



2026 2Q Growing in a Relationship with God Lesson 5: How to Study the Bible

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

The title is “How to Study the Bible.”

What ways have you found that have been especially helpful in studying the Bible?

Read the second paragraph,

- Martin Luther said, “For a number of years I have now annually read through the Bible twice. If the Bible were a large, mighty tree and all its words were little branches, I would have tapped at all the branches, eager to know what was there and what it had to offer.” *Adult SS Guide 2nd Q 2026, Growing in a Relationship with God*, p. 38.

I like the idea that Martin Luther suggests of studying into all of Scripture, searching it deeply for what it has to offer.

If the heart is honestly seeking truth and open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, then there is no single right way to study the Bible. What I mean is that is not wrong to study the Bible to find insights or God’s wisdom on a particular question—I remember studying for thousands of hours seeking understanding in God’s design for our minds, how sin has damaged, and how God heals our minds. I remember being taught in church and school how to do a word search, what does this word generally mean in Scripture, and doctrinal proof studies. All of these types of study and more have their place, but there are some overriding principles that are important and if we lose these principles, or perhaps were never taught them, then Bible study can be confusing, or we could even draw the wrong conclusions.

Here are some of the overriding principles that, if included in all Bible study, help ensure the healthiest and most consistent conclusions from studying the Bible:

- Approaching it with an honest heart that wants to find truth, humbling willing to be led by the Holy Spirit
- Remembering the Bible’s primary purpose is to reveal God to us—if one doesn’t know God, one will struggle to understand many portions of Scripture.
- Knowing God means knowing His character, methods, principles design laws—God is love; God is truth; God is Creator; God’s ultimate power is not physical but the power of truth and love.

- Realizing Jesus is fully God and He is the clearest, most accurate, and reality-based revelation of God—if we have seen Jesus we have seen the Father. Everything that is true about Jesus in character is true about the Father.
- Remember that Scripture teaches that God reveals truth in more places than Scripture and our understanding of Scripture must be harmonized with God’s revelations in nature and life experiences. The integrative evidenced-based approach.

These some of the big principles that are helpful when studying Scripture. Have you found others?

One method that many have found helpful, yet never really worked well for me, is reading the Bible on a schedule so that it is read through in a year. This method never worked well for me because I would either come to sections that were very boring, like the long family lists, or areas that made no sense in reading through like that, such as prophecies in Ezekiel and if I wanted to try to comprehend what I was reading I would have to stop my reading through and go into a deep study of the symbolism comparing Scripture with Scripture, or I would come to passages that really intrigued me, stirred my mind and heart with new truths and possibilities and I would not want to continue reading on but to dive into that subject or concept and understand it more fully.

What about the book by book approach looking for what that book of the Bible tells us about God, have you found that method helpful?

I have found this helpful, and I have considered changing up our weekly Bible study for one year and not doing a lesson each week from the church’s Bible study guide, and instead do a weekly book by book study but with a slightly expanded theme: such as The Cosmic Conflict in All 66. This, of course, would always keep the focus on the truth about God because the great controversy is centered on the knowledge of God. Satan has lied about God and we war against everything that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. So, such a study would always connect to the truth about God.

But I think the Cosmic Conflict focus might also expand our understanding of how the war is fought, how God wins, His methods, and contrast those with the devil’s and also align our minds and hearts with what God is doing, perhaps expanding our appreciation of His purposes, methods, principles, which could help us mature in not only appreciating God for the beauty of His character, but deepen our appreciation of His ways, why He does what He does, and thereby grow in His likeness.

But instead of putting the time into such a project, I have continued the various other endeavors, such as teaching my weekly Bible study class, writing a weekly blog, doing a weekly podcast, producing other materials like our magazines and pamphlets, our various programs like the God of Reality Seminar.

Our ministry team, (which includes all of you who pray for and support us) have been praying that God will open avenues for this message to go forward, because we know it is a healing message, a life transforming message, for it is the truth about God, His kingdom, and His methods for life, which must go to the world to prepare the world for Christ’s return.

This is the same message that all of God's people through history have been taking to the world, for it is the eternal gospel, the good news about God that has always been true and will always be true. And God is working incredibly, when a door closes in one organization, God brings other people to the cause to open new avenues.

Because the message is God's message, the gospel is God's gospel, it is not owned by an organization.

