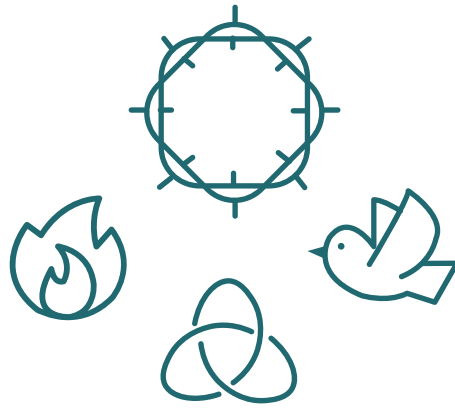


EVERYDAY THEOLOGY

WHAT YOU BELIEVE MATTERS



MARY WILEY



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MARY WILEY

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mary Wiley lives with her husband and two children in Lebanon, Tennessee, where they attend and serve Fairview Church. She gets to work with words every day as the manager of women's and kid's books marketing at B&H Publishing Group at Lifeway. Mary holds a Master of Arts in Theological Studies and an undergraduate degree in Christian Studies and English. She hosts the *Questions Kids Ask* podcast and loves good coffee, good conversation over chips and salsa, and learning new things. Read more from Mary at marycwiley.com or connect on social media @marycwiley.

INTRODUCTION

WHY STUDY THEOLOGY?

What you believe matters. It matters on the days you make life-altering decisions and on the days that feel numbingly mundane. It drives how you spend your time, your money, and ultimately, your life. Your beliefs determine the lens through which you see the world and how you respond to both blessing and disaster. Your theology shapes your life.

WHAT IS THEOLOGY ANYWAY?

Theology simply means “the study of God and of God’s relation to the world.”¹ Don’t let this fancy word make you feel like you have to be fancy to study it. I’m about as not fancy as it gets. I’m that girl who often brings store-bought cookies to the potluck. And I’m still utterly amazed that God gifted someone with the intelligence to design seat warmers for cars. So, fancy or not, we are in this study together.

Theology centers on who God is and what God has done, is doing, and will do in the world as revealed in Scripture. Embracing a right theology:

- Helps us identify teaching or worldviews that don’t align with Scripture;
- Equips us to make decisions based on biblical principles;
- Compels us to honor God with godly behavior;
- Moves us to rightly worship God.

Theology is not about our gaining knowledge; it’s about rightly ordering our lives to honor God. He loves us, pursues us, and redeems us “with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:19). We are His sons and daughters, and as children and heirs, we need to know what the essential beliefs of our faith are.

THAT’S WHERE THIS STUDY COMES IN.

Over the next eight weeks, we’ll walk through eight essentials of the Christian faith. This is not an exhaustive study on systematic theology; rather, this study will equip you with a biblical foundation upon which your faith can rest and grow.

I’ll provide texts and contexts to give you a clear view of each truth as it is presented in the whole story line of Scripture. Hopefully this solidifies each belief in your heart and gives you a passion to study more of God’s Word. Working

through a particular book is my favorite way to study, but for these eight weeks we'll jump around a lot, so buckle up.

Some of the best spiritual learning takes place in community. That's why a group discussion time is included in each week of this study. Hopefully the group time is a safe space for you to ask hard questions, wrestle together with the truth of these doctrines, and discuss how to speak the truth in love to people who need to hear it.

MY HOPE FOR YOU

We serve a great God who has given us His Word so that we might know Him and what He has done, is doing, and will do. I pray you see Him in every sentence of this study.

I'm praying specifically that learning key truths about God and His Word will:

- Give you an intense desire to know Him more intimately and surrender every aspect of your life to Him.
- Move you to obey Him.
- Equip you to discern, defend, and proclaim the truth.
- Stir up your affection for Him each day.

The more I study, the more I'm reminded that I am finite and know so little of the vastness of God and His work in the world. I pray we will get a glimpse of the depth of His knowledge compared to the lack of our own. I'm trusting He will meet us here on every page and in every discussion. I look forward to hearing what He does in you and through you in this study.

What you believe really does matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Wiley". The script is cursive and elegant, with a prominent loop at the end of the name.

HOW TO USE

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

Each week, you'll find five days of personal Bible study—written to help structure your personal time with the Lord, deepen your understanding of an essential truth, and move you to worship.

