

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Women of the Word | 11.17.17

Overflow Panel Questions

1. When you don't know what to do or read, how do you go about it? For me, it is just daunting to get started. As far as devotions go, which part of the 'elephant' so I eat first?

Brenda Henderson:

First, stop viewing your devotions as an elephant. Devotions aren't about a time slot, an obligation, or a specific pattern of practice. They are called "devotions" because you are choosing to DEVOTE that time, those thoughts, that practice to GOD! James 1:5 reminds me that if I lack wisdom, I am to ask Him, and He WILL give it to me (without getting mad at me for asking...how cool is THAT?)!

So ask Him what He would have you to read.

However, and secondly, I realize what you're asking. And this is why following a plan, a book, a specific pattern is good. Even if it's a simple one-minute devotional on the promises of God (hmm...oh, I don't know, something like *Petals of Promises*...written by Joe and Brenda Henderson!), it can prompt your thinking toward further study or toward a specific verse on which to meditate that day. Every day doesn't have to be mind-blowing! It's about a steady, constant, consistent, forward momentum in your spiritual walk.

Basically, do what will help you get to know God better. See Him at work in the Old Testament. Watch His Son's/His/the Holy Spirit's actions and reactions in the New Testament. But do what works for YOU! That includes the time of day that you study His Word, where you are when you have your "God-and-I Time," and what you read.

2. What Bibles or commentaries have you used to study?

Brenda Henderson:

Time for a disclaimer: I'm a little nontraditional in my thinking on this. I love using various translations and versions to help me better understand the Bible. I love that both Bible Gateway and YouVersion allow me to switch from one version to the next so quickly and easily as I read, so I generally have one of those open on my phone or computer next to my physical Bible when I read.

The NLT makes things clearer for me than any other version I use, so it's my "practical Christian living" version of choice when I do my Bible study. I'm learning to like the ESV, though for Bible study, I use the New American Standard Version. My inductive study Bible is NASB, so it's what I've used for my study time since my college professor first introduced me to that particular version.

True story: I just got a KJV Bible right before Christmas (my first KJV Bible to own since before college), and I'm honestly enjoying reading it. It's always been my "memorizing Bible" of choice because of the poetic style of writing. It's easier to follow along in church now too! 😊

I love using *The Treasury of David* commentary set when studying the Psalms. They are a great reference tool, written by C. H. Spurgeon and given to me by my parents when I graduated from high school.

For practicality, you can't beat Wiersbe. Anything Wiersbe.

He's not considered top of the line, but I like the "understandability" of Matthew Henry's *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Awesomely helpful for a non-theologian like me!

3. What is your favorite method to study the Bible and why? What is your favorite study book and why? What is your favorite book of the Bible you have studied and why?

Brenda Henderson:

I'm big on inductive Bible study. Go to the Word first. Let the Word teach you the Word so that when you read other books, hear sermons, or sit under other teachers, you are founded in solid, unshakeable, unchanging truth as you listen and learn. Kay Arthur's Precept Ministries has been my foundation for learning and sticking with this method for over thirty years now. "Line upon line, precept upon precept"...that's my favorite and the most effectual method for me. Other study books and commentaries are tools, resources, and aids, but they cannot and should not substitute time in the Word!

My favorite book of the Bible is whatever I've just read! Truly. Though I'm enormously partial to Ruth, Esther, Psalms, Luke, and Philippians. Oh, and Exodus, I'm in love with Exodus right now (think: *Choosing to Change when Change Happens*)!

4. Who is your favorite spiritual author and why?

Brenda Henderson:

Uh oh. Here's another area where I have a rather eclectic taste...in authors, primarily due to my "eclectic" background over the last fifteen years! But I will be honest here. However, I will first mention that I think certain authors "fit" with certain people. Some authors are well-known and highly recommended by solid and wise spiritual leaders, but I read them and don't have a CLUE what they're saying. So I would first say that you need to read the works of those whose lives touch yours through their writing.

I'm all about living it out. I want to learn deep and live broad...in a far-reaching sort of way. So I lean toward practical writers. But this is also the group that I think you need to practice the most discernment with when choosing a writer of choice. Some can lean so heavily into practice that the truth of the Word gets lost in their opinions!

I will add at this point as well that some authors are great writers (with a lot of great helpers, editors, and research teams), but they are not people we would have in our church due to their practices and participation with events and groups whose stand on the truth of the gospel is weak or nonexistent. Be discerning in who you read!

One final note before I actually answer the question (ha-ha!): Don't get so hung up on the writers of these commentaries, studies, books, blogs, etc. that you inadvertently worship the writer more than the God he or she is writing about! I've seen this happen with the "old guys" (Spurgeon, Moody, etc.) as well as with modern-day writers (Piper, McArthur, Moore, etc.). People begin to follow the writer and quote him or her frequently, while at the same time saying they can't memorize Scripture! Focus on the Word first...and always!

That said (whew!), I personally appreciate the writings of the following “spiritual authors”:

- Priscilla Shirer – Word-based above all else, practical, current, relevant life-changing studies that hit me where I live
- Elisabeth Elliot – Word-based, practical, “motherly wisdom”
- Paul Chappell and his wife, Terrie Chappell – They write it, I read it. Word-based, genuine, conservative, and I’m a better, stronger, more greatly faith-filled believer for having read their books
- Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth – Her early works; the newer ones are too “busy” and too reflective of her husband’s marketing/editing style, but some of her earlier books literally have been used of God to change my life (*A Thirty-Day Walk with God in the Psalms* is an all-time fave)
- D. L. Moody – His writing is old, but its truths never change, and he was the real thing
- C. H. Spurgeon – another “old-time” writer, but he’s solid; his clichés wear thin with me quite quickly, so I take him in small doses, but he uses Scripture well, and he was one of my dad’s favorites, so I grew up reading his works

5. When you're studying, what do you do if you don't feel anything?

Brenda Henderson:

Stop! Immediately...stop! Then quickly remind yourself that studying God’s Word is not about feelings. It’s about knowing God and being obedient to His command to grow in your knowledge of Him (2 Peter 3:18). Period. The results that come from knowing God better are the byproducts of studying the Bible and hearing it taught. Look for God, not for something that will make you feel a certain way. God knows what you need. If you are seeking Him, you WILL find Him...He promised that in His Word (Jeremiah 29:13)! Bottom line: keep reading anyhow!

6. What is a good starting point to begin writing a Bible study?

Brenda Henderson:

Have (what my husband, Joe, calls) a “fire in your belly!” In other words, be so greatly stirred personally by what God is teaching YOU that you simply HAVE to share what you’re learning. If you are writing simply to write a Bible study, it will be flat, all about you (or simply about all the other authors whose works you are quoting), and therefore, ineffectual. If your focus doesn’t guide others to a greater knowledge of God, put your pen down until it does. If it doesn’t light a fire in you first, put your pen down until something does!