

## Discipleship: Knowing God's Voice Well: the Bible Part 2

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### I. Introduction

The goal of studying God's Word is simple: what does it mean and how do I apply it to my life? God did not give us the Bible to study it as a subject. It's not designed to give us information **about** anything. "About" is not the goal; the goal is to **do!** what God said. He wants us to meditate on His Word in a personal manner, i.e., He wants us to see and hear Him as a Loving Father who's always reaching out to us, especially when we're struggling.

### II. Discipleship: Knowing God's Voice Well: the Bible

The goal of studying God's Word is this: what does it mean and how do I apply it to my life? That is, you're asking, "What did God say?" and "What am I going to do about it?" as your fellow brothers and sisters help you determine both. To put it simply, we want to seek God's voice and then obey it as Jesus did and as He taught His disciples to do: He taught them how to hear the Father's voice and then obey it. And this is the Lord's command to all of us; He wants us to teach people what He said and how to obey it (Matthew 28:19-20).

#### Things to keep in mind when studying God's Word:

1. God meant for His Word to be understood, what He wrote was not meant to confuse you, but to be understood. We know this because: (1) God tells us to obey what He said (Joshua 1:8); if we can't understand Him, how can we obey Him? (2) He gave us His Holy Spirit precisely so that we could understand what He said and apply it (John 14:26; 16:12-15 cf. Matthew 7:24-27). Therefore, every time we study God's Word, we should ask Him to speak to us through His Spirit, to reveal to us what it means and how to apply it to our lives. (3) God will never contradict Himself. His Word is absolute, unchanging truth (Psalm 119:160; James 1:17). There are apparent contradictions (e.g., salvation by faith in Ephesians vs. salvation by faith + works in James) but there's always an explanation because God never contradicts Himself.
2. Context, Context, Context, one of the key things you must keep in mind is Context. If you want to know what a verse/passage means, look at its context. You're constantly asking, Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How? about the verse's/passage's immediate and surrounding context. You can consult other portions of Scripture as secondary support or collaboration, but your initial meaning must not come from another unrelated passage or book; it must first come from its own immediate and surrounding context.
3. Study Meditate on God's Word regularly, the goal of God's Word is not to study it, but to live it (Matthew 7:24-27). Yes, you need to study it, i.e., you need to know what it means, but you also need to know how it applies to your life. Therefore you need to contemplate God's Word in a life-engaging, life-altering manner. That is, you need to *meditate* on God's Word so that you can live it (Joshua 1:8). God the Father and God the Son don't want to be subjects you study; they want you to know them intimately so that they can be there 24/7/365 to comfort and guide you every step of the way (John 17:3, 20-26).

4. Learn from those who've gone before you, there have been many others who have diligently studied God's Word and you can benefit from their labor (some of whom have been specifically gifted by God to teach us what it means and how to apply it, Ephesians 4:11-12). There are study Bibles, verse-by-verse commentaries, lexicons, theological works, exegetical works, digital media (e.g., [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org), [thebibleproject.com](http://thebibleproject.com), or even Google's search engine) etc., etc. And you don't have to agree with their theology to benefit from them. The key to benefiting from any resource is this: do not accept everything anyone says about God's Word (including me) as infallible truth. ALWAYS check it against what God actually said in His Word (Acts 17:11). If it's not what God actually said, then it's wrong.

**What is God saying to Gideon and how does it apply to his (and your) life?** In Judges 6 we have an interaction between Jesus and Gideon. As you read this context, you want to ask questions like, "Did God abandon Israel?" "Why did the Midianites prevail over Israel?" "Where are the children of God now living?" "How many nations attacked Israel every year?" "How big were the armies of these nations?" "What did they steal from Israel?" "How did Israel finally respond to these attacks?" "What was the Lord's response to Israel's response?" "Why does the Lord remind them of His past deliverance?" "What does the Lord say is Israel's problem?" "Who is the Angel of the LORD?" "Why is Gideon hiding?" "What's the first thing the Angel of the LORD says to Gideon and why?" "What does the Angel of the LORD call Gideon and why?" "What is Gideon's response and why?" "What 'facts' does Gideon cite to support his argument?" "Whom does he believe delivered Israel into the hands of the Midianites?" "How does the Lord interpret those same 'facts'?" "Who told Gideon all these 'facts'; where did he get this ~~truth~~ lie?" "What does Gideon believe about himself, his life, and the Lord?" .....and as you're asking all these questions, you're also asking, "And what does all this have to do with me; how does this apply to my life?" We don't just want to study; we want to **meditate** on His Word in order to live it. We want the answers the Lord gives to the people in the Bible to fix our problems too.

**A man finds peace in spite of his life's chaos**, this man had been struggling with depression for 50 years. His wife kicked him out of the house. He was fighting with his kids, his wife, and co-workers. He believed God was his Father, that he'd go to heaven when he died, but also that God was mad at him. He was separated from his wife, his kids, and the destiny God had for him. Though he was a Christian, God couldn't help him. He struggled deeply with, "I'm a depressed loser; it's in my DNA." "Bad things will always happen to me." "My wife's gonna leave me" "I'm gonna get fired." "Somehow we're gonna lose all our money." "I've gotta be perfect." "I'm gonna mess this up." Where did he get these ideas about himself, his life, and God? Where else? The "facts" of his life: growing up both his parents made him feel like a loser who would never amount to anything. His father was irresponsible with money and always threatened the family's home and livelihood. Throughout his life, things went wrong, bad things would happen, he'd make bad mistakes. His first marriage not only fell apart but produced a lesbian daughter. Eventually he became a Christian and dove right in, studying the Bible and theology for hours. In the process he gained a lot of knowledge "about" God but never a personal relationship with Him. In fact, because of his miserable life, because of the "facts" of his life he believed God was cursing him. And he'd often scream at God as He cursed and renounced Him. And now his current marriage was a source of stress and anxiety; his wife is difficult to deal with and his kids are such a handful that he's been forced to call the cops. Because of his life (the "facts") he would forever be a giant loser who struggles with depression and repeated failures.

But he decided to seek God's voice and obey it, to do something about what God was saying to him. Both at home and at work God showed him the truth about all those "facts" he believed and it set him free from the anxiety and stress. He felt like he could do no wrong, like he could handle anything and everything both at work and at home.

### III. Conclusion

*And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!" Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?" So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." And the LORD said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man."*