

READ: Psalm 119: 9-16



KEY VERSE:

Hebrews 1: 1

“God . . . spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets.”

This series of Studies will help you to understand the importance and background of the greatest Book in the world - the Bible. It is sometimes called 'The Word of God', because it originated from God, or 'The Scriptures', because it was originally written down. (A script!) No Christian will ever make progress in his spiritual life until he realises that the study of the Bible is a vital part of his life! Napoleon Bonaparte, one of the great French generals, summed up the value of the Bible by saying, 'The Bible is no mere book, but a living power that conquers all who oppose it.'

The Bible is not one book, but a collection of books. The English word 'Bible' comes from a Greek word meaning 'books' or 'a collection of books' - almost like a library!

The Bible is made up of 66 books. These books are divided into two main sections. The first section is called the Old Testament and the second the New Testament. The word 'Testament' means 'covenant' or 'promise'. The Old Testament is about a covenant made by God, with the Israelites long ago. The New Testament is about a covenant made by God with all who trust in the Lord Jesus. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament.

The Bible is, then, a small library. Jerome, a great Christian teacher who lived over 1500 years ago, called the Bible 'The Divine Library'.

1) THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE WERE WRITTEN BY DIFFERENT MEN.

The Bible is not the work of one writer. The first writer was Moses and the last, the Apostle John. Between Moses and John were at least 35 other writers.

The books of the Bible were written by all sorts of people, who did a variety of jobs. There were Jewish priests, prophets and kings, together with shepherds and fishermen. A fruit-picker, a Prime Minister, an income tax collector, a doctor and a tent maker were among the other writers of Bible books. Some books, such as Hebrews in the New Testament, are anonymous and we have no idea who wrote them.

Some of the writers were very clever men. Moses, for

example, was instructed in the wisdom of the ancient Egyptians, the very people who built the Sphinx and the Pyramids. Daniel was educated in the best schools in Babylon. The apostle Paul was taught, in Jerusalem, by a brilliant Jewish Rabbi.

The Biblical writers were not all like these. Peter and John, for instance, were untrained. They were once called **“uneducated and untrained men”**. (Acts 4: 13) Most of these people had no contact with each other and no means of knowing that when their writings were all put together as one whole book, it would be complete. The remarkable thing is that although there was such a variety of writers, the whole Bible has one message, which is centred on God's dealings with mankind.

2) THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE WERE WRITTEN FROM DIFFERENT PLACES.

Some of Paul's letters were written from prison. At the other extreme, parts of the Bible were written from a palace. At least one of David's psalms came from a cave (**Psalm 142**) and another was probably composed in the open on a clear night. (**Psalm 8**) The books were written in different parts of the known world of those ancient times. Some were written in Jerusalem, while others were compiled in Babylon. A selection of Paul's letters came from Rome. There are other books, the origins of which are unknown.

3) THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE WERE WRITTEN AT DIFFERENT TIMES.

The Biblical books were not all written at the same time. In some cases there were hundreds of years between the time of one writer and of the next. In all, it took over 1,500 years for the whole Bible to be written. Even so, it was finished nearly 2,000 years ago, so the earliest books are extremely old!

4) THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE WERE WRITTEN IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.

Originally, the New Testament was probably all written in Greek. The Old Testament was not - although it was later translated into Greek. Seven chapters were written in Aramaic and the rest (another 922 chapters) were written in Hebrew.

Until the 14th century in Britain, the Bible could only be read in the original Hebrew and Greek, or in Latin. So the vast majority of people, even if they could have afforded the Bible, would not have been able to read it. Over the years, much work has been done to translate the Bible into clear and understandable English, and to produce it in a printed form which is accessible to everybody.

We should be very thankful that the books of the Bible have now been translated into good English. Otherwise most of us would never have any idea what they are about. In the next Study we shall discover something about what is actually in these books.

Study 1. A Library

1 WRITE TRUE OR FALSE AFTER EACH OF THE FOLLOWING:-

- a) God used only very clever and well educated men to write the Bible.
 - b) There are 27 books in the New Testament and 39 books in the Old Testament.
 - c) The Bible was completed before the time of Christ.
 - d) We know who wrote every Bible book.
 - e) One man wrote nearly half of the books of the New Testament.
- (Check the titles of the New Testament books in your Bible)

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2 PSALM 119 is a remarkable Psalm, partly because it is the longest chapter in the whole Bible and partly because the majority of verses mention the Bible as God's Word, using a variety of different words. **LOOK AT THE BIBLE READING AND MAKE A LIST OF THE DIFFERENT NAMES USED FOR THE BIBLE.**

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3 FROM THE BIBLE READING WRITE OUT:-

- i. Part of a verse which tells us where the writer has put God's Word.

