



Trekking Deeper

EXPLORING GOD'S WORD



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INTRODUCTION

Jesus testified: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matthew 24:35). He also declared: "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). God has given us His Word so that we might truly know Him and know ourselves as citizens in the Kingdom of God.

This booklet is in no way definitive. It is more of a hiker's map that gives some directions. We will focus more on practical methods of study than on investigating the theology of revelation and inspiration. As we consider the study of Scripture, we shall also introduce more intuitive ideas like meditation and stimulating the imagination.

There are twenty studies in this booklet. The course is designed to take one month, but you can do it at whatever speed you choose. There are two free days each week, but I would encourage you to use these extra days to pray and to look more deeply at any particular topic the Lord has been speaking to you about. Alternatively, you may like to try some of the Bible exploration methods we investigate.

Whatever the reason you chose this module, please make these studies your own. Most days there is a relatively long Bible reading. This is because every verse must be seen and read in its context. In addition, the Bible is the only perfect and pure word of God. Therefore the Scriptures are far better for teaching about themselves than these or any other notes could ever be! Read the Bible passages slowly and allow the Lord to speak to you through them. Please note all Scripture references are from the New International Version.

My prayer for you is that through your Trek experience you will grow in your relationship with God, draw closer to Him, and delight in learning more of Him and from Him.



DAY ONE: GOD'S ETERNAL REVELATION

READING – PSALM 119:81-104

Verse 89 “Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.”

Evangelical Christians have always placed the Scriptures above tradition, human reason, and experience. Because of this, we have sometimes been accused of ‘bibliolatry’ or the worship of the Bible. But we do not adore the Book. We adore the God we find revealed within the pages of the Book.

God not only reveals Himself through the Scriptures. The Bible itself refers to dreams, visions, prophecy, and to God’s revelation through creation. However, Jesus is the only complete revelation of God, and it’s in the Bible where we discover Him in His fullness – His glory and His humility (Hebrews 1:1-3).

The Word of God describes itself as light, fire, milk, honey, gold, a hammer, a sword, seed, and bread. These images help us to grasp the uniqueness and influence of God’s written revelation. The Bible is God’s gift to His people so that they can know Him and trust Him. It is essentially God’s story and not a scientific textbook, a philosophical manual, or historical tome.

So what’s the Bible for? It communicates knowledge of the one true God; it challenges both the believer and the unbeliever; it shows us who we are and where we belong; it strengthens faith and produces spiritual growth; it exposes our true motives and sins; it transforms us into the image of Christ; it unveils the strengths and weaknesses of others; it gives us a weapon against personal temptations, society’s inducements, and Satan’s deceptions and much more!

Are you truly committed to exploring God’s Word? It has been said that many Christians expect the world to respect a book that they themselves neglect. Do you engage with God’s truth or do you only receive God’s teaching through a third party? As you begin this module, pray that God will meet you and change you through His Word.

**DAY TWO: LIVING WORD OF GOD**

READING – HEBREWS 4:1-13

Verse 12 “For the word of God is living and active ... it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

Our Lord Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1); He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Note that it does not say that He has the truth or knows the truth, but that He Himself is the truth. The better we know the Bible the better we know Jesus, not just as Saviour but as Creator, Judge and King of kings.

In the Bible, knowledge is not so much about the intellect as about experience. Also, God's truth is something to be done, not something only to be believed. So, it is not that we come to learn facts and information, but rather to grow in our love relationship with God and to find help to live out our faith in our home, college, workplace, Trek assignment and so on.

The Scriptures have one author: God. The whole Bible links together to tell one story, so if you jump into the Gospels or Epistles without having read the Wisdom books or the Prophets, it's like jumping in half way through a movie and expecting to know who everyone is and be able to follow the plot. Of course, life is much more than a film but we can only really understand and take part in the Story when we trace it from the beginning and take our cues from the Eternal Director.

The Bible alone is living and active. This means it is as relevant and applicable today as it has always been. It addresses life's issues and difficulties. It cuts through the tangle of ethics and morals, and reveals what is the truth. As the Scriptures are living and active so should be our response to them!

We should approach the Bible with awe and wonder, yet at the same time with an open mind and an open heart, hungry and craving to know the Lord. Is this how you come to the Word of God? In *Discipleship* (p.140) David Watson writes: “More important than all our other needs and wants, more important than even physical life itself, is God's word to man.”



