

Study To Show Thyself Approved

By: Sally Hohnberger

As I have read rapidly, thinking that there was so much to read and so little time to learn all I needed to learn, I realized I was unable to retain what I had read. In frustration I sought God's will for me. He reminded me of a friend saying slow down your studies so you can learn faster. Well, that advice was foolishness when I heard it, for wasn't there all these books to read? How could I ever gain all that knowledge if I didn't read quickly? When I felt God was asking me to slow down in this way, I tried it. Friends, reading slower I did learn faster. Grace and virtue attended this method. God led me to practicalize the Biblical precepts and gave guidelines to my personal life, today!

SLOW DOWN YOUR STUDIES MAKE IT PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL

Reading I'll liken unto eating. One can only eat so much at a sitting without causing indigestion, fermentation and problems. As in the physical, so in the spiritual. When I read so quickly, its like swallowing my food without proper chewing. I thought, if I read for hours without stopping, can that do me any more good than eating for hours at a time nonstop? Think about it! In my studies therefore, I saw a need to stop every little while and lay down my fork (book), in order to chew and digest (think/pray about) what I was reading. I must learn to ask and see what is this passage, this topic, teaching **me, now** for what I need. All of us spend too much energy applying the scriptures to others, don't we?

In problem solving I began to see that because I didn't stop to think over what I read, say after each para-

graph and chew what I just read, it created indigestion and confusion in my thinking. I did not retain what I just read. Guilt and despair were common for I wasn't living up to what I just read was God's standard, I didn't know how to obey. I kept vague facts but not concepts of how it was to be practically applied to me **today**.

As I pondered my dilemma it helped me to discover it wasn't more knowledge I needed but rather a decision and application of how to follow after Christ **now** in what I **already knew**. So, it wouldn't hurt me to slow down my reading would it? This is experimental religion. When I cooperated with God in the re-training of my habits of reading, I found it required my surrender first, to do it God's way and second an effort to choose to deny my former inclinations to keep on reading. Then I discovered I would retain what I read. It was very helpful to me. I even began to remember what book and page I had read that was personally meaningful, and life changing to me, where I never did before. I came to realize that this is divinity working with humanity that makes the difference. In changing habits I found I have my part and God has His part. If I don't put forth my effort God cannot add His grace which multiplies my effort and makes the transformation of misconceptions or emotions in my life.

In slowing down, personalizing the instructions to me, asking, "how will this knowledge affect me in my response in a trial with my husband, children, or friend within my home life today?" This made a difference in how I responded. When Jim & I didn't see things the same, I sought God's directions of what to do and He instructed me often according to what I just read. Most

often it began by me surrendering my wrong feelings and emotions for Christ to subdue before I was prepared to respond as Christ would have me do now. In this way Christ was becoming a personal Saviour to me. As a result I responded slower not only to my husband, but to irritation when a conflict of the wills arose between my child and I. I cried out often to God and He helped me know how to handle the various conflicts rightly. My child was brought to a surrendered position before God and he tasted grace in his heart, changing him. What a blessing. This must be the school of Christ! Even my conduct of school academics and will training changed for the better, for Christ was my Principal, leading, guiding and directing me in the way to go. Priorities in life became clear. Home ran smoother, quieter. We all were happier as a result of seeking and surrendering to God's will and way. God gave concrete directions how to do not only the academics successfully for life here, but character development successfully for life now and life eternal.

I found reading God's word and SOP in this way changed my life. God became a real helper to me personally. I found Him to be interested in every detail of my life and had specific counsel and directions for me. I believe this is where primitive Godliness begins. Through this personal relationship with God as my Teacher, interpreting the scriptures to me today, He takes the rightful place as my God. My dependence, my trust and obedience grew from cultivating this one new habit of reading slower, with God.

COLOR CODING SYSTEM

To enhance and direct our minds during our Bible and SOP studies, I have found it helpful to mark neatly and distinctly the differing ideas presented in a color coding manner. For example, one of the greatest lessons I had to learn was the distinction between God's work and my work in working out my salvation. So I marked my part of the equation, what I must do or be in **blue**. Blue represents obedience in the sanctuary. I use **pink** to denote my child's part or anything specific to infants and young children. In marking God's part I used **red**. Red represents the power and blood of Christ which washes away my sins. It also represents His promises, or anything to do with God. This distinction helped me to see I was trying to do God's part and change my desires and emotions, no wonder I couldn't change them. This method of color coding brought this vividly to my mind, so I could cooperate and change my direction of effort.

Orange represents cautions, reproofs, or corrections. **Brown** is used for Satan's wrong ways of life. Brown

highlights the thoughts, words or actions that are evil. Evil is any selfishness. I liken brown to the dirt from which we need to be cleansed. **Green** highlights anything to do with faith. Biblically green denotes faith. **Yellow** is to highlight any information that I find interesting or I want to highlight to be able to find at a later date. I use this color sparingly or it gets hard to read. A **box** around words is used to highlight key words or topics I have a special interest in finding at a quick glance later. The pen I found very useful is the 8 colored Pentel pencil. It marks lightly and does not make all the markings offensive. Discipline yourself to mark sparingly and not everything.

