

**Searching the Scripture**

Proverbs 2:1-5

Last Sunday, from the Apostle Paul's prayer for the church in Ephesus, we learned three lessons that have to be applied to our prayer life. First, we are not supposed to lose our eternal Kingdom perspective in our prayers - Our prayer is part of a whole community on earth and in heaven. We also must pray for the strength of our inner being or the renovation of our hearts - We have to long for the transformation of our hearts. Finally, we have to pray to deepen our understanding of Christ's love - We are to grow in our love as we grow in our understanding of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. These three have to be offered to God constantly in our prayers.

The second Means of Grace we will explore today is "[Searching the Bible](#)," which involves reading, meditating on, and studying the Scriptures.

"The American Bible Society's "[State of the Bible USA 2024](#)" survey reveals a steady decline in Bible reading among Americans, with Generation Z (born 1997–2012) being the least engaged and least likely to value the Bible. Since 2011, Bible engagement has dropped from 50% to 38-39% as of 2024, with the most significant decline occurring in 2022. Engagement is defined as reading the Bible at least 3-4 times a year."

Let me quote Martin Luther when he wrote the preface to his Old Testament commentary, "[These are the Scriptures which make fools of all the wise and understanding, and are open only to the small and simple, as Christ says in Matthew 11:25](#) (["I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants."](#)). [Therefore dismiss your own opinions and feelings, and think of the scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines which can never be sufficiently explored, in order that you may find divine wisdom which God here lays before you in such simple guise as to quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling clothes and the manger in which Christ lies.](#)" Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 35, 236.

We are easily tempted to depend on our own experience, wisdom, and knowledge when we try to make decisions on the affairs of our lives. Think about Job's three friends, Eliphaz([엘리패즈](#)), Bildad([빌대드](#)), and Zophar([조우파아](#)).

Their understanding of Job's suffering is based on their own experiences or their research into what happened in the past.

**"My experience shows that those who plant trouble and cultivate evil will harvest the same."** (Job 4:8 NLT)

**"Just ask the previous generation. Pay attention to the experience of our ancestors."** (Job 8:8 NLT)

One time, Job said, "Why are you torturing me?" Our words of wisdom based on our own experiences can be a tool of torture for others unless we follow God's heart. Job's friends failed to reveal God's compassionate heart toward their suffering friend. They were very judgmental and behaved as if they knew why Job was suffering. This was because they were not guided by God's Word. Instead, they relied on their own wisdom, knowledge, and experiences.

**Today's Scripture teaches us how we should treat the Word of God and the benefits we can get from the Scripture as we fairly deal with the Word of God.**

**Let us look at the benefits of relying on God's Words first.**

**"then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."** (Proverbs 2:5 NRSV)

Here, the fear of the Lord, doesn't mean terror or dread of the Lord but a deep reverence, respect, and awe for our God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (**Proverbs 1:7**) and wisdom (**Psalms 111:10**). Israel was destroyed because of their lack of knowledge and rejection of knowledge of God, according to the prophet Hosea (**Hosea 4:6**). According to **2 Corinthians 7:1**, those who fear the Lord are the ones who pursue God's holiness, rejecting sins that can affect their bodies and spirits. **Proverbs 8:13** states they hate evil, pride, arrogance, evil behavior, and perverse speech. **Psalms 112:1** reveals they are the ones who find great delight in God's words. Furthermore, Jesus Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24 & 30). Therefore, for our character formation and sanctification, we have to engage with the Bible and let the Holy Spirit work on us through the Scripture.

**Then how should we treat God's Words?**

**First, we must honestly examine our *hearts* regarding Scripture.**

**"My child, if you *accept* my words and *treasure* up my commandments within you, *making your ear attentive* to wisdom and *inclining your heart to understanding*,"** (Proverbs 2:1-2 NRSV)

Are we passionate about the Bible? Are we filled with God's Word and guided by His truth so that we can reveal God's wisdom, power, and love in our words and actions? In the Bible, to love God means to obey God's commands. Our love for God and obedience to God are inseparable. That is the consistent message from both the New and Old Testaments.

