

STUDY GUIDE FOR

Taking God At His Word

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Study Guide for *Taking God At His Word*, by Kevin DeYoung

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Chapter 1

Believing, Feeling, Doing

Overview

Psalm 119 shows us what we should believe, feel, and do as we interact with God's revelation to us in words—the Bible. The goal of *Taking God At His Word* is that we would learn to “*love this psalm because it gives voice to the song in my soul*” (p. 16).

Quote

“*When we embrace everything the Bible says about itself, then—and only then—will we believe what we should about the word of God, feel what we should feel, and do with the word of God what we ought to do*” (p. 16).

Discussion Questions

1. What do you get passionate about? How do you typically express it?

2. DeYoung shares three different reactions to the psalmist's passion for God's word in Psalm 119 (i.e., “*I open my mouth and pant, because I long for your commandments*”):

- “*Yeah, right.*”
- “*Ho, hum.*”
- “*Yes, yes, yes!*”

Which of these reactions most often expresses your honest feelings? Why?

3. Psalm 119 boldly proclaims that God's word "*says what is true,*" "*demands what is right,*" and "*provides what is good*" (pp. 17–18). Briefly explain how each of these three statements can fuel an "*explosion of praise*" (p. 16).

4. What internal or external influences hinder us from experiencing the Bible as the "*book that brings us face to face with the One who possesses all greatness, beauty, and power*" and "*the greatest story ever told*" (p. 19)? What do you think it would be like to experience the Bible that way?

5. What does it mean to "*live . . . by every word that comes from the mouth of God*" (Matthew 4:4)? Whom do you know who actually lives by God's word that way? How does this encourage you?

6. On p. 22, DeYoung lists seven action verbs illustrating Spirit-prompted uses for the word. Which of these do you already do? Which one could you begin to practice this week?

Praying Scripture

Use the following verses to express your rejoicing, repenting, and requesting to the Lord:

- "*My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly.*" (Psalm 119:167)
- "*I open my mouth and pant, because I long for you commandments.*" (Psalm 119:131)

Chapter 2

Something More Sure

Overview

God speaks saving truth to us in Scripture. The story of Jesus’s birth, life, death, resurrection, and promised return is not a myth but a historical, inerrant, written account which is powerful to save those who believe. The apostle Peter gives two infallible evidences for the reliability of the gospel: the prophetic Scriptures and his own confirming eyewitness account of Jesus’s transfiguration. We don’t need any other saving word from God than Scripture itself.

Quote

“You do not need another special revelation from God outside the Bible. You can listen to the voice of God every day. Christ still speaks, because the Spirit has already spoken. If you want to hear from God, go to the book that records only what he has said. Immerse yourself in the word of God. You will not find anything more sure” (p. 42).

Discussion Questions

1. What is your reaction to “My Conversation with God” on p. 27? When and how do you typically want God to personally speak to you?

2. Read 2 Peter 1:16–21. What two pieces of evidence does Peter offer for the certainty of the return of Christ? Which evidence seems more persuasive to you? Why?

3. On p. 32 DeYoung says, *“Paganism was built on the power of mythology, but Christianity . . . saw itself as an entirely different kind of religion.”* What kinds of modern myths influence how people live in our culture? (**Note to discussion leader:** Myths might include: evolution—human beings are naturally changing for the better; self-sufficiency—“I can be/do whatever I put my mind to”; materialism—more

material comforts lead to more happiness.) What are the consequences of these “myths”? How does the Christian faith offer a more realistic, radiant hope based on what God has done in history?

4. How does DeYoung’s statement “*Scripture is the word of God*” differ from the neoorthodox (Barthian) view (p. 34)? What problems arise when the neoorthodox view prevails? How does 2 Peter 1:19–21 speak to this?

5. How would you define inerrancy? What is the biblical argument for it? Why is the doctrine of inerrancy at the heart of our faith (p. 39)?

6. How are Peter’s eyewitness account of the transfiguration and the “*prophecy of Scripture*” related to each other in 2 Peter 1:16–21? To which one are we directed to “*pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts*”? How will you do that this week?

