



1 JOHN: Light. Life. Love.

God's Word Alive in You

1 John 2:12-17

The most well-worn pathway to knowing God and becoming like Him is taking God's Word into our hearts.

I. The pathway to knowing God and becoming like Him

A. The Foundation of the Christian Life (1 John 2:12, 13c)

The foundation of the Christian life is being anchored in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know that our sins are forgiven because of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:9, 2:1-2; Acts 2:38, 4:12). We know that we have been reconciled to God as our Father (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6-7, Ephesians 1:3-8).

B. Fighting the Battle with God's Word (1 John 2:13b, 14b)

The younger men and women are engaged in overcoming the evil one and the world (1 John 2:13-17, 3:7-10, 5:1-5, 18-20). They recognize they are in a spiritual battle for hearts and souls, and their greatest weapon of warfare is God's word.

They are clinging to God's word like an anchor in the storm, like an air supply underwater, like the very bread for their souls that Jesus said is God's word (Matthew 4:4, John 15:1-8). They are taking God's word into their hearts so that He guides and strengthens them (1 John 2:14).

God has ordained that the Bible is the source of life for our souls. Consider the following truths:

- God's Word is the means by which the Holy Spirit regenerates the human heart (1 Peter 1:23, 25; Romans 1:16-17, 10:14-15)
- God's Word is the means by which faith is given and renewed (Romans 10:17)
- God's Word is the means through which He gives encouragement and perseverance (Romans 15:4)
- God's Word is the means through which He gives joy and peace (Romans 15:13)
- God's Word is the means through which we grow in maturity and holiness (1 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Timothy 4:6, 1 Peter 2:2, Hebrews 4:12)

C. Feeding upon God's Word Over a Lifetime (1 John 2:13a, 14a)

The spiritual maturity and knowledge of God of these older men and women is anchored in their deep conviction that the Apostles' message about Jesus Christ is true. Jesus is the word made flesh who perfectly reveals God (John 1:1-18). Jesus is the eternal son of God, the God-Man, who was sacrificed for our sins that we might be saved (1 John 2:1-2, 4:14).

These older men and women have grown into mature, spiritual fathers and mothers, because they kept themselves anchored in the Apostles' message regardless of the false claims made about Jesus and God. They have not let themselves become distracted or deceived by false gospels.

II. Practical Suggestions (Psalms, Gospels, NT Letters)

Commit yourself to read, meditate, memorize, pray, and study God's word.

A. Meditate upon God's Word (Psalm 1, 119:5; John 15:7)

"In our meditation we ponder the chosen text on the strength of the promise that it has something utterly personal to say to us for this day and for our Christian life, that it is not only God's Word for the Church, but also God's Word for us individually. We expose ourselves to the specific word until it addresses us personally. And when we do this, we are doing no more than the simplest, untutored Christian does every day; we read God's Word as God's Word for us."
Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Life Together"

B. Lectio Divina (see below)

C. Dwell App (<https://dwellapp.io/signup/with/izst6H>)

D. Reading/Prayer Guide – "Seeking God's Face – Praying with the Bible through the Year" (BakerBooks)

Contemplative Bible Reading (Lectio Divina)

*"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
...But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law
he meditates day and night." Psalm 1:1-2*

Contrary to our more common cognitive and analytical approach of studying Scripture, contemplative reading or Bible meditation is a slower approach, which seeks to hear the Lord's word to us with our hearts. It is the difference between informational and formational reading of Scripture.

Jesus continually called His disciples to listen at the heart level – "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15, 13:9-17, 43). It has been wisely said that "truly to hear, and in listening to obey, is at the heart of knowing God. ... This knowing and being known takes place when God's word so penetrates our innermost being that we become what we hear. We are transformed into God's likeness. ... This is how intimacy with God takes place."ⁱ

One of the oldest and best ways of reading Scripture is called by its Latin name – *lectio divina*, which means "divine reading" or "spiritual reading." It consists of a four-part movement, beginning with the text and ending in prayer. The goal is to allow the Lord to speak a word to you through the text.

Step One: Reading/Listening

Prepare to read by quieting yourself (centering). You will need to sit upright in a chair; practice taking deep breaths to slow yourself down. Practice the Lord's presence by reminding yourself that He is with you at this very moment. Some find it helpful to set an empty chair in front of them and imagine Jesus sitting there.

Read aloud a short passage of Scripture. As you read, listen for a word or phrase that speaks to you. You may have to read the passage several times slowly. What is the Spirit drawing your attention to? You are listening for the "word within the word" such as a key phrase or promise.

Note: Each person's prayer relationship with the Lord is unique. In some, the imaginative faculty is more developed and active. Some may find it helpful to use their imaginations to enter into the scene, seeing and hearing the persons, imagining the touch and smells. Others may rely more on their intuition by savoring the truth or insight inherent in the passage. Whatever our approach to prayer, a basic principle applies: "Pray as you can, not as you can't!"

Step Two: Meditating

Repeat aloud the word or phrase to which you are drawn. Here, you are allowing the word or phrase to sink into your heart. Make connections between it and your life. What is the Spirit saying to you by means of this word or phrase?

Step Three: Praying

What is the Spirit leading you to pray? Now take these thoughts and offer them back to God in prayer, giving thanks, asking for guidance or forgiveness, and resting in God's love.

Step Four: Contemplating

This is resting in God's presence. We move from the activity of prayer to the stillness of contemplation. Stay open to God, listen to Him. Remain in peace and silence before God. You are allowing the text to work its way into the deepest part of your being. You are savoring an encounter. How is God revealing Himself to you? It will be helpful to record your thoughts in a journal.

"The gospel is not a doctrine of the tongue, but of life. It cannot be grasped by reason and memory only, but it is fully understood when it possesses the whole soul, and penetrates to the inner recesses of the heart."

John Calvin

"In our meditation we ponder the chosen text on the strength of the promise that it has something utterly personal to say to us for this day and for our Christian life, that it is not only God's Word for the Church, but also God's Word for us individually. We expose ourselves to the specific word until it addresses us personally. And when we do this, we are doing no more than what the simplest, untutored Christian does every day; we read God's word as God's word for us."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Life Together"

¹ *The Practice of Prayer*, Robert Warren, p.109-110.