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Blessings in Christ

I want you to imagine that you found out that a distant relative has passed, left a huge fortune and that you were an heir. How carefully would you read the will? In order to know what was legally yours you would be crazy not to study it meticulously. It is exactly the same as God's word. The Bible is not only a supernatural record of God's thoughts, insights of divine wisdom, history and prophecy, it is also a record of what God has already provided for you through the cross of Jesus Christ.

Through the cross of Jesus, God extravagantly provided for all your needs before you were even alive therefore we need to know this provision and access it by faith. Remember it is primary to know that we are created for God's good pleasure and His purposes and as we *obey Him* we have access to all of heavens resources.

So what happened on the cross? There was a divine exchange. God took all your bad stuff and provided for you 'the riches of His glory'. We access all of this through faith! Here are just some of His provisions for us.

'For He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to become sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.'
2 Corinthians 5:21

Through a divine exchange, Jesus took our sin and gave us His righteousness - you cannot earn it is a free gift that you believe and receive by faith.

'He was wounded for our transgressions (sin) and bruised for our iniquities (sin) the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and by His stripes (severe injuries resulting from being beaten with a leather and steel whip) we are healed.'

Isaiah 53:5

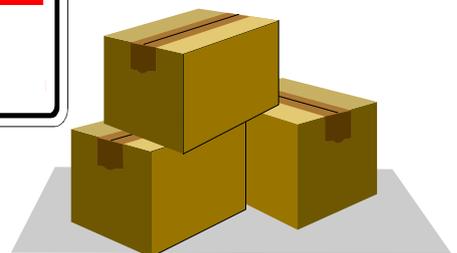


All the sickness of humanity was upon Jesus through the scourging He received. All healing for your life has already been acquired for you; you cannot earn it, you just need to believe it and receive (claim) it by faith.

'For you know the grace of our lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich (in all things) He became poor that through His poverty we would become rich (in all things).'

2 Corinthians 8:9

The riches bestowed upon us by Jesus death upon the cross include all areas of life: wisdom, favour, finance, healing, etc.



Ignorance

With this in mind we need to get ourselves acquainted with this 'legal document' - the Bible.

First you need the knowledge, the Bible says,

***My people are destroyed
for lack of knowledge...***
Hosea 4:6

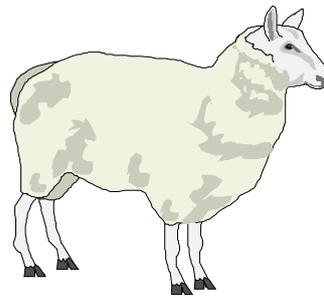
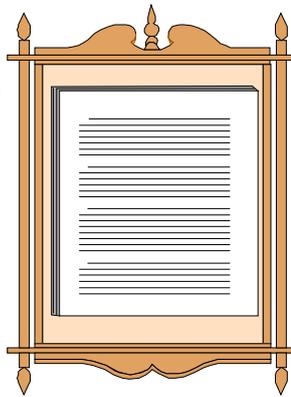
Illustration...

The story is told of a famous preacher called Charles Spurgeon visiting a old woman who was dying. She was living in abject poverty and as he spoke to her he noticed a framed letter on the bedroom wall. He stepped closer and read the letter, it was written by the woman's previous employer, a wealthy landowner, she had been a his trusted maid and housekeeper.

He enquired why she had placed the letter on the wall and found out that she couldn't read and had placed the letter in the frame on the wall in memory of her much loved employer.

The irony of this story is that the letter was her employer's last will and testament and that he had left his whole estate to her.

She had been incredibly wealthy, but living in absolute squalor because she was ignorant of what was legally hers!



Then we need to meditate on that knowledge...to think over it again and again and again (just as a sheep chews the cud) until it goes deep down into our spirit.

Then we need to speak it and act it out. Sometimes we say,

'I want to understand it first then do it'

Whereas most of the Bible works on the premise of,

"If you do it then you will understand it".

Step 1

Begin to get to know what God says in His word through systematic study.

In 1st Timothy 4:13 Paul encouraged Timothy to *'give attention to reading'* Scripture. He later he urges Timothy to progress from reading to studying the word,

'Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.'

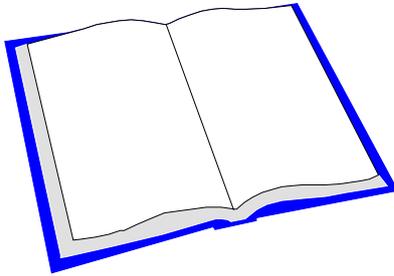
2 Timothy 2:15

A good place to start your study of the scripture is in the gospels for they give you a clear picture of who Jesus is and what he teaches about the Kingdom of heaven.

Getting to Know His Word

Two or three chapters a day would be a practical first goal to achieve. Some Bibles have study guides and it is good to read the introductory overview of the book first so that everything is read within a context and doesn't seem too abstract.