Each day includes:

- Scripture passage(s) to study and consider.
- Questions to help you examine the Scripture and apply it.
- Two opportunities to assess and apply what you're learning.
- A prayer prompt to focus your conversation with the Lord about what you've learned.
- Key verse(s) to memorize and meditate on. If one verse per day feels like too much, memorize three per week or even one per week. Meditate on the Word. Chew on it. Soak it up. Let it take root and change your heart. A set of printable memory verse cards are available for you at www.lifeway.com/everydaytheology.
- At the end of each week is a "Further Study" section for you to list other questions you may have about the week's study.

RESOURCES

Each week contains extra resources to help you dive deeper into that week's essential belief. The resources can also be a reference tool later when you run into a tough question or need a refresher. These are meant to support the five days of study and can be used or skipped as desired.

GROUP TIME GUIDE

Group leaders: A Group Time guide is included at the end of each week to help your group review the previous week's personal study and apply what you've learned. We suggest you begin your session in a large group, and then break into smaller groups for the rest of the discussion time. Make sure to enlist someone from each small group to facilitate their group discussion.

If you are doing the study on your own, complete the Group Time questions to help you process the content.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

There is a glossary found on pages 218-219 to define terms that may be unfamiliar to you. Words found in the glossary are designated with [*this style*](#) in the content.

INTRODUCTORY SESSION (OPTIONAL)

Note to leaders: We suggest you begin the study of *Everyday Theology* with an introductory session. This will give you an opportunity to distribute the study books to each participant and explain different aspects of the study and what they can expect. Include a time of fellowship for participants to get to know one another. Consider walking through the Introduction (pp. 6-7), highlighting the sections on what theology is and why we should study it.

Feel free to use the following questions to help drive your discussion:

- How would you define *theology*?
- Are you intimidated by the thought of studying theology? Why or why not?
- Why did you choose this study, and what do you hope to get out of it?
- What truths of the Christian faith do you consider to be essential? Why?
- It's highly possible we will disagree at times in this study. How can disagreement be healthy for building a solid biblical theology? How do we need to conduct ourselves during times of disagreement?
- What initial questions do you have about the essential beliefs presented in this study?
 - Scripture
 - God the Father
 - God the Son
 - The Holy Spirit
 - Humanity
 - Salvation
 - The church
 - The end times

Close the session by spending time praying for one another and for the following eight weeks of study. Ask God to give you a hunger for His Word and to transform your heart as you study.



SCRIPTURE

SESSION 1

DAY 1

SCRIPTURE IS AUTHORITATIVE AND TRUE

What we believe about God is foundational to every other belief we hold. God is the object of our faith and worship, the Person in whom and through whom we have life.

If that is the case, then why start with Scripture?

God has revealed Himself to us in two key ways: through Jesus, the Word made flesh (John 1:14), and through His written Word. Through Scripture we learn about God's character and actions (past, present, and future). It also reveals what we are to believe about God and how we should live. Scripture alone is the authoritative source of our theology.

Why should we believe the Bible is true?

There is external evidence that validates the truth of Scripture. This includes noting the way God has sustained Scripture for thousands of years, the amazing reliability of ancient manuscripts that affirm we read what the early church read, and the consistency across all the books of the Bible, even though they were written by many different authors. (See p. 33 for further discussion on external evidence.)

There is also internal evidence, which is what we will focus on today. Scripture has a lot to say about itself, and every word is valuable and true. Our God cannot lie. How beautiful that the God of the universe would come near by gifting us His Word!

Read 2 Timothy 3:10-17. Complete the following from verse 16:

"All Scripture is _____."



“All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness.”

2 TIMOTHY 3:16

What do you think “inspired by God” means? And why is it important?

The word translated “inspired by God” or “God-breathed” (NIV) is *theopneustos* in the original Greek. The English Standard Version uses the literal meaning, “breathed out by God.”²

The Bible is unlike any other book ever written. It originated with God; He breathed His character into it.³ But how did it come to be written down?

Hold your place in 2 Timothy and flip to 2 Peter 1:20-21. Where did the “prophecy of Scripture” come from?

The Holy Spirit moved in the hearts of the authors who delivered a message from God in *their* own style and personality. He didn’t dictate every word to the writers but led them to choose what He intended for every single word. (This concept is called verbal plenary inspiration.)⁴

Why is the Bible the ultimate authority?

The authority of any particular instruction flows from the authority of the person giving it. Whether it comes from a parent, coach, friend, boss, or stranger largely impacts how much weight it carries. Scripture is the authority over every person and every aspect of life because it is breathed out by God. Every word is valuable and without mistake. Because of its authority, Scripture is also useful.

In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul listed four ways God’s Word is useful: for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

How does Scripture accomplish this work in your life?