When the church that God ordained to carry the knowledge of Him to the world to prepare the world for His first advent, rejected and crucified Him 2000 years ago, God brought those from outside that organization to the cause. They accepted the truth and the message spread to the world *without* the historical organized church's endorsement or support—in fact that organized system that had been called by God to be the light to the world instead warred against the advancing truth.

We see this process repeating in our own lives. When one organization or group, who has been blessed by God with advancing light and is given the opportunity to take the message of truth forward, closes their hearts, minds, and resources and stops moving forward with the truth, and instead works against it and seek to silence, purge, and shut down the voices with the truth, God raises up others whose hearts love truth and will invest themselves in growing in the truth and sharing it.

I have seen this happening in the growth of this ministry and message. As the organization of my upbringing has to a great degree rejected and worked against this message, and sought to purge it from its system, God has opened other avenues over the last 16 years and the message continues to advance.

God has led me in my professional walk to my current position at Honey Lake Clinic (HLC) and brought faithful Christians from all over the country and various denominational backgrounds who have hearts for advancing truth to join together with the primary focus upon growing in and apply God's truths for healing people—not merely physically, but eternally, spiritual healing.

Our team at HLC recognizes God is the God of reality and healing is only possible in harmony with the laws of health—the laws the Creator has built into the operations of life, across all domains, physical, psychological, relational, and spiritual. Our entire team at HLC are committed to Jesus first, His kingdom, His principles, His design laws upon which reality is built. And we have seen the impact of what this does:

- Among patients who started treatment with moderate-to-severe anxiety and completed our program, 98% improved and 58% reached remission of symptoms based on the gold-standard GAD-7 anxiety assessment.
- Among patients who started treatment with moderate-to-severe depression and complete the program, 100% reported improvement, 96.8% had clinically meaningful improvement as measured by standardized tests, and 64.5% reached remission of symptoms based on the gold-standard PHQ-9 depression assessment.

This is significantly better than what is seen in standard mental health programs—including many Christian programs, why? Because we are actively seeking to, as far as possible, apply God's design

laws across the entire domain of human experience. And this requires we return to worshiping God as Creator and understand all His laws are design laws, including the laws that govern the operations of the heart and mind.

Jesus taught this when He said,

- ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. Matthew 22:37-40 NIV84.

Love cannot be ordered, commanded, obtained by imposed law and law enforcement, thus Jesus’s words are intended to lead people away from the false penal/legal way of thinking and back to worshiping God as Creator. Jesus is calling people to think, what kind of law is love and how does it function? It is a design protocol, like the laws of health.

One cannot maintain health while violating the laws of health—even if one prays for better health! In fact, every violation of the laws of health damages, injures, undermines health. Conversely it is also true that if you harmonize with the laws of health you cannot avoid the healing and restoration of wellness that results.

While I am so thankful that God is working at HLC and opening avenues for this healing message to go forward, I am simultaneously deeply saddened—truly grief-stricken when I think about my church and it’s calling, it’s mission. Why? Because what we are doing at HLC was the message and mission brought to the SDA church more than 150 years ago, and which the church has abandoned, and in many cases actively rejected. But the message is God’s and if those blessed with it refuse to take it, then God brings in others to take this message forward, just like He did 2000 years ago.

To be fair, the SDA church has embraced and applied these principles *along the physical health lines*, and thus developed one of the most successful and highly respected physical healthcare systems in the world. As a result, SDAs have been known for decades to live longer, have less cancer, heart disease, obesity, and other medical problems than the population at large—why? Because they have actively sought to teach and apply the laws of physical health (God’s design laws).

But sadly, the true purpose of the health message was not fully realized and integrated into the practices and teachings of the church. The true purpose of the health message was not intended to be a message to teach people how to live longer in sin; it was a message intended to connect hearts and minds to reality, to teach them how God’s laws function, so that they could break out of the Dark Ages system of imposed law thinking about salvation with its false penal/legal god who is seen as the source of pain and suffering inflicted as so-called justice for sin and whom we must pay with the blood of a human sacrifice not to kill us.

The physical health message, teaches reality—design laws built into the operations of life that health is built upon and teaching people these real-world truths of how life function is supposed to lead people to back to a knowledge of God, the true nature of sin, and God’s solution for it.

