

SHORT TEACHING

THE WORD OF GOD AND GROWING IN HOLINESS

By: J.D. McGurn
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Growing in holiness is a journey that has many different types of “travel.” One way that we can grow in holiness is through the Word of God. We can grow more like Christ by getting to know Him through His Word. Pope Benedict wrote *The Word of God* to discuss the importance of dedicated and responsible Bible study for Catholics.

In *The Word of God*, Pope Benedict writes about the important links between prayer, Mass, Bible study, and Tradition (for more on this, please see the quote pages). As Catholics, we are blessed with many ways to experience Jesus—through the Mass and the Holy Eucharist, through the Bible, and through prayer. As we attend Mass and hear the Word of God proclaimed, we then can approach the Eucharistic Meal with a better understanding. And as we partake of the Eucharist, the Scriptures are opened to us more deeply and with more hunger for them. As we seek God in prayer, we grow in holiness and are taken back to the Mass and the cycle continues to repeat, helping us to learn and grow closer to God.

Pope Benedict stresses the need for responsible Bible study by using other Scriptures and Tradition to make sure we are staying in line with the Christian faith. There are many ways to do Bible study and this teaching offers one of those methods based on the **Three-Step Method** (that is in-line with the Pope’s teaching). It is important before any Bible reading or study to pray and ask Holy Spirit to be present and active during our Bible time to help us to grow in holiness.

The next two pages of this document are quotes from *The Word of God* to give you a *flavor* of the document. I urge everyone to go to the Vatican’s website and read this instructive document. The following page is a Bible study guide for personal use. This is the method of Bible study that I use in my published Bible Studies.

Blessings,

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VERBUM DOMINI QUOTES

P. 5—There is no greater priority than this: to enable the people of our time once more to encounter God, the God who speaks to us and shares his love so that we might have life in abundance (cf. *Jn* 10:10).

P. 6—Indeed, the Church is built upon the word of God; she is born from and lives by that word.

P. 11—Following the example of the Apostle John and the other inspired authors, may we allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit to an *ever greater love of the word of God*.

P. 16—God makes himself known to us as a mystery of infinite love in which the Father eternally utters his Word in the Holy Spirit. Consequently the Word, who from the beginning is with God and is God, reveals God himself in the dialogue of love between the divine persons, and invites us to share in that love.

P. 18—Finally, the word of God, attested and divinely inspired, is sacred Scripture, the Old and New testaments.

P. 18—Christianity is the “religion of the word of God”, not of “a written and mute word, but of the incarnate and living Word”. Consequently the Scripture is to be proclaimed, heard, read, received and experienced as the word of God, in the stream of the apostolic Tradition from which it is inseparable.

P. 21—Listening to the word of God leads us first and foremost to value the need to live in accordance with this law “written on human hearts” (cf. *Rom* 2:15; 7:23).

P. 23—May our hearts be able to say to God each day: “You are my refuge and my shield; I hope in your word” (Psalm 119:114)...

P. 24—Here the word finds expression not primarily in discourse, concepts, or rules. Here we are set before the very person of Jesus. His unique and singular history is the definitive word which God speaks to humanity.

P. 25—The *divine Word* is truly expressed in *human words*.

P. 31—Consequently the Synod pointed to the need to “help the faithful to distinguish the word of God from private revelations: whose role “is not to ‘complete’ Christ’s definitive revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history”....The criterion for judging the truth of a private revelation is its orientation to Christ himself.

P. 32—In fact there can be no authentic understanding of Christian revelation apart from the activity of the Paraclete. This is due to the fact that God’s self-communication always involves the relationship of the Son and the Holy Spirit...

P. 34—...the Synod Fathers highlighted the importance of the Holy Spirit’s work in the life of the Church and in the hearts of believers in relation to sacred Scripture: without the efficacious working of the “Spirit of truth” (*Jn* 14:16), the words of the Lord cannot be understood.

P. 40—Sacred Scripture is “the word of God set down in writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit”.

P. 42—As the cross of Christ demonstrates, God also speaks by his silence.

P. 43—God’s silence prolongs his earlier words. In these moments of darkness, he speaks through the mystery of his silence. Hence, in the dynamic of Christian revelation, silence appears as an important expression of the word of God.

P. 45—The word of God draws each of us into a conversation with the Lord: the God who speaks teaches us how to speak to him.

P. 46—Here the word of God reveals that our entire life is under the divine call.

P. 46-47—*The proper human response to the God who speaks is faith.* Here we see clearly that “in order to accept revelation, man must open his mind and heart to the working of the Holy Spirit who enables him to understand the word of God present in the sacred Scriptures.”

P. 53—The Holy Spirit, who gives life to the Church, enables us to interpret the Scriptures authoritatively.

P. 54—Jerome, for whom “ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ”, states that the ecclesial dimension of biblical interpretation is not a requirement imposed from without: the Book is the very voice of the pilgrim People of God, and only within the faith of this People are we, so to speak, attuned to understand sacred Scripture. An authentic interpretation of the Bible must always be in harmony with the faith of the Catholic Church.

P. 55—“As the reader matures in the life of the Spirit, so there grows also his or her capacity to understand the realities of which the Bible speaks.”

