



## SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Session One | Study  
Dr. Barry Stricker

### READ

2 Timothy 2:15

### INTRODUCTION

Let's start with 2 Timothy 2:15. In most modern Bible translations, we won't find the word "study" in 2 Timothy 2:15. But the concept of study is surely there – and that word itself is what shows up in the King James Version of the Bible. In Paul's words to young Timothy, we are challenged to study, to do our best, to apply ourselves, to work hard, to put our whole heart into the task . . . of fulfilling the calling that God has put before us. Paul is encouraging Timothy to devote his energy and time **and intellectual pursuit** and spiritual passion so that he would be able to stand before God one day and declare, "I did the best I could!"

Often, people think of "study" as dry, boring, and tedious. But that is not the flavor that we find in 2 Timothy 2:15. What we find there is passion, desire, and even desperation. Imagine a time in your life when you were desperate, a time when you knew full well that you simply wouldn't make it without intense effort.

With that image in mind, consider this question:

What would it be like to bring that same kind of passion, that same devotion, that same diligence, that same desperation to your walk with Jesus?

What would it be like to bring that kind of passion . . . to your activity of study?

### STUDY AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Study is a classic spiritual discipline. Study calls us to the passionate pursuit of God and his word – so that we might be transformed into the people that he created us to be. Sadly, most people are perfectly happy to have growth and transformation happen – but only if that doesn't require too much effort. But the discipline of study takes effort – and, yes, discipline as well! Ultimately, we become what we dwell on, and in study we dwell on God and his ways.

Richard Foster notes four simple steps in study that might help us with this discipline:

First, there is repetition: the regular, repeated rehearsal of God's words and deeds. (Surely, this is at least one of the reasons that Jesus gave us the Lord's Supper!)

Second, there is concentration: focusing with intention our hearts and our minds and things that matter.

Third, there is comprehension: taking the time to reach moments of insight and discernment. (And reaching that point does take time!)

Finally, there is reflection: thinking about the significance of what we've come to understand and seeking authentic ways to apply that to life.

And that whole process is undergirded by an attitude of humility, devoting ourselves to study out of desperation and with the hope that we might be completely changed . . . as we study.

Over the next weeks, the discipline of study will be unavoidable in your life! But as you study, pay attention to your study. See it not only as a way to get your work done, but also as a spiritual activity of devotion to God.

And do your best to bring deep passion to your study this month.



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### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Romans 12:1-2, the Apostle Paul challenges the Christians in Rome not to conform to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed. To be transformed is to be changed – and that is something God alone can do. How important is spiritual transformation in your life right now? Is it your sincere desire for God to change you? Are you willing to take the steps that you can take to see that happen in your life?

2. Spiritual practices are steps that we can take that will give God room to work in our lives. One spiritual practice is study. When we study, we place our focus and attention on God, his Word, and his ways. Think about how you feel about the practice of study. Is study something you eagerly embrace? Or does study sound tedious and difficult? Do you look forward to opportunities to study – or do you avoid study at all cost? Is study fruitful for you – or is it largely a waste of time? Why do you think you feel this way about study?

3. What have you learned about God lately as you have spent time with God, time with the Bible, or time with other followers of Jesus? How has this learning affected your life and your friendship with God?

4. The video suggests that we should bring a measure of desperation to our study of God. How desperate are you to grow in your understanding of God, his Word, and his ways? What might cause you to become more desperate for that?

### NEXT STEPS

1. Pray that God would lead you to have a deeper hunger for the spiritual practice of study. Ask God for opportunities to study – and for avenues for study in your life that will be fruitful and productive.

2. Spend time every day with God's Word. Bring your full focus to your reading of Scripture and search for new insights about God and his ways. Even if you have only a few minutes each day, devote time to this important task of study.

3. Find a friend or a small group of friends to join you in the study of God's Word. We are enriched when we walk with God together – and study is a wonderful practice for followers of Jesus to do together in a group setting.

4. Be willing to act on new insights that God shows you about himself. When we study, we put ourselves in a place where we can learn. When we apply what we are learning, we allow God to change us. That is the ultimate goal of study.