

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

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OUR PLAN FOR BIBLE STUDY

Kevin W. Rhodes

The dawn of a new year provides a prime opportunity for Christians to take inventory of their spiritual health and create new and improved patterns for the future. Only such diligence will ensure greater growth and stronger faith while sojourning through life (2 Pet. 3:18). However, although many saints desire a closer relationship with God and a deeper understanding of His will, few have a specific plan to achieve this objective.

Some will dedicate a portion of their day to reading through the Bible in a year. This I highly recommend to encourage familiarity with the whole of God’s revelation and scheme of redemption; however, this can only reinforce current knowledge or underscore fundamental knowledge. Others read through a book to help them remain better centered spiritually. This also has merit. But growing spiritually requires more.

When a Christian realizes his ignorance, guilt or frustration can short-circuit additional learning by trying to rush the process. However, attempts to learn a lot quickly can undermine long-term growth by introducing study methods that offer only the illusion of growth. Instead, God’s people should develop an approach that will encourage, challenge, and endure. Toward this end I offer ten recommendations to help you create a Bible study plan for the year.

Plan reasonably. Grandiose plans produce more guilt than growth. Know your knowledge, needs, and ability, and focus your plan to build on where you are spiritually. Also, consider your actual availability. Bible study takes time. And you need to study when you have the energy necessary to really think. Plan accordingly (Mark 14:38).

Carve out sufficient time in your schedule. Either 30 minutes per day or 4 hours per week would provide enough time to develop a steady pace. If 4 hours sounds like a lot of time to you, you should consider that this represents the approximate time a preacher would take to prepare for a weekly Bible class. However, studying the scriptures personally—with the right method—will challenge you more and grow you more (Eph. 5:16).

Dedicate a special location just for Bible study. Create an area (mobile, if necessary) that you specifically associate just

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JANUARY 2025

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OUR PASSION FOR LEADERSHIP

Cody Westbrook

An organization without capable leadership is like a ship without a rudder. It drifts along with the wind, headed to nowhere and destined for disaster. The same could be said about a nation, a family, and yes, even a congregation of God's people. In time past Western Culture was led by figures like Churchill, Thatcher, Washington, and Lincoln. But tenacity, courage, and vision like theirs is difficult to find in the halls of government now, and where have we arrived? To a welfare society of chaos and weakness. We once championed the strong leadership of hardworking and present fathers in the home, but such thinking became culturally anathema some time ago, and what has happened to the home and society because of it?¹ The last several decades have witnessed too many congregations install unqualified and incapable men into positions of leadership; men without vision, wisdom, or courage. Such congregations are not thriving but struggling for survival, and many have lost the battle and no longer exist. It is well past time for a renaissance of strong leadership in our nation, in our homes, and in our churches.

How is such a revival to take place? How are God's people to renew their passion for following and developing great leaders? As in all things, we must turn to God. The Bible is the greatest leadership manual in the world. It has something to say about the qualifications, character, and wisdom that leadership must possess. It also illustrates those characteristics through the lives of great leaders of the past. One of whom is Nehemiah, the wall-builder.

In 586 BC the Babylonians finally destroyed Jerusalem and took its inhabitants into captivity. In 538 BC the Persian king Cyrus released the Jews to return home. And, in 445 BC, Nehemiah began working to rebuild the walls around the city. His resume is quite impressive. He was a cupbearer, general contractor, and a governor. He had experience in project planning and management, communication, conflict resolution, problem solving, and long term planning. Nehemiah exemplifies the best of leadership. He reminds us that...

¹ <https://americafirstpolicy.com/issues/issue-brief-fatherlessness-and-its-effects-on-american-society>

A good leader is one who is led (Neh. 1:6; 11; 2:20; 5:15). Nehemiah may have been cupbearer to the king, but he was first a servant of God and ultimately accountable to Him. First Corinthians 11:3 says, "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." That passage teaches us that no one is without a superior, save the Father. A school principal answers to the school board. An employee answers to his employer. The President answers to the Constitution and to the people. Aristotle said, "He who is to be a good ruler must first have been ruled." That may be true but perhaps a better way to express it is "He who is to be a good ruler must first BE ruled." A good leader is, himself, led by the God of Heaven. He submits himself to the Father's Will, serves Him, and allows Him to be the ruler of his life.

