

EQUIPPED: Tough Questions

Chapter 1

Why Do We Really Need to Know What the Bible Says Anyway?

I'm one of *those* people. You know. The ones who have to know *why, what, when, and how*. Maybe you are too?

Think for a moment about every great invention, every cure to disease, every successful business, and every thriving ministry.

Each conceived from questions like, "Why?" and "What if?" and "How?"

Perhaps you've heard of Sir Isaac Newton? He was renowned for formulating the Laws of Motion and Universal Gravitation. But did you know that his quests began by asking simple questions like, "Why does an apple fall from a tree?" and "Why does the moon not fall into the Earth?"

Question-askers are innovators, initiators, trailblazers, world-changers. They don't just aimlessly walk through life ping-ponging from one mistake to the next in hopes of finding the pathway to success - or blindly follow others. Question-askers consciously and consistently ponder the path of their feet, seeking what is right and true, ambitious to be all God created them to be. They ask questions that lead to more questions that ultimately lead to answers.

But studies show that after the age of four, most children stop asking questions. That means the majority of adults are no longer question-askers. And when people stop asking questions, they also stop reflecting on their own lives and why they do what they do, what they should be doing, and how they can make a difference with the life they have been given.

History brims with stories of empty lives, wayward hearts, and whimsical ways. God's people are no exception. Threaded throughout Scripture we find the children of God repeating the same prodigal performance on the stage of their lives time and time again.

God would enter the scene in surprising and obvious ways to work on their behalf. He would fight for them, deliver them from bondage, or set them free from some sort of self-imposed

situation. He would speak to them through the prophets and call them to back to Himself...to follow His will...to follow His Word. And with thankful hearts and determined minds, they'd yield themselves to His call, knowing that His love for them was not only unmerited, but also unconditional.

Unfortunately, their commitment to God's Covenant lasted about as long as a Broadway show and they'd exit stage-right, and walk away from the role they were born to play.

In Hosea 4:6, God tells us, *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."*

Hosea lived in a day of spiritual collapse, moral corruption, and political pandemonium. The government had institutionalized idolatry and compelled the people to breach their covenantal relationships with God. The people forsook God, embraced sin, and watched as political leaders plundered the laws of the land.

It sounds a lot like our world today. Does it not?

God says His people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Which means His people perish, cease, are cut off, are brought to silence, and are undone because of lack of knowledge, perception, discernment and skill.

The reason God's people live defeated lives, cling to complacent and casual Christianity, are enamored with cultural Christianity, and talk about how they love Jesus while living like they don't even know Him, is because God's people cease...are brought to silence...are perishing...are undone because they have no knowledge...no perception...no discernment...and no skill about what God's Word says about doctrinal truths or moral or social issues of the day.

And since we really don't know what we don't know, isn't it time we start asking questions? Isn't it time we start looking to God's Word for answers instead of simply listening to what someone says or what someone writes?

We need to know what God's Word says because we only get one opportunity to get this thing called life right. We only get one chance to make a difference in the lives of people on this planet. This is not a dress rehearsal for something else. This is the role we were born to play. Oh, that we'd be question-askers - so that we could be God-lovers, Jesus-followers, Word-obeyers, and difference-makers.

But first you have to know what you believe and why.

Let's begin by getting to know ourselves a bit better. Take a few minutes and answer the questions below. That will help you create your own personal *Knowledge of Scripture* inventory.

- 1. Do you think that you have a clear understanding of what the Bible says (not what you think or have heard) about how to be saved?**
- 2. Can you lead someone to the Lord using the Bible?**
- 3. What are some things about salvation that you are unsure of or would like to know more about from Scripture?**
- 4. Share some things you or other people (lost and saved) believe that are not rooted in Scripture.**
- 5. Why do you think so many Christians live defeated lives?**
- 6. Do you think that most Christians know how to study the Word of God?**
- 7. Share about your own personal quiet time in the Word and in prayer. Also share about some of the ways you personally study God's Word.**
- 8. List some doctrinal teachings or culture issues that you would like to know more about from a biblical perspective.**
- 9. Review the Table of Contents and compare each lesson with the list you created from question 8. Then go back to question 8 and circle those topics that we will be covering in this study and highlight those that aren't listed. (This will give you your own "To-Study" list to do after you finish this study.)**

The questions above were designed to serve as a mirror of sorts. Mirrors have a way of showing us the good, the bad, and the ugly. Peeking into the portals of our souls is an important part of not only understanding where we are, but also showing us where we need to go.