DAY THREE: OUR INFALLIBLE LIBRARY

READING – 2 TIMOTHY 3

Verse 16 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

The Scriptures resemble a library as they contain 66 books written by many different human authors, but all inspired by God Himself. Unfortunately, our familiarity with the Bible dulls our appreciation of it. The Bible shows us that God wants us to know Him and shine for Him in this shady world.

If we think about it, it's amazing that the Bible is so short. So much history is unfolded in often exasperatingly brief detail. God's purposes are relayed but there is never an excess of information. Still, we have all we need to know even though we might want to know more!

The Bible is infallible. In *Know the Truth* (p.41) Bruce Milne writes, “This claim means that all the Bible's assertions are truthful and worthy of entire confidence.” While God's Word is infallible, the chapter and verse divisions in our Bibles are not. These were added to help us, but sometimes they are a hindrance as they can distort the flow. In addition, many people enjoy using a Study Bible, but while these often give useful insights, the notes are not inspired by God in the way that the Scriptures are. Don't feel constrained by study notes: there are mistakes! It may be quicker to read what others have discovered, but wait to do this until after you yourself have delved into God's Word. Isn't it better to hear from God directly rather than read second-hand details?

God chose to restrict Himself to particular people, particular places, and particular times. God could have written about colonising the moon and brain transplants, but He did not force unfamiliar ideas on the human authors. So, we must take time and make the effort to comprehend the Scriptures as the original writers and hearers understood it. Take time to commit yourself to sincere Bible study. It can be gripping!

**DAY FOUR: THE HOLY WORD AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**

READING – 2 PETER 1

Verse 21 “... prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God ... carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit was central to the writing of the biblical books. He is also central in communicating the truth of the Bible to the minds and hearts of those who read it. The Bible deals in spiritual themes and spiritual growth so it needs the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for us to understand and apply what we read. If we want to know what a particular verse means, we should ask the Author.

Before we read the Scriptures we must pray that the Holy Spirit will unlock our minds and spirits to His revelations. Someone has said that this does not make study unnecessary, it makes study effective. When the Spirit reveals truth we are not discovering things that were never there, but seeing and understanding what is there so that we can respond in faith and obedience. The less we know of the Bible, the less the Holy Spirit has to work with! The Holy Spirit will not bring to our minds what we have never read, but He will bring to our memories what we have read. The Holy Spirit does not study for us, but with us!

Some people think that believers are either people of the Word or people of the Spirit. But if we are people of the Spirit then we are people of the Word and vice versa. The two are inseparable. The Holy Spirit enables us to both know the Word and live according to the Word.

The person who reads the Bible prayerfully, thoughtfully, and receptively will discover that it is indeed the Word of God, and that it is perfect for teaching, guiding, encouraging and challenging. John 14:26 says, “... the Holy Spirit ... will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

Do you consider yourself a man or woman of the Holy Bible or a man or woman of the Holy Spirit? How do you read the Bible? With the help of the Holy Spirit or with your own intellect?



DAY FIVE: BEGIN TO INVESTIGATE

READING – ACTS 17

Verse 11 “... they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day ...”

Let's consider probing God's Word. It is vital we become apprentices of God's truth. It is essential that we examine and interpret the Bible before we can think about applying what it says. Often we jump into a passage feet first with the sole intention of finding out what it means for us. But as a landscape artist walks an area to carefully choose his angles for the best light, so we must survey the angles before we colour in any application. In *Celebration of Discipline* (p.60) Richard Foster writes: “When we study a book of the Bible we are seeking to be controlled by the intent of the author. We are determined to hear what he is saying, not what we would like him to say.”

Most people are skilful skim readers, but we must painstakingly examine the Bible texts. We must be thorough, so that we make sure we see all the details. It is a good idea to underline or highlight words. If you don't like marking your Bible, then use a notebook. Try to discern if there is something striking that is not in the text. Why is that? Someone has said that only accurate observation leads to correct interpretation, which in turn leads to right application.

A basic examination of a text asks these six questions:

- 1 **Who** is talking or being talked about?
- 2 **What** is the subject being discussed? What comes before, and what follows after?
- 3 **Where** is the activity or dialogue taking place?
- 4 **Why** is the activity or dialogue taking place?
- 5 **When** is the activity or dialogue taking place?
- 6 **How** are the people involved responding?