A good leader recognizes his own shortcomings (Neh. 2:2). Nehemiah revealed his own vulnerability by speaking of his fear! He did not pretend to be flawless in some attempt to show his superiority over the people he led. A good leader does not allow his position to corrupt him. He does not develop a better-than-you mentality or pretend as if everyone is the problem but him. He recognizes he is human, and he makes mistakes, and sometimes he's just flat wrong. He's not prideful, but humble. Consider also David in Psalm 51:3-4 and Acts 13:22.

A good leader identifies with the need (Neh. 1:4, 7-8). Note the "I" and the "we" in 1:4, 7-8. Nehemiah likely had not been born when Jerusalem was destroyed. If he was, he would have been very young. He had nothing to do with the sins that led Jerusalem to Babylon and yet he associated himself with the problem. A leader who does not learn to identify and associate himself with the need is like a father who is so busy working to provide a living for his family, he is blind to what they really need! Leaders don't say "It's their problem!," "Too bad for them!," or "I hope they get it right!." They say, "Your problem is my problem, now let's fix it."

A good leader has vision (Neh. 2). Vision is a defining characteristic of leadership. It is what distinguishes a

leader from merely a manager. Others can have compassion, relate to people, and see their needs but they have no ability to chart a course in order to meet them. Leaders do! Note that Nehemiah did not only see what WAS but what COULD BE. He prayed and wept but he didn't stay on his knees. In the 4 months that passed between Nehemiah 1 and 2 Nehemiah was busy working on a plan (Neh. 2:5). He set a time (2:6), secured communication (2:7-8), evaluated (2:11), and educated (2:17).

A good leader has foresight (Neh. 7). Leaders have one eye on the present and the other in the future! The walls were completed but Nehemiah knew that the new city would need to be defended and populated. So he placed a guard (7:1,3), emphasized spiritual priorities (7:1, 61-65), emphasized the development of future leaders (7:2), planned for the future (7:4-5; 11:1ff), developed talent for the future (7:6-60), and worked to fund it through generosity (7:66-73).

How desperately we need more leaders like Nehemiah! Leaders with integrity, wisdom, vision, and foresight! So much more could be said about his leadership but an emphasis on developing these characteristics alone would bring about a world of good in the church, the home, and the nation. In this new year, let us renew our passion for developing and perfecting leaders like Nehemiah!

CW

OUR EMPHASIS ON EVANGELISM

Rob Whitacre

The churches of Christ in America are on a steady decline. A recent projection from a Christian University revealed that we will lose 70% of our congregations and members by 2049. If you carry the numbers even further, by 2069, there will be almost no visible traces left of the Church in America. Those who seek RATIONALIZATION minimize our losses by pointing to similar declines among our denominational friends. Those who seek EXPLANATION (should we dare say excuses) cite increased distractions, entertainment, secularization, busyness, and muchness. While all these things may be true, they do not change the numbers. The only way to address this crisis is by EVANGELISM! If churches of Christ are going to survive in America, we MUST return to our roots and once again train the saved to teach the lost.

Unfortunately, at least two generations have risen who know not evangelism. We have children who have grown up in homes and have never seen their parents conduct a

personal Bible study. Remaining still is a generation that remembers a time when churches grew. Christians carried around a film projector in the trunk of their car and showed their family, friends, and neighbors the Jewell Miller Bible study series. We were the fastest-growing religious body in America. We excelled at soul-winning! Those days can return if we train the saved. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Here are four proven Biblical things we can do to help turn things around.

Invite people into our HOME: "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42) Have we forgotten that our homes are a tool for bringing souls to Christ. The mat in front of too many Christian doors reads "Come Back Later" instead of "Welcome." Open homes equal open hearts. Our first-century brethren had open homes. They ate together, prayed together, and studied together (Acts 2:46; 20:20). We have found that over 90% of those we engage in Bible study from our home obey the Gospel.

Extend Christian HOSPITALITY: I am afraid that this Christian attribute is almost lost in modern America. Hospitality is defined as "love of strangers." The Greek word is used in Hebrews 13:2, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." All Christians are commanded to display hospitality, and elders are to be proven in this qualification (I Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8). Our hospitality to others should never be the reason behind their Gospel obedience, but the lack thereof could be the reason they don't obey. Take someone out to eat, deliver a meal, cut their grass, send Compassion Cards (<https://www.handiworkbyhannah.com>), take them a new mover's basket, and/or extend another act of kindness. Jude 22 states, "And of some have compassion, making a difference."

When you are with the lost, HEARKEN: Everyone wants to be heard. James said, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (1:19). Spend a lot of time asking about their family, hobbies, past experiences, and things they enjoy. This is a time to find common ground and to develop friendship and trust. As you listen, take mental notes of things that may need emphasized during a study. Have they been divorced? Do they have any organized religious background? Do they have family who are devout in any particular religion?