That's what I hope the nine questions you just answered will do for you. Help you really stop and think about what you know and what you don't know - so that you won't become like Hosea described... someone who is destroyed, perishes, or is brought to silence because of lack of knowledge or discernment.

It's crucial to know what you believe. But it's equally necessary to know why. If what you believe is not based on a precept-upon-precept study of God's Word, then what you believe may not be what Scripture really presents as Truth.

Not long after I became a Christian, I scurried into church on a Wednesday night, situated myself in the perfect pew with the perfect view of the pastor whose every word I would hang on. He was oh-so wise and Scripture just oozed from every pore of his being. He knew God's Word like no one I knew. He would stand on the stage and bellow out verses by memory and then direct your attention to a supporting verse and never even glance at his notes.

And then he said something I will never forget. Something that changed the trajectory of my Christian experience from that day forward.

"Do NOT believe what I am telling you is true!"

My heart started racing and my body grew limp.

I didn't understand. How could I not believe him? Why would I not believe him?

And before I could process another thought, he said it again.

"Listen to me people! I do NOT want you to believe what I am telling you is true!"

What? Did he just say it again? I don't understand!

And then he continued...

"It is your responsibility to KNOW what God's Word says. You need to study it like your very life depends upon it, because it does. Don't believe me or any other preacher standing behind a pulpit. Study God's Word precept upon precept and find out what it says for yourself."

I swallowed hard as my heart slowed down to an almost normal beat and the spiritual lightbulb that went on in my head, I'm absolutely sure, became visible to all.

It's up to me! I'm the one who needs to know what this Book says! I get it!

What if what I've been told all my life is wrong? How will I know? What if what they say on the radio doesn't line up with Scripture? How will I know? What if the voices I hear at work every day begin to wear me down? How will I stand? And on what will I stand? What if the world tells me I have the right to act a certain way or do a certain thing? How will I know if they're right or wrong?

I already had an insatiable appetite for God's Word. But that day I became more convinced and more committed than ever. He was right. He may not always get it right. And he's not the only pastor I'd ever listen to or the only voice I'd ever hear. I was responsible to search the Scriptures myself. Pastors and Bible teachers are fallible, but God isn't fallible. And His Word to you and me! An amazing gift!

Truth-telling, love-exuding, beautiful, powerful, life-changing, joy-giving, purpose-presenting, righteousness-revealing, deep, profound, unchangeable, Truth. And He's written it to us. Why wouldn't I want to know it...deep down know it for myself?

Galvanized by the gutsy words of a man who treasured and taught God's Word well, I embraced my passion as more than just something that consumed me in that season, it became something I was compelled to do for a lifetime. I understood that if I was going to be strong in the Word, and know what I believed and why, then I needed to do some major digging on my own.

It became a lifelong resolution to make knowing His Word my responsibility and I'm still learning more about who He is, what His Word says, what He calls me to, who I am in Christ, and how to live this life to fulfill His will for the days He has given me under the sun.

So, for the sake of helping us all sidestep our tendency to enjoy the simple spoon-feeding of God's Word, this study of *What the Bible Really Says About...* is designed to drive us to a steadfast, enthusiastic, and systematic study of the Word of God. I'll share some verses that will lead you in the right direction, but I'm asking you to invest in your own personal knowledge of God's Word.

For those of you who may not have some of the study tools we will be using, I will provide the necessary information as well. Throughout this study, I'm going to ask you to read the Word, study the context precept upon precept, and answer some pertinent questions that will help you in your journey.

