. We prayerfully think about what it means and ask ourselves, what does this passage say to me? Does it speak to my present need? How does it reveal Jesus?

This process is called meditating or attending to. We read the same verse or passage until our minds are occupied with the meaning and with the presence of the Lord. At this time, the Word feeds us.

The written Word reveals Christ to us. He is the living Word. The more we know the written Word, the better we know the living Word. The better we know Christ, the more we love Him and obey Him.

King David meditated much on God's Word and wrote, "My mouth will speak words of wisdom; the utterance from my heart will give understanding" (Psalm 49:3). When we are in Christ and Christ is in us, we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:15–16). Our meditation renews our minds.

## ***Application***

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- 1** Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement about the value of devotional study.
    - a)** It draws us close to God.
    - b)** It fulfills our spiritual needs.
    - c)** It gives us the mind of Christ.
    - d)** It replaces other types of Bible study.
  - 2** The key to devotional study is that which allows us to
    - a)** separate ourselves from reality.
    - b)** fill our minds with the Word.
    - c)** get new ideas of our own.
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## B. GUIDELINES FOR DEVOTIONAL STUDY

**Goal 2.** State the guidelines for devotional study.

David prayed, “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law” (Psalm 119:18). We need to pray this as we study how to make the message of God’s Word plain, personal, and practical.

Every passage of Scripture has a main truth. Often, there are other less obvious truths too. It is your task to find out what the Holy Spirit intends to say. Follow these five steps to help make the message plain.

### Five Steps to Follow

*Read.* Bible study begins with reading. In 1 Timothy 4:13, Paul advises, “Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.” We must feed daily on God’s Word to be spiritually healthy: “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked . . . his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:1–2). In Bible days, a group of Christians who lived at Berea were known for their love of Bible study (Acts 17:10–11). They were more than listeners; they searched the Scriptures daily. We need to be faithful in study as they were.

*Record.* The attentive Bible student writes notes as he reads and studies the Bible. His pencil is a tool to help his eyes and mind “see” spiritual truth as the Holy Spirit guides his understanding.

*Search.* Bible truth is clear, simple, and meaningful. The deep meanings of the Word are as “silver” and “hidden treasure” for which we must search in our studies (Proverbs 2:4).

*Relate.* Before interpreting the meaning of a passage, we need to relate it to its context and to related teachings. This helps us find the harmony of each passage with the whole Word of God.

*Meditate.* We must meditate on the Word. Proverbs 2:1–3, 5 advise, “If you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, . . . then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” The Holy Spirit will always bring some message to our hearts as we take time to think about what we have read. The psalmist exclaims, “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long” (Psalm 119:97). If we follow the command of Proverbs 4:20–21 in our meditation, we will gain much. By paying attention to what God says, we gain knowledge of God and His Word as we become more acquainted with Him. When we really listen to God’s words, we allow them to control our lives. We learn obedience. True meditation affects the way we live.

### ***Application***

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**3** List five steps for devotional study.

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**4** Read Psalm 119, verses 27, 48, 78, 99, and 148. What word is mentioned in each of these verses? .....



## **C. APPLICATION OF DEVOTIONAL STUDY**

**Goal 3.** Describe how to apply devotional study to your life.

### **Making the Message Personal**

Devotional study of God’s Word makes the Bible message plain and personal. A worthwhile part of devotional study is memorizing verses. Deuteronomy 6:6–9 records:

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at

home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

Devotional Bible study helps us to overcome the devil (Revelation 12:11; Luke 4:4), and live holy lives (Psalm 119:9; John 15:3). It helps us to succeed (Joshua 1:8), to develop strong faith (Romans 10:17) and to grow spiritually (1 Peter 2:2). It helps us to witness to others (2 Timothy 3:16).

Memorizing Bible verses is just part of making the Word personal. We must apply the Word to ourselves by making it a lamp to guide us and a light for our path. (See Psalm 119:105.) The Scripture advises on how to respond to God’s Word:

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:22–25)

There are various ways to put God’s Word into practice. We must obey His commands and prohibitions. For example, we must love our neighbor (Luke 10:27) and not judge our brothers in Christ (Romans 14:13). We must claim the promises God has made. It is not enough to know that we have been given full life in union with Christ (Colossians 2:10); we must claim that full life and exercise our freedom in Christ (Colossians 2:11, 20). We must learn from the examples of others, good and bad, as we studied in Lesson 7. Above all, we must believe God’s statements of truth and live according to them. To illustrate, the Bible teaches that we are one in Christ (Ephesians 2:14–18)

and that love is the thing that makes us like Christ (Ephesians 3:17–19; 1 Corinthians 13). Our response to these truths will show whether or not we have applied them to our lives.

## Making the Message Practical

God wants us to share the gospel with others. Thus, a main purpose for Bible study is that it helps us to share God’s truth. It gives us knowledge and the desire to teach others.

Teaching begins in the home. We must teach God’s Word to our children (Deuteronomy 6:7). It is a joy to have knowledge and to be able to pass it on to children and young people, especially in our own families.

Then, as Colossians 3:16 states, we are to “teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.” Paul told Timothy, “The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2). Christ gave every Christian the directive to “go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15). Part of this task is to teach them (Matthew 28:20). Christ wants us to bear fruit. He said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last” (John 15:16).

We must emulate Jesus, who said, “My food, . . . is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (John 4:34). God did not save us so that we could just enjoy our salvation; He expects us to tell others about Him. God wants us to study the Bible as a means of devotion, strength, and joy for ourselves; but He is most pleased when we share it with others. Our love of God’s Word makes us want to share it. May God bless you, as Bible study becomes life to you.

## ***Application***

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**5** Fill in each blank with the correct word: Two ways to apply devotional study to your life are to make it . . . . . and . . . . .

**6** List five ways to make the Word personal.

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**7** State why we need to make the message practical.

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The more we study the Bible, the more beautiful it becomes. The more we search it, the more it grips our hearts. Our belief in it brings unlimited blessing. Living it adds joy and peace, and sharing it with others demonstrates again its eternal power.

## Check Your Answers

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- 1 a) True  
b) True  
c) True  
d) False
- 5 personal, practical.
- 2 b) fill our minds with the Word.
- 6 Obey it, claim it, learn from it, believe it, live according to it
- 3 Read, record, search, relate, meditate.
- 7 We must share the gospel with others through teaching and preaching. (To do this we must be able to explain the message of the Word in a practical way.)
- 4 The word mentioned is *meditation* or *meditating*. Verses 15, 23, and 97 also mention *meditate*.

## CONGRATULATIONS

You have finished this course. We hope that it has been a great help to you! Remember to complete the second Unit Evaluation and return the answer sheet to your instructor.