When the lost say things for which we disagree, HESITATE: It is very IMPORTANT as you listen to resist the urge to defend and respond. This is not the time to refute, reprove, rebuke, or instruct, regardless of what is said. Refrain from expressing your political, cultural, and social views. Remember, you are

building a relationship; not everyone believes, thinks, or lives like you. In addition, this is not the time to address tongue speaking, miracles, various millennial theories, Bible versions, or other errors that lead you away from the Cross. Remain focused! You want to take them to the battlefield of Golgotha and show them the Kingdom of God and the blood of Christ. If we truly respect the power of the Word, we must stop telling everyone what we think and how we feel and start showing them the truth. The quicker we get someone into the Bible, the sooner God can begin working on their hearts.

We must emphasize congregational training to create a Body of soul winners. One or two personal workers can't carry this burden alone. We need Evangelists equipping the Saints in each local congregation to become an army (Ephesians 4:11-12). It is the key to winning souls and changing those heart-wrenching projections about our future in the United States. We have hundreds of thousands of untrained Soldiers in our pews. We serve an offensive God who has a winning strategy. If we can once again learn to fight for God, He will fight for His people. Any failure is on us and not Him. If we don't act now, we will need other countries to send missionaries here to reestablish the Lord's Church in America in the not-so-distant future.

Authors note: In 2018, we began the House to House/Heart to Heart School of Evangelism. Since then, HTHSOE has trained 300 congregations and recorded over 5000 baptisms. We are a full-time school that offers congregational training and a one-year curriculum to focus Christians on the one mission of the church. We have eight regional trainers and a full-time staff. HTHSOE has seven principles, six steps, and One Mission! You can learn more by going to our website at evangelism.housetohouse.com or contacting me at Rob@housetohouse.com.

CW

OUR DESIRE FOR GODLY HOMES

Josh Walker

When Joshua addressed the nation, he heavily implied that a strong nation begins with the home (Josh. 24:15). Many of the societal issues today can be attributed to the deterioration of the home, shining a light on its importance. God established the home in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1:27-28), and it has proven to be the foundational pillar of society. The importance of godly homes has not diminished, and is as necessary today as it has ever been. An adherence to God's Word, a yearning to please Him, and a

sense of obligation to His glory comes when a home strives to carry the moniker of "A Godly Home."

A Godly Home Instills a Bias Towards the Bible

No one can enter into a study of God's Word without being influenced by their environment and circumstances. This is not to say that one cannot approach God's Word with an honest heart, but totally free of outside persuasion is impossible for everyone. With that in mind, why not swing the proverbial pendulum toward God and His Word? Solomon wrote, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Pro. 22:6). The Hebrew word translated "train" can also be translated "dedicate," and carries the sense of developing or dedicating a person's behavior toward something. It is the same word used when Solomon dedicated the temple to God (1 Kings 8:63; 2 Chron. 7:5). Wise Solomon advises dedicating, influencing our children, toward God and His precepts. Today, too many children are taught to be skeptical of the Bible – the godly home trains children to be skeptical of the Bible's opponents. Paul wrote, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). The Greek word translated "discipline" ("nurture" in the KJV) entails the sense of cultivating and developing the mind and morals of the child (used also in 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 12:5,7-8, 11). The word translated "instruction" ("admonition" in the KJV) carries the tone of cautionary advice or a warning of danger (cf., 1 Cor. 10:11; Tit. 3:10). Oh, that there were more homes in the world that dedicated and cultivated a bias toward God and His Word, while warning of the dangers of contradictory philosophies and ideologies.

A Godly Home is Prepared to Stand Alone

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus mentioned the path that leads to life that only a few will find (Matt 7:14). Throughout the Bible, God has proven that He does not need the majority to bring about His will. Whether one considers the eight souls to survive the flood (Gen. 7:13; 1 Pet. 3:20), the "diminished" army's victory over the Midianites (Judges 7:7), or the faithful remnant that refused to worship the idol, Baal (1 Kings 19:18) – God and His people were victorious. Conformity is a mindset that plagues society, and has led to many of the abominations that contradict God's will today. The fear of being ostracized has led many households to neglect their responsibilities to God, adopt lifestyles that focus on the physical matters of this world, and condone behaviors that stir the wrath of the Creator. Immodesty, lasciviousness, forsaking the assembling of the saints, and the like can often be attributed to a family's desire to fit and a fear of "missing out." When Jesus went further in the Garden of Gethsemane to pray (Matt. 26:36-44) and as He hung on the cross, the world saw Him as alone and by Himself; however, He was in

the company of His Father. If one is to stand with Jesus, he or she must be prepared to stand against the world, at times, alone. Parents prepare their children for this when they say no to the dances, they miss the ballgames because of Bible class and worship, and enforce a standard of modesty and spiritual growth – though they may be ridiculed. Because the one who stands with God is never really in the minority.