We must be careful we don't turn the Bible into a textbook, but most people treat God's Word too lightly rather than too heavily! To practice, use today's reading to ask the above six questions.



DAYS SIX AND SEVEN: **A PIECE OF LITERATURE?**

Think carefully about this quote from Mahatma Gandhi:

“You Christians look after a document containing enough dynamite to blow all civilisation to pieces, turn the world upside down, and bring peace to a battle-torn planet. But you treat it as though it is nothing more than a piece of literature.”

How about spending some time in God's explosively-healing Word?

If you are not sure where to go, try reading Exodus, Nehemiah, Mark's Gospel or 1 Peter.



DAY EIGHT: **BIBLICAL CONTEXT**

READING – ROMANS 15:1-22

Verse 4 “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us ...”

Is all this talk of study and learning putting you off? Does it sound like homework or a job assignment? If so, it's crucial to realise that the Bible answers life's big questions. Do you want to know about the outrageous facts of God's grace? Do you want to grasp the reality of your identity and purpose? The Bible is not a course book but we do need time, mental energy and the Spirit's leading to fully comprehend God's astounding truth.

Now, once we have finished looking at the text, it is time to interpret it. We need to understand its meaning and message. We need to be conscious that the circumstances under which the Bible was written are very different from our own. The Bible was written thousands of years ago by dozens of different people. It reveals different cultures, with evolving social, ethical, and religious perspectives. These differences are barricades to our understanding of the original meaning of Scripture and must be overcome by careful study.

As we delve into our Bibles, we must understand that we subconsciously interpret everything we read through our own cultural filters. We must be aware that by doing this we can accidentally screen out important details. We might pass over aspects of occupations, family life, or education because they are outside our sphere of understanding, when, in fact, they hold little nuggets of biblical truth that can help us as we follow Jesus.

How about taking one or two of Jesus' parables and interpreting them through the local culture on your Trek assignment? Does your present setting help you understand the biblical world better? For example, you may be in a rural village where the women go off to collect water at a nearby well. Even if you are in a developed country, you may have come across very different perspectives on hospitality. What can you discover?

**DAY NINE: MIND AND HEART**

READING – DEUTERONOMY 6

Verse 5 “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

In Hebrew, the heart is the centre of human life. The term ‘heart’ does refer to our feelings and passions but it also refers to our mind, will, thoughts, conscience, and understanding.

Many ancient cultures assumed that the heart was the centre of intelligence and so the heart became a metaphor for all mental and emotional activity. This is important because understanding that the word ‘heart’ also means ‘mind and comprehension’ helps to clarify the meaning of a number of Bible passages. For example, Proverbs 15:14: “The discerning heart seeks knowledge ...” Also Jesus helps to explain this point in Matthew 15:19 “For out of the heart comes evil thoughts ...” In our key verse, the author was not rejecting the mind or will, they are implicit in the word ‘heart’. When the New Testament makes reference to this greatest commandment, because the authors were writing to Greek hearers, we have the phrase ‘and all your mind’ added in to emphasise what the Jews would have already understood.

We touched on this on Day Two but when English speakers use the verb ‘to know’ we think of our mental understanding. In Hebrew, the word for ‘to know’ is not just knowing facts or information. The Hebrew idea stresses knowing from experience and relationship. So, Genesis 4:1 literally says: ‘And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and gave birth to Cain.’ Obviously, Adam did not simply know about Eve for her to become pregnant! The knowledge of God is not about facts or explanations, but having a life in relationship with Him. For the Jews, they understood knowledge of God as intimacy with God, knowing him as a son or daughter knows his or her father.

Are you allowing the Bible to influence, mould, affect and shape your heart, mind and will; your entire inner life?



DAY TEN: BIBLICAL CULTURE

READING – 2 TIMOTHY 2

Verse 15 “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved ... who correctly handles the word of truth.”

It is vital to put Jesus and the other Bible people back into their historical and cultural contexts. Let's consider two biblical examples to emphasise that the work is worth it. I recognise that on your Trek you may be away from the resources of the Internet and Bible commentaries. On the other hand, you may have more access to these things than you would at home.

In Luke 15, we find the well-known parable of the lost son. We read that when the father saw his son in the distance, he ran to meet him. That sentence washes round us, but would have caused a tidal wave with the original hearers. Men never ran – that was only for children. This action would have brought ridicule on the father from the whole community. In addition, because of the son's sin, the father would have been expected to meet the son at the border of his property and send him away. Instead, the “parable father” goes out to welcome his son and gives him a robe, a ring, and sandals, all of which were symbols of acceptance.

