



Ignite

A 6-Week Online Study

IGNITING SPIRITUAL
PASSION FOR LIFE
THROUGH READING
GOD'S WORD



with PAM GILLASPIE

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Introduction

If you've ever struggled with reading the Bible, this study is for you! In fact, it's a study about freeing you from the need for "studies"! Now don't get me wrong, Bible study materials can be very helpful tools as we pursue God through His Word. I've benefited enormously from them over the years and I spend my days (and many nights!) writing them. Clearly I believe in their importance—it's where I'm investing my life.

What I know to be even more important, though, is helping people catch the vision to be able to handle God's Word for themselves, to be able to read without an assignment, to be able to learn even when class is on break. How does your spiritual life look when all you've got is your Bible and the Holy Spirit? The answer should be "Great!" because the Spirit is the One who leads us into all truth and He works through the Word. Unfortunately, though, many experience something different altogether.

This short study is designed to help guide you to the biblical reasons for being in God's Word and to equip you with some of the basic skills to do it. Only the Holy Spirit can set your life on fire, but together we'll do our part to learn to yield to His work in our lives.

Each week, we'll go both deep and wide in God's Word. We'll start by looking deeply at few short passages of Scripture. We'll use a process called inductive study. It's a big phrase that means we'll let the text speak for itself. In order to learn about the Bible, we'll look directly at the Bible.

We'll observe the text closely to see what it says. We'll read. We'll pay attention. We'll read again. We'll watch for repeated words and phrases, we'll notice comparisons and contrasts. We'll pay attention to time phrases and context. We'll ask questions about the text—*Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?*—to help us discover what the author meant when he was talking to his original audience.

Answering *What does the text say?* and *What did the author mean?* will help us answer the all-important question of *How does this apply to my life today?* After all, we can't know how to apply a text if we don't know what the author was talking about in the first place. "What it means to me" is important to know but if it's not grounded in what it meant to the original audience, we'll find ourselves in a world of hurt—fast!

God can apply His Word in many ways to our lives, but correct application will always be grounded in the text's original meaning. So as we study, we'll be looking for the one meaning of the text that anchors the many and varied life applications.

Since the 5Ws and H are so critical to the inductive process, we're also going to use these as a simple outline for our six-week study together.

- Who can read God's Word?
- What does the Bible say about itself?

- When is a good time to read?
- Where should I read?
- Why is reading God’s Word important?
- How can I make time for God and His Word?

Each week, after looking at a few texts inductively, I’ll suggest a number of places for you to read God’s Word widely. This will be a time of learning to sit and read and enjoy.

You may find the texts I’m suggesting are longer than you’re accustomed to reading. Don’t let that worry you. There will be no fill in the blanks, just direction toward portions of Scripture that are relatively easy to read in larger quantities. My goal for our time together is to encourage you into His presence as much as is physically possible in order to both dig and to simply soak in the Word. Sometimes you dig, sometimes you soak—and they’re both incredibly important!

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Ignite: Igniting Spiritual Passion for Life Through Reading God’s Word

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Week One:

Who Can Read God's Word?

Clearly anyone with adequate language skills can go through the mechanics of reading the Bible and yet God's Word remains essentially a closed book to many who have read it or tried to read it. Surveys show that even among people who call themselves Bible-readers, the average time spent reading the Bible is 52 minutes a week—that's 7 minutes and change per day if people aren't fudging the numbers up. Realistically, the number is probably closer to 5 minutes. That's less time than you'd spend watching commercials in a typical half-hour television show.

Some of the same people who claim with their mouths to be sold-out to God, tell a different tale with their lives. Why is it that some people can read the Word while others can't? What makes this book different from every other book that's out there? And our bottom line question for today: *Who can effectively read the Word?*

Let's look to the Word itself for the answer.

DEEP . . .

Context:

In John 16, Jesus talks to His disciples in the hours immediately before He will be betrayed. This section of text (John 15-17) is often referred to as The Upper Room Discourse.

Scripture:

READ John 16:7-15

- 7 *"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.*
- 8 *"And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;*
- 9 *concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;*
- 10 *and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me;*
- 11 *and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.*
- 12 *"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.*

- 13 *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.*
- 14 *“He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.*
- 15 *“All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.*

Questions:

Who is important in this passage?

(One way to see this clearly is by marking the text. I've included simple instructions in the parentheses if you want to give it a whirl.)

Who is speaking?

(Circle the Speaker in the text and every pronoun referring to Him.)

What can we learn about Him from the text?

(Look back at every entry you've marked and compile a short list.)

Who is the Speaker talking to?

(Underline the pronouns “you” or “your” that refer to these people.)

Who is the Speaker talking about?

(Box in every reference to His main topic.)

Who else is mentioned in this passage?

Where is Jesus going? Why will this benefit the disciples?

Who is He going to send? When? How does Jesus describe Him?

What will He do for the world?

What will He do for Jesus' followers?

Does the Spirit speak on His own initiative? Explain?

Who does the Spirit glorify?

If you are in relationship with Jesus Christ and the Spirit dwells in you, how will the Helper operate in your life according to this text?

The Spirit is the One who leads us into all truth, the One who empowers godly living. The Spirit gives us ability and power to set our minds on the things of the Spirit and not on the things of the flesh. In fact in Romans 8—a watershed treatment of life in the Spirit—Paul says in verse 9b, “But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

While some problems of Bible intake have to do simply with reading skills, over-committed lives, and scrambled priorities—and we'll look at some of those barriers in upcoming weeks—we need to ask a key question as we get started: *Do I have the Spirit?* It's a totally biblical question that Paul brings up with the church at Corinth.

Context:

Paul closes his letter to the church at Corinth with the instruction to test themselves to see if they are in the faith. Paul is confident that he, himself, has not failed the test.

READ 2 Corinthians 13:5-6

- 5 *Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?*
- 6 *But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.*

Questions:

Who does Paul say needs to test themselves?

What do they need to find out?

How are they to do this?

If people in the first century church needed to test themselves to see if they were in the faith, do you think that is appropriate for us to do also? Explain.

GOING DEEPER

WORD STUDY . . .

If you like to dig, compare the Greek words translated *test*, *examine*, and *“do not fail the test.”* Be sure to look at verse 7 while you’re at it! Record your findings.

WIDE . . .

My overall goal in our WIDE reading sections is to direct you toward more extended readings in Scripture that are easy to get into and where you’ll have immediate success and want to keep on reading. We’re not talking roll-off-a-log easy, but relatively easy. It’s important to understand that some portions of the Bible are decidedly more difficult than others but the simpler sections outweigh the difficult by a lot!

You also need to know that this is the section that’s designed to give you the ultimate in flexibility. I’ll suggest a number of different places where you can read to give you some direction, but the choice will be yours!

Always remember the words of my dear friend Diane . . .

“Some is better than none!”

Wide Readings . . .

READ 1 John.

First John is a heart diagnostic tool. Addressing his readers, John says “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13). God’s people today demonstrate the same characteristics as God’s people in John’s day. As we embark on this adventure of reading God’s Word, we need to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. My assumption is with Paul that Christ is in you unless you fail the test. So this week, make 1 John your top WIDE reading priority. Watch for the marks of a true believer and ask God to confirm to you if you belong to Him. It is the Spirit who empowers us to follow Jesus and to read and live God’s Word.

READ the Gospel of John, 2 and 3 John, and/or the Revelation.

Want to go wider still? Read some of John’s other writings . . . the Gospel of John and/or the super-concise letters of 2 and 3 John. For those who are already seasoned Bible readers you may want to add in John’s prophesy: the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Remember, this section is totally optional and designed to flex with you! Enjoy!