A Godly Home Prioritizes Spiritual Matters

There is not a single, fit parent that does not want their child to succeed. Success is a natural desire for all, but where that success is found differs among the people. There is nothing inherently wicked with accomplishments in academia, athletics, and social circumstances; in fact, one should strive to do his or her best to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17). Nevertheless, all should strive for success in matters that will benefit forever. The Bible speaks of treasures that would not be destroyed (Matt. 6:19-21), an accolade of the greatest accomplishment (Matt. 25:21, 23), and a crown given by the Righteous Judge, Himself (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Trophies will one day tarnish and rust, grades will one day be meaningless, and social status will only be a memory, but spiritual success will never fade. Prioritize the things that matter the most.

Regardless of the time of year, now is the opportune time to commit our homes to the service and glory of God. Let us all, as individuals, families, and congregations, seek to instill a bias toward God and His Word, prepare to stand with God though it may mean standing alone, and prioritize that spiritual matters – the matters that are truly eternal.

CW

OUR LOVE FOR OUR NEIGHBOR

Alex Simmons

Just as it is the case every January, the new year brings many resolutions. Another year has passed and because of the new opportunity set before us, it is time to make some changes. More than likely we have all been there before. As January 1st approaches, we resolve in our minds that there are gym memberships to buy, there are diets to apply, and there are hobbies we want to try. There is something about the new year that brings a desire to improve ourselves, set new goals, and gain greater achievements when the ball drops. Certainly, there is nothing wrong in seeking to improve our health or read more throughout the year. However, often it is the case we place more emphasis on our physical resolutions, than we do the spiritual. Without a doubt, there are a plethora of

spiritual resolutions that could be made as we ring in the new year, but one we all need to think about is the love we have for our neighbor.

When asked by a certain lawyer what the greatest commandment was, Jesus replied, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:37-40). As we examine these verses, it becomes quite obvious God wants mankind to love Him wholeheartedly and above all else (Matt. 6:33), but Jesus also makes the point we are to love our neighbor. To further emphasize the importance of these commands Jesus said, “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” In essence Jesus is proclaiming all the commands found within the Old Law can only be fulfilled and practiced by loving God and loving our neighbor. In a similar manner, Paul commands the Christian to do the same when he says, “Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom. 13:10). Without a doubt, we would all agree it is both important and essential to love our neighbor. So, with that in mind, let us consider three things to remember as we resolve to do such through 2025.

First, if we want to love our neighbor, we need to remember this is something that requires action. It would be fair to say sometimes we might propose that we love our neighbor, but there is very little action which suggests we do. James made a point similar to this when he said, “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?” (Jas. 2:15, 16). The truth of the matter is, if we really love our neighbor, our love will be expressed and acted upon. Did not John say, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18). You see, it is not enough to think that we love our neighbor, and it is enough to just say we love our neighbor. True love for a neighbor is much more than that, it requires action.

Second, to properly love our neighbor, we need remember this is something that requires dedication. On one occasion when an individual asked who his neighbor was, Jesus replied with the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37). There is certainly much to be learned from this specific teaching of Christ, but one truth we take away is true love for a neighbor requires dedication. The Samaritan bandaged and dressed the wounds, the Samaritan put the injured man on his own animal, the Samaritan took this man to an inn, and the Samaritan told the innkeeper, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you” (Luke 10:35). Without a doubt, the Samaritan was

dedicated in the love he had for his neighbor. Could the same be said for you and me?

Finally, if we want to love our neighbor, we need to remember this is something that requires imitation. In John 15:12 Jesus said, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” Certainly, we recognize Jesus is speaking to His disciples in the final moments before the cross. However, the command applies both to the apostles of old, and the saints of today. If we want to love our neighbor in the best way that we can, we will follow in the footsteps of Christ. No man past, present, or future has ever or will ever love their neighbor more than Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:8). Therefore, if we desire to do the same, we should look no further than Jesus of Nazareth, and strive to imitate Him.

