

Getting A Grip On God's Word
Lesson One: Inspired, Inerrant, and Authoritative
Memory Verse: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

The goal of this lesson is to introduce and/or reaffirm the *inspiration, inerrancy, and absolute authority* of God's Word, the Bible.

Where did God's Word come from? Is it reliable? How can I understand it? How is it different from other spiritual writings? How am I to relate to it? This lesson will deal with these questions.

THE SOURCE OF GOD'S WORD

1. Read 2 Timothy 3:16. Note that the Bible is *inspired*. The word *inspired* comes from the Greek word meaning *God-breathed*. The Bible is the very words of God.

"The meaning, then is not that God breathed into the writers, nor that He somehow breathed into the writings to give them their special character, but that what was written by men was breathed out by God. He spoke through them. They were His spokesmen."

— JOHN R.W. STOTT

- a) How much of God's Word is inspired? What are some implications of this fact?

 - b) If God's Word is inspired, meaning that it is the very words of God, what must we conclude regarding its reliability? Is it full of contradictions and errors as critics claim? (For more information regarding inerrancy please see APPENDIX ONE.)

 - c) Since the Bible is inspired and inerrant, what might we conclude about its *authority*? Explain your answer.
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2. What does 2 Peter 1:20-21 say in answer to the accusation that the Bible is only the words of men?

- a) Why is it important that the Bible was not "written by men?" What would be wrong with it if it were?

**TWO ATTACKS ARE OFTEN
LEVELED AGAINST THE BIBLE.**

1. When people defend the Bible by referring to other passages in the Bible, critics often say, "You can't use the book to defend the book."
2. Those who wish to discount the authority of the Bible say, "It was written by mere men."

How we answer those charges:

The Bible is not one book. It is a library containing sixty-six books written by forty authors, living on three continents, in three languages, over a period of over 1500 years. The authors ranged in social status, wealth, and education from kings, to priests, to farmers. They wrote about hundreds of controversial subjects, and yet there is unanimity and agreement in what they wrote. Therefore, we conclude:

- 1) The diversity of authorship allows us to use the Bible to defend the Bible.
- 2) The unanimity among the diverse writers argues for one Author—God, the Holy Spirit—who worked through human instruments.

HOW WE UNDERSTAND GOD'S WORD

3. The Word of God is inspired by the Holy Spirit. What role does the Holy Spirit play in helping us understand it?
 - a) Even though the writing is *inspired*, what will a person get out of it if the Holy Spirit is not *illuminating* his mind? (1 Corinthians 2:14)

4. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 again. In what six ways is the Word of God profitable? How does God's Word accomplish these six things? (Find out what each one means.)

THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD

5. Read John 8:31-32. What three promises are yours if you abide in Christ's teachings? What does each mean?

- a) What do you think it means to "abide in" His Word? (Look it up in a dictionary.)

- b) What kind of *freedom* is Jesus promising to those who abide in Him and know the truth? (Look at the next several verses in the passage.)

6. Look back at the questions in the section of this lesson entitled, LESSON OBJECTIVES. Answer those five questions in your own words.

Connect To Life:

Pray before you read your Bible each day this week. Pray asking God to give you a high view of His Word. Think consciously each day this week about the fact that you are reading the very words of God, that they are inerrant, and are therefore supremely authoritative.

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Lesson Two: Salvation and Growth

Memory Verse: 2 Peter 3:18

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

The first lesson emphasized objective truths about God's Word, namely its *inspiration, inerrancy, and supreme authority*. This lesson will explore some subjective truths about what God's Word can do in our lives.

How important is God's Word in bringing people to salvation? How important is God's Word for continued spiritual growth? This lesson is intended to challenge you to think of answers to these two important questions.

GOD'S WORD & SALVATION

1. What is God's Word able to do, according to 2 Timothy 3:15? Can you name three things?

a) Why is God's Word necessary for this to happen?

2. Write (paraphrase) 1 Peter 1:23 in your own words.

As important as your testimony is in sharing your faith, God has not promised to empower your testimony. He has promised power in His Word. Use your testimony to arouse interest and to communicate personal conviction, but you must communicate the Word of God if you want to lead people to faith in Christ.

GOD'S WORD & SPIRITUAL GROWTH

3. What is a Christian expected to do according to 2 Peter 3:18?

a) What does it mean to grow? How does the Word of God help us grow?

4. What do you think the following statements mean?

"The vigor of our spiritual life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts."

— GEORGE MUELLER

"The Scriptures were not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives." —D. L. MOODY

5. When Jesus explained the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15) He said the seed sown by the sower represented the Word of God (v.11). The four soils represent four different human heart conditions. Explain what you understand about each of the four soils.

a) The wayside, or path (vv.5, 12-13)

b) The rocks (vv.6, 13)

c) The thorns (vv.7, 14)

d) The good ground (vv.8, 15)

e) In verse 14, what three things did Jesus say would suppress the effect of God's Word in our lives? Why do these things have this effect?

f) Which of the soils represent people who are truly saved? How do you know?

g) Since you cannot be absolutely sure about whether the thorny soil represents a truly saved person, what must *you* do to be sure *you* are saved? (1 John 2:3-5)

6. What reason did the writer of Psalm 119:167 give for obeying God's word? (Also Psalm 119:97.) Do you feel this way about God's Word? Why or why not?

Connect To Life:

Pray this week asking God to increase your love for His Word.