- ii. Part of a verse which explains why he would do that.

- iii. Part of a verse which helps us understand how we can live pure lives.

- iv. Part of a verse which tells us that the writer gives much thought to what God's Word says.

- v. Part of a verse which reminds us that we must always obey God's Word.

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4 It is amazing how many Bible expressions are used in our everyday language, although sometimes the speaker may have no idea that he is quoting from the Bible.

LOOK UP THE FOLLOWING REFERENCES AND WRITE A PHRASE OR SENTENCE, WHICH HAS BECOME AN ACCEPTED PART OF OUR LANGUAGE.

JOB 4: 15

JOB 19: 20

ECCLESIASTES 10: 20

MATTHEW 26: 41

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5 The Bible has stood the test of time despite men's efforts to ban it, burn it and even bury it! **READ 1 PETER 1: 23-25, THEN WRITE IN YOUR OWN WORDS A SENTENCE TO EXPRESS HOW PETER DESCRIBES THE ENDURING NATURE OF THE BIBLE.**

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6 **HOW WOULD YOU CONVINC A NEW CHRISTIAN OF THE VALUE OF READING PART OF THE BIBLE EVERY DAY?** (Maybe your own experience would be a help to another person!)

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This study sheet belongs to:



KEY VERSE:

2 Timothy 3: 16
All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

In the last Study the division of the Bible into two sections was explained. Now we subdivide the **Old Testament** into 4 groups.

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|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) The LAW. | Genesis to Deuteronomy |
| 2) The HISTORY books. | Joshua to Job |
| 3) The POETRY books. | Psalms to Song of Solomon |
| 4) The PROPHECY books. | Isaiah to Malachi |

THE LAW contains the details about the creation of the world, the flood, and the growth of the nation of Israel from Abraham and Isaac to the time when they were slaves in Egypt. Then came the Exodus from Egypt with Moses, and the travelling through the desert, en route to the Promised Land of Canaan. Much of Leviticus and Numbers record the commands that God gave to Israel, showing how they should behave as a nation and how they should worship God. Some of it is not easy reading, but it does give an insight into God's Commandments, some of which have been taken as the basis of the laws used in many countries of the world.

THE HISTORY BOOKS record Israel's history from Moses' death, up to the time when they were taken into captivity in Babylon and their return seventy years later, to rebuild the Temple and Jerusalem. This is a period of approximately 800 years. It takes us from Joshua, the leader after Moses, through the time when Israel was ruled by the Judges, such as Gideon and Samson. It explains the search for the first king, Saul, and then the reign of King David. He was followed by a series of kings, some good, some bad, until Israel was punished by God, and the nation was sent into exile in Babylon. Nehemiah and Ezra record the fascinating story of the return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the nation.

THE POETRY BOOKS contain some of the greatest writings of the Bible. The Psalms give us some wonderful insights into people's devotion to God. Some psalms can be sung, and others used in private devotion. The Proverbs are a remarkable collection of sayings from the wise king Solomon, whilst the Song of Solomon is a love poem.

THE PROPHECY BOOKS are usually divided into the Major Prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the Minor Prophets like Amos and Jonah. In those days, the Old Testament was far from complete, so God chose to send messages to the Jews by men whom He had specially chosen to be His spokesmen. Some of them brought messages of encouragement about the future, some brought warnings of impending punishment. Some prophesied before the captivity, others like Daniel during the captivity and some after the return to Israel. These are not easy books to read although

READ: 2 Timothy 3: 10-17

the principles they contain teach us many helpful things about the Christian life, so we should not neglect reading them.

Paul, who had been well trained in the Old Testament, had helpful things to say about the value of reading it. **"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."** (Romans 15: 4)

The **New Testament** can be divided into 3 groups.

- 1) The GOSPELS AND HISTORY - Matthew to the Acts of the Apostles
- 2) The LETTERS (sometimes called the epistles) - Romans to Jude
- 3) The PROPHECY BOOK - Revelation

THE GOSPELS AND HISTORY section includes four books about the birth, life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Each of these is called a 'gospel' (meaning 'good news'). Then there is also the book about the work of the Holy Spirit through the apostles (mainly Peter and Paul), and an account of the beginnings of the Christian church known as 'The Acts of the Apostles'.

THE LETTERS are really a kind of early Christian 'post bag'. The longest ones were written by Paul, to some of the churches he had visited, to help them in their church practices and individual Christian lives. Others, such as Peter's letters, were written to Christians who were facing persecution and needed help and advice. Churches today still use these letters as the foundation of how they should function and operate.