As we understand the laws of health and that violations of them cause suffering, disease, and death, we realize that God is *not* acting with external power to inflict punishment for the transgression of His laws of health, and our minds are to realize that this is exactly how the sin works—it is breaking God’s laws, which are the laws of life, and sin causes pain, suffering, and death and God is working to heal and save.

The health message was supposed to lead the church to return to worshipping God as Creator who built life, in all domains, mind, body, spirit, to operate upon His design laws of truth, love, trust, and freedom, and when we break these design laws we damage ourselves infecting ourselves with fear, selfishness, guilt, shame, and survival drives that lead to every kind of wicked and destructive action (sins).

Understanding the reality of the laws of health were supposed to help our people realize that God is our Creator, Savior, and heavenly Physician who has provided the only remedy to our terminal sin condition in Jesus. And this message of God’s true character as Creator, who is love and whose laws are design laws, when received leads us to trust Him, and in that trust we surrender our fearful self-centered lives to Him and are reborn with a new spirit, a new life, of love and trust received freely from Jesus.

This is what the Bible teaches, this is what God is calling people to understand, embrace, accept, choose, and be transformed by and share with others. This was the special message that was given to the SDA church, but sadly which the church leadership rejected in 1888 and instead divorced the health message from its theology. I have been told by various theologians that in regard to health God’s laws are natural, design laws, built into the operations of life, but God’s moral law, which governs our hearts and minds, those are imposed rules that God must enforce through punishment. Thus, my heart grieves, because the precious message that would have transformed the church, healed lives, opened the people for the latter rain, and have lightened the world for Christ’s return has been rejected—and it is now going to those who will receive and take it.

As evidence for what I am saying, here are a few historical quotes from one of the founders of the SDA church written more than 150 years ago:

- The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. **The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws that govern the heart's action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul. From Him all life proceeds.** Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same--a life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will. To transgress **His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place one's**

self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin. *Education* p. 99, emphasis mine.

- **The right hand is used to open doors** through which the body may find entrance. **This is the part the medical missionary work is to act.** It is to largely **prepare the way for the reception of the truth for this time...***Medical Ministry*, p. 238, emphasis mine.
- **Men and women cannot violate natural law by indulging depraved appetite and lustful passions, and not violate the law of God.** Therefore He has permitted the **light of health reform** to shine upon us, that we may see our sin in violating the **laws** which He has **established in our being.** **All our enjoyment or suffering may be traced to obedience or transgression of natural law.** Our gracious heavenly Father sees the deplorable condition of men who, some knowingly but many ignorantly, are living in violation of the **laws that He has established.** And in love and pity to the race, He causes the light to shine upon **health reform.** He **publishes His law** and the **penalty that will follow the transgression of it,** that all may learn and be careful to live in harmony with **natural law.** He proclaims **His law** so distinctly and makes it so prominent that it is like a city set on a hill. All accountable beings can understand it if they will. ... **To make plain natural law, and urge the obedience of it, is the work that accompanies the third angel's message to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord.** *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3. p. 161. emphasis mine.
- [Medical treatment centers] are **the right hand of the gospel.** In them the sick are to be educated that **sin is the transgression of the law, and that it is this transgression that brings suffering and disease...** Those who are suffering as the result of a wrong course of action are to be shown **the necessity of reform in their habits of life.** **The laws of health have been violated...** 25LtMs, Ms 23, 1912, par. 1, emphasis mine.
- Medical missionary work is the **right hand of the gospel.** It is necessary to the advancement of the cause of God. As through it men and women are led to **see the importance of right habits of living, the saving power of the truth** will be made known. Every city is to be entered by workers trained to do medical missionary work. As the **right hand of the third angel's message...**—*Testimonies for the Church* vol. 7, p. 59, emphasis mine.

This message calls people back to worship God as Creator with reality-based evidence of God's laws of health at the forefront. It is to teach people the emerging scientific discoveries breaking upon the world and affirm and confirm that God's laws are design laws. Every person rightly taught can comprehend God as Creator, and His laws as the laws of life, built into the operations of reality for our health, our good, our freedom.

When we understand reality like this, we then realize why the Bible describes God's law as the law that gives liberty. It gives liberty because God's laws give life, vibrancy, vitality—when we violate God's laws we enfeeble ourselves, and become less free, less capable of living life to the fullest. Imposed law does not give liberty, imposed law always restrain and restrict, only design law opens the life to greater freedom.