Praying Scripture

Use the following Scriptures to express your rejoicing, repenting, and requesting to the Lord:

- *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.* (2 Peter 1:16)
- *And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* (2 Peter 1:19–21)

Chapter 3

God's Word Is Enough

Overview

The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture says that the words in the Bible are the only words we need to live a full and godly life as we wait for Jesus to return. God's word is clear enough, relevant enough, comprehensive enough, and powerful enough for every aspect of life. As the old hymn says, *"How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in his excellent Word! What more can he say than to you he has said, to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?"*

Quote

"Scripture is enough because the work of Christ is enough. They stand or fall together. The Son's redemption and the Son's revelation must both be sufficient. And as such, there is nothing more to be done and nothing more to be known for our salvation and for our Christian walk than what we see and know about Christ and through Christ in his Spirit's book" (p. 52).

Discussion Questions

1. Read the first paragraph on p. 43. Which of these questions would you answer "yes" to? Why did you want something more than the words of Scripture?
2. Briefly explain the four contrasts on pp. 46–47. What conclusion do these four contrasts lead us to?
3. On pp. 49–52 DeYoung explains that the finality of God's redemption in Christ implies the finality of God's revelation in the Bible. He states on p. 50, *"If we say revelation is not complete, we must admit that somehow the work of redemption also remains unfinished."* Unpack the logic of this statement. Do you agree?

4. How would you respond to someone who said, “*You Evangelicals are too bound to the written words of the Bible. What’s really important is the living word, Jesus*”?

5. Give examples of overemphasizing and underemphasizing the role of tradition in the life of the church. How does the Reformation cry of *sola Scriptura* keep tradition in its proper place?

David Powlison writes about the sufficiency of the Bible (*Counsel the Word, second edition, 2002, pp. 3–5*), “*But when people with crammed Bibles speak of Scripture’s sufficiency they mean. . . . Something living and active, inexhaustibly rich, comprehensive and relevant, is sufficient for a very complex job. . . . I am persuaded that the Bible teaches us how to go about practical, face-to-face ministry with people. Scripture is filled to overflowing with God’s face and presence, with insight, explanations, stories, instructions, promises, and implications God is in the business of weather, anxiety, politics, heartache, money, inter-personal conflict, what you do on your day off, and how you react to suffering!*”

6. How would believing and living out this view of Scripture impact your church’s teaching, discipling, evangelism, and growth group ministries?

Praying Scripture

Use the following Scriptures to express your rejoicing, repenting, and requesting to the Lord:

- *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. . . . They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”* (Luke 24:27, 32)
- *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.* (2 Peter 1:3–4)

3. DeYoung says that four things are at stake with the doctrine of clarity (pp. 65–70). Which of the four do you think is most serious or urgent in the church today? Why?

4. Read Genesis 3:1–5. What are the implications of the fact that Satan was the first to challenge the clarity of God’s revelation? What challenges the clarity of Scripture in your life?

5. What are some dangers of the Protestant doctrine of the perspicuity of Scriptures (p. 67)? How do the advantages of this doctrine outweigh the disadvantages?

6. DeYoung asks some provocative questions on pp. 69–70: “*Is the Bible only for pastors and priests? Can laypeople be trusted with the sacred Scriptures? Do you need to be a scholar to really understand God’s word?*” How would you answer these questions and what reasons would you give for your answers?

Praying Scripture

Use the following Scriptures to express your rejoicing, repenting, and requesting to the Lord:

- *For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. . . . But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.* (Deuteronomy 30:11, 14)
- *The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.* (Psalm 119:130)

3. What other authorities compete with the Bible in your life? What makes them persuasive for you?

4. How would you explain the difference between general revelation and special revelation? Which one has more authority? How are they related?

5. What reasons does DeYoung give for us to trust completely in the Bible? How would you counsel a young Christian who is worried about the apparent discrepancies in the Bible?

6. How will you pursue “*the singular virtue of giving Scripture the last word*” (p. 83) in your life this week?

Praying Scripture

Use the following Scriptures to express your rejoicing, repenting, and requesting to the Lord:

- *Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.* (Acts 17:11)
- *And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”* (Matthew 4:3–4)

Chapter 6

God's Word Is Necessary

Overview

Every single person longs for purpose, happiness, acceptance, and glory. We want to hear a voice assuring us that we have what we long for. The only voice that can accomplish this is the voice of God, and he has spoken this necessary word in the Bible. Only by the Spirit speaking through the Scriptures can we become what we were meant to be and live joyfully forever with God. God's word is necessary for salvation and eternal life.

Quote

"The doctrine of the necessity of Scripture reminds us of our predicament: the One we need to know most cannot be discovered on our own. And it assures us of a solution: this same ineffable One has made himself known through his word" (p. 86).