In Luke 19:45-46, we find Jesus driving out the Temple merchants. We might think this is harsh but the traders had established themselves in the Court of the Gentiles. This was as far into the Temple as a non-Jew could go and was where the Gentiles worshipped God. The Jewish dealers were buying and selling goods right where the Gentiles wanted to pray. The Jews were robbing the Gentiles of their right to worship God. No wonder Jesus was angry and exclaimed that His house was a house of prayer!

Once more, hunt around in your Trek location. Do some detective work and see if you can sniff out any new clues on Bible texts. You are looking for cultural insights that will help to explain biblical culture.

**DAY ELEVEN: COMPLIMENTARY/CONTRADICTORY PASSAGES**

READING – MATTHEW 22:23-40

Verse 29 “Jesus replied, ‘You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.’”

We must interpret each verse or passage of Scripture in its context, noting where it is located in Scripture, what precedes it, what follows it and how it is related to other Scriptures. One author states that context is the single most important factor in correct interpretation.

It is a good idea to read the entire book you are studying before you start to study parts of it (or at least read the surrounding paragraphs or chapters). Think creatively as you read – why has this been included? Why has it been placed here? How does this relate to the whole chapter of the book? Try to discover the basic theme or purpose; the main divisions of the book; the important people; significant events; plus any theological ideas, repetitions or common elements.

Finally, we must interpret each verse or passage in view of related or similar passages in the same or other books of the Bible. These will often help us understand and apply the truth of the Bible. There are some extremely complex passages of Scripture but we must bear in mind that the Bible will never contradict itself. We should choose a simple, natural meaning over a more complex one and interpret unclear or ambiguous passages in the light of plain, unmistakable ones. In the Westminster Confession, we read, “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself, and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.” Remember, it has been said that we should be more concerned with what we understand – and don’t obey – than with what we don’t understand!

Take a look at Judges 11. This is not a straightforward passage but try to interpret it in its context.



DAY TWELVE: SPECIAL FORMS OF LANGUAGE

READING – MATTHEW 7:13-29

Verse 24 “... everyone who hears these words ... and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

For example, Jesus was undoubtedly a genius with words. He used:

- **Overstatement** (eg. Matthew 5:29: “If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away”);
- **Hyperbole** (eg. Mark 10:25: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God”);
- **Allegory** (eg. John 15:1, 5: “I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener...you are the branches”);
- **A fortiori argument** (eg. Matthew 7:11, “If you, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”);
- **Metaphor** (eg. Matthew 26:26: “Take and eat; this is my body”); parallelism (eg. Matthew 20:16, “The last will be first and the first will be last”);
- **Simile** (eg. Matthew 10:16: “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves”);
- **Proverbs** (eg. Matthew 26:52: “All who draw the sword will die by the sword”) and, of course,
- **Parables** (eg. Luke 11:5-8, “Suppose one of you has a friend ...”).

Don't be put off by all these specific forms of language. Jesus used all these varied forms to help sincere seekers to understand, not to confuse them! Jesus was the supreme communicator. He was able to manipulate language freely and easily to impart His message.

Take a trek through the Gospels and see if you can find other examples of the figures of speech listed above. Are you better able to understand what Jesus is saying? Can you see how much easier it is to remember images?



DAYS THIRTEEN AND FOURTEEN: **PRAY FOR THE WORLD**

It is crucial we pray for world evangelisation. Wherever you are, how about interceding for the Uzbeks in Uzbekistan?

- The Uzbeks are a mixture of the original Tajik inhabitants and the Mongols who conquered them in the fifteenth century. A major problem is suicide among younger women, attributed to male-dominated Islam and environmental problems or the hard labour in the cotton fields.
 - Pray that all Uzbeks would find identity and purpose in Christ.
 - Officially, the Uzbeks are Sunni Muslims. The five daily prayers are not rigidly observed but Islamic customs of circumcision, weddings, and funerals are central. Since independence from Russia, many new mosques have been opened and Muslim seminaries have been reopened.
 - Pray that the truth of Jesus Christ will transform Uzbek society.
 - Animism still exists, with amulets worn to ward off evil spirits being a normal part of life.
 - Pray for protection for Uzbek believers and liberation for Uzbek people from the control of Satan.
 - Evangelical Christianity arrived early last century. The first believer was martyred for his faith. Today, evangelical Uzbeks are a tiny minority.
 - Pray for strength, courage and boldness for the Uzbek believers.
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DAY FIFTEEN: OBSTRUCTIONS TO SERIOUS PROGRESS

READING – 2 PETER 3

Verse 16 “His letters contain things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort ...”