What is the ultimate goal of Scripture according to 2 Timothy 3:17? How would you describe this goal in your own words?



Scripture instructs us how to live and provides authoritative discipline to help us course correct when we are straying. It doesn't just point out errors; it trains us in holy living so we can be fully equipped to do the work God has called us to in Christ.

If Scripture is to be useful, then it must be understood. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. He helps us understand and apply the Word rightly (John 14:26; 16:13-14). This doesn't mean there aren't passages that are difficult to understand. However, there's no secret code needed to unlock Scripture. The Holy Spirit illuminates God's Word as we study it and hear it taught and proclaimed. He helps us grasp its timeless truths and apply them to our everyday lives.

Why do you think Paul talked about difficult times (2 Tim. 3:1-13) before reminding Timothy of the truth of God's Word?

Most scholars believe Paul wrote this letter to Timothy from a prison in Rome just before he was martyred under the rule of the emperor Nero.⁵ He reminded Timothy that all who follow Christ will be persecuted. Timothy was serving as a pastor in Ephesus—a city saturated with idol worship and a church quick to believe false teaching about myths and the need for strict adherence to the Law.⁶ Paul reminded Timothy to stay faithful to God and His Word.

*The Holy Spirit
illuminates God's
Word as we study it
and hear it taught
and proclaimed.*

What might people be teaching today, either with their words or the way they live, that is contrary to God's Word?

False teaching still exists today. It might be a call to ignore sin; a promise that trusting Jesus will result in a happy, prosperous life; or an assertion that we need to live our own truth. It's appealing and may even sound right at times, making it harder to identify as false and more dangerous to our hearts. That's why it's important to thoroughly study Scripture and place ourselves under its authority. As we pore over the Word, the Holy Spirit will help us discern truth from lies. A right understanding of Scripture leads to a life of obedience that looks radically different from the world around us.

How might your life be different if God's Word weren't true?

God has come near to us by gifting us His Word. When it comes to the grand narrative of Scripture, there is no "loosely based on a true story." It's all true, which should compel us to obey and worship Him.

BUILDING YOUR THEOLOGY: Summarize in 1–2 sentences the main point of today's study.

LIVING YOUR THEOLOGY: Explain how this truth affects the way you live your life.

PRAY: Ask God to remind you that His will is for you to love and obey Him and His Word. Ask Him to help you rest in this truth.

MEDITATE AND MEMORIZE: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

DAY 2

SCRIPTURE IS ALIVE AND ACTIVE

As Christians, we believe some hard-to-believe things:

- We believe that our God is one God in three Persons.
- We believe God created the world by speaking it into existence.
- We believe God's Son paid for our sin on the cross and was resurrected three days later.
- We believe that the Bible is God's Word, and that His Word is alive. *Alive, people.*

Read Hebrews 4:12-13. List what this passage says is true about God's Word.

To provide some context, the writer of Hebrews spent the bulk of chapter 3 and the first part of chapter 4 discussing entering God's rest. He warned his readers not to turn "away from the living God" (3:12) or be "hardened by sin's deception" (v. 13), but to "hold firmly until the end" (v. 14). He used Psalm 95 to exhort them: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" (v. 15). He reminded them of how the Israelites failed to enter God's rest (the land of promise) because they rebelled. They heard the "good news" (4:2) but didn't believe it. And only those "who have believed enter the rest" (v. 3). He pleaded with his readers not to suffer this same fate, reminding them that the opportunity to enter God's rest of atonement was still available for those who put their full trust in Christ with enduring faith.

The author of Hebrews made clear that the opportunity to enter that rest is now—*today*. He again referenced Psalm 95 in 4:7, urging readers to hear the voice of God. And he gave a warning in verse 11: "Let us then make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall into the same pattern of disobedience." This urgent,

essential message is followed by the statement on the Word of God in verses 12-13.

Write out Hebrews 4:12-13 below.

Note “that this description of God’s Word echoes the author’s treatment of Psalm 95, with its emphasis on the ‘voice’ of God that we should ‘hear’ (95:7). Psalm 95, therefore, forms the basis for the author’s comments on ‘the word’ in Hebrews 4:12-13.”⁷

The ancient readers of Hebrews and the current ones—you and I—need to know that Scripture isn’t just words on a page; it is the powerful voice of God. The Word won’t allow us to fake it or skirt by. It penetrates. It rightly divides. It is powerful to speak, convict, and expose. It can’t be taken for granted or disobeyed without consequences. Consider what happened to the Israelites when they disobeyed the voice of God. Scripture speaks authoritatively into our lives, and we cannot push it to the side. We must respond in faith, not with hard hearts.