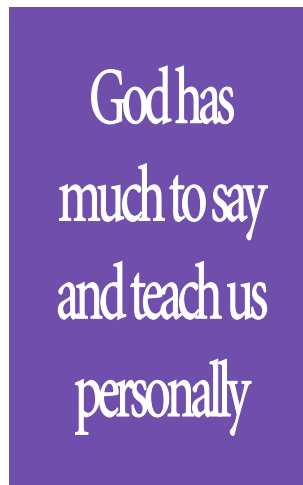
This color coding system, reiterates to my mind God's part and my part, as I read and re-read these passages. This method slows me down and makes me think more. I can find topics and references more easily. Try this system or make up your own. My friend Alane does a similar coding system yet it varies from mine. It will make your study time more meaningful and aids retention of these special truths. It especially helped me see what is my part in cooperating with Christ for my salvation from sin.

3 LITTLE DISCIPLINES TO SELF IN STUDYING

The **first** discipline is to pray before and during my study for divine enlightenment. This is a discipline of recognizing our dependency upon God in order to read and interpret the scriptures aright. Without Christ we will formulate concepts but not necessarily **heavenly** concepts and principles. We cannot learn properly without Christ as our Teacher leading us continually.

The **second** discipline is to make a personal application through reflection upon what we have just read. This is not just at the end of an hours worth of reading. But rather stopping often, at times it may be necessary to stop after each verse or a sentence within that verse that strikes the conscience. Stop to let God instruct you. By slowing down in this way, you will actually learn faster, and remember more. Stopping to reflect upon your reading for personal application to yourself and your family today, is worth more than reading large volumes of information in a superficial, fact gathering mode or for reproof of others! God has much to say and teach us personally. We need to slow down our reading in order to allow Christ to truly lead us and be our Teacher.

I want you to know this way didn't come natural to me. I had to deny old ways and inclinations, and so will you. My reading seemed awkward when I first stopped after each paragraph to discipline myself to slow down. To develop a new habit requires repetition before it be-



comes a dominating, natural habit. However God will kindle our minds to think differently. Often, at first He would ask me a question to prompt me to think the matter through logically and objectively. Peculiarities in my personality didn't like this method, but I needed this correction, instruction, and experience. My cooperation and effort is essential. The difficult at times, but the rewards of a changing life are well worth it.

To slow me down God suggested a variety of ways to help me think and practicalize what I just read. Here are a few:

1 Write down meaningful quotes that have a practical application to your life.

2 Learn how to collect and organize these quotes to specific topics or categories. I had to discipline myself to brevity and a limited number of quotes. As you go over and over the gathered quotations, weed out what is repetitive and save only the best practical "how to" quotations on that particular topic. You can gain a **balanced approach** to a topic because counsel will be given from several perspectives correcting both excesses and negligence.

3 Word studies can be helpful depending upon your personality. For me, I found too often I would get so deep into the multiple word studies that I'd lose the overview of what I was learning. If I stayed in this type of studying exclusively, I didn't grow in my personal, practical life of walking and changing with Jesus. I found this format of study was better done on a small scale to be effective. You will need to evaluate yourself and seek God's directions at all times for which way is most effective for your walk with Him and what hinders you.

4 - Sit back in your chair and ask the Lord, "What does this mean to me today? How will the application of this text change me in how I relate to my spouse, children or neighbors today?" As you think about the practical application, God then impresses the thoughts with our mind. In this way God is truly our personal Teacher.

We as the student must be able to discern the spirits. John says, "Try the Spirits whether they be of God." If the thoughts are of God, they will lead us to repentance and a turning away from self centered or unbalanced ways. They will be full of hope, that with God I can do what He is asking. They will call us to a death of self, in Christ Jesus our Lord. All good things come from God. Test all thoughts to Isaiah 8:20, "To the law and the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them." Satan too, can suggest thoughts and concepts. If the thoughts lead to hopelessness, doubt, despair and a giving up, it's characteristic that Satan is suggesting these thoughts and these must be denied and turned away from through a connection with Christ.

5 - End your study time with 10 to 15 minutes for making a decision. How will my readings today change the way I live. What will I do differently today? Make a resolve with Christ and He will go with you to see that you do what you have promised. That is a loving, caring Saviour. Yet He will not do it for you, but He will call for a continuous and conscious decision and surrender from you, to keep your promise. He wants you to experience what grace can do in your flesh, how you can change your habits today through cooperation with Him. It's your effort **with Christ** that will make the difference. Christianity is not suppose to be a spineless, weak religion that leaves you in Satan's snares and evil habits of life to dominate you. No, with God there is power over all flesh. We just haven't experienced it consistently, because we haven't given God all and cooperated with Him as is our privilege.