Getting A Grip On God's Word

Lesson Three: Hearing the Word

Memory Verses: Romans 10:17, John 10:27

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

The remainder of the lessons in this workbook are based on the Navigator's Word Hand illustration. Please familiarize yourself with this illustration found in APPENDIX TWO.

The goal of the illustration is to instruct us how to "get a grip on God's Word." Note that each of the five fingers is progressively stronger. Each works best when used in conjunction with others of the fingers. Each is strongest when used in conjunction with the thumb.

The little finger of the Word Hand is hearing. It is the easiest and least demanding way to take the Word of God into your life. We hear the Word of God read, preached, and taught. This lesson will show how important hearing is, how to become a more effective hearer, and what is required of those who hear God's Word.

WHAT TO HEAR

1. According to the two verses that follow, *Who* will we hear if we will listen? What will He be saying? Why is this important?
 - a) Psalm 81:8

 - b) Psalm 85:8

2. What important characteristic is promised to you if you will hear the Word according to Romans 10:17? How does this happen? Why is this important? (Hebrews 11:6)

WHO HEARS THE WORD?

3. What can you be sure of about yourself if you hear the Word of God according to the following passages?
 - a) Proverbs 1:5

 - b) Luke 8:19-21

c) John 10:1-8, 25-27

d) Based on the above scriptures, what could you say about yourself if you *do not* hear the Word? Is this what you want?

HEARING AND OBEDIENCE

4. What is God's goal for a hearer of the Word according to Deuteronomy 5:1?
 - a) Why must we *learn* to do this?

5. What does God say will happen to you if you *do not* hear and obey the Word according to Deuteronomy 30:17-18?

6. Read 2 Kings 17:14-18. Verses 15-17 describe what happened to God's people when they stopped hearing the Word. List several things and describe how these things can happen to believers today as well.
 - a) What is the end result in verse 18?

7. What does Jesus say in Luke 6:46-49 about our relationship with Him if you are not hearing *and doing* what He says?

8. Read James 1:22-25 List three ways we can be deceived by *hearing* without *doing* the Word.

a) Whose picture is seen when we “*look into the mirror*” of the Word? (vv.23-24) What are we supposed to do when we see something in the mirror that needs attention?

HEARING MORE EFFECTIVELY

9. Read APPENDIX THREE, “*Get Involved In Your Pastor’s Sermon.*” Be prepared to discuss ways you can improve your listening skills in order to hear the Word of God more effectively.

Connect To Life:

Identify *one thing* that you have heard from God that you have not acted on. Become a doer of the Word by acting on *that one thing* this week. Come next week ready to discuss how it went.

Put into practice what you learned based on the article, “*Getting Involved In Your Pastor’s Sermon.*” Come prepared to discuss how preparation, expectancy, and concentration helped you get more out of the pastor’s sermon.

Getting A Grip On God's Word

Lesson Four: Reading and Studying the Word

Memory Verses: 2 Timothy 2:15

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

This lesson continues to focus on the Navigator's Word Hand illustration. Both *Reading* and *Studying* are addressed in this lesson. Do you know the difference between these two?

Reading the Bible gives you understanding of the overall flow of the Bible. Reading helps you become familiar with the Bible so that when you want to study something in more depth you will know where to turn.

The best way to read the Bible is to have a plan. There are many plans available to guide you through the Bible in a specified amount of time. Reading haphazardly will almost always mean skipping entire sections of the Bible. Find a plan and stick with it.

If you spend little or no consistent time with a person, you will not have an intimate relationship with that person. The same is true concerning your relationship with Christ. Therefore, daily reading of God's Word is important.

Studying is more of an in-depth analysis of a passage that will give you greater insight and understanding of the passage. Studying also challenges you to apply what you have studied to your life.

Think of the Bible as a mosaic. Reading enables us to see the big picture. Studying is a way of examining each tile. Reading and studying the Bible are both important ingredients for spiritual growth.

DAILY READING

1. Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20. God told Israel what a king should be like. He said that the king was to make a copy of the law [the Word of God] for himself. He was to read from it *every day*. What five things in verses 19 & 20 did God promise would take place in the king's life as a result of this activity? Explain what each one means and how it might apply to your life.

WHY WE READ AND STUDY

2. We are not to read and study the Bible as a purely academic pursuit. We are not simply after *more knowledge*, but rather we want to become *more like Christ*. What can knowledge (devoid of love) lead to? (1 Corinthians 8:1-2)
 - a) When we read or study, what must we bear in mind to avoid this? (1 Corinthians 13:2)
 - b) Love and knowledge are both important. Paul says knowledge without love is nothing. What does a person tend to be like if he is full of knowledge, and yet lacks love?
 - c) What does a person tend to be like if he is exceptionally "loving," and yet lacks knowledge?
 - d) Which do *you* lack most, love or knowledge? What can you do to become more balanced?

PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

3. Please read APPENDIX FOUR, entitled "*Eight Principles of Hermeneutics*." Be prepared to explain what each one means, complete with examples.

READ AND STUDY FOR YOURSELF

The key to studying and understanding scripture is learning to ask questions of the Bible. There are four basic kinds of questions to ask and answer when studying the scripture. They are:

OBSERVATION:

What does the passage say?

INTERPRETATION:

What does it mean?

CORRELATION:

What else does the Bible say about this?

APPLICATION:

How shall I live because of these truths?

Go over each of the questions on APPENDIX FIVE. Into which of the four categories does each question fall?