**"You shall love the Lord your God, therefore, and keep his charge, his decrees, his ordinances, and his commandments always."** (Deuteronomy 11:1 NRSV)

**"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts."** (1 John 5:2-3 NRSV)

To love God, we are to study the Word of God seriously and systematically, applying its teachings to our lives and constantly adjusting our hearts and wills to God's heart and will. If we love God, we read, meditate on, and study the Word of God to obey Him.

**Secondly, we have to check on our *priority* of searching the Scripture above all else.**

**"if you *seek* it like silver and *search for* it as for hidden treasures"** (Proverbs 2:4 NRSV).

In Jesus Christ's parable, there was a man who sold everything he had to purchase a field where he had found hidden treasures (Matthew 13:44). The parable teaches us that we have to place our priority on God's Kingdom. Similarly, searching the Scriptures reflects this commitment. The Bible is waiting for our exploration, and God is eager to reveal His hidden treasures to us. Through these treasures, we can discover God's loving presence, which is God's wisdom and power for our transformation.

**Finally, our search for the Scripture has to be accompanied by our *prayers*.**

**"if you indeed *cry out* for insight and *raise* your voice for understanding"** (Proverbs 2:3 NRSV).

The Holy Spirit has two wings: the Word of God & Prayer. They have to go hand in hand. If you only seek the Word of God and do not pray, you can be easily trapped by legalism, which can lead to a dull and dry spiritual state. If you only pray and do not search the Scripture, you can easily become overly enthusiastic, relying solely on your own experiences. Both legalism and enthusiasm are extreme expressions of spiritual arrogance, causing us to lose sight of God's genuine heart, which is love. Just as a bird cannot fly with only one wing, we need both wings to soar alongside the Holy Spirit.

We cannot understand the Scripture without kneeling before God and without the help of the Holy Spirit. **“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you.”** (John 14:26 NRSV).

Let me share John Wesley's daily schedule during his voyage on a ship called The Simmonds from England to America, which took place between October 1735 and February 1736. The journey from England to Georgia took around 120 days. John Wesley was 32 years old at that time.

<b>4:00-5:00 AM</b>	Private Prayer
<b>5:00-7:00 AM</b>	Bible Study with Companions
<b>After Breakfast</b>	Morning Prayer with about 40 Passengers
<b>9:00-12:00 PM</b>	Study of Biblical Greek or German, Sermon Writing, Reading Religious Books, or Teaching Children
<b>12:00 PM</b>	Accountability Session to Report on Time Usage
<b>After Lunch - 4:00 PM</b>	Reading and Ministering to Others on the Ship
<b>4:00 PM</b>	Public Evening Prayer
<b>5:00-6:00 PM</b>	Private Prayer
<b>6:00-7:00 PM</b>	More Reading to Passengers
<b>7:00-8:00 PM</b>	Moravian Public Service
<b>8:00 PM</b>	Met with Companions for Mutual Exhortation & Instruction
<b>9:00 PM</b>	Bedtime

John Wesley slept for seven hours and prayed for more than four hours every day. If my calculation is correct, he probably spent at least four hours studying the Bible, teaching it, and encouraging others with its messages. He is a prime example for all of us because he maintained a balance between prayer and searching the Scriptures, all while keeping a heart for the people around him. He practiced the Means of Grace intentionally, persistently, and diligently.

Let me show you a diagram from the **“State of the Bible USA 2024”** survey. More than half of American adults (53%) say they wish they read the Bible more. Even among those who are not considered Bible Users - people who interact with the Bible less than three times a year - over one-third express a desire to read it more. This indicates that all is not lost. The majority of Americans still have a desire to engage with the Bible.

How about us? Are we going to join the majority? I'd like to invite you to one of the Bible studies we will have in our church. Sunday Adult Bible study, Tuesday

10 AM Bible Study, which will start on February 4th, and the weekday evening Bible study, which will be launched soon by Karyn Vaughn.