This incredible reality-based message was given to the SDA church in the 1860s and 1870s to lead people to return to worshiping God as Creator and stop worshiping Him in the false light of a creature, a dictator, a being who makes up rules and uses His power to inflict punishment for rule-breaking.

And as this advancing truth was doing that very work, Jones and Waggoner saw this light and applied the design law reality to God's moral law, to sin, salvation, and righteousness by faith at the 1888 General Conference in Minneapolis. They rightly taught that God's laws are not imperial, imposed, that the Ten Commandments were added after sin as a God directed aide and helpful tool for sinners to diagnose and act as a hedge of protection to lead us to Christ for real healing. They taught that real righteousness happens within believers and is not a penal legal declaration stamped in books in a court system.

But sadly, the majority of church leadership (other than Ellen White) rejected this truth and embraced the lie that the Ten Commandments are eternal imposed rules that God enforces through inflicted punishment. And the church divorced the health message from the gospel message and has actively worked to suppress the final message that is to lighten the world. I am not saying the SDA church has any specific doctrine, such as Sabbath, state of the dead, divinity of Christ etc. factually wrong. I am saying that they have presented those facts in the wrong law framework, so even when one accepts the doctrinal fact they are still operating in a false understanding of reality and all too often worshiping a false God—just like the Jews 2000 years ago. Those Jewish leaders had the right doctrinal Sabbath day, but it was set in a false imposed-law legal setting that requiring enforcement through punishment. And thus, they rejected their Creator, accused Him of Sabbath breaking, used imposed laws to convict and crucify Him, and then they ensured He as off the cross by sunset to keep the right day of the week. But, despite having many right doctrines, when they claimed God as their Father, Jesus told them they were actually children of Satan (John 8:44).

The issue is not primarily correct doctrinal facts, but whether those facts reveal the truth about God, and that is only possible when those facts are understood in the context of reality, which is God is Creator and all of His laws are design laws.

The health message, based on design law, is the right hand of the gospel and is to be presented in perfect harmony with the gospel. Unfortunately, the SDA leadership separated the two and rather than carrying the Reformation forward continued teaching a fraudulent theology of rules and rule-enforcement through inflicted punishment by God who uses His power to torture and kill unless appeased by the blood of His Son.

Just as the Jews misinterpreted the symbolic system given to them and rejected Christ, so too the leadership of the SDA church misinterpreted the law of God and rejected the message that is to go to the world. EGW herself wrote in multiple places how the leadership of the church at that conference treated the Holy Spirit with contempt, with the same attitude of the Jews who crucified Christ.

This division within the SDA church between health message (design law) and the false penal/legal theology (imposed law) was magnified and more deeply entrenched during the first decade of the 19th

century when J. Harvey Kellogg attempted to wrest control of the church away from the theologians and advanced his false pantheism theology. That conflict resulted in the church separating in a semi-official, and certainly geographical, way the teaching of the healing arts and the teaching of theology. Our major seminar was placed in Michigan while our medical school was placed in California. And medical and seminary students, who should have been learning the foundational truths of God's design laws that govern the operations of the entire being, body, soul, and spirit, and thereby have a unified, coordinated, and cooperative presentation of the same Creator God, instead drew apart. The physicians, by necessity, learned the laws of health and the principles of health, but the theologians, to a great degree, have been taught a fraudulent system of rules and rule-enforcement that inflames fear, anxiety, distrust of God, and promotes all kinds of fictional theologies designed to hide and protect people from God.

Thus the church has divided the human being into a physiological organism whose body is governed by design law, the laws of health, but whose soul and spirit, (mind and heart), are governed by made up rules enforced through threats of punishment.

This rejection of design law and clinging to the lie that God's laws are imposed, has not only prevented the church from being able finish its work of taking final message of mercy to the world, it has actively interfered with the healing of the whole person, body, soul, and spirit. Thus it has interfered the preparation of God's people to be ready to meet Him, and thereby contributing to the delay of Christ's return.

Decades ago, when I finished my residency, I approached various church leaders about advancing our health message past just physical health, to mental health, to bring these same eternal truths to bear upon the operations of hearts and minds. I wrote my first book *Could It Be This Simple? A Biblical Model for Healing the Mind*, which I submitted to the church's flagship publishing house, the Review and Herald. It went through their full acquisition committee and was unanimously accepted and published in 2007.