Remember: *The key to studying and getting the most out of the Bible is not natural ability or insight. It is learning to ask questions!*

4. Study Proverbs 2:1-9 asking and answering the sample questions on APPENDIX FIVE.

Connect To Life:

It has been said that to teach is to learn twice. Preparing to lead a Bible study is far more involved than preparing to be a student. This *CONNECT TO LIFE* assignment will last for as many sessions as there are people in your study group.

In turn, each student in the group will assign the rest of the group a scripture passage to study as homework, using the study questions on APPENDIX FIVE. The person who assigned that week's homework will then lead the discussion the following week. Each person in the group will prepare and lead once.

Getting A Grip On God's Word

Lesson Five: Memorizing the Word

Memory Verses: Psalm 119:11, Proverbs 3:1-2

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

This lesson continues to focus on the Navigator's Word Hand illustration.

Is scripture memory merely an activity for children in Sunday School? Hardly! Memorizing scripture is the only way to fulfill the biblical command to "let the words of Christ dwell richly in us." Because we cannot always be assured of having a written copy of the Bible handy, we need to commit as much of it to memory as we can.

Those who insist that they *cannot* memorize scripture are mistaken. Besides the fact that we can, and do, memorize many things (names, addresses, phone numbers, etc.) the Holy Spirit will enable us to memorize His Word — if we will do our part and try.

This lesson will present a biblical argument for memorizing scripture as well as assist with some practical "how-to's."

PSALM 119 ON SCRIPTURE MEMORY

1. Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible, containing 176 verses. Take some time to read through the Psalm looking for promises and exhortations that are connected with the concept of scripture memory. Write the references down along with how the promises and exhortations apply to your life. *Enjoy!*

COMMANDS TO MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE

2. Look up the following verses and see what they have to say about scripture memory.
 - a) Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Why must you memorize the Word to do this?
 - b) Joshua 1:8 How does meditation connect with memorization? What promises follow?
 - c) Proverbs 3:1-2 What promises follow this command? What is the connection?
 - d) John 15:7 How can memorized scripture affect your prayer life?
 - e) Colossians 3:16 What results will memorized scripture have in your life?

REASONS FOR MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE

3. The following passages of scripture, though not necessarily about memorizing scripture, supply additional reasons and benefits that you will receive from memorizing scripture. Write your observations about what these verses say on this subject.
 - a) Psalm 1:1-6
 - b) Psalm 37:30-31

c) Psalm 119:9-11 (Matthew 4:1-11)

d) Proverbs 3:1-2

e) Proverbs 6:20-22

f) Acts 17:11

g) 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

h) 1 Peter 3:15

GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL MEMORIZING

1. Know What To Memorize

- a) *Priority verses* - those dealing with salvation, assurance, and the importance of memorizing scripture.
- b) *Study verses* - those that are assigned along with discipleship study.
- c) *Impact verses* - those that speak to you personally during your quiet time, or from teachings you may hear.

2. Use Cards

- a) Write the reference on one side and the text and reference on the other.
- b) Once you have memorized the verse, only look at the side with the reference to test yourself.
- c) Cards are useful because they:
 - are easier to carry than a Bible.
 - can be referred to for review easily.
 - help redeem otherwise wasted time.
 - reinforce memory of references.
 - keep verses in an orderly system.

3. The Importance Of Consistency

Set and keep a goal—1 or 2 per week and keep the pace every week.

4. The Importance Of Reviewing

- a) “*Over-learning*” is the only way
- b) review daily
- c) review out loud—it helps you to remember
- d) review references—before and after every verse, every time
- e) review new verses 2-3 times daily
- f) review old verses weekly as number of verses grows
- g) review, Review, *REVIEW!*

Connect To Life:

If you have not been one who memorizes scripture, begin now using the guidelines in this lesson.

If you are one who memorizes scripture, great! Are there any steps you might take to become more efficient based on what you have learned in this lesson?

Getting A Grip On God's Word

Lesson Six: *Meditating on the Word*

Memory Verses: *Psalm 1:1-2, Psalm 19:14*

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

This lesson concludes the focus on the Navigator's Word Hand illustration. All of the first four fingers of the Word Hand find their greatest usefulness when they are working in concert with the thumb, which represents meditation. It is as we hear, read, study, and especially as we memorize God's Word that we can most effectively meditate on it.

The word "meditate" can also be understood as "ruminate." Besides meaning to ponder, contemplate, reflect, or think, ruminating is what cows do with the cud they chew. They chew it, and chew it, *and chew it!* It is as we ruminate on the Word of God that we receive the most insight into its meaning and how to apply it to our lives.

If we hear, read, study, and memorize without really meditating on it we may miss much of what God has to say to us.

The "thumb" of the Word Hand it is not so much a *task* as it is a *mindset* and an *attitude*.

BLESSED IS THE MAN

1. Read Psalm 1. What two things does the blessed, or fulfilled, man or woman of God do with the Word? (v.2) Explain each.
2. The man or woman of God who does these two things is like a tree. Meditate on verse 3. Discuss at least two aspects of what is meant by each of the following descriptions of that tree:
 - a) "*planted by rivers of water*"
 - b) "*bringing forth fruit in its season*"
 - c) "*leaves shall not wither*"
 - d) "*what he does shall prosper*"

THINK ON THESE THINGS

3. Read Philippians 4:8. Why the command to meditate on "*these things?*"
 - a) What do you find yourself thinking about during the day? "*These things?*" Or something else? Why?