Having closed the doors on 2024 and directed our eyes toward 2025 there are certainly many resolutions on the horizon, but as we set our goals and aspirations for this new year, let’s be sure we do not neglect what is most important. Going forward may we all resolve to love our neighbor.

CW

OUR PURSUIT OF HOLINESS

Adam Orr

It was after hearing a sermon from 1 Peter 1:16 (Be holy, for I am holy) that William Longstaff sat down and wrote the words to the popular hymn, “Take Time to be Holy.” Perhaps the best advice anyone can offer in the year 2025 is simply - take time to be holy. The writer of Hebrews reminds us of its importance, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord,” (Heb. 12:14). Is it your desire to see the Lord; to remain in His presence for all eternity? Our pursuit of holiness has everything to do with heaven!

Let’s consider briefly three questions of consequence:

What does it mean to be holy? By looking to the word used by the Hebrews writer in the verse referenced above we get a clearer picture of what it means to be holy. It carries with it the idea of being morally pure and set apart from the world and the flesh. In the highest sense, holiness belongs to God. Three times in Isaiah 6:3 we find God is called holy. Revelation 15:4 says that it is God alone who is holy. He is light and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). Our pursuit of holiness is the pursuit of being more like God. No, this does not mean that we will attain perfection, but we must give all diligence and

energy to striving to be more like Him and less and less like the world.

Am I holy? Examine carefully the text of 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 and one can see that it is God’s desire for us to be in pursuit of holiness. In the context, this is directly tied to words like sanctification, honor, purity and being clean rather than unclean. Perhaps we would do well to ask the honest question of ourselves, “Am I holy?” When others hear my speech, does it build them up and draw them closer to a holy God? (Col. 4:6; Tit. 2:8) Or, do my words sound much more like those in the world? Do my actions reflect those of a holy God? What kind of servant am I and who do I really seek to please? If we seek to please men, we cannot be bondservants of Christ (Gal. 1:10).

Three ways to pursue holiness in 2025:

Make it a priority. Typically, in the beginning of a new year, resolutions or goals are made. When was the last time you thought about adding holiness as a top priority? In Galatians 6:1, Paul says that those who are spiritual are to restore those who have been overtaken in a trespass. Are you spiritual? Are you striving to be more like God and pursuing Him? This will not happen unless you make it a priority! What do you find yourself talking about in open conversations with others? This is a way to help you see what you prioritize. We talk about things that have great meaning to us. What do you spend your time doing? The tendency is to do things that are most meaningful in our lives. Strive in the new year to make holiness a priority. In all things make sure Jesus has first place in your life (Col. 1:18). Take time to be holy!

Draw closer to a holy God. Among things suggested by Longstaff are speaking oft with the Lord and spending much time in secret with Jesus alone. Prayer and Bible study must be staples if one is going to correctly pursue holiness. How can one expect to draw closer a holy God if no time is spent in His holy word? We must be careful never to despise the word of the Holy one (Isa. 5:24). His words are words of truth and we must spend time drawing closer to Him as we study His words (Eph. 1:13). Make it a priority to spend more time reading and studying the Bible in the new year. Make it a priority to spend more time in prayer to a holy God this year as well. Most every congregation has a prayer list of those dealing with illnesses or special circumstances. Make it a priority to make better use of those lists! Create your own list and give more thought in the coming year to names and personal circumstances you want to pray for and about. Find new reasons each day to praise God and to thank Him. Every day let God speak to you (study His word) and you speak to God (prayer) and your relationship with Him will improve!

Distance yourself from an unholy world. “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world,

the love of the Father is not in him...And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever,” (1 John 2:15-17). The devil’s desire is for us to love this life and things of this world more than God and allow them to take His place. In the coming year let us make every effort to hate the devil more and to create more distance between us and him. Paul says it best, “Seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth,” (Col. 3:1-2). In verse 4, Paul says that Jesus Christ is our life. Is He your life?

In the coming year, let’s evaluate our personal holiness and make every effort to be in hot pursuit of a holy God. Take time to be holy in 2025 and may God be glorified!

CW



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with studying your Bible. Eliminate distractions. Find proper lighting. Make it comfortable enough to stay for a while but professional enough to keep you focused. You will need to be able to read, write, and reflect, so choose your space with all of these in mind (Jas. 1:25; 1 Tim. 4:15).

Get everything ready before you plan to study. Otherwise you will waste time just organizing and setting up your environment. Instead, put everything in place the night beforehand if you plan to study first thing in the morning or before supper if you plan to study in the evening. Eliminate any friction between you and your study time (Col. 3:1-2).