THE PROPHECY BOOK is Revelation. This describes some of the things which will happen in the future.

Despite all these different kinds of books, the startling fact is that, from beginning to end, the books of the Bible reveal a complete unity and harmony. If we looked at the Bible's teaching about God, we find that the same God is presented in the book of the Revelation as was revealed in the writings of Moses. Again, we discover that the whole Bible unfolds one central theme - the person and work of the Lord Jesus. His coming was foretold in the Old Testament and is declared and explained in the New Testament. Again, from book to book, God's way of salvation is always the same. **"From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."** (2 Timothy 3: 15)

How are we going to explain that one mind runs through all the books of the Bible? The Bible itself offers us the answer. It claims that **"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God"**. (2 Timothy 3: 16)

We shall consider what this means in the next Study.

In conclusion, note that Paul said that **"All Scripture . . . is profitable."** Taking the four key words, it has been said; **"doctrine"** tells us 'what is right', **"reproof"** - 'what is not right', **"correction"** - 'shows how to get right' and **"instruction"** - 'how to stay right'.

Study 2. A Unity

1 IN WHICH BIBLE BOOK WOULD YOU FIND:-

- a) An account of the beginnings of the Christian church?
- b) Paul's message to Titus?
- c) The wise sayings of Solomon?
- d) Songs which can be sung in worship?
- e) The stories of Samson and Gideon?
- f) A prophecy written during Israel's exile in Babylon?
- g) Israel's return to Jerusalem?
- h) Israel's departure from Egypt with Moses?
- i) The first history book of the Old Testament?
- j) New Testament prophecies about the future?

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2 In the left-hand column there are five Old Testament references where a prophecy is made concerning the Lord Jesus. **LOOK UP THE PROPHECY AND ALSO THE VERSE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WHERE IT WAS FULFILLED AND WRITE OUT IN YOUR OWN WORDS WHAT THE FULFILMENT WAS.**

- i. *PSALM 69: 21* *JOHN 19: 28 & 29*
- ii. *HOSEA 11: 1* *MATTHEW 2: 15*
- iii. *ISAIAH 7: 14* *MATTHEW 1: 22 & 23*
- iv. *ISAIAH 53: 5* *1 PETER 2: 24*
- v. *PSALM 22: 1* *MATTHEW 27: 46*

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(The fact that so many of the prophecies from the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New Testament proves the uniqueness of the Bible.)

3 The Lord Jesus on one occasion said, **"YOU SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES, FOR IN THEM YOU THINK YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE; AND THESE ARE THEY WHICH TESTIFY OF ME"**. (*JOHN 5: 39*) [He was speaking of the Old Testament] **LOOK AT THE LIST OF REFERENCES AND WRITE ONE MAIN FACT ABOUT THE LORD JESUS WHICH EACH CONTAINS.**

- a) *ISAIAH 9: 6*
- b) *ZECHARIAH 9: 9*
- c) *MICAH 5: 2*
- d) *ISAIAH 53: 6*
- e) *ISAIAH 61: 1*

(Compare with *LUKE 4: 18 & 19*)

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4 'The books of the Bible reveal a complete unity and harmony'.
WRITE A SHORT EXPLANATION OF WHAT THIS SENTENCE MEANS.

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Study 3. The Word of God

This study sheet belongs to:



KEY VERSE:
2 Peter 1: 21

“For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

In the last Study, it was stated that the Bible claims to be inspired by God. This means that God guided and controlled its writers when they wrote. We have already seen that the Bible has about forty writers. However, it has only one author - God. It is therefore described as **“The Word of God”**. The claims to its inspiration run right through the Bible.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Moses wrote that **“God spoke all these words”**. (**Exodus 20: 1**) Moses claimed in nearly five hundred other places that he was writing the words of God. Later, David said, **“The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue”**. (**2 Samuel 23: 2**)

Jeremiah, the prophet, said on many occasions, **“The word of the Lord came to me”**. (**Jeremiah 2: 1 & 2**) The one expression, **“Thus says the Lord”**, occurs over 400 times in the Old Testament.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Lord Jesus Himself guaranteed that God would help His apostles to remember His sayings accurately. We have these in the four gospels. The Lord Jesus also said that, after He had gone to Heaven, the Holy Spirit would teach the apostles everything that they would need to know. **“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”** (**John 14: 26**)

The apostles found that this actually did happen. Paul wrote well over half the letters in the New Testament. He made the following claims:-

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you...” (**1 Corinthians 11: 23**)

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord...”