DEALING WITH YOUR THOUGHT LIFE

4. Paul says to think on good things. If your mind is on bad or worthless things, what can you do to curb and control your thoughts according to 2 Corinthians 10:4-6?
 - a) According to verse 4 what is going on when you are struggling with your thought life?
 - b) What practical steps can you take to put this into practice?

THE HEART AND THE MOUTH

"Let the words of my mouth,
and the meditation of my heart,
be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer."
-- Psalm 19:14.

"If it were just a matter of the mouth,
I wouldn't have so much trouble.
But it isn't... And I do."

-- Lois A. Cheney ("*God Is No Fool*")

5. What is the relationship between the meditation of the heart and the words of the mouth? (Matthew 12:34-37) What has this to do with meditating on God's Word?

BIBLICAL MEDITATION

6. Cultic meditation is based on an emptying of the mind. How is Christian meditation different?
See Romans 12:2.
 - a) What is the result of true meditation on the Word of God? (Romans 12:2)

Connect To Life:

Take time this week in your quiet time to meditate on the Word. Don't just read it, take time to ponder, contemplate, and reflect on what God is saying through it. Do this at least 2 or 3 times during the week. Be prepared to share what happens as a result.

Look at how your hand works. Write a short essay explaining the Word Hand. Review each finger and how they work with the others to give a firm grip on the Word. Share your observations with the group.

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ANSWER KEY / DISCUSSION GUIDE

Lesson One

1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

1. a) ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God.

We must affirm the inspiration of the *WHOLE* Bible so that we do not disregard some portions to suit our taste.

We believe in the inspiration of the 66 books found in Protestant Bibles. The additional 14 books of the Old Testament found in Roman Catholic Bibles were never accepted as inspired by Judaism. No Christians considered them to be inspired until the 4th century. These extra writings are recognized by scholars as interesting, even inspiring, but not *inspired*. There are two primary reasons:

- 1) They are forgeries.
- 2) They contain material that is not compatible with the inspired books of the Bible.

ALL scripture is equally *inspired*, but it is not all equally *essential* for Christian study. For example: 1 Chronicles 1:1 is *inspired*, but it is not as *essential* for Christian study as is John 3:16.

1. b) Because God is without error, His Word is without error. The Bible is, therefore *inerrant*.

What do we make of the alleged contradictions and errors in the Bible? The Bible is without error in the original manuscripts. We do not have the original manuscripts, but since we have so many copies that date so closely to the time when the originals were written, and because they agree with each other so completely, we may have confidence that the Bible is supernaturally reliable.

Because the Bible was not written in English, our English translations inherently contain certain difficulties. Some of these difficulties arise from the fact that whenever something is translated from one language to another, there are words that do not translate directly. All translations possess these difficulties.

There are some *apparent* contradictions or errors in the Bible. In virtually all cases, these can be explained and the apparent contradiction is not a contradiction at all. In the extremely few cases in which there are differences numerical or name discrepancies), they do not do violence to the meaning of the text.

We may be confident that the good translations of the Bible we have are, though not perfect, are more than reliable. (Good translations are word-for-word, rather than thought-for-thought. These include The King James, the New King James, the New American Standard, and the New English Version. Most other English Bibles are thought-for-thought translations and are therefore less accurate.

Please see APPENDIX ONE for more in inerrancy.

1. c) The fact that the Bible is the very words of God, and since there is no error in God or in His Word, the Bible

is supremely authoritative. Since *all* of the Bible is inspired and inerrant, *all* of it is authoritative. Because it is authoritative, every word of the Bible is to be obeyed.

2. Holy men were moved by the Holy Spirit. What they wrote did not come merely from their hearts, but from God's.

2. a) Because men are fallible, if the Bible were merely written by men, the Bible would be fallible. If the Bible were written by men, it would not have supreme authority.

How were holy men were moved by the Holy Spirit? God didn't do either of these two things:

- 1) God did not dictate the Bible to men who merely transcribed it. This would remove the personalities of the writers from their work.
- 2) God did not merely put ideas in men's minds and allow them to explain those ideas in their own fallible ways. This would make human personality dominant and remove the assurance that the scriptures are authoritative.

Here is what God *did* do: The Holy Spirit moved human writers to use specific words to convey the exact message He wanted to communicate. Human intellect and personality were not overridden, but were sovereignly used by God.

3. Even inspired scriptures are just words on a page to those who are not given *revelation*, or *illumination* of their true meaning. Just as the Holy Spirit was involved in the writing of the Bible, He must be involved in the reading for the communication to be complete.

3.a) The Bible is foolishness to those in whom the Holy Spirit is not at work. The Bible *cannot* be understood apart from the *revelation*, or *illumination*, of the Holy Spirit.

4. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

- 1) DOCTRINE — Doctrine is "strong authoritative teaching." The Bible is a book of doctrine. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 warns against rejecting sound doctrine. Without sound biblical doctrine, we do not know that what we believe is true.
- 2) REPROOF — The Bible shows us where we are in error.
- 3) CORRECTION — The Bible does not stop at showing us where we are wrong. The Bible instructs us what is right and how to get back on track with what is right.
- 4) INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS — The word *instruction* is the same word that is used for *discipline*. Like a coach pushing an athlete to the limits of his capabilities to make him stronger, the Bible disciplines us so that we may grow in grace.
- 5) The Bible makes us COMPLETE — The word *complete* means *mature*. The Bible matures us.