As those who have read it know, it presents the truth that God's laws are design laws, and demonstrates how to apply them to our hearts, minds, and relationships. And just as when we apply the physical laws of health to our bodies we experience healing, so too when we apply God's design laws for our hearts and minds we experience healing. And because of its reality-based healing, the book was spreading rapidly through the church and had sold multiple times more than the publishers had anticipated.

As this book was making serious advances within the SDA organizational system, bring with it the special message for this time, I was scheduled to do a book signing and promote it at General Conference in July 2010, but certain church leaders, who hold to the fiction, the infection, that God's law is imposed, and that sin is rule-breaking, and that God is the source of death inflicted for so-called justice sake, used their influence behind the scenes to have the Review cancel its publishing contract with me, cancel the book signing at the GC, and in May of 2010 all the rights were returned to me. The organization officially chose to purge advancing light from its avenues of distribution, specifically, the truth regarding God's laws as design laws.

But the message is God's message, not mine, and not the organization's message. As such, this message is not restricted to any one organization. After the publishing rights were returned to me, a group of us founded Come and Reason Ministries and we published the book ourselves and began giving it away. Since then it has been translated into 10 other languages and is currently being translated into Swahili. I genuinely don't know how many copies have been produced and distributed, but hundreds of thousands for sure and perhaps many more. We have received emails and letters from all over the world of lives that have been healed through receiving the truth about God as our Creator and applying these principles to their lives.

As we continue to share this message, God has blessed us with other books and opened new avenues with other Christian publishers and Christian groups who embrace and share this message.

2000 years ago, when the Jews rejected the truth, God opened new avenues to take this truth forward. Likewise, because the SDA church has refused to advance the truth about God's law, God has opened other doors, for He will not allow the end to come without the truth being proclaimed. Consider this historical quote:

- The Lord God of heaven will... not close up the period of probation until the **message shall be more distinctly proclaimed**. The **law of God** is to be magnified; its **claims** must be presented in their **true, sacred character**, that the people may be brought to decide for or against the truth. Yet the work will be cut short in righteousness. The message of **Christ's righteousness** is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the **glory of God**, which closes the work of the **third angel**. *Testimonies to the Church* vol. 6, p. 19, emphasis mine.

When people and organizations refuse advancing light, God calls others to do His work, and we are witnessing this very process unfolding before us. I see God's leading in this message, this ministry, but also in my career and how he has led me to HLC. My colleagues, and the leadership there, have fully embraced the truth that God is our Creator, that His laws are design laws, and that life and health are only possible when we trust God and harmonize our lives with the laws He built into the operation of our being. Thus, the program we have developed there is the fullest and most complete integration of Christian principles for human health, applying God's design laws across all domains of our being, body, soul, spirit, that I am aware of in the world. This is why we are seeing such incredible healing outcomes.

And the leadership at HLC has been convicted, with a real passion, and are investing millions of dollars to promote this complete integrated message, which puts God as Creator at the center. And God has graciously allowed me to be part of this team to develop a Christian mental health platform that will incorporate all the design law principles into the plan to be distributed across the world.

I was at a Christian Mental Health retreat this week with Christian mental health providers, educators, researchers from across the country—and the programs presented, research being done, and message

these others are taking, is the applied message of returning to worship God as Creator because His laws are design laws.

Baylor University mental health research team has been involved with Harvard University in the Flourishing Study which has studied hundreds of thousands of lives and identified 6 domains of life that we must operate within healthy parameters in order to have the abundant or flourishing life. And one of those is healthy spirituality, which Baylor emphasis is Christ-centered. Their research is being published and promoted across the world and yesterday one of their colleagues in the project from Harvard presented this research at the United Nations. Nature magazine is promoting this through a series of publications.

One of the presenters at the meeting was Brad Gray, co-author of the book *Brining Heaven Here: How the Lord's Prayer Can Change Your Life and Our World*. He presented the Lord's prayer in the context of its setting to the Jewish people who heard Jesus give it, and connected it all back with Creation, God's design, and God's plan to restore earth back into harmony with heaven—and all of this requires restoration with us of God's design laws. He doesn't use that terminology of design laws, but he describes the reality, the function of design law. That God is working to bring order to the chaos of this world, just like in Genesis God brought order out of chaos. And this book has been turned into a movie and a seven-episode TV series.