Avoid the temptation to do too much too soon. Your original enthusiasm and curiosity have great value, but you need to sustain study as a daily joy. So do not try to study every word or attempt to uncover every nuance of the text at the beginning. That is the work of a lifetime—not a weekend. Choose the most interesting word to examine and the most beneficial nuance to consider. That will still spark plenty of thoughts for your growth (1 Pet. 2:2).

Select an appropriate text or topic. A deep dive into the book of Romans or the doctrine of atonement might sound intriguing, but that intrigue may turn quickly into frustration for those just establishing a plan (2 Pet. 3:14-16). Instead, choose a simpler and more familiar book. For example, one of the synoptic gospel accounts would provide a narrative structure, familiar information, and plenty of room for personal growth in both study and application.

Establish an interpretive workflow that considers a passage’s meaning, significance, and application—in that order. Many beginning Bible students attempt to read a passage of scripture and immediately apply it to their lives. While this might work on occasion, it often creates confusion. Instead, establish the practice of thinking in terms of what it meant for the original audience first. Then, consider what significant principle(s) this implies. Finally, take the time to consider what the closest modern-day equivalent would be when applied today. This process will require more of you and push you to deeper study (Neh. 8:8).

Take notes. Writing down what you learn not only provides you with a record of your study to consult in the future, it also helps you retain the information you learned. But do more than just copy and paste information. Summarize its significance. Cite your sources. Write it out in your own words. This discipline pushes your mind to evaluate the information more thoroughly while helping integrate the ideas into your own thinking (Pro. 3:3-4).

Create a Bible study journal to record personal lessons learned and specific items to work on in your life. While notes should concentrate on the meaning and significance of the scriptures, a journal should concentrate on you and your spiritual growth. By recording what you have learned, giving yourself assignments to improve, and then evaluating your progress, a Bible study journal enhances your biblical knowledge. More importantly, it adds a personal layer of accountability for developing Christlike character which Bible study should have as its intended end (Ps. 119:11).

Review. When you first sit down to study, few things—other than prayer—can focus your mind on the subject at hand better than reviewing your notes and journal from your most recent study. This helps create a flow to your study, a flow to your notes, and a flow to your spiritual growth as well (Ps. 119:27).

Deciding to study the Bible more diligently this year than last year is a noble and worthwhile goal, but you need a plan if you are to succeed. While Bible study is inherently a serious undertaking, it can also provide far greater joy, comfort, and guidance with each successive step forward. May God bless you with a wonderful year of Bible study and a meaningful year of spiritual growth.

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“To Know Jesus and...make Him known”

From the Director's desk



Trent Kennedy
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SWSBS

The Southwest church of Christ will host its annual Arise! Workshop February 27 - March 2, 2025. This workshop will have something for everyone, and you will benefit from attending. In addition to the great lessons and quality hospitality, Arise! affords an opportunity to get more involved with Southwest School of Bible Studies.

Alumni: If you are a SWSBS alumni, you can expect to see many familiar faces. Members of SW, classmates, old friends, and teachers will all be at Arise! Additionally, we will have an “alumni” gift for those who attend the workshop in person. While it will be just a small memento, we hope it will remind you of your time at school and help us advertise in your local work. There will be an alumni lunch for all SWSBS alumni and their families on Friday at noon. We will provide a catered meal and a brief update on the work of the school. This time is primarily meant for you to visit with other SWSBS alumni and their families as we build camaraderie in the Kingdom (1 Pet. 2:17).

Friends and Supporters: Without our supporters, we could not function as a school. On Friday evening at 5:00 pm, we will have a dinner to say “Thank you!” to our friends and supporters. All are invited to attend that event to learn about what we are doing at SWSBS. Your presence greatly encourages us as we pray for you each day. Since you have fellowship with our work when you give financially (Phil. 4:14-20), we want you to participate in this event with us.

Prospective Students: We want to invite all prospective SWSBS students to come to Arise! This will allow you to meet the current student body, ask questions of faculty and staff in a one-on-one setting, tour the school, meet alumni, and get to know the SW congregation. We believe that if you see what we are doing, you will want to be a part of it. I cannot think of a better foundation for present and future growth than devoting two years of your life to study God's Word (cf. Ps. 119:89-93).

This will be a great event. Our students, faculty, and staff will work tirelessly to help the congregation host. Many of us will speak or cook or pitch in with whatever is needed. You will benefit. You will be blessed. You're invited to Arise!, and we would love to see you there

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