- 6) The Bible THOROUGHLY EQUIPS us for every good work God wants us to do. If we are students of the Bible, we will be able to do whatever ministry God calls us to.
5. John 8:31-32.
- 1) I will be His DISCIPLE *for sure* — This means that if I do not abide in His Word, I have no assurance that I am a true disciple.
 - 2) I will know the TRUTH — If I am abiding in Christ's Word, I will know Christ, who is the Truth. The more I know the Word, the more I will know the truth [God's mind] on every other aspect of life as well.
 - 3) I will be FREE — Those who abide in Christ's Word experience true spiritual freedom.
5. a) To *abide* means to "remain permanently." To "remain" means to "stay." It is possible, however, to "stay" *temporarily*. "Permanently" means "*not temporarily*." Therefore to "abide in Christ" is to "remain permanently," or "consistently remain" in Christ in both the short and long terms. To abide in Christ's Word means to "never wander away — *ever!*"
5. b) The context in the following verses define this freedom as "freedom from sin." It is not a freedom to live as I please, but rather a freedom to live as God pleases. It is a freedom both from the *penalty* of sin when I die and the *power* of sin while I yet live. See Romans 6 for more on this subject. (Note: We are not free from the presence of sin until we are glorified, either at death or at Christ's return, whichever we experience first.)
6. WHERE DID GOD'S WORD COME FROM? God's Word comes from God — it is inspired, or God breathed. This means the Bible is the very words of God.
- IS GOD'S WORD RELIABLE? God's Word is reliable because it is not from men, but from God Himself, in Whom there is no possibility of error.
- HOW CAN I UNDERSTAND GOD'S WORD? To understand God's Word, I must receive spiritual revelation of its meaning. I can ask God for this illumination. (James 1:5-8)
- HOW IS GOD'S WORD DIFFERENT FROM OTHER SPIRITUAL WRITINGS? Other spiritual writings may be interesting and even inspiring, but only God's Word is inspired, God-breathed, inerrant, and supremely authoritative.

Lesson Two

1. 2 Timothy 3:15
 - 1) The scriptures give wisdom.
 - 2) The scriptures bring salvation, since they contain the gospel.
 - 3) The scriptures build faith.
1. a) God's Word is where the message of salvation is recorded. While a person does not need to read the

Bible to be saved, all true evangelism proclaims the gospel that is contained in the Word of God.

2. 1 Peter 1:23 Sample paraphrase:
"Christians are spiritually reborn, not because of religion or good works that do not last, but because of the message of the gospel that is contained in the Bible, which is the living and eternal Word of God."
3. Grow in grace and in the *knowledge* of the Lord.
3. a) The kind of growth in view here is *spiritual*. Spiritual growth means increasing in one's *love for God, knowledge of God, and faith in God*. We do this by submitting our lives to the Word of God (Romans 10:17).
4. Mueller: Those who grow the strongest in the Christian faith are those who read and study the Word of God to the extent that it transforms their thoughts and actions. Those who do not have this relationship with the Bible will not grow as steadily or become as strong.
Moody: It is not enough to approach the Bible as a textbook on religion. Our studies must impact how we think and live, or else our studies may be futile. We study to become more like Christ, not simply to gain knowledge.
5. Parable of the Sower
 5. a) These seem to be people who are hard-hearted, disinterested, sometimes openly resistant to the Word of God. The seed (Word) does not penetrate this kind of heart at all. These are not saved.
 5. b) These seem to be people who show an initial interest in the Word of God, possibly demonstrating a short-lived enthusiasm for the Lord. However, there is no genuine interest in the Lord. These people are often interested only in an experience or what they can get from God. These are not saved. (Please see 1 John 2:19.)
 5. c) These seem to be people who have a more sustained interest in the things of God, but because they love the things of the world more, they remain unfruitful in their Christian growth, producing nothing in terms of Christian character or the fruit of the Spirit (John 15:4-6; Galatians 5:22-23). Some debate whether these are saved or not.
 5. d) These are the people who, by God's grace, hear and receive the Word of God, persevere in the faith, and become fruitful (John 15:4-8). These are clearly saved.
 5. e) They are suppressed by "cares, riches, and pleasures of life." These love the world more than they love God.
 These things have this negative effect because a) the things of the spirit are at odds with the things of the world (Galatians 5:16-17); and b) the things of the world drain so much of our time and resources away from attention to spiritual matters (Matthew 6:24).

5. f) The wayside and the rocky soil are definitely *not* saved.
The good soil definitely is saved.
The thorns are questionable at best. Some say they are still saved although not fruitful. Others say the lack of fruit is the evidence that these are not saved. The fact is, even though we cannot be sure about another's salvation, since God is the ultimate judge, worldliness is still a sin (*please* read 1 John 2:15-17). In addition, there is no good reason for a person to choose to live in a place that allows no assurance of salvation.
5. g) Salvation is by grace. Assurance is by works! (1 John 2:3-5) To be sure you are saved, receive the Word, put away worldliness, commit yourself to growth and fruitfulness, and persevere! (See 2 Peter 1:10-11.)
6. He loved God's law (Word). Further answers will vary. The point is that we must love God's Word if we are going to be successful in obeying it.