What do you think it means for Scripture to be living and active?

God’s Word is neither dead nor ineffective. It is living because it is the Word of the living God. God’s Word is active, meaning that the Holy Spirit is working through it every time we open its pages to help us understand, illuminating it for us.

What does it mean that Scripture is sharper than a double-edged sword?

How is Scripture able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart? How have you personally experienced this?

Each verse of Scripture is like a scalpel in the hands of an able surgeon, opening us up and revealing disobedience, calling us to repentance and correction, and thus restoring us to a place of joy and obedience. The sword of God's Word is so sharp that it can penetrate the hardest parts of our hearts and bring our deepest motives and rebellious thoughts into the light. It cuts through both our soul, or, as John Piper says, "the invisible dimension of our life that we are by nature,"⁸ and our spirit, or who we are supernaturally in Christ. Scripture shows us our true selves, judging rightly our actions and motives.



The Word is alive and active, working powerfully to accomplish God's purposes in us and through us.

Read Isaiah 55:8-11. What does it mean that God's Word does not return empty?

Scripture that is spoken, read, studied, and lived will effect change and bring a harvest of righteousness.

God's Word does not go out without producing fruit. Scripture that is spoken, read, studied, and lived will effect change and bring a harvest of righteousness. Like rain and snow that fall in winter, the impact of Scripture may not be immediately seen, but spring will come and the results will be apparent.

However, life only springs from the ground that's been watered, cultivated, and tended. The farmer must be intentional about caring for the fields and the crop. The same is true of our spiritual lives. If I'm not spending time with God in His Word, then I'll lack spiritual fruit. My spiritual life will wither if I'm not consistently seeking the source of my nourishment in His Word.

Too often I allow the busyness of life to replace the still moments with the Lord. I easily allow my to-do list to dictate my every hour rather than taking time to hear from the God who created me and saved me. If I choose to ignore my dependence on God's Word, then I'm saying I can control my own circumstances. I can make my fruit grow.



If God's Word truly is alive and active, never returning void, then a single minute in it is never wasted, and every verse is useful.

What excuses do you use for skipping time in God's Word?

What needs to change in your schedule to prioritize spending time in God's Word?

If God's Word truly is alive and active, never returning void, then a single minute in it is never wasted, and every verse is useful. That's true whether you're folding clothes, sitting on a beach, or being the taxi driver for your children. God's Word has the hope that you need for today.

BUILDING YOUR THEOLOGY: Summarize in 1–2 sentences the main point of today's study.

LIVING YOUR THEOLOGY: Explain how this truth affects the way you live your life.

PRAY: Ask God to help you prioritize time in His Word. Thank Him that it is living and active and reveals the true motivations of your heart.

MEDITATE OR MEMORIZE: Hebrews 4:12

DAY 3

SCRIPTURE IS FOREVER

Define *forever* in your own words, then write the dictionary definition.

When we use the word *forever*, we're often referring to an annoyance like a long wait at the doctor's office or in the grocery checkout line. But when the Bible says that God's Word endures forever, it means it never passes away, never goes out of style, and remains beneficial throughout all eternity.

God has been sustaining His Word throughout generations, protecting its integrity and its existence despite many attempts to snuff it out. Antiochus Epiphanes, a Seleucid king who ruled in the second century BC, tried to destroy all copies of Scripture during a bloody persecution of the Jews.⁹ Then in AD 303, the Roman emperor Diocletian demanded all Scripture be confiscated and destroyed.¹⁰ However, God sustained His Word despite these and other attempts and will continue to do so.

Read Isaiah 40:8. Draw a healthy flower and blade of grass below. Then draw both plants withered.

I'm no expert gardener, but the life span of both the flower and grass seem very short, as is the life span of everything else on earth. Situations or people may fail us, but God's Word can be trusted. It will not end, and it will not fail. It is not like the grass and the flowers, springing into life for a moment and then fading away. God's Word is always alive and active and true. It will not change, and it will not become irrelevant.

What does it mean to be relevant? Do you believe God's Word is relevant today? Why or why not?

The timeless truth of God's Word continues to resonate in every generation. The Bible is not just some old book written for another people in another time. Although understanding the historical context of Scripture is critical for right interpretation, the Bible is not stuck in history. It applies today. Popular books come and go, but the Bible remains useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

Read Psalm 119:89-112.

Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, is devoted to celebrating God's Word. The psalm is an acrostic, composed of twenty-two stanzas with each stanza containing eight verses. Each of the eight verses in a stanza start with the same Hebrew letter. Almost every verse in this psalm contains one of the following words describing God's Word: instruction, decree, precept, statute, command, judgment, promise, and word. You'll often see the word *delight* in the chapter too. (More on delighting in God's Word tomorrow!)

I love that even the structure of this psalm reveals God's character. He is not a God of chaos but of order. This is such an encouragement to my heart, especially when life feels out of control and messy.

Write Psalm 119:89-91 in your own words.

The psalmist praised God for His eternal Word and for His eternal faithfulness.

What will last eternally? List as many items as you can.



The list for what lasts forever is short: God, His Word, and people. That's it. Unfortunately, I tend to become very attached to things that will not last: jobs, relationships, easy seasons of life, financial security. I can become incredibly driven to preserve these at all costs. And every time I do, I uproot God from the throne of my life, replacing Him with one of these lesser gods. I ignore God's eternal Word and choose what I believe will be a better way.

What temporal idol do you most often place on the throne of your heart? How and why do you let that idol drive your life?

Don't trade the eternal for the temporal. Don't be driven by whatever is in front of you right now. The things of this earth wither and fade. Our constant striving to earn more "likes" on the Internet, to achieve some level of success in our work or our personal lives, or to meet some standard of beauty so we might be applauded seems silly in light of forever. As verse 96 says, there is a limit to perfection. Regardless of how hard we work or the success we achieve, it still pales in comparison to the eternal glory to come. Stay the course.

Read Psalm 119:92. Is that also your testimony? Explain.

Read Psalm 119:97-104. How did the psalmist become so reliant upon God and His Word?

Our constant striving to earn more "likes" on the Internet, to achieve some level of success in our work or our personal lives, or to meet some standard of beauty so we might be applauded seems silly in light of forever.

If we love God's Word without loving God, we become full of knowledge but miss life's most vital relationship and the fruit that comes from it, including the salvation of our souls. If we love God without loving God's Word, we don't really know the object of our affection. We may bow to a god we've created in our heads instead of the true God of Scripture. This is dangerous ground. We must love Him and the Word that reveals Him.

Read Matthew 24:35. What does this say about God and His Word?

Our God is sovereign, and His reign is eternal. Every word of Scripture is true and every promise will be fulfilled. His Word has stood and will stand the test of time. It will go forth and not return void. It will pierce our hearts so that we might know Him and obey Him. That is worthy of worship!

BUILDING YOUR THEOLOGY: Summarize in 1–2 sentences the main point of today's study.

LIVING YOUR THEOLOGY: Explain how this truth affects the way you live your life.

PRAY: Spend time praising God for His Word and His faithfulness to preserve it forever. Thank Him for revealing Himself and the grand story of the gospel of Christ that we might know Him and be with Him forever. Praise Him specifically by praying Psalm 119 as you worship.

MEDITATE AND MEMORIZE: Isaiah 40:8

DAY 4

SCRIPTURE IS WORTHY OF DELIGHT

Read Psalm 1. What characterizes a “happy” or “blessed” (NIV) man?

Charles Spurgeon described Psalm 1 as the preface psalm, or the “Psalm of Psalms,” because it reveals the intention of the whole book: “to teach us the way to blessedness, and to warn us of the sure destruction of sinners.”¹¹

Psalm 1:2 states that the happy man’s “delight is in the LORD’s instruction.” What do you think that means?

Throughout the psalms, we see that delighting in God’s Word is central to the life of God’s people. Delighting in God’s Word means we hunger for it. We find our spiritual nourishment and fulfillment in God through His Word. It means allowing Scripture to define who we are and to direct our paths. We trust the Word of God because we trust Him. He knows how creation works best because He created it, and we believe He is working all things for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28). We can lovingly and without hesitation obey His Word, knowing that “the LORD watches over the way of the righteous” (Ps. 1:6). God’s Word—both the encouraging and the convicting verses—is life to those of us who trust Jesus.

Why do you think the psalmist described the happy man as “a tree planted beside flowing streams” (v. 3)?

The Middle East is a dry, arid place, so lush vegetation isn’t the norm. Yet this tree is the picture of health because of its proximity to water, which provides life. God’s Word is life to us. It is our

nourishment (Matt. 4:4). It is worthy of delight. However, we can't hold it at arm's length, simply giving it a cursory nod of approval. To delight in God's Word means we must take it in.