As with any spiritual activity, there are potential obstructions. Whatever prevents us from hearing God must be bulldozed out of the way. Here are just a few possible roadblocks:

- Do we expect to meet with God? It's best to approach the Bible in prayer and with reverence, but also with an anticipation that God will open up His Word to us. Do we truly believe that we can and will encounter the Lord?
- Do we have a willingness to learn? It has been said that we should come to the Bible as a learner and not as a teacher. We must resist the urge to read our own ideas into passages but allow the Holy Spirit to lead us as we consider His truth.
- Are we often too busy or too distracted? We should recognise that when we open the Bible we are in the presence of God in a very special way and He will meet with us. We can pray to God to be burdened for His Word, but we still need to sit down and open up our Bibles! Today's text states that parts of the Bible are hard to understand so we must make the effort to get to grips with it.
- Do we know that we have sinned or are holding onto pride, bitterness, or fear? If so, we need to come before God in humility and in remorse for our actions, and ask for His forgiveness and cleansing. God will speak to us, but we must admit our sins and allow Him to remove them.
- Have we botched our obedience to what the Lord has clearly commanded us? Why is this? In His grace, God may continue to bless us, but if our fantastic heavenly Father is talking or teaching us why would we want to refuse to listen or fail to respond?

Do any of these obstructions stand out? Do you need to pray for expectation, impetus, forgiveness, or humility?

**DAY SIXTEEN: OBEDIENCE AND ACTION**

READING – JAMES 1:19-27

Verse 22 “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

We have examined and interpreted. Now we must apply. This is paramount. To handle God's Word effectively we must live to the glory of God. The Bible is not about information: it is about transformation, so true understanding only comes when a person reacts to the Word of God. The purpose of the Bible is to equip us for good works (2 Timothy 3:17). We grow spiritually only as we understand God's truth *and* apply it. The two are linked, so knowledge must lead to response.

First, obey God's commands. These may be direct (rejoice in the Lord, do not steal) or indirect (sell your possessions and give to the poor). Indirect commands may only apply fully to the person at that time, but there is usually a principle we can apply.

Secondly, seize God's blessings. Most blessings seem to be conditional. We frequently find the construction “if you ... then I will ...” (or something similar) in both the Old and New Testaments (2 Chronicles 7:14; Romans 10:9). So, we cannot expect the blessing unless we are consciously doing, or not doing, what we have been instructed.

Thirdly, believe God's truth. People always live what they believe, so the more of God's truth that we are His children – loved and commissioned – has saturated our souls, the more devoted and dedicated we will behave.

Fourthly, act on the teachings. Today's text shows we must listen to God's Word and act! There may also be implied challenges. For example, the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-10) do not give direct commands but we sense instantly that they are important. If we are not like this, we need to accept the teaching and pray to become more like the person God wants us to be.

Is there anything you need to obey, seize, believe, or act upon?



DAY SEVENTEEN: CHARACTER RESEARCH

READING – DANIEL 9:1-19

Verse 2 “... I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah ...”

There are several different forms of biblical studies. Today, let's consider biblical characters. Someone has calculated that there are 2,930 people mentioned in the Bible. I'm not suggesting you look at every one, but the lives of many of these make extremely interesting investigations.

Here is one method: choose one Old Testament or New Testament character, either male or female. (Please note, for the sake of expediency, I shall refer to the character as “him”.) Pray to the Lord for inspiration and ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand your chosen character. You will need a concordance, which you may have at the back of your Bible or there could be one in your Trek location. Look up every reference where his name occurs.

Ask questions like: where was he born? What was his upbringing like? How did God prepare him? What did he accomplish during his life? What were his main character traits? What struggles did he face? Who were his friends? What influence did they have on each other? What was his experience of God? Is there anything particular to learn about his faith, prayer life, worship, service, or witness? Is there one main lesson in his life that will help you in your spiritual life?

Someone has said that the Bible is not full of stories of extraordinary men and women, but of God's story as He works in and through ordinary men and women. What is true for them can be true for you, and learning from them can help you to emulate their achievements and avoid their mistakes.