Lesson Three

1. a) Those who hear the Word of God will hear the voice of the Lord.
He will admonish [advise, exhort, counsel and caution] those hear Him.
This is important because we need God's advice, exhortation, counsel and caution. Those who will not listen to the Word of God will not receive these things, though they may want them.
1. b) Those who hear the Word of God will hear the voice of the Lord.
He will speak peace to those who hear Him.
This is important because we need the Lord's peace. This verse tells me that the peace I need and that He has promised to give me (John 14:27) comes from hearing God's Word.
2. Those who hear the Word of God will receive faith. By continuing to hear the Word, faith will increase.
Faith comes and increases by hearing the Word of God, because the Word is filled with the track record of God's faithfulness, as well as faith-building testimonies from God's people.
3. a) I will be *wise* if I hear the Word of God.
3. b) I will demonstrate that I am a *child of God* if I hear the Word of God.
3. c) I will demonstrate that I am *one of God's sheep* if I hear the Word of God. (Note that the people who are not sheep will not hear. Hearing the Word does not make a person a sheep, but sheep do hear the Word.)
3. d) If I am not hearing the Word of God, I will be *foolish*, I will demonstrate that I am *not a child of God*, and that I am *not one of His sheep!* Obviously, no believer wants such a thing.

4. The goal of hearing the Word of God is to LEARN so that we may OBEY CAREFULLY.
4. a) If we do not learn what God expects of His people, we will not know how to obey.
5. Those who will not hear and obey the Word will: WORSHIP AND SERVE OTHER GODS (v.17). This does not mean that they will forsake the Lord altogether, although some do. It means that they will worship and serve other gods *in addition to* the Living God. This is no less damnable, even if the other gods are good things like family, work, leisure, etc.
PERISH (v.18). This may refer to not being saved, or in the case of a believer, it may refer to "dying on the vine," so to speak. Alive, but living like a spiritually dead person.
NOT PROLONG THEIR DAYS IN THE LAND (v.18). Godly living is not an ironclad guarantee of long life. Many of the most godly people have died at a young age. The promise of a prolonged life is general and it refers to quality, not merely duration
The phrase "in the land" refers to the promise to the Israelites to live in the Promised Land. The New Testament equivalent is to live in the midst of God's blessings. Those who do not hear and obey the Word of God remove themselves from the stream of God's blessings.
6. Several negative things happened to God's people when they stopped hearing God's Word. These things happen to God's people today as well.
THEY BECAME WORLDLY (v.15). When we listen to the world more than we listen to God, we will become worldly in our thinking and our actions.
THEY BECAME IDOLATERS, WORSHIPING THE CREATION RATHER THAN THE CREATOR (v.16). Whenever we get away from the Word, we will begin to esteem created things higher than the Creator.
THEY SACRIFICED THEIR CHILDREN TO FALSE GODS (v.17). We may not sacrifice our children with fire on altars, but many sacrifice their children for the sake of their careers, hobbies, and personal interests. When people choose abortion, which is almost always done because a baby is deemed "inconvenient," they are sacrificing [literally killing] their babies for the god of convenience, career, reputation, etc. This is "unthinkable" to those whose minds are held captive by the Word of God.
THEY DABBLED IN WITCHCRAFT AND THE OCCULT (v.17). Christians who are in the Word do not dabble with the allegedly "harmless" practices of astrology, fortune telling, palm reading, bio-rhythms, ouija boards, psychic hotlines, etc. Another form of witchcraft is the simple sin of rebellion. See 1 Samuel 15:23.
6. a) Those who did these things ended up:

ANGERING GOD. (vv.17-18) God is angered when He speaks and we ignore Him. Angering God is not advisable.

BEING REMOVED FROM GOD'S SIGHT. (v.18) If a person neglects God's Word, he may be demonstrating that he is not a child of God. God will not damn anyone who is truly one of His children, no matter how we may neglect His Word. However, those who are in Christ do remove themselves from the blessing of living in the presence of God when they neglect hearing the Word.

Think of practical ways we neglect hearing the Word.

7. Jesus is not the Lord of my life if I am hearing and not doing. I am like the man who built his house on the sand. In the time of difficulty, I will fall. Building on the rock is obedience.
8. If I hear God's Word and do not do what it says I may be deceived into thinking:
 - a) I have no faults.
 - b) My faults are justifiable and therefore need no attention.
 - c) Other people's faults are worse than mine, so I will point theirs out [judge?], and I need not bother with mine.
 - d) I delay obedience until I either forget or lose interest in changing.
8. a) When we look into "the mirror of the Word," we see our own picture. When we see ourselves and our own faults, we need to take action to deal with those faults. We must not use the Bible to identify faults in other people.
9. Read the article out loud with your group. Discuss practical ways to become better hearers. Make realistic commitments. Share them and hold each other to them.

Lesson Four

1. What takes place as a result of reading the Word of God?

LEARN TO FEAR THE LORD (v.19). Knowing God's Word will cause me to fear Him. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." (Proverbs 1:7) Believers should respect the Lord and fear backsliding, or worse, falling away completely, proving they were never saved! (1 John 2:19)

BE CAREFUL TO OBEY THE LORD (v.19). Why is it important to *be careful to obey*? Because obedience does not come naturally. We obey only as we are *careful* (intentional, purposeful, diligent) to do so.

REMAIN HUMBLE (v.20). When we have the Word of God and the blessings that come from abiding in it, we may be tempted to become proud, looking down on others who are less fortunate. Let us remain humble, remembering that even our

obedience is by the grace of God! (Acts 11:18, Philippians 3:12-13)

Do not COMPROMISE (v.20). When we become adept at obeying God in the big and obvious things, we may be tempted to compromise in the lesser things. God requires nothing less than total obedience. No compromise whatsoever!

