

Chapter 15 - Study Your Bible

1. Take a few minutes to reflect on the story.
 - A) In Nicodemus' time, the rabbis studied the Torah and depended on the wisdom of other scholars to help them understand it. Their dissection of the text gave them a clinical understanding but did not open their eyes to the big picture. Compare and contrast this to your own Bible study.
 - B) Consider the impact the ministry of Jesus had on the serious Jews of the 1st century. No wonder Nicodemus sought a personal interview with Him! Think about one of the teachings of Jesus that has unsettled you enough to make you do some serious study to understand it.
 - C) Today, Christians are used to the Holy Spirit illuminating the Scriptures as they read and study it. Try to identify at least one or two times when you were aware that God really spoke clearly to you through His word with fresh insight, correction or direction.

2. I reserved the consideration of Bible study for the latter half of *Refresh* because so often, paired with prayer, it usually comes first. We tend to nod our heads and think: *Yeah, yeah, I know that. Tell me something interesting.* I hope that by this point in the book you've been really applying the Bible to your life and you're willing to look at Bible study and its role in your life with fresh eyes. In a few words, describe how your view of the Bible and its impact on you has matured.

3. The usual approach to Bible study, in our busy culture, is to take a few verses and "squeeze the juice" as best we can - that is, find something we can apply to our life that day. Then we close our Bibles and get on with it. If you're like me, usually within a few hours you've pretty well forgotten about it. This approach, while certainly not "bad," isn't entirely adequate because in using it, we tend to be like the Pharisees of Jesus' day concentrating on details and missing the big picture. Jot down your thoughts on how Bible study should affect *the way you think*, not just *the things you do*.

4. Reread the verses quoted in the “Biblical Background” section. Think about how they challenge the way we think about the Bible and its place in our lives. Write down your understanding of the role of the Scriptures in our daily lives. (Feel free to consult other passages as well.)

5. Most Christians depend heavily on sermons for their spiritual food. By now, as you’ve made your way through *Refresh*, you’ve become aware that God has some things to say directly to you through His word. Describe the difference in the “nutrition level” between a sermon, which we could think of as prepackaged food, and your own study, which is more like cooking from scratch.

6. In this chapter, I mention the importance of paying attention. Spend at least a few minutes doing some independent research on techniques for focussing your attention and make some notes. If you’re doing this as a group study, share your insights with the others.

7. One thing that sometimes confuses people is the relationship between *facts* and *truth*. All the *truth* we need is in the Bible, however, it doesn't provide all of the *facts* we might like (think of creation). Sometimes it includes *facts* which seem at odds with the *truth* (think of specific stories like Judah and Tamar). Explain how focussing on *facts* can hinder our understanding of the *truth*. Discuss this in your group or start a discussion online at www.fbhinternational.com/refresh.

8. Repetition is a valuable tool for helping us to remember things. Make a point of sharing what you've learned from this chapter with at least three people. Jot down their names and keep track of your conversations. (If you're in a group, group members don't count!)

For Group Leaders:

This chapter is one in which you may notice some group members nodding off because they already know that all Christians should study their Bibles. This is true, but it is also true that not all Christians do a very good job of it.

Take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with some of the more accessible Bible study methods and give your group members information on where to find them.

As an extra resource for this session, you might want to introduce how to use Study Bibles, commentaries, lexicons, Bible dictionaries and other study helps. This is especially true if you have some new believers in the group.

You might want to consider choosing a passage and studying it together to demonstrate a few techniques that people can use on their own.