God is moving, the message is going forward, every single human being on earth is called to join with this message; it is to lighten the entire world. It is the message that matters, not the organization that takes the message to the world. We must stop confusing the two, we must stop allowing the organization to determine our thinking, focus, and mission. We must not be like the Jews 2000 years ago and reject the message, the advancing light out of fear of what the organized church leadership will say. Instead, we must study for ourselves, think for ourselves, surrender our hearts and minds to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and really consider the issues at stake. And when you are fully persuaded in your own mind, then join us in sharing the final message of mercy to the world so that we can hasten the Lord's return.

So I invite you to worship God as Creator, reject the lie that God's law function like human law, and then surrender to Him in trust and ask for His healing of heart and mind and to lead you to understand where you are out of harmony with the laws of life, whether physical, mental, relational, or spiritual.

For you cannot have health while violating the laws of health, but you cannot avoid the healing that results from harmonizing with them!

So what is the best method of Bible study? The method that helps one learn and understand the truth about God, His nature, character, design laws, kingdom, and how we can cooperate with Him for healing and restoration!

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on the description in Scripture that God's Word is sweet to the soul—how have you found this to be true?

As we choose to study, believe, and internalize God's truth it becomes encoded into the substructure (tubulin molecules) of our brains, which cause a real-time change in emotional/spiritual resonance. Then as we choose, based on this new truth encoded, and new motive experienced, to act upon that truth, our brains begin to rewire, and we wire in healthier patterns of thinking and living and wire out unhealthy ones. We are literally transformed and healed through the truth that sets us free, ultimately leading us to know God well enough that we trust Him and open our hearts to Him and are reborn with a new spirit, the Spirit of Christ.

The lesson asks us to read Isaiah chapter 55 in light of this process:

- “Come, all you who are **thirsty**, come to the **waters**; and you who have **no money, come, buy and eat!** Come, **buy wine and milk without money and without cost.** [What is the message? What is this water? How are they to buy without money? What is being said? That God offers us His truth, His love, His life, freely—all we are required to do is value it and partake of it. But in order to do that, we have to relinquish feasting and drinking upon the sewage of this world.] Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and **eat what is good**, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. [What is it that we are to eat? Jesus said that we are to eat His flesh and drink His blood and if we do not we have not part with Him (John 6:53) what does this mean?] Give ear and come to me; **hear me, that your soul may live.** [Why is hearing related to our soul living? Because we are deceived, walking paths contrary to reality, going down paths that lead only to disintegration and death, and if we want to live, we must have hearts that are willing to be corrected, that love objective truth.] I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples. Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, he has endowed you with splendor.” Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. **Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts.** Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for **he will freely pardon.** “**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,**” declares the LORD. “**As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.** [What are God's ways that are higher than human ways? God freely pardons, no legal payment, no inflicted punishment, free pardon for all who listen to truth, turn from the path of destruction, give up their fearful, selfish ways, and trust God. This does not mean God could save without Christ, only that what Christ had to do to save us was something other than a legal payment to God to get Him to pardon or forgive. And notice what comes next in the text after God says His ways are higher than ours] **As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my**

word that goes out from my mouth: [Design law, how reality works, sowing reaping, growth with water and sunlight] It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed." Isaiah 55:1-13 NIV84, emphasis mine.

When God's seeds of truth and love are ingested into our hearts and minds and take root, and are watered by the Holy Spirit, fear, distrust, selfishness are purged, and love and trust are established and we bring forth a new song of joy, peace, love, and trust.

SUNDAY

The lesson focuses on the importance of time in regard to Bible study—thoughts about this?

Isn't it true that anything that becomes a priority for us we will choose to include in our lives, we will spend time doing?

Those who value physical health spend time to exercise, rest, but also time to learn, to understand ways to improve their health, wither by exercise mechanics, nutrition, or types of exercise.

Those who value excellence in any profession, will spend time not only engaging in the practice of that profession, but time studying, learning, advancing.

And this process, results in knowledge advancing, we have seen growth in the knowledge of medicine, science, technology, because people have spent their time studying and engaging in those fields.

What about theology? Have we seen the same dynamic and exponential growth in the knowledge of God as we have seen in other fields of understanding? Or is Christianity, overall teaching basically the same thing it has for hundreds or thousands of years. Aren't the Roman and Orthodox churches teaching basically the same doctrines and systems that have been taught for more than a thousand years? And what about Protestantism, isn't almost all of Protestantism teaching basically what the Reformers taught, ideas that were advancing the truth 500 years ago, but are those ideas the truth for today?