(**1 Thessalonians 4: 15**)

“These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches...” (**1 Corinthians 2: 13**)

How did God guide men to write what He wanted? Paul’s way of writing is different from John’s. Jeremiah’s style is not like that of Isaiah. So it is clear that when these men wrote, they used their minds, and their

personalities are shown in their writings. God did not use them as if they were lifeless things, like pens or computers!

The method God used was to prepare the writers. He controlled the place and time of their birth, how they were brought up, their education and so on. When they came to record what He revealed to them, they wrote it just as He had planned.

For instance, when God wished to record the life of Abraham in a certain way, He did not wait till the last moment, to find a secretary, and then dictate it to Moses when he became available. God directed the details of Moses’ birth and education. In this way He prepared Moses to write just in the way He wanted. The words Moses wrote, therefore, were his own words and God’s words at the same time. In the Acts of the Apostles, when the church prayed, they recognised how David had written the words of the Lord, **“You are God...who by the mouth of your servant David have said: ...”** (**Acts 4: 24 & 25**) Note also the **Key Verse “For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”**. (**2 Peter 1: 21**)

Why did God guide men to write the Bible? He wanted us to know certain things about Himself. We can learn a little about God from the universe He has made. We can tell, for example, that He is powerful and that He is wise. But we can never find out whether He is willing to forgive those who sin ... or how we should worship Him ... or what happens after we die. The only way for men to know about these things is for God to reveal them to men. This He did through the prophets and apostles.

Why did God’s revelation have to be written down? God revealed Himself directly to only a few people, and this happened long ago. There were only two ways in which those who lived later could know what God had said. His Word could be passed on by word of mouth from father to son ... to grandson ... to great-grandson, or it could be written down and handed on. This is the only accurate way for it to be preserved for mankind, for all time.

God wished us to know the truth about Himself. He wanted us to learn the true (and only) way of salvation. He wanted His words to be preserved for ever. So He inspired men to write it down for us. How we ought to value the Bible, when we consider that these are God’s words for Israel, for the church, for the world, and for ME! If we are wise, we will take note of its truth, apply it to our hearts and use it to guide our lives!

Study 3. The Word of God

1 A. WHAT IS MEANT BY SAYING, 'THE BIBLE IS INSPIRED BY GOD'?

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B. HOW COULD YOU PROVE IT FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT?

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C. HOW COULD YOU PROVE IT FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT?

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2 LOOK AT 1 CORINTHIANS 11: 23-25 AND 1 THESSALONIANS 4: 15-17. NAME THE TWO IMPORTANT DOCTRINES, OR BELIEFS, ABOUT WHICH PAUL WAS INSPIRED BY GOD TO WRITE IN THESE TWO READINGS.

i.
ii.

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3 LOOK AT THE KEY VERSE AGAIN AND THEN WRITE AN EXPLANATION OF WHAT IT MEANS IN YOUR OWN WORDS.

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4 THE BIBLE IS GOD'S WAY OF REVEALING TO US HIS PURPOSES FOR MANKIND!

a) Whom did God use to reveal His Word to men?

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b) Why did He choose to reveal His purposes to us?

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c) Why did His revelation have to be written down?

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5 A. IN WHAT WAYS WOULD 'THE HELPER', 'THE HOLY SPIRIT', ASSIST THE APOSTLES IN THE WRITING OF WHAT THE LORD JESUS HAD SAID?

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B. WHY DO YOU THINK THEY WOULD NEED SUCH HELP?

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6 WHY IS THE 'INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE' A VERY IMPORTANT CHRISTIAN BELIEF?

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HAS GOD SPOKEN TO YOU THROUGH HIS WORD? IF SO, WRITE A FEW SENTENCES ABOUT ONE SUCH OCCASION.

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25

Total marks for this study

Study 4. A Book to Read

This study sheet belongs to:



KEY VERSE:
Psalm 119: 105

**“Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.”**

The NewLife Bible Study Course is intended to help you to understand some of the most important teachings of the Bible, but you should not let these Studies take the place of the Bible itself!

Young babies need milk if they are to grow. So also young Christians need the spiritual **“milk”** of God’s word if they are to grow in the Christian life. **“As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” (1 Peter 2: 2 & 3)**

The Bible Reading mentioned at the top of each Study and the references quoted in the Study, are chosen to tell you more about the subject covered. This makes it possible for you to check that the teaching in the Study agrees with what the Bible says. You should, however, get used to reading the Bible by yourself as well. The purpose of this Study is to give you a few hints on how to do this.