PROLONG HIS DAYS IN GOD'S KINGDOM (v.20). Christians have eternal life that cannot be shortened, but it is as we abide in God's Word that we experience the blessings of being citizens in God's kingdom while here on earth. It is as we abide in God's Word that we experience a greater sense of security in our salvation.

2. Knowledge often leads to pride. Be aware that spiritual pride, or pride about one's spiritual knowledge is among the worst of sins! *Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up!*
 2. a) To avoid becoming prideful concerning spiritual knowledge, one must remember that possessing knowledge without love is of no value.

We must remain humble concerning our spiritual knowledge, remembering that any knowledge or wisdom we may have is by God's grace alone!
 2. b) People who have great amounts of knowledge without love tend to be impatient with those who know less. They tend to be impressed with themselves. They tend to be rigid and dispassionate. They tend to be judgmental.
 2. c) Those who are exceedingly "loving" without knowledge tend to accept and condone all sorts of things that God is opposed to. They are often so concerned with "love" that the truth is compromised.
 2. d) Answers will vary. Discuss practical steps that can be taken to become more balanced. Remember that unless we change, talk about change is of no value!
3. Take time to discuss APPENDIX FOUR. Discuss any new concepts or the one principle that challenges each person the most.
4. Appendix Five. Proverbs 2:1-9.
 1. The passage is written to Solomon's son, by Solomon. In a wider sense, the passage is written to God's children by God. Solomon was known for wisdom. I need to listen to wise counsel.
 2. The passage is about the importance of diligently seeking the knowledge of God and His wisdom. It can be noted that the knowledge of God and His wisdom are to be found in His Word [commands v.1].
 3. There are no characters in this passage.
 4. The word "IF" appears several times in vv. 1, 3 & 4. This tells me that there are conditions issued in the passage. The concept of diligently seeking wisdom, knowledge, and understanding are repeated. This tells me that there is an important issue at stake in the passage.

5. 1 Corinthians 1:24 says that Jesus Christ is “the wisdom of God.” In this sense the verse reveals Jesus as One for whom we ought to seek with all diligence. Proverbs 2:9-10 accurately promises that those who know Christ will “understand righteousness.”
6. This passage has conditional promises that IF I will diligently seek the Lord and His wisdom, I will (a) understand the fear of God (v.5), (b) find knowledge (v.5), (c) be protected (v.7-8), and (d) understand righteousness and justice (v.9).
7. There are no direct commands in this passage. There is strong encouragement to seek the Lord’s wisdom in order to receive God’s promises.
8. The only error in this passage is mentioned indirectly. It is an error of not seeking God’s wisdom diligently and expecting His blessings that are promised to those who do seek.
9. Answers will vary.
10. Examples: Job 28:12-ff., wisdom is valuable; Hebrews 11:6, seek God with all diligence; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, Christ is the wisdom of God; Matthew 7:7-11, ask and it will be given; 2 Chronicles 1:7-12, Solomon asks for wisdom rather than riches; James 1:5-8, if you need wisdom ask, God will give it.
11. Sample: If you will seek God’s will in God’s Word with all your heart, then God will give you knowledge, wisdom, and discernment. As a result, you will understand the fear of the Lord, receive God’s protection, and have a greater understanding of righteousness and justice.
12. This will vary.
13. *This is the main event in Bible study.* Observation, Interpretation, and Correlation are important to have a correct understanding of the passage, so that you can *APPLY* what you have learned. The more specific the application, the more likely you will actually *DO* something. “*I should,*” or “*I need to,*” are not likely to result in action. “*I will,*” followed by realistic steps and end-dates, provides incentive to do something in a timely manner.

Lesson Five

1. Psalm 119 Here are some examples:
 - v.2 I will be blessed
 - v.4-5 It is commanded
 - v.8 I will be committed
 - v.9-11 I will be cleansed and freed from sin
 - v.15 I will meditate
 - v.16 I will not forget
 - v.21 I will rebuke those who stray
 - v.22 Reproach will be removed
 - v.31 I will cling to the testimonies

- v.33-34 I will keep until the end
- v.42-43 I will have words for witnessing & counsel
- v.44 I will keep forever by memorizing
- v.49 Remember Your Word to me, Lord
- v.52 Comfort when remembered
- v.54 Sing the word
- v.57, 60 Keep it (also v.141)
- v.61 Comfort in time of attack
- v.67 Keep and do not go astray
- v.69 I find strength when under fire
- v.81-83 Remember in tough times
- v.93 Refreshment from memorized scripture
- v.98 Wisdom granted
- v.109 Help in time of danger
- v.139 God’s enemies do not remember scripture
- v.148 Review verses when I can’t sleep
- v.153 Deliverance granted
- v.167 Soul keeps
- v.170 Answers to prayer
- v.176 The Word brings me back when I stray

2. a) If we are going to teach our families the Word of God “at all times,” we must not be dependent upon having an open Bible in front of us. We must have the Word of God in our hearts so we can reference it at any and all times.
2. b) If we are going to meditate on the Word “day and night,” we must not be dependent upon having an open Bible in front of us. We must have the Word of God in our hearts so we can meditate on it at any and all times.
2. c) This passage promises *long life* and *peace* to those who will “not forget” the Law, but will “keep the commandments” in the heart.
2. d) Those who abide in God’s Word *will ask*, meaning that they *will pray*. Knowing the Word prompts prayer. Having the Word in us at all times prompts prayer at all times.
Those who know the Word know how to pray according to God’s Word. It is only as we pray according to God’s Word that we can be assured that our prayers will be answered.
2. e) This passage commands us to have Christ’s Word “dwelling in our hearts.” The result is wisdom, the ability to teach and admonish fellow Christians, and a song in our hearts!