What does the happy man do with the Lord's instruction (v. 2b)?

What does it mean to meditate on Scripture?

To meditate on Scripture means to reflect on it, marinate in it, and consider its truth and how to apply it. Bartholomew Ashwood said it this way: "Meditation chews the cud, and gets the sweetness and nutritive virtue of the Word into the heart and life: this is the way the godly bring forth much fruit."¹²

We are not only to meditate on the Word but also memorize it. The two go hand in hand.

Read Psalm 119:9-16. Why should we memorize Scripture?

Meditating on and memorizing God's Word helps it to dwell deeply within our hearts, to provide comfort when we're afraid, and to correct us when we've strayed. It helps us identify truth from Satan's lies and becomes a weapon against him when he tempts us, just as it was for Jesus when He was tempted (Matt. 4:1-11). It helps equip us to share the gospel and also to defend our faith.

Are you currently meditating on and memorizing God's Word? Why or why not? If not, what needs to change for you to begin these important spiritual disciplines?

Knowing and loving God's Word is a result of knowing and loving God, and knowing and loving God is a result of knowing and loving God's Word.

Why does it matter that we see God's Word as worthy of delight rather than just a list of rules to follow or tasks to be completed?

What might cause us to see God's Word in a negative light instead of celebrating and rejoicing in the freedom and life found within its pages?

The psalmist rejoiced in God's Word, not because it was his duty to obey, but because it was his privilege to do so. We don't normally think of instructions as worthy of delight. Yet rules and instructions are given to protect, guide, and teach.

God's statutes are worthy of our delight because they reveal His love for us and His desire that we flourish as His children. Like children with good parents who make good rules (like not eating ice cream for every meal), we can trust the good rules set by our Father just as the psalmist did. Every rebuke, instruction, and promise in Scripture is for our good and is worth treasuring.

Read Exodus 20:1-2. Why do you think God prefaced the Ten Commandments by reminding Moses of His goodness to His people?

God summoned Moses to Mount Sinai three months after the Israelites left the land of Egypt (Ex. 19:1). They were headed to Canaan, the land God had promised. Before giving Moses the Ten Commandments, God issued a reminder: *I'm the God who loves*



God desires devotion from a love relationship, not dutiful, begrudging compliance.

you. *I delivered you.* God was defining the heart of obedience He desired—devotion from a love relationship, not dutiful, begrudging compliance. The Israelites complained a lot as they wandered through the wilderness, but we never see them complain about the Law. It was life to them.

However, they could not perfectly obey it, and the continual sacrifices they made to atone for sin were not sufficient. That's why God sent Jesus to be the perfect sacrifice. He didn't come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it, to complete it (Matt. 5:17). By His blood we are now redeemed, declared righteous, and no longer live under the condemnation of the Law (Rom. 3:21-26).

Why is the Law still important, valuable, and delightful to us?

The grace of Christ we live under now doesn't give us freedom to sin but freedom *from* sin. We are no longer slaves to sin but slaves to righteousness, called to walk in holiness and loving obedience (Rom. 6). All of Scripture, including the Law, points the way.

BUILDING YOUR THEOLOGY: Summarize in 1–2 sentences the main point of today's study.

LIVING YOUR THEOLOGY: Explain how this truth affects the way you live your life.

PRAY: Reread Psalm 1, then use it to guide your prayer time today.

MEDITATE AND MEMORIZE: Psalm 1:1-3.

DAY 5

SCRIPTURE IS TO BE LIVED

When I was a teenager, my room was always a mess. I mean, a real mess. My mom would ask me to clean it about seventeen times before reminders turned into threats. Only then would I jam my strewn stuff into my closet or under the bed. You know, cleaning without really cleaning.

I wasn't a doer of the instruction my mom had spoken; I was simply a hearer. Sometimes I fooled myself into thinking I had satisfied her cleanliness requirements. I had the appearance of obedience, but I couldn't deceive my mom forever. She would eventually drop off a pair of shoes in my closet and be welcomed by an avalanche of junk. Similarly, but even more so, God is not deceived by our charade of obedience. Instead, God is concerned with the hearts of His people. His will is that we would love and obey Him in every moment, seen and unseen.

Read James 1:19-27. Describe a time when you were a hearer and not a doer of God's Word. How might things have been different if you had obeyed?

James, the author of this passage, was the son of Mary and Joseph. He grew up as Jesus' brother and saw Him be a faithful doer of the Word. James wrote this letter to Jewish Christians dispersed throughout Gentile lands, who were experiencing persecution (1:1). It seems that those who were living away from Israel were tempted to adopt the practices of the land in which they were living. By doing so they could fit in, not experience any pushback, and not seem weird to those around them. We can relate, right?