We don’t know who wrote the first Psalm, but whoever he was, he said that **“his delight is in the law of the LORD” (Psalm 1: 2)** and that he meditated in it day and night. He obviously started and finished the day with a reading from the Scriptures, but it was not a quick read and then rushing off to do something else or falling asleep at the end of the day! He meditated on it, which means he spent time thinking about its meaning and applying it to his own circumstances. He was learning what God was saying to him that day! The result was a strong spiritual life which was bearing fruit for God. This is described in **verse 3. “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.”**

WHAT SHALL I READ?

As you know, the Bible is a very big volume. But there is no need to be put off by its size. It is best, when beginning, to choose one of the more interesting parts to read. It is not a good idea to start ploughing through long lists of names. To most people, this is no more interesting than reading a telephone directory, though God has had these lists recorded for a purpose! At the end of this Study you will find a list of some of the books of the Bible which you may find helpful to read. Whenever you wish to read something for your own enjoyment, try one of these. However, it is good to be systematic. Keep a record of the Bible books you have read, and slowly work your way through the Bible.

WHICH BIBLE SHOULD I USE?

Some people get a little confused when they find that there are several different translations of the Bible. There is no need for this confusion. We learned earlier that the Bible

READ: Psalm 119: 97-108

was originally written in three languages - and English was not one of them! The various translations that exist each try in slightly different words to get over to us the meaning of these original languages, so in difficult Bible readings it is often helpful to compare one translation with another.

Some translations are better than others. We should choose a translation, or translations, with which we are comfortable and which we can understand easily, but also which is known to be reliable and accurate. This course normally quotes from the New King James Version (sometimes called the ‘Revised Authorised Version’).

HOW DO I GO ABOUT IT?

Three things are essential if you are going to read the Bible properly. They are:-

1. Prayer - The Bible is God’s Word. Before reading it, always ask God to make your reading enjoyable and useful to you. Your prayer does not need to be long. **Psalm 119: 18** is a good example of a Bible-reader’s prayer: **“Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.”**

2. Care - It is sometimes possible to misunderstand the meaning of the Bible. This happens mainly when one verse or passage is read on its own without being compared with other parts of the Bible. Your Bible may have references in the margin or at the bottom of the page. It is a good idea to see what these other verses say about the same subject. Of course, as you learn more of God’s Word, you get to know other passages which cover similar subjects.

3. Purpose - God has given you a mind! You should use it to think about what you read. Be on the lookout to see what the Bible can teach you. The following are examples of the sort of questions you should be asking whenever you read the Bible:-

- What does the passage tell me: -
- about God and His works?
- about the Lord Jesus Christ?
- about my salvation?
- about the kind of life I should live to please God?
- about avoiding sin?

Suggested list of Bible books for reading

- Genesis - How it all began.
- Gospel of John - Jesus meets individuals.
- Acts of the Apostles - How the church began.

J. B. Philips was a Bible Teacher, who had a group of young people in London who found it difficult to understand the Bible. His version of **2 Timothy 3: 16** says, **“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith, and correcting error, for resetting the direction of a man’s life and training him in good living. The Scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God, and fit him fully for all branches of his work”.**

Study 4. A Book to Read

1 READ THE BIBLE READING AGAIN. IN WHICH VERSE OR VERSES DOES THE PSALMIST MENTION:-

- a) His love for God's Word?
- b) His meditation of God's Word?
- c) His obedience to God's Word?
- d) The benefits of God's Word?
- e) His guidance from God's Word?

(As we have explained before, different words are used in *PSALM 119* to refer to the Word of God)

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2 LIST AND EXPLAIN IN YOUR OWN WORDS THE THREE THINGS THAT ARE ESSENTIAL WHEN YOU READ OR STUDY THE BIBLE:

- i.
- ii.
- iii.

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3 READ *PSALM 1* AGAIN.

- i. What effect does Bible reading and meditation have on the man described in *VERSE 1*?
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- ii. What is the life style of those who do not read the Bible? (*VERSES 4 & 5*)
.....
- iii. What good thing(s) will happen to the man who does read the Bible?
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6

4 WRITE TRUE OR FALSE AFTER EACH OF THE FOLLOWING:-

- (a) Reading the Bible helps us to discover God's will for our lives.
- (b) Reading the Bible is best when it is systematic.
- (c) The Bible was originally written in English.
- (d) Before reading the Bible, we should ask God to make
our reading enjoyable and useful.

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5 HOW CAN YOU APPLY THE PARAPHRASE OF J. B. PHILLIPS, AS QUOTED IN THE STUDY, TO YOUR OWN LIFE?

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100

Total marks for this Unit

Return your study sheets to:

25

Total marks for this study