Discussion Questions

1. What do you most want or desire right this moment? How long would getting this satisfy you? What would satisfy you for ten thousand ages?

2. How does the Bible function as our "spectacles" (p. 86)? How does this analogy protect us from exaggerating or underestimating what the Bible is and does?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 2:1–16. What are some popular sources of worldly wisdom today? How would Paul respond to these worldly wisdoms?

4. How would you respond to someone who said, “*God speaks to me through the still small voice in my heart. When I look deep inside myself, that’s where I hear from God*” (p. 89)?

5. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18–24. How would worldly and/or religious people define a “spiritual” person today? How does Paul define one?

6. What are the four attributes of Scripture *Taking God At His Word* has unpacked? What practical difference do these four attributes of Scripture make for Christians? What difference will they make for you this week?

Praying Scripture

Use the following Scriptures to express your rejoicing, repenting, and requesting to the Lord:

- *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. (John 6:68)*
- *Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. (1 Corinthians 2:12–13)*

Chapter 7

Christ's Unbreakable Bible

Overview

For Christians, one crucial question will ultimately determine our doctrine of Scripture: What did Jesus believe about the Bible? In this important chapter DeYoung looks at passages from the Gospels of John and Matthew to unpack Jesus's view of Scripture.

Quote

“He believed the Bible was all true, all edifying, all important, and all about him. He believed absolutely that the Bible was from God and was absolutely free from error. What Scripture says, God says; and what God said was recorded infallibly in Scripture. . . . it is impossible to revere the Scriptures more deeply or affirm them more completely than Jesus did” (p. 109–110).

Discussion Questions

1. In John 10:35 Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6 and says of it, *“Scripture cannot be broken.”* What does this mean? How does quoting from an obscure verse in an obscure psalm make the point even more powerful?
 - a. Matthew 5:17–19
 - b. Matthew 12:38–42
 - c. Matthew 19:4–5
2. How does Jesus argue for the authority of Scripture in the following passages?

3. How would you explain Jesus's apparent corrections of Old Testament Scriptures (pp. 98–102)?

4. How does Jesus understand and speak about the story of Jonah in Matthew 12:38–42? How is this different from some modern scholars (pp. 102–107)? How do you interpret this story?

5. How would you respond to liberal Christians who say we should worship Christ and not the Scriptures?

6. How does Jesus's doctrine of Scripture encourage or challenge you? What changes in attitude or behavior is God calling you to make because of this?

Praying Scripture

Use the following Scriptures to express your rejoicing, repenting, and requesting to the Lord:

- *Scripture cannot be broken.* (John 10:35)
- *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.* (Matthew 5:17–18)

Chapter 8

Stick With the Scriptures

Overview

The apostle Paul charged Timothy to “*continue in what you have learned,*” and so must we. In order to continue to grow in our faith we must continue to grow in our understanding and application of Scripture. Paul gives us four reasons to stick with the Scriptures: our history, Scripture’s ability, Scripture’s originality, and Scripture’s practicality.

Quote

“So let us not weaken in our commitment to our unbreakable Bible. Let us not wander from this divinely exhaled truth. Let us not waver in our delight and desire. God has spoken, and through that revelation he still speaks” (p. 124).

Discussion Questions

1. Who led you to faith in Jesus Christ or first taught you the Bible? What was this person like? What continuing influence has this had on your life?

2. On p. 116, DeYoung says, “*The purpose of Holy Scripture is not ultimately to make you smart, or make you relevant, or make you rich, or get you a job, or get you married, or take all your problems away, or tell you where to live. The aim is that you might be wise enough to put your faith in Christ and be saved.*” Has this happened for you? If not, what is keeping you from trusting and following him? If so, what would you like to thank him for?

3. What does B. B. Warfield mean (p. 117) that *theopneustos* is “*primarily expressive of the origination of Scripture, and not of its nature and much less of its effects*”? Why is this important?

4. What are the implications that *all* Scripture—every book, chapter, line, and word—is breathed out by God? Is this the way you read Scripture?

5. What practical benefits of spending “*hours and days and years in the word*” does DeYoung list on p. 121? What other benefits can you think of?

6. What are the main takeaways of this book for you? How has it influenced your doctrine of Scripture? How will it influence your practice?

Closing Prayer

Take time to pray through each chapter title, giving thanks for what you learned and asking for grace to “take him at his word.”