Yet James didn't give them an out to take the easy path and fall in line with the practices of the pagan cultures. Instead, he called them to continue in obedience to the Word.

Review James 1:19-21. What instructions did James give in this passage?

What do you think it means to “humbly receive the implanted word” (v. 21)?

The Letter of James implores us to be eager to hear and obey the message of God. To listen. To practice restraint. David Platt states that we often approach Scripture wanting it to say what we want it to say. He says, “We are not quick to hear and slow to speak but loathe to listen and anxious to argue.”¹³

Instead we are to “humbly receive the implanted word” (v. 21). This word planted in us has brought about our new birth and continues to do the work of salvation in us (v. 18). It sanctifies us and leads us to ultimate salvation—the moment when we see Christ. To humbly receive it means we do so with a continually submissive and teachable heart.

Write a one-sentence summary of the illustration James used in verses 22-25.

Based on James 1:22-25, what characterizes a doer of the Word?

God’s Word changes our hearts. Therefore, to read, study, and experience God’s Word, but then to forget it or live contrary to what we’ve read would be the opposite of what should be true of us. Instead, James stated that we are to look intently into it and persevere in it (v. 25).

The Word of God is not a sound bite that we acknowledge as a clever thought but then go our way and forget it. No, we must look into it, study it, remember it, and live it. The Word is to be applied, and practiced. We deceive ourselves if we think we can just read it, maybe even study it, but not live by it.

What is the promise to the doer of the Word in verse 25?



This isn't a promise that all of your dreams will come true if you obey God's Word. It's not a guarantee that you'll never be sick or sad again. But this verse does promise God's blessing for those who walk with Him. That blessing may take different forms, but His greatest blessing is His presence. He is with and within the doer of the Word.

We deceive ourselves if we think we can just read it, maybe even study it, but not live by it.

What does it look like to be a hearer of the Word and not a doer? How does that affect your plans and purpose?

It would be much easier to read God's Word and not be required to do anything with it. But James says those who read and listen and yet are not compelled to act deceive themselves into thinking they are obedient servants of the Lord.

Write John 14:15 below. This verse is an if-then statement. Underline the *if* statement. Circle the *then* statement.

Sometimes portraying an outward appearance of obedience isn't difficult. We can do the right things, go to the right places, and say the right things to make people think we know, love, and obey God and His Word. Yet our hearts might be far from Him. Just know, He is not deceived. Instead, He lovingly calls us back again and again to walk in holiness by being doers of His Word.

Being a doer of the Word also means being a pray-er of the Word. We will not perfectly walk in step with Him at all times, but we can ask God to make what we read in Scripture true by praying it back to Him. Praying Scripture also helps us be specific in our praying, gives us the words to say when we are lacking, and helps us maintain the right focus.

Are you currently a doer of the Word? If not, why not? What needs to change for you to walk in obedience to Scripture?



*God's Word is not
just to be read; it
is to be lived.*

God's Word reveals who God is and how we can find Him. It shows us His will and ways. It gives guidance, direction, and wisdom. But it is not just to be read; it is to be lived.

BUILDING YOUR THEOLOGY: Summarize in 1–2 sentences the main point of today's study.

LIVING YOUR THEOLOGY: Explain how this truth affects the way you live your life.

PRAY: Ask God to reveal your true status as a doer of the Word. Pray for a humble heart so God can use the implanted Word to do His work in you.

MEDITATE AND MEMORIZE: Psalm 119:105

FURTHER STUDY: What other questions do you have about the Bible?

RESOURCES

HOW TO READ SCRIPTURE

When it comes to reading Scripture, the best advice is to read it often, deeply, and widely. The Bible is a book and should be read as one. [Context](#) is incredibly important. Keep an eye on what is going on immediately around the text within the particular book.

Always keep the big story of Scripture in mind as you read, which can be summarized like this:

CREATION

God created all things out of nothing, and everything He created was good. He created man and woman in His image. There was peace.

FALL

The man and woman God created and placed in the garden disobeyed Him. All of creation, including humanity, is now broken by sin and experiencing its consequences.

REDEMPTION

The punishment for sin is death. Yet God, in His infinite kindness, chose to send His Son, Jesus, to pay for sin. He lived the life of sinlessness that we couldn't live and paid the price for sin that we couldn't pay by dying on the cross. He rose again three days later, proving that He had paid for sin and defeated death.