The goal is to get Word-strong! Faith-strong! Jesus-strong! No spoon-fed sistahs here! No way! No how!

As a note, I will be primarily using the NKJV and will often include the verses or links to the verses for translation cohesiveness in both the NKJV and the Amplified Classic Edition. If you use a NKJV, you will be able to make notes and jot down how the Lord speaks to you in your Bible. If not, you may want to either purchase one or look up your verses from the links provided to BibleGateway.com. You can use BlueletterBible.org or YouVersion.com.

Oh... and please note: *You can create your own notebook on your computer or through the printable PDF's. And you will also have continuous access to the video library that will contain 5 to 15 minute introductory study lessons for each session.*

This is designed for individual and group study. Doing the online pilot study with us or doing it on your own will, no doubt, ground and equip you in the Word. Please be sure to share it with your friends and your teachers to use for future small groups studies. Online studies will have links to verses provided.

Read the following verses and beside each verse, explain why it is important to study, know, and live out God's Word.

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

- Romans 10:17

- Hebrews 4:12

- Isaiah 40:8

- Psalm 119:9

DIG DEEPER

For deeper understanding, look up key words and unfamiliar words in the Concordance. You can dig even deeper by examining those words in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament* and the *New Testament*. (Both resources are published by AMG Publishers.)

There's so much more, but the verses above arm us with what a healthy dose of studying God's Word can do for us. When it comes to the Word of God, there's always more.

Below are 5 ways God's Word affects our lives and why we need to consistently and intentionally study it.

1. To protect your faith and your family

Read through Colossians 2:8 below and circle the following:

- * What Scripture tells you to beware of
- * Through what means someone may try to deceive you
- * According to what
- * Not according to who

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

Now review how this same verse reads in the Amplified Bible’s Classic Edition. In the lines provided below the verse, explain how the study of God’s Word can protect you from being *cheated* or *carried off as spoil* (made captive):

“See to it that no one carries you off as spoil or makes you yourselves captive by his so-called philosophy and intellectualism and vain deceit (idle fancies and plain nonsense), following human tradition (men’s ideas of the material rather than the spiritual world), just crude notions following the rudimentary and elemental teachings of the universe and disregarding [the teachings of] Christ (the Messiah).”

How did simply reading this one verse in the Amplified broaden your understanding?

Now read Ephesians 4:14 and explain *why* and *how* you must protect yourself and your family from being deceived by *every wind of doctrine*. Make note of any ways that you and/or your family may have experienced *exposure to* and the *effects of* false doctrine or a personal misunderstanding of Scripture.

“that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting”

Now look at 2 Timothy 3:1-7 and circle every characterization of behavior that is mirrored in our modern-day culture.

“1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Verse 6 begins with the phrase, *For of this sort*. Describe what sort Paul is referring to.

Explain where *this sort* goes and who their targets are.

The Amplified Classic Edition says it this way...

“6 For among them are those who worm their way into homes and captivate silly and weak-natured and spiritually dwarfed women, loaded down with [the burden of their] sins [and easily] swayed and led away by various evil desires and seductive impulses.”

In the original language, *gullible* means *little* or silly. These silly, little, weak-natured women were described as *loaded down with sins*. They were the opposite of everything I want to be. Instead of strong, they were weak. Instead of living an overcoming life, they were overcome by their own sin.

This sort seemed to be well versed in the slimy serpent’s tactics of deception. Just as he slithered his wicked way into the life of Eve in Genesis 3, these creepers wormed their way into the lives of the women mentioned in 2 Timothy. They’re still creeping, crawling, slithering, and worming their way into the lives of women today.

The thing is, they might be vile but they certainly aren't ignorant. They're crafty, conniving, and cunningly convincing. They know that if they can get to the woman, they have a good chance of getting to the family. That's what happened to Adam.

Read the Genesis 3:1-6 account of The Fall.

"1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."

