How to Develop Your Daily Bible Study Method

1. Make an appointment with God—set aside a specific time and place to meet with God daily where you can be alone and be free from distractions.

2. Use an easy-to-read version of the Bible. The New King James (NKJV), NIV, or New American Standard (NASB) are all good versions to use.

3. The Bible is God's Word; He is speaking to us. The Lord is the source of the Bible. Scripture contains His thoughts, not man's ideas. We must accept its authority in our lives. God shared His Word with us so we can know Him.

4. Read the Bible prayerfully. We need God's Spirit to open our eyes to spiritual truth. Before you start reading, ask God to feed you spiritually and give you an understanding mind and a receptive heart that is willing to obey Him.

5. Read the Bible purposefully. Don't just pick random passages. Instead, work your way through a book of the Bible. You can also use a Bible reading guide to check off your progress as you make your journey through Scripture.

6. Read the Bible slowly with a questioning, engaged, active mind. A rushed reading of the Bible just to get it done will make it feel like a chore and somewhat useless. Ask questions—Who? What? Where? When? How? Why?

7. Read with a notebook and a pen handy. Write down what the Lord reveals to you or questions you have.

8. Don't get frustrated. In his booklet, *Reading the Bible*, Geoffrey Thomas wrote, *"Do not expect to master the Bible in a day, or a month, or a year. Rather expect often to be puzzled by its contents. It is not all equally clear. Great men of God often feel like absolute novices when they read the Word. The apostle Peter said that there were some things hard to understand in the epistles of Paul (2 Peter 3:16). I am glad he wrote those words because I have felt that often. So do not expect always to get an emotional charge or a feeling of quiet peace when you read the Bible. By the grace of God you may expect that to be a frequent experience, but often you will get no emotional response at all. Let the Word break over your heart and mind again and again as the years go by, and imperceptibly there will come great changes in your attitude and outlook and conduct. You will probably be the last to recognize these. Often you will feel very, very small, because when your eyes close for the last time in death, and never again read the Word of God in Scripture you will open them to the Word of God in the flesh, that same Jesus of the Bible whom you have known for so long, standing before you to take you for ever to His eternal home."*

Getting Something Out of the Bible

As a kid, did you ever read stories of pirates and buried treasure and dream about finding some? How awesome that would be! But what many people don't realize is that we can be treasurer hunters every day. Jesus said, "… every scribe (student of the Scriptures) who is instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings forth out of his treasure things both new and old." (Matthew 13:52 NMB). Christ is saying that as we learn the Word we find treasure! Some might be "old treasures"—nuggets that we are reminded of that we have discovered in the past. Other are "new treasures", fresh revelations that we glean.

At the same time, have you ever read the Bible and felt like you were getting little or nothing out of it? Maybe you completed your allotted amount of chapters from your Bible reading guide or devotional but you found yourself not receiving much spiritual value or inspiration from it. It is like digging for treasure only to come up with an empty hole in the dirt. However, the problem is not with the Bible, it may be the way that we are reading the Bible. We only "read" it. Instead, there is a simple process we can use that helps us find treasure almost every day.

The Process of "SOAP"

When you've been working outside in the dust or with oily engines or working up a sweat through some sort of physical activity, you typically take a shower to get the crud off and feel refreshed. If you just wash up with water, it gets much of the dirt, grime, and stink off, but you don't feel completely clean. Using soap cuts the residue leaving you pure, spotless, and feeling fresh. Spiritually speaking, we need to use some "SOAP". *SOAP* stands for:

S – SCRIPTURE: We must read the Word. Devotionals contain great insights, but they are no substitute for God's Word. Read 1-2 chapters a day or what is listed in your Bible reading guide if you use one. Before you start reading, ask God to show you something.

O – OBSERVATION: Look for something in the passage that stands out. See if there is at least one thing that pops off the page or is meaningful to you. Then write the Scripture reference and your observation down. If you have trouble identifying something, ask these questions about the passage: What did the writer want his audience to know/how did he want them to respond? What does this passage say about God/Jesus? What does it say about humankind? What commands are given? What themes do you see? What's repeated?

A – APPLICATION: This is where it starts to get personal. It is not enough for us to know the Word. We must be doers of the Word (James 1:22). How does the thing you observed apply to your life? Is there an example you need to follow or an error to avoid? Is there a promise to claim or a prayer to pray? Is there some sin to repent of or a command you need to obey? Is there a truth you need to believe or something to thank God for? Let the Holy Spirit show you how the Word relates to your life. Write down a practical way you can apply this truth.

P – PRAY: Now pray about what God revealed in your observation and application (you can write your prayer or speak it aloud). Ask Him to make His living Word (Hebrews 4:12) become living in you. Pray the Scripture over yourself and if it applies, pray it over your family and friends as the Lord impresses them upon you.

Ephesians 5:26 says Christ washes us with the water of Word of God. He uses His Word to cleanse, renew, and refresh us. Reading the Bible with *SOAP* helps cleanse us from the filth of sin and the grime of everyday life that accumulates in our lives. It renews our minds and gives us a fresh walk with Jesus! We become more like Him and that is the greatest treasure of all!