The **Third** discipline is the most essential part. Now we have to enter the discipline of **responding to Christ** when He calls for our heart. We must learn to walk with God through the day, all day long. Learning to say **no** to self and **yes** to God amidst our daily life activities. These are all disciplines aren't they? God honors even our timid surrender. He loves to show us His power. God bless you as you seek to follow Christ as a Christian should! Won't you try to incorporate these today

How will my
readings
today change
the way I live?

TOPIC STUDIES

Study out topics that will be useful on a day to day basis. We need to study the topics that we find ourselves facing and struggling with everyday, rather than those areas that are comfortable to our likes, interests or personalities but are not life changing. For example:

All of us need God to answer **important** questions about our personal walk like, how do I surrender? What is conversion? What is the right action of my will? Can I overcome sin and self with Christ? How do I overcome anger, appetite or emotions ruling over me? How can God subdue my emotions, what is my part and what is God's part? How does God free me from wrong thoughts, words, habits, practices or deeds? What is true faith, a feeling, an action, or a mental assent? What are works? What is the fruit of a connected Christian? Will God save me in my sins or from my sins? What is my preparation before I am ready to proclaim the gospel to the world? How do I deal with the erring? How does self die? Where do the timid find self worth as it is in Jesus - how do I enter in? Does God really love me? Can I be saved? Where do I gain self-control to live the life God has asked me to? What does it mean to hear God's voice? Can God really, personally direct me and lead me more closely than when He was with the disciples and

walked this earth with them? Why must we tarry with Jesus first? We need to know the answers to these topics intellectually, but more importantly ... **experientially**.

A spouse asks, "How do I become the spouse God is calling me to be?" How do I keep an objective view of the conflict when my emotions pull me strongly in the old ways of the flesh? How do I create an atmosphere of growth towards Christ for my spouse? Is continual union and communion with Christ a reality?

A parent needs to study, evaluate and experiment with God, how to bring their child to Christ to be changed in disposition, desire and habits. Where is the balance of justice and mercy in parental government? What is heavenly discipline? What does God mean, we should command our household in righteousness? What would Jesus do were He in this conflict of wills right now? What is a parent's first work? What is true missionary work? How do we redirect a rebellious, wayward child? Where should we live? How am I to meet all the needs and duties of our home? How important is the Mother's work in the home? What does the priest of the home do?

A child needs to ask God, "Lord, what would you have me to do?" What does it mean to be a team member in the home? What is my occupation/work? How do I surrender? Why must I pray, study, read and learn to sit quietly? What is and is not proper association with others? What should be my attitude towards my parents?

A youth must have surrender, union and communion, and a knowledge of scripture to guide them in their needs. They need to come to know what is my purpose in life? What practical training do I need? What occupation should I pursue? What are my talents and abilities? How do I problem solve in this world of so much worldliness? Can I be a Christian and be successful in an occupation if I practice integrity, honesty and Sabbath observance? What is proper conduct with the opposite sex? What is appropriate in courtship and marriage? Are these important questions in our day to day life? A practical God makes knowledge practical and useful.

These types of studies are life changing. They give solid direction to our study time, we need this structure. As you read to understand the basics you are preparing to proclaim the gospel message to the world. This world is in great need of Christians, **followers after Christ**, to help brothers and sisters learn how to be a living Christian in their homes, under all circumstances. It teaches them how to overcome sin and selfishness through a constant crying out to God. It teaches them how to connect with wisdom and divine power to help them raise their children for heaven now, in their homes and how to be a spouse in Christ. These are the true needs of today.

When we can personally lead people to Christ to find the power to live above the pull of the flesh, inclinations and wrongs ways of life because it is our **living experi-**

ence, the message will go like a wild fire in dry grass. God awaits His army to come under His Generalship and power before He can direct the finishing of the work. He must first prepare His people individually! We need the continual drawing upon divine power in our lives, giving us victory daily. We need the experience of training our children how to come to Christ and surrender to Him that they too may find the gospel power over their flesh. In this way like none other we will be trained to finish the work. We need to learn to live the gospel in our homes in the practicals before any of our precious doctrines, or medical missionary work will be for **saving good** and not just a work in the world. We cannot give the message of a Saviour if the Saviour is not **presently saving us!** We cannot give what we do not possess ourselves. We can give knowledge, a healthier diet or life style to some who are open but without the experience of Christ as our Saviour from anger, irritation, despair etc. all our work will never **finish** the work. Luke 5:18, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel (power of God to save me from self) to the poor ... heal the broken-hearted, preach deliverance to the captives, ... sight to the blind ... set at liberty them that are bruised ..." We all need to study practical, life changing themes and find the balance and personal application in Christ our Saviour.

We pray these study helps will help you find a closer, problem solving Lord in your life as He has been in ours. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, as workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of God." II Timothy 2:15. God be with you!

Power for Living



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