Once the gospels have been read and studied you could proceed with the book of Acts. This is a historical account of the way the power of the Holy Spirit moved through the church and shook the known world at the time. It is inspiring and easy to follow.



Then you should read Paul's letters (epistles) to the church for they discuss the risen Christ and how we are 'new creatures' in Him. His letters are deep and spiritual but also address practical issues within church life.

Finally you should read the Old Testament starting at Genesis for it speaks of our beginnings as people, reveal much about God, the old covenant and history of Israel.

No one graduates from Bible study until he meets its Author face to face.

Everett Harris

The man whose Bible is falling apart Usually isn't

Step 2

Start to memorise scripture so that you can meditate on it. There are powerful Biblical promises to those who meditate on God's word such as prosperity and success.

'Blessed is the man... his delight is in the law of the Lord (word of God) and in His word he shall meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, his leaf shall not wither and whatever he does shall prosper.'

Psalm 1:1-3

First find Scriptures that relate to your situation i.e. fear, anxiety, financial lack, protection, God's love, assurance of your salvation. There are several good resources to help you find where to find passages that relate to your need. The concordance, or topical index at the back of your Bible is a good place to start.



Also of benefit are passages of Scripture that personally encourage you i.e. the benefit of meditating in the word, victory over sinful habits, genuine love, how to enjoy the treasures of wisdom.

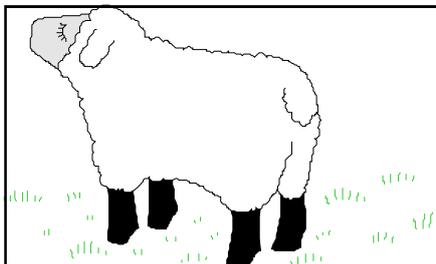
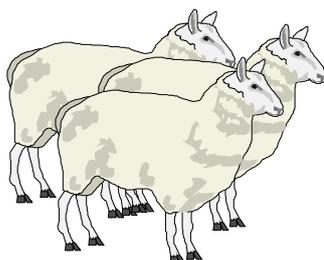
Step 3

Once we have located the appropriate Scriptures to memorise then we can start to meditate on them over and over. Many Eastern religions subscribe that you empty your mind when you meditate however Biblical meditation is built on the solid foundation of focusing on God and his word repetitiously.

All through Scripture God's people are referred to as sheep, this was not by accident but by design.

Sheep have a complex digestive system comprising of four different chambers in their stomach. When sheep graze, their food goes through these chambers with indigestible matter rejected while digestible matter is turned into cuds that are periodically regurgitated back into the mouth for additional chewing and salivation. This allows sheep to graze more quickly in the morning and then fully chew and digest feed later in the day.

When we feed on God's word we need to graze in the morning before our daily commitments (ie work or study) and then periodically meditate (chew the cud) throughout the day in order to properly digest what we have read. Studying, memorizing and meditation are skills that are developed over time but are indispensable if we want to walk in faith and the power of the Holy Spirit.



If you do this consistently it will literally change your life,

'...(you) will be transformed by the renewing of your mind'

Romans 12:2

You will overcome all obstacles,

'For whatever is born of God overcomes the world and this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith.'

1 John 5:4.

The battle ground of the Christian walk is in the mind for there are spiritual forces that want to bombard us with thoughts that are contrary to Scripture. We are clearly taught

to 'cast down these contrary thoughts' and bring our thoughts into line with Christ.

'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (weak, worldly) but mighty in God (spiritual, supernatural), with them we pull down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...'

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

In other words whatever you feed (focus on) will live (thrive) and whatever you starve (crucify) will die. If you overcome in your thought life you *'will be transformed by the renewing of your mind'*.

In the original Greek language, the word *'transformed'* is based on the our word , *metamorphosis*, such as when a caterpillar goes into a cocoon and comes out as a transformed butterfly.

Bringing It Home

Then there are the amazing words of Jesus,

'If you abide (remain) in Me and My words abide (remain) in you, you shall ask what you desire and it shall be done for you.'
John 15:7

God's promises are incredible but conditional - embrace due process and you will be blown away. If you 'work the word' the word will work for you. Having a gym membership will give you no benefit unless you use it for regular exercise, the same applies for spiritual growth.

Questions

1. Name three areas that God has promised you blessings as a result of Jesus' work on the cross.

2. How do we access all the blessings God has for us?

3. From our discussion in this lesson why is it important to read the Bible?

4. What are the three steps to appropriating God's promises?

5. Where is the battleground of the Christian walk?

6. If you could ask any question about your new Christian experience what would it be?

Write down these Scriptures and begin to memorize them.

What God says about...

Fear: 2 Timothy 1:7

Anxiety: Philippians 4:6,7

Healing: 1 Peter 2:24

Finances: 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, Philippians 4:19

Forgiveness of sins: Matthew 6:12, 1 John 1:9

Prayer: Matthew 6:7-15, Mark 11:22-24, John 16:23 -24