- Who was the deceiver? _____
- Who was deceived? _____
- Who disobeyed? _____

1 Timothy 2:14 reminds us what Genesis 3 reveals. It was the woman who was deceived, not the man. Adam willfully chose to disobey. Eve was deceived.

I don't want to be a silly little woman. The kind of woman who is ever learning but never able to come to the truth. She's the woman who believes the lies of the enemy and the insecurities of her own heart. She's the woman who is laden down with the burden of her own sin - looking for relief and longing for release. Instead of seeking the truth, she willingly swallows the lies.

Searching but never finding. Longing to be filled but always feeling empty.

Desperate for peace, hope, joy. The stuff that Jesus-filled lives are made of. The stuff silly little women can never possess.

I've hovered here in this precarious place because this is where women live and the enemy lurks. The doorsteps of your home is the gateway to the ones you love - to your heart - to your husband's heart - to your children's hearts.

*The enemy of
your soul is
the enemy of
your home.*

Make no mistake about it. The enemy of your soul is the enemy of your home. He's seeking silly little gullible women who will fall prey to his schemes so he can prey on those they love.

These are the days for strong women who know what they believe and why. Women who don't try to bear their sins alone or cling to them as idols. Women who know whom they've believed and that Jesus is able to save, forgive, set free, sanctify, and send out on mission those who surrender to and trust in Him. These are the days for strong gutsy women who willingly relinquish their all to the one who gave His all for them.

Jesus-women. Women who guard their homes and guard their own hearts.

We need to be women who are committed to knowing what we believe and why, because our faith and the faith of our families, is at stake.

2. To know how to answer opposition

Read 2 Timothy 2:23-26 and answer the following questions.

What are the two things we are told to avoid?

Describe the characteristics of a servant of the Lord.

When we share truth with people, what is the ultimate goal?

Those who have been taken captive by the enemy do what?

What type of disposition should we have when we respond to others and why?

How does knowing God's Word well help us to answer those who oppose us?

Read 1 Peter 3:15-18.

In your own words, describe what this passage is telling us to do.

Look at how the Amplified Classic Edition expands verse 15...

“Always be ready to give a logical defense to anyone who asks you to account for the hope that is in you, but do it courteously and respectfully.”

Explain how you might prepare to give a *logical defense* to questions, opposition, or accusations.

Have you already encountered circumstances in which others have opposed your faith, questioned your beliefs, or wrongly accused you of something? If so, please describe below.

In verse 18, Jesus stands as our example of suffering insults and opposition. It comes with the territory. But the goal is to point them to Christ remembering that we were in need of forgiveness too. (Romans 5:8)

How does Christ’s example help us deal with suffering for our faith?

3. To be equipped to reach and teach others

Look at Matthew 28:19-20. It’s a familiar passage but there’s something we often miss. Let’s not miss it this time.

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
Amen.”*

Years ago, I heard a pastor once say, “When you see the word ‘therefore’ you need to see what it’s there for.” That means check it out in context. So, let’s take a minute to do that.’

Who does Matthew 28:16-17 say Jesus was talking to? _____

How many were there? _____

Did all eleven believe? _____

What and/or why do you think some of them doubted?

Now that you’ve examined what *therefore* is there for, let’s turn our attention back to what is commonly called The Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20.

In this passage, we are given a *to-do list* of sorts and a guarantee. Basically 4 action items and a promise. List them on the lines below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

There’s a command to go, to make disciples, to baptize them when they become disciples, and to teach them all that Jesus has commanded us.

There’s also a beautiful and powerful promise of His relentless and constant presence with us as we obey His Word.

But oh-so-sweetly tucked in this power-packed passage of Scripture is an intrinsic decree that is often overlooked. One I don’t want you to miss. Making disciples means you must first make converts. To teach them, you must first reach them.

I think if we were to narrow down the Great Commission and, ultimately, God's call on the life of every believer, it would be summed up in five words...

Reach them and teach them!

It's what the Great Commission is all about.

Our goal as Christians should be to do everything we can to intentionally reach people for Christ and to competently teach those who know Him.