P. 61—...since Scripture must be interpreted in the same Spirit in which it was written, the Dogmatic Constitution indicates three fundamental criteria for an appreciation of the divine dimension of the Bible: 1) the text must be interpreted with attention to *the unity of the whole of Scripture*; nowadays this is called canonical exegesis; 2) account if [to] be taken of *the living Tradition of the whole Church*; and, finally, 3) respect must be shown for *the analogy of faith*.

P. 70—Here the words of Hugh of Saint Victor remain a sure guide: “All divine Scripture is one book, and this one book is Christ, speaks of Christ and finds its fulfillment in Christ”.

P. 79—Christianity, on the other hand, perceives *in* the words *the Word* himself, the *Logos* who displays his mystery through this complexity and the reality of human history.

P. 126—here it is important to stress the relationship between sacred Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as it is set forth in the *General Catechetical Directory*: “Sacred Scripture, in fact, as ‘the word of God written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit’, and the catechism of the Catholic Church, as a significant contemporary expression of the living Tradition of the Church and a sure norm for teaching the faith, are called, each in its own way and according to its specific authority, to nourish catechesis in the Church today”.

P. 140—Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of sacred Scripture”. The Council thus sought to reappropriate the great patristic tradition which had always recommended approaching the Scripture in dialogue with God. As Saint Augustine puts it: “Your prayer is the word you speak to God. When you read the Bible, God speaks to you; when you pray, you speak to God”. Origen, one of the great master of this way of reading the Bible, maintains that understanding Scripture demands, even more than study, closeness to Christ and prayer.

P. 189—...I wish once more to encourage all the People of God, pastors, consecrated persons and the laity, to become increasingly familiar with the sacred Scriptures. We must never forget that all authentic and living Christian spirituality is based on *the word of God proclaimed, accepted, celebrated and mediated upon in the Church*. This deepening relationship with the divine word will take place with even greater enthusiasm if we are conscious that, in Scripture and the Church’s living Tradition, we stand before God’s definitive word on the cosmos and on history.

P. 191—The greater our openness to God’s word, the more will we be able to recognize that today too the mystery of Pentecost is taking place in God’s Church. The Spirit of the Lord continues to pour out his gifts upon the Church to guide us into all truth, to show us the meaning of the Scriptures and to make us credible heralds of the word of salvation before the world.



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THE THREE STEP METHOD BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

NAME: _____ Date: _____

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE: _____

STEP 1: Answer the following questions to discover what is happening in the Scripture.

1. Who is in this Scripture passage?
2. What is the setting of the Scripture passage?
3. What is the person doing in the Scripture passage?
4. What has led up to this event?
5. What is the conclusion of this event?
6. What is the topic of this Scripture passage?
7. What is the main lesson, teaching, or thought of this Scripture passage?

STEP 2: How does this Scripture passage “fit in” with Sacred Tradition and The Bible?

1. What are some other Bible verses that talk about the main topic found in the Scripture passage that you chose?
2. What does Tradition teach us about the main topic found in the Scripture passage that you chose?

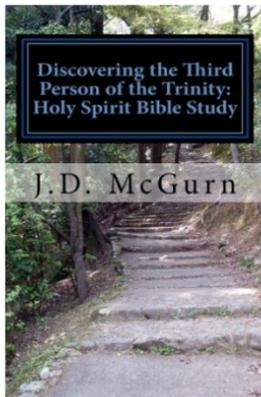
STEP 3: How does this Scripture passage impact your life?

1. What did you learn from this Scripture passage?
2. Will you make any changes in your life after encountering this Scripture passage? If so, what changes?
3. If this passage did not result in you making changes in your life, why?

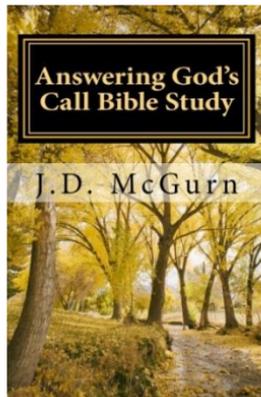


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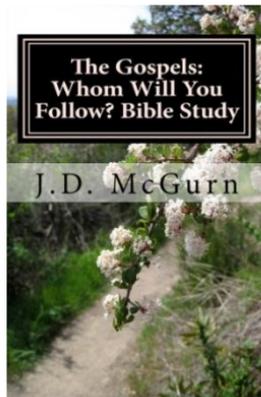
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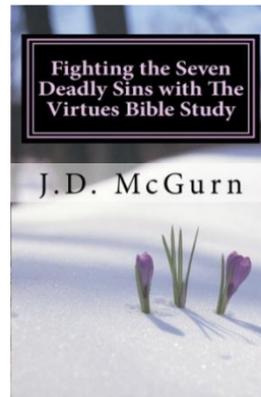
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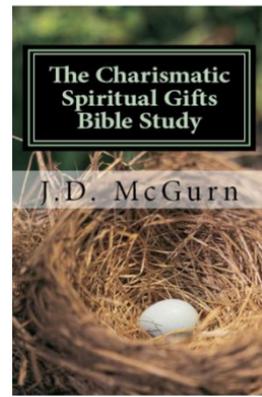
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