RESTORATION

One day Jesus will return and will judge sin and evil. Sin will be cast out forever, and there will be no sickness, sadness, or death. He will also renew and restore all of creation, and His people will dwell with Him forever.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

One method of Bible study I recommend is called inductive Bible study. Books have been written on this method, so we won't cover all the bases here, but on the next page is a brief overview.

This method has three major steps:

1. Observation—What does the text say?
2. Interpretation—What does the text mean?
3. Application—What does the text mean for my life?

OBSERVATION

Again, context is vital. Note what comes before the text and what comes after it. Ask as many questions as possible about the text.

INTERPRETATION

Begin by asking who the original hearers were and what the author's original intention was. What was the occasion? What is this text's main point? What problem is being addressed?

APPLICATION

When we understand the context of the passage and what the author intended for the original audience to learn, we can make it actionable. What is this passage asking us to do? How should we live in light of this passage?¹⁴

TIPS FOR MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE

1. Record yourself reading the verse(s), and then listen back to it as you commute or work around the house.
2. Write it. Journaling the verse or drawing it in a notebook gives the opportunity for tactile learning.
3. Make up a song or search for a recorded song for the passage you are memorizing. Everything is easier to remember when it's set to a tune.
4. Print out cards from lifeway.com/everydaytheology or write the verses used in this study on note cards. You can carry them with you for a quick review.
5. Enlist a friend to memorize with you. Text the verses you are memorizing to each other. Then quote them to one another via phone, voice text, or in person each week.

FAQS

How reliable are the ancient manuscripts?

We have more ancient copies of the New Testament manuscripts than any other book. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were highly treasured in the ancient Mediterranean world. We have twenty-five hundred total manuscripts between these two works, making them highly reliable.¹⁵ Yet scholars have indexed more than fifty-seven hundred manuscript portions of the New Testament in Greek, making the total number about twenty-five thousand when added to early translations in other ancient languages.¹⁶ God has miraculously sustained His Word since the beginning.

Why are there multiple translations?

Every Bible translation lands on a continuum, ranging from strictly word-for-word translation to strictly thought-for-thought. The word-for-word translation (e.g., NASB) seeks to stay as close to the original word order and grammatical structure of the Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament) texts as possible. A thought-for-thought translation (e.g., NLT) seeks to translate the original intended meanings of the biblical texts. Reading and studying the Bible using multiple translations can help you better understand meanings and concepts. You can quickly access multiple translations online through apps and websites such as *Bible Gateway* and *YouVersion*. When choosing a Bible, select a translation that is easy for you to understand and true to the text.

When were chapter and verse numbers added?

Chapter and verse numbers are not divinely inspired. They were added centuries after these works were written to make it easier to locate a passage being referenced. Chapter and verse numbers were first printed in English in the Geneva translation in 1557.¹⁷ The divisions shouldn't have any bearing on our interpretation of Scripture.

(For more resources about Scripture, go to lifeway.com/everdaytheology.)

GROUP TIME

OPEN

Begin your group time with the large group discussing the following questions:

What was the highlight of your week of study?

What was something new you learned this week?

How did this week's study challenge what you believe about Scripture?

REVIEW AND DISCUSS

Break into smaller groups to complete this section. Use the following Scripture passages and questions to review what you learned in your personal Bible study on Scripture.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

How does this passage speak to the authority of Scripture?

How has the Bible taught, rebuked, corrected, and trained you?

Read Hebrews 4:12.

How would you explain the work of Scripture described here?

How has the Bible been alive and active in your life?

Read Isaiah 40:8.

How does Scripture's eternal quality speak to its trustworthiness?

How have you seen the truth of God's Word stand up over time?

Read Psalm 1:1-3.

How is the Bible worthy of your delight?

What is your current practice for meditating on and memorizing the Word? Why are both disciplines so important to your spiritual life?

Read James 1:22-25.

What does it mean to be a doer and not just a hearer of the Word?

How are you currently looking intently into the Word?

REFLECT AND APPLY

Spend a moment writing your answers to the following questions, then discuss with your small group.

What other questions about Scripture did this week's study raise?

What's your main takeaway from this study on Scripture?

Why does what you believe about Scripture matter?

What will you do this week to seek to cultivate a love and hunger for God's Word?

CLOSE

Determine as a small group to hold each other accountable for reading, studying, meditating on, and memorizing God's Word. Close in prayer, thanking God for His Word and asking Him to give you an insatiable hunger for it.