God is infinite and we are finite—we never become God, therefore we are never to stop advancing in our knowledge of God. But has Christianity been advancing in our knowledge of God? God is the infinite source of truth and light shining down in all kinds of revelations of truth, but God's enemy is active and working to close hearts and minds to the advancing light.

Truth in many fields has been advancing, but Satan has worked to disconnect those truth from their ultimate purpose, and that ultimate purpose of all truth is to lead minds back to the source of truth.

The heavens declare the glory of God—all truth cosmology isn't to stand alone as interesting facts about the universe—it is to lead us to greater appreciate for God.

The advancing truths of medicine and health care are not to stand alone as simple facts about health, but are to lead us back to greater appreciate for God who constructed and built life and the laws of health.

The advancing truths in information science and technology are not to stand alone but to lead us back to appreciate God who built the universe to operate with such precision, consistency, reliability, accuracy that the mathematics and systems we build work.

Likewise, various Bible doctrinal truths, whether creation, the Sabbath, sanctity of marriage, the trinity, the nature of humanity, the atonement—none of them are to stand alone as facts, but each and every truth are to be connected to God and inform us of Him, ultimately increasing our love, admiration, awe, respect, and trust in Him.

Satan works in every conceivable way to obstruct us from seeing and appreciating the truth, and even to take fact truths and turn those fact truths into functional lies that corrupt heart and minds and turn people against God, while they promote a fact truth.

A classic example is the truth about the Bible Sabbath, created by God in Eden, it is the seventh day of each week, beginning at sunset Friday and ending at sunset Saturday. This is a fact truth. But when that fact gets disconnected to what it says about God, that God is Creator—for only the Creator could build a day into time, but more than that, that this day stands apart because on it God rested, God ceased using power, God established a memorial in time to demonstrate to all that He leaves us free, that He does NOT use external might and power to force compliance or punish rule-breaking.

When the fact of the day of the Sabbath gets disconnected from the truth it reveals about God, then Satan uses the Sabbath to misrepresent God as a being who makes up rules and uses His power to punish rule-breaking. And people who claim to worship the Creator God, who teach the doctrine of the weekly Bible Sabbath, reject Christ, crucify Him, and want Him of the cross in time for sunset so they can keep the Sabbath day.

What was the problem, the wrong day of the week? No, they disconnected the Sabbath from God and what it actually reveals about Him and thus were not benefited by that fact truth.

This is much of Christianity, various fact truths, disconnected from God, His character, design laws, and how reality works and ultimately used to teach falsehood about God.

Another example would be that atonement—all of Christianity teaches the truth that salvation is only possible through Jesus, His voluntary, sinless, substitutionary sacrifice that became necessary because of human sin.

Yet, this fact, Jesus is our Savior. He died as our substitute, to provide atonement, salvation, reconciliation with God. Gets interpreted in various ways that teach things about God that rather than restoring trust in God, make people actually distrust God, while they rightly state salvation is only through Jesus.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on the benefit to making certain habits or life routines dedicated to spending time with God and in Bible study.

I agree with this—absolutely—I encourage my patients when leaving HLC to establish life routines that are essential to maintaining their health. These include:

- structured and scheduled sleep and wake times, generally within a 60 minute window daily
- regular exercise times and routines
- a dietary framework, which can be wide with many different things, but all within the framework of what is healthy.
- times for eating
- daily time with God and in Bible study

And then the rest of life gets scheduled around the elements that are required for the maintenance of one's own health. This scheduled times and systems only get altered in true emergencies or exceptions, and we return to them as soon as possible.

TUESDAY

The lesson recommends a structure for deep Bible study—what have you found to be helpful in your deep Bible study.

Lectio Divina literally means “divine reading,” *Lectio Divina* is an ancient Christian practice that goes all the way back to Origen of Alexandria in the third century. The intention of the practice is to help the Christian internalize the Scripture beyond mere fact or head knowledge to a deep experience, heart appreciation, and practical living out of the things of God. This style of meditation is designed to help the believer in Christ engage in purposeful practices that cooperate with God for the healing of their entire being—spirit, soul, and body.

