



Rooted

GROW DEEP. LIVE STRONG.

Rooted in the Word of God

9 “For as heaven is higher than earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.¹¹ so my word that comes from my mouth will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do.”

Isaiah 55:9 and 11

1. What is God saying?

This first question is essential. First, it is so important that we are seeking the truth that God has revealed. It is a common theory in our culture that truth is relative. 2 Peter 1:20-21 tells us that when God spoke to humans it wasn't their responsibility to use their opinions to discover truth. God communicated His Word through them for the purpose of being understood clearly.

When we approach scripture in order to understand what God is saying, the are helpful to keep in mind:

Every passage of Scripture has an intended and discoverable truth—one correct interpretation *(This doesn't mean we won't see truth we haven't seen before. It means the truth is universal.)*

The Bible is its own reference and commentary. *(God's Word is consistent. Trust that the truth in God's Word will be confirmed and clarified within His Word, not internally contradicted.)*

The First Mention: The first time something is mentioned in scripture it provides a key to its meaning throughout the rest of the Bible. Look for prior occurrences of what you are studying.

Repetition: All scripture is God-breathed. Therefore, when something is repeated in the Bible it is done so because of its importance. This calls for our attention.

Read in context. We don't serve ourselves well by forming a habit of only reading single verses. To ensure we are getting the understanding we need, we should always read in context. This means reading a longer section of scripture surrounding one key verse.

Commentaries and other books are good resources. We, in America, have great access to many brilliant authors. However, these are secondary to the Bible. Always use God's Word with such writings.

The most important truths that God reveals are those that helps us understand Him. This could be truth about His character, nature, and how He acts. Any truth we learn about God helps us grow in our understanding of other scripture and life.

Methods to Approach Bible Study:

There are many methods that you can use to approach Bible study, but we are going to look at 3, and their advantages.

Topic/Theme Study:

This method focusses on one topic or theme in scripture. Many times this method is helpful, because it produces a deeper understanding across scripture on a topic or theme. You are able to search much of the Bible, which brings confirmation that you have arrived at God's intended meaning. This is often attractive to those who struggle in certain areas (ie forgiveness, worry, hurt, etc). You can also study more theological themes. For example "incarnation". This is the truth of Jesus being both man and God. In studying this many come to grasp the truth of how Jesus understands them (having lived this life), but also how God's Word in the flesh (Jesus) gives us the perfect example to follow. Additionally, we understand the Gospel as the good news that God sent, not that we created.

Character Study:

Sometimes we learn truth better when we can see it, through watching a person's life. Seeing someone's successes and failures often helps us to see ourselves. There are many people in scripture that show us real life examples of what God is teaching and how He teaches. When studying someone's life we still must look for what God is saying first. Then we can study their life to help us see how God proves Himself, and to see how we should put God's truth to action. Remember, God is the same then, now and forever. You may have heard someone say that God "can do it again". Often we forget that God hasn't changed, and will likely work the same way again. However, God doesn't have to exactly repeat Himself to be consistent.

Book/Chapter Study:

Studying a book or large section of scripture is very beneficial. Studying this way helps you see a more complete view of God's truth over various topics and across the lives of different people. Each book of the Bible has a unique theme, an original audience, and a time it was originally inspired in. Much of this is what we refer to as "context". For example, consider the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)

Matthew: Written from a Jewish perspective to show that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.

Mark: Written to emphasize Jesus as the Son of God through his actions and words. He also shows the emotions of Jesus.

Luke: Written as part one of two. Part two to this Gospel is the Book of Acts. Luke was written with great detail, showing Jesus as human and God. The detail serves as proof of Jesus' identity and effectiveness of his ministry.

John: Written to emphasize the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we should respond to him. "Knowing" and "Believing" are key terms in this Gospel. Almost 90% of the content of this Gospel is unique to the book of John.

Genesis was written to show God as creator, God's resistance to sin, and the promise of redemption. Exodus shows God as a freedom giver. Hebrews reminds us that when we struggle with "religion" we should choose the relationship with Jesus. James is super practical in wisdom for living the Christian life. It is helpful to do some research on the book before you begin reading and studying.