Do you want to try this method of Bible study now? Remember that you can learn all sorts of things from biblical “villains” as well as the biblical “heroes”. If this has aroused your interest, it is best to begin with a smaller character like Ruth or Silas, then tackle Moses and Mary later.

**DAY EIGHTEEN: CHAPTER RESEARCH**

READING – 1 JOHN 5

Verse 13 “I write these things to you who believe ... so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

Traditionally the main form of Bible studies, and arguably the most profitable, are chapter studies.

Here is one method: pray to the Lord for wisdom and insight. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to choose a chapter and then unpack it. It can be a good idea to choose a whole book and study the chapters consecutively. Read the chapter several times. It is a good idea to read it aloud; when you do, you will notice many things that you do not see when you read silently. If you read it aloud a second time, try to place the emphasis of various sentences in different places.

Divide the chapter into segments and give each one a heading that succinctly describes its contents. Then write down the prominent truths of the chapter in their proper order. See if there is one central truth in the chapter and maybe a key verse. Give a title to the chapter, ignoring the headings in your Bible: remember they are not always exact!

Identify the people mentioned and any information the chapter gives on their character. Note the major lessons in the chapter. It is a good idea to categorize these; eg. truths about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, grace and holiness. Make a note of any subjects you want to explore further. Having done all this, look back over the truths you have found and praise God for them.

Finally, spend time in prayer, asking the Lord to enable you to apply what you have learnt so that you can become more like Christ. This method can be expanded to examining whole Bible books.

So, do you fancy giving this a go? You could choose one of the following options, but feel free to pick an entirely different chapter. Take some time over this and remember – observation then interpretation and finally application: Genesis 12, Exodus 12, John 17, Acts 4, or Ephesians 1.



DAY NINETEEN: TOPICAL RESEARCH

READING – ISAIAH 55

Verse 11 “... my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire ...”

One final Bible study idea is the topical investigation.

Here is one method: ask the Lord for wisdom and help. Pray to the Holy Spirit to help you choose a topic and to really get to grips with it. Try choosing an important subject, particularly anything that has struck you since you arrived on your Trek. Some examples would be truth, love, faith, peace, the cross, and worship.

Then, using a concordance, study as much as you can about your chosen topic. Aim for breadth and don't ignore the Old Testament! However, don't feel you have to look up every relevant verse in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. For some topics this could take days! If you note what verses you read, then you could always do another topical study on the same subject, but using different texts. You may find it helpful to divide your topic into sub-topics, so that truths are easier to find and you don't end up with lots of bits here and there.

For example, with 'heaven', you could have descriptions of heaven, Christ's teaching on heaven, heaven as a gift from God, heaven as our inheritance, conditions in heaven, worship in heaven, and so on.

Remember to note down any related topics that you want to study another time. Then look back over the truths you have found about your chosen topic and praise God for them. Finally, spend time in prayer, asking the Lord to help you to accept any promises, to be obedient to any commands and to apply any truths that you have learnt.

It has been said that although it may be important to know what great men and women in history have to say on important subjects, it is far more important to know what God has to say on them. The only way to know what God has said is to go through the Bible and examine that subject. How about trying one now?



DAYS TWENTY AND TWENTY-ONE: **PARAPHRASING**

We have considered all sorts of different methods to explore God's Word. One we are yet to mention, but which some people find helpful, is paraphrasing passages.

Why not try it? It can be extremely enlightening to take a text and rewrite it in your own words. The process of doing so can arouse both your mind and heart.

As a suggestion, take either Psalm 25 or Revelation 4 and reword it as best you can.



DAY TWENTY-TWO: MEMORISE AND REVIEW

READING – 1 PETER 3:8-22

Verse 15 “... Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you ...”

The idea of memorising Scripture can seem rather peculiar to us. While we memorise many things – phone numbers, addresses, birthdays, and schedules – we might question the importance of memorising Bible verses. We live in a literate arena with countless books and the Internet at our fingertips. If we want to find a verse, we can just look it up. But what if you are on your Trek with no access to books or the Internet and someone asks you a question? Are you prepared, at all times, to give an answer to everyone? Can you back up your faith and experience with Bible truth?

