

# How to Acquire God's Thoughts

## ***Bible 101:***

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

**November 4, 2007**

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If you live in a healthy family, you are formed by the words and actions of your parents. They love you in word and deed. They instruct you in word and deed. You learn to trust their words. You learn to value their words. You learn to seek their words because they help you see and feel love. They help you see relationships. They help you see yourself, they help you see life and they help you see the ones you grow to love, your parents.

Mature love requires words, even if they come with hand signals. You cannot relate to parents if all you get is silence; and you cannot relate to God, if there are no words. You can't be formed by God. You can't know God, please God, love God or be formed by God, unless you acquire his thoughts. You must come to know what God thinks and feels.

God wants to be known. God wants to form us as his children. God loves us and so he communicates. Turn in your Bible to Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 and 2 (page 934):

***Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son.***  
(Hebrews 1:1-2, NLT)

God is not silent. He spoke many times. He has spoken now through his Son, so that you will know him and be formed by him. The term, *spoken*, means that Christ's speech continues to have impact. The world around you claims that God's silent and withdrawn, but the Bible tells you differently. If over the next four weeks you listen to Rick Phillips and me preach, you'll learn what we think about God. However, if you bring your Bible, or purchase one here, and use

it as your personal Bible (read it, carry it, mark it up), you'll learn what God thinks. You can actually discover what God is saying to you personally and also to the church with your Bible.

For example, if you brought your personal Bible today, mark Hebrews 1:1-2. Bracket or underline the text. Then note in the margin the date and "C" for church or "BC" for Bethany Church if you are visiting. Do that for the rest of the Scriptures we use, and you will be able to track what God is lifting up to your attention and to the attention of our church family. You already know now that he is telling you that he speaks. He is not silent like many think.

Like a good parent, God speaks for your benefit. Turn now in your Bible to 2 Timothy 3:16-17. This is the text that was read moments ago. In the New Living Translation, our pew Bible, you can find it on page 929. Now I am going to read out of the New International Version. See how yours is both similar and different

***All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*** (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV)

Since we've read it, let's put this translation up on the screen. It begins with the words, **all Scripture is God-breathed**. If you have your Bible, you may want to underline this. This is a word-for-word English translation of the Greek. St. Paul is telling us that God didn't just breathe into Adam so he became living soul, but God also breathed into believers so that they would write his words. God wanted his speech scripted. God wanted his words pondered. God wanted his words preserved. God wanted his words passed on. All Scriptures is God-breathed. If God caused his words to be scripted or written, don't you think he wants those words to be read? When you read the Bible, you're acting in faith. There's even more good news.

God's words are for all nations. Paul wrote these words in common Greek. It was the language most common and accessible to all the nations living in that time. All of Jesus' words

were written in this common language. To my recollection, we have only one statement of Jesus preserved in his actual language. What Jesus uttered on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me,” was written for us in a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic, which Jesus actually spoke, and also in common Greek translation. God led all other words of Jesus to be written into a common language.

You might not know this. The 700 pages of Islam’s Koran were written in Arabic, the language of Mohammed. They are supposed to be read and prayed in that language. However, the 66 books of the Bible were written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek; and when Jesus’ apostles wrote their gospels and letters, they used the common Greek to convey the Good News and often used a Greek translation of the Old Testament when quoting Scriptures. God meant his word to be read in languages people could understand. God reaches out to you in the written words of the Bible.

Although my parents frequently read the Bible to me, and I got my first Bible in third grade, I began to read the Bible without prompting when I was in Junior High School. God did something to my heart so that I wanted to read. I’d put my *Reach Out* edition or the Living New Testament under a magazine and then read chapters and even books during study hall. *Reach Out* was an easy-reading-paraphrase of the New Testament like the Message. An English paraphrase is a rewriting of an English translation. A translation, of course, examines the original language works and puts it in a different language like English.

Recently, I gave our Confirmation students a New Testament copy of the Message, and we’ve been reading a chapter a day since we started in September in the Gospel of John. We just completed the book of Acts and have started Romans. The New Living Translation that we have in the pew is an easy-reading-Bible, and is about as readable as the paraphrase I began with.

When I wanted to study the Bible, however, I chose translations that were harder to read but paid closer attention to the meaning of each Greek word or each Hebrew term. I began with a King James Thompson Chain Reference Bible. With it I could see the verses I had memorized as a child, and quickly with the chain reference I'd find any similar verse. It gave me a chain of relevant references. I then began to use the New American Standard Bible. Its English was modern, but difficult to read. It gave an English translation for every word, even if that made it difficult to read. I finally settled on the NIV Study Bible. It was easier to read, yet it still tried to pay attention to individual words rather than just the thoughts. I now use the Message with confirmation students and the New Living Translation for devotions. I use the NIV for ministry and carry a small NIV Bible wherever I go. I take it everywhere. I use the computer for study.

When St Paul wrote that all Scripture is God-breathed, he referred to our Old Testament. However, Peter later referred to Paul's letters as divine Scripture, and each