Lectio Divina has four distinct actions or steps:

- 1) Bible reading (always Scripture only)
- 2) Meditation upon the passage read, which means reflecting on its meaning
- 3) Prayer (conversation with God) about the passage

- 4) Contemplation or experiencing its application to the inner workings of one's heart, attitudes, motives, and affections—i.e., abiding in and experiencing the Holy Spirit applying the truth to the heart.

A couple of important points about *Lectio Divina*: First, this form of meditation always starts with the inspired Word of God. If one replaces Scripture with other writings, then the meditation will serve to strengthen those writings' ideas into one's being rather than God's Word.

A second point is that this form of meditation requires deep thinking, reflection, active thought, and communion/prayer with God. It is *not* an emptying of the mind, nor is it a repetitive mantra. The goal is to expand our finite awareness, both cognitively and experientially, of our knowledge of God, so that we may *know* God for ourselves just as Jesus prayed that we would (John 17:3).

As we engage with God, actively connecting with Him and applying His methods to our lives, we experience healing, cleansing, recreation, renewal, transformation.

Lectio Divina meditation engages all aspects of our being. We engage our body when we disengage from the daily activities of life, put down the digital devices, and sit quietly with God, often in nature—breathing in the fragrance of the flowers, hearing the songs of the birds, appreciating the beautiful rainbow, feeling the warmth of the sunshine, being caressed by the gentle breeze. Our experience in the natural world that God has created stimulates our senses and turns our minds toward our Creator in awe and appreciation.

In such a state of reverence, we turn our attention to the written Word, focusing upon a specific passage of Scripture, and in that place of natural quiet, we meditate deeply upon the message of God. We reach out to God with our heart, reflecting upon the meaning, asking Him for greater insight, understanding, and wisdom. We praise God for His providence, presence, faithfulness, and goodness and for connecting the truths in Scripture in our minds and for its application to our life at that moment in time.

And then we pour out our affection, love, appreciation, and adoration to God, inviting His Spirit to cleanse and purify our attitudes, feelings, and longings to be ever more united with His so that we experience the joy, love, and presence of God in our inmost being.

I found that one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church advocated these very same practices, without ever using the term *Lectio Divina*. Consider the following historical quotes, keeping in mind the four components of *Lectio Divina*: Bible reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

- Merely to hear or to **read the word** is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures **must meditate upon the truth that has been presented to him**. By earnest attention and **prayerful** thought he **must learn the meaning of the words of truth**, and **drink deep of the spirit** [contemplation] of the holy oracles. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 59.

- It would be well for us to spend **a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ**. We should take it point by point, and **let the imagination grasp each scene**, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, **our confidence** in Him will be more constant, **our love** will be quickened, and we shall be more **deeply imbued with His spirit**. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on what it terms a Double Blessing, which is the blessing that comes when we teach or share truths with others.

It is one thing to study something for oneself, but another to explain or teach it to another.

What has been your experience of sharing or teaching things to another person?

Do you find that sometimes something you think you believe clearly, you may struggle to explain or teach to others?

What might that indicate?

Let's assume that whatever it is you want to teach is in fact the truth. Could difficulty in trying to teach the truth to someone else indicate that there is room to grow in one's understanding of why it is true?

I have found this to be true for me—whenever I have been challenged on something that I believed to be true, I always struggle if I don't understand the reality based reasons for what I believe. As I understand the reasons why what I believe is true, it becomes easier and easier to explain.

For instance, when I started my residency I already believed in God, the Bible, that we were created by God, and that God's ways, teachings, were better than the teachings of man.

However, my professors who did not believe in God, challenged those of us who did. They would point out various concepts, ideas, evidences that would suggest that the Bible and what it teaches are not the best.

I believed that they were wrong, but, until I could understand why, I had a hard time explaining. To say to my professors, "you are wrong, or I don't believe what you say, because the Bible says it that settles it" would not have helped them, and would not have helped me.

I had to study deeply to know not only what the Bible teaches is truth, but why it is true, and this led me ultimately to discover that God as Creator is the builder of reality and His laws are the laws of life, and when I began to understand that, I could then identify different types of design laws that govern different aspects of our being. And then I could understand why different sickness, problems arise

when different aspects of God's laws of health are violated, and then bring interventions to bear that apply reality, healing truth, whether physiologically, psychologically, or spiritually. And as I have understood more of these things I have worked to explain them to people so they can engage intelligently with God for their own healing.

So, the double blessing is that we grow in truth as we teach others, and we also get the blessing of seeing others benefited by the advancing truth.