The benefits of memorising Scripture are gigantic: it gives power in prayer; it helps you to make wise decisions; it keeps you from deception when you hear or read various things; it helps you to witness to unbelievers; and it strengthens you in times of turmoil. In heart-breaking situations you might struggle to read the Bible, but a verse can give you indescribable support. Also, it gives you potent ammunition against the devil and temptation, just as Jesus used Scripture to defeat Satan in the desert.

So how do you memorise God's Word? First, choose verses that challenge you. You are far more likely to learn verses that have inspired you. Secondly, say the reference before and after you say each verse. Third, practice aloud. Finally, keep going! Someone has said that the three keys to memorisation are review, review, review!

You can memorise verses at any time: while waiting for local transport, cooking, or having a wash. You shouldn't think that you have to memorise thousands of verses. If you learned one every week of your Trek, that would be tremendous and would be a great starting point.

Do you want to try one now? How about Acts 4:12 or Galatians 2:20?

**DAY TWENTY-THREE: CHEW ON GOD'S TRUTH**

READING – PSALM 77

Verse 12 “I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.”

Biblical meditation is an important discipline. This has nothing to do with Eastern meditation where you empty your mind to dwell on nothing. Biblical meditation is blurring your mind to the distractions of life to focus on a Bible verse, or verses, in order to learn and grow in your relationship with Christ.

You may know that meditation carries with it the idea of rumination or chewing the cud. In the same way that an animal chomps numerous times on its fodder in order to get all the nourishment, so the believer chomps numerous times on God's daily bread for the very same reason.

One seminar I attended proposed six ways to meditate on a verse: First, picture it – visualise the scene in your mind. Secondly, pronounce it – say the verse aloud, each time emphasising a different word. Thirdly, paraphrase it – rewrite the verse in your own words. Fourthly, personalise it – replace the pronouns or people in the verse with your own name. Fifthly, pray it – turn the verse into a prayer. Finally, probe it – ask the following questions: is there a promise to claim, a command to obey, a sin to confess, an attitude to change, an example to follow, a truth to believe, or something to thank God for.

It has been said that when you think about a problem over and over again in your mind, that's called worry. When you think about God's Word over and over again in your mind, that's called meditation. If you know how to worry, you know how to meditate. Just switch your attention from the problem to the solution!

Do you meditate? Maybe your lipped curled at the thought. But have you ever tried? If your Trek is busy, you may *need* to make the time to meditate. How about looking at John 20:26-29? Pray that God will open His Word to you, and you will begin to delight in biblical meditation.



DAY TWENTY-FOUR: SACRED READING

READING – 1 CORINTHIANS 2

Verse 9 “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him ...”

The tradition of *lectio divina* or “sacred reading” means approaching the Scriptures in a contemplative way. This helps to deepen our experience of God, rather than simply gaining knowledge. St. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote, “The objective is not to learn God’s secrets, but allow the soul to experience his presence and to be united to him.”

Here is one method: First, select a time and place that will allow you to be quiet and focus. Next, choose a passage of Scripture to pray through, then pray to God and state your desire to meet with Him. Slowly read your chosen passage of Scripture. Be attentive to any word or phrase that jumps out. Read the verses repeatedly until you feel drawn to a specific section of the passage. Swirl that word or phrase around in your mind, letting it be absorbed. Then reflect on the meaning of your word or phrase. See how it fits within the passage. Don’t worry about distractions. As you tease out the phrase, see if there are any feelings, images, thoughts, or connections with other passages that come to you.

As you continue to mull over this word or phrase, interact with God about your discoveries. What is God saying to you? How do you respond? In joy, expectation, sorrow or remorse? Pray to God about your response. Stay quiet in God’s presence. Simply rest and enjoy the experience of being in the presence of your God. Don’t try to force any image or insight from God. Finally, as you move off into other things, ask the Holy Spirit to help you to live out what you have understood from this Scripture passage.

How about trying it? One suggestion would be Mark 4:35-41. If you are uncomfortable about this, don’t feel you have to try it and don’t worry about it! We are all different people and this method may be unhelpful to you. Just do something else!

**DAY TWENTY-FIVE: WOULD YOU IMAGINE THAT?**

READING – 1 SAMUEL 17

Verse 48 “As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly towards the battle line to meet him.”

While it's imperative to examine God's truth, it's good to simply take pleasure in reading the Bible. If we get so serious with studying texts, we can miss the pure enjoyment of all the action and adventure. The Bible is full of excitement, intrigue, and even humour.