That's where studying God's Word comes in. We can't teach what we don't know. In the same way that we can't pass on a faith we don't possess, we also can't convey what we don't comprehend.

The Great Commission's intrinsic call is to *reach* people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But we're also called to *teach* those who become Christians. We are designated with a Divine decree to instruct each other in the Word. To teach believers how to know God more - who we are in Christ - the promises that are ours - the way God calls us to live - the foundational doctrines of the faith - and how to read, study, and apply God's Word.

Make a list of those whom you are praying for and trying to reach for Christ.

Describe how you can or are you fulfilling the Great Commission by reaching and teaching others.

Please reread 2 Timothy 2:25-26 and focus on the ultimate goal of responding to those who oppose, insult, or wrongly accuse you. What are we hoping to accomplish and why is being adequately equipped in the Word so important?

Look carefully at Hebrews 5:12-14 and describe what is expected of those who are saved.

How would you rate your spiritual maturity when it comes to your readiness to reach and teach others?

Immature Mature Very Mature
 Somewhat Immature Somewhat Mature Unsure

What are some areas in which you personally need to grow so that you'll be ready to reach others with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and teach them the foundations of the faith?

DIG DEEPER

For those of you who want to learn how to use the Bible and lead someone to Christ, here's an easy way to create a Romans Road map. It's easy peasy. All you will have to remember is the first verse you will take them to. I'm going to share a simple version of the Romans Road below. You can add other verses if you'd prefer, but this will get you started and help you share the Gospel from the Word of God.

- Open your Bible to Romans 3:23 (this is the only verse you will need to remember)
- In your Bible, next to Romans 3:23, write Romans 6:23
- In your Bible, next to Romans 6:23, write Romans 5:8

- In your Bible, next to Romans 5:8, write Romans 10:9-10
- In your Bible, next to Romans 10:9-10, write Romans 10:13

And there ya go! It's that simple. Just memorize Romans 3:23 and you're on your way.

And here's another tip: When you're sharing how to be saved from the Bible, turn your Bible towards the one you're sharing with and ask them to read it themselves. This will help them personally see what God's Word says.

4. To live the way God's Word tells you to live

Read James 1:22-25.

"22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."

Describe what happens to someone who hears the Word of God but does not do what it says.

What does this passage say about those who are doers of the Word?

Did you notice that the doer is blessed in what he does? The blessing of doing God's Word is found in *the doing of it*. The works are blessed because they are initiated in submission to and according to His Word and His will.

Look at Psalm 90:17 in the Amplified Classic Edition...

"17 And let the beauty and delightfulness and favor of the Lord our God be upon us; confirm and establish the work of our hands—yes, the work of our hands, confirm and establish it."

Who establishes and confirms the work of our hands? _____

Explain why it is important that our works be confirmed and established by God and how that relates to being a doer, not just a hearer of God's Word.

Here's the beautiful and powerful parallel: When our hearts are aligned with the Word of God our works overflow from the will of God - those works are then blessed because they were birthed in the heart of the Living God. But in order to be a doer of God's Word, we have to *know* God's Word. Rightly divide it. Study it precept upon precept - in context. If not, what we believe to be true and the works that we do will flow from our preconceived concept of Scripture instead of the whole counsel of God.

I open the pages of Holy Writ much like I unwrap a gift. Sometimes like a wide-eyed child. Frantically prying the pages back, anxious to see what's inside. Other mornings, I hug it to my chest, breathe it in, then tenderly peel open the cover, gently sliding my hand over the each page like the blind reading Braille. Maybe somehow my fingers will feel what it says. This amazing gift!

So, why do we really need to know what the Bible says? Because we *get* to. And because knowing what it says is about knowing *Who* says it. And because knowing His Word is knowing what to believe, how to live, and how to help others know Jesus, know what to believe, how to live, and how to help others...and so on, and so on.

And that, sweet friends, is how faith flings from one generation to the next. Because we know what we believe and why.