3. a) Psalm 1:1-6 To meditate day and night (v.2), the Word must be “in us.”
The promises include: counsel from God (v.1), vitality, fruitfulness and prosperity (v.3).
This is in contrast to the ungodly who are carried away into judgment (v.4-6).

3. b) Psalm 37:30-31 Those who speak the Word speak it from the heart (Matthew 12:34). To be in the heart, it must be memorized.
The promise is a stable and lasting walk, rather than stumbling.
3. c) Psalm 119:9-11 When the Word is in the heart (memorized), it will serve as a source of conviction and strength to deal with temptation. It will keep us from sin.
3. d) Proverbs 3:1-2 We must not forget (memorize) the Word. It will enhance the quality of our lives.
3. e) Proverbs 6:20-22 Having scripture with us when we roam, sleep, or are awake necessitates memorization. Memorized scripture provides guidance.
3. f) We need to check all things with the Bible. If we have scripture memorized, we can check all things as we hear them at any and all times.
3. g) We are to bring every thought into captivity to Christ. One way to do this is to check our thoughts against the Word of God. Having scripture memorized enables us to do this at any and all times.
3. h) If we are to always be ready to answer those who have questions about our faith, we must have the Word in our hearts.

LESSON SIX

1. PSALM 1
HE *DELIGHTS* IN GOD'S WORD. The blessed man does not think of God's Word as a chore, but as a refreshment. He longs for it and is satisfied by it.
HE *MEDITATES* IN GOD'S WORD. Meditating on God's Word means to think about it over and over, constantly evaluating everything by it.
2. a) When we delight and meditate in the Word of God, we will always be refreshed, never dried out. This means that when we are experiencing dry times, we need to meditate on scripture.
When we delight and meditate in the Word of God, we will be deeply and firmly rooted.
2. b) When we delight and meditate in the Word of God, we will be fruitful — not at every moment or when we think best, but in the Lord's timing.
When we delight and meditate in the Word of God, we will produce fruit which will nourish and bless others as we minister.
2. c) When we delight and meditate in the Word of God, we will be able to provide refreshment (shade) for others.
When we delight and meditate in the Word of God we will appear healthy to others, which will enhance the credibility of our testimony.
2. d) When we delight and meditate in the Word of God, we will think, say, and do God's will. When we do God's will, we shall be prosperous.

When we delight and meditate in the Word of God we will be prosperous. The biblical definition of prosperity is not worldly wealth. 1 Timothy 6:6 says "Godliness with contentment is great gain [prosperity]."

3. These things keep us from negativity, pessimism, and a "quitter's" attitude. The things that are listed are all found in scripture and in Jesus Himself.
This is not merely "positive thinking," as though we can create or change reality with our minds. Rather, it means thinking on the goodness of the Lord.
Notice that the first thing mentioned is "whatever is true." Positive thinking often denies reality in favor of lofty pie-in-the-sky ideas. Meditating on the Word is based on truth.
3. a) Answers will vary. For the most part, however, people think about: the tasks at hand (work or school), or fantasies that satisfy the flesh.
A.W. Tozer asked this question: "*What do you think about when you are free to think about whatever you will?*" The answer to this question reveals a lot about where our hearts are.
3. b) Answers will vary.
4. It is impossible to stop thinking about something unless the unwanted thoughts are replaced with other, more desirable thoughts. Example: Tell a person *not* to think about a rainbow. The first thing that will pop into that person's mind is a rainbow. If you want that person not to think about a rainbow, redirect his thoughts by telling him to think of something else.
This passage gives three steps to purge our minds of unwanted thoughts:
 - 1) "*Cast down arguments [vain thoughts] and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.*" First, identify these thoughts for what they are and resist them. You can do this by asking yourself, "Do these thoughts glorify Christ?"
 - 2) "*Bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*" Second, bring those thoughts into the presence of Christ — think on the things of the Lord. When we do this, the vain thoughts are driven out.
 - 3) "*Be ready to punish all disobedience.*" To be successful at this we must be willing to discipline ourselves and persistently stay at it.
4. a) The problem is spiritual. There is a spiritual battle going on in and for our minds. Unless we recognize it as a spiritual problem, we will dismiss it as unimportant, or we will try to conquer it in our own strength. Both spell defeat.
The only means of victory is reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit in prayer.
4. b) Prayerfully identify problem areas in your thought life and wage war on them.

Share your struggle with your thought life with a brother or sister who will pray for you and hold you accountable.

Be deliberate about identifying undesirable thoughts, casting them down by bringing them into the presence of Christ and disciplining your mind persistently.

5. Whatever comes out of our mouths has come from our hearts.

Because our words reveal what is in our hearts, if our words are less than Christ-like, the problem is in our hearts. The way to remedy this is to meditate on God's Word, filling our hearts and minds with His truth. Our mouths are a reliable gauge that reveals our progress.

6. Rather than emptying one's mind, Christians are to have their minds transformed by filling them with the Word of God.
6. a) When our minds are renewed and transformed to think God's thoughts as they are revealed in His Word, we will know [have proven to us] what is God's perfect will for our lives.