Take King David as an example. A quick flick through 1 Samuel shows a shepherd boy chosen ahead of his brothers to be king. He boldly killed a giant and fell in love with the king's daughter. Our hero had to flee for his life from the paranoid king, but built an unbreakable friendship with the king's son. Our champion crushed rival armies and danced before the Lord. He went undercover to spy on his enemies and was triumphant in victory. Wow, this is great stuff!

One obvious next step is to place ourselves in the stories. We need to be careful not to push the accounts too far, but it can be a great way to understand what is going on. For example in John 21, you could picture yourself in the boat with the disciples. Imagine the breeze on your face and the rhythmic swaying of the boat. Listen in on the conversation with the stranger standing at the water's edge. Envisage straining to haul in the net of teeming fish and being amazed at what you have just witnessed. Picture dragging the boat onto the beach and walking quickly across the shore. See this man crouched down cooking breakfast, then stand before the Lord as He looks at you and offers you some bread and fish.

This can be an extremely revealing exercise as you imagine what people are thinking and feeling. What are people's tone of voice? What else might be happening around the main scene? What is happening with you in the stories?

How about reading Mark 6-9 for pleasure or Luke 8:40-56 for imagining, or both. Enjoy the Bible!



DAY TWENTY-SIX: PARABLE OF RESPONSES

READING – MARK 4:1-20

Verses 8-9 “Still other seed fell on good soil ... Then Jesus said, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’”

This passage is absolutely crucial. In verse 13 Jesus says if we don't understand this parable, we won't understand any parable. However, Jesus graciously explains it to His disciples and, therefore, to us too.

The Word of God is like scattered seed. The Word is spread and it's received, not by four separate types of people but by people with four separate responses. We should not think the parable shows that there are people who are always eagerly receptive, nor that there are people who are always rootless, but at different times and in different places we will all experience these four different responses of receptivity.

The first response is hardness that does not allow the Word to penetrate. It is then all too easy for the devil to snatch it away.

The second response is fickleness. The Word has been enjoyed, but when problems come the Word is forgotten and people are preoccupied with their troubles.

The third response is self-centredness. The Word is heard but the distractions of this world and the desire for personal gratification mean that the Word is strangled.

Finally, the fourth response is faithfulness. The Word is accepted and produces confidence, obedience, and dependence.

This final response is what the Lord desires and should be our longing every time we hear or read His Word. If all Scripture is useful (2 Timothy 3:16) then every passage we read has the ability to transform us. Unfortunately, sometimes we receive God's Word gladly and expectantly and sometimes we receive God's Word impatiently and intolerantly. If we are honest, none of us always receive God's Word as you should. What is your response now? Are you “producing a crop”? Is it 30, 60 or 100 times what was sown?



FURTHER READING

We can learn a lot about costly discipleship by reading and studying portions of the Scriptures. Below is a small selection, but do not be limited by the ones listed here. Read the passages and discover what you can about sacrifice and obedience. How do these accounts help you in your own life of discipleship? Praise God for His Word and pray in recognition that “This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome...” (1 John 5:3).

Genesis 4:1-26

Deuteronomy 6:1-25

Deuteronomy 30:1-20

Psalms 119:1-88

Psalms 119:89-176

Jeremiah 11:1-23

Luke 9:46-62

John 14:15-31

Romans 6:1-23

Ephesians 6:1-24

Hebrews 10:1-39

Hebrews 12:1-29

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NOTES

Trekking Deeper is a devotional discipleship programme specifically written for short-term volunteers. The aim of the Course is to help “Trekking Deeper” keep their focus on Christ and to grow spiritually during their placements.



Trekking Deeper consists of a series of nine booklets:

The ABC of Preparation
Costly Discipleship
Dynamic Prayer
Exploring God's Word
God's Guidance

Practical Faith
Living Holiness
United in Discipleship
Returning & Advancing

“Refreshing, stretching, packed with helpful insights, I found the Trekking Deeper booklets an excellent tool for personal discipleship.” **Glenn Myers (author of the Briefings series)**

“I learnt a lot about prayer and it was good to have notes with short-termers in mind.” **Gillian Thom (Mexico)**

“I learnt stuff I didn't know before.” **Jeremy Estabrook (Senegal)**

“The questions made you analyse and pray about your feelings rather than just pottering on.” **Lindsey Hale (Mexico)**

“I learnt things that I could apply and think about and they weren't boring!” **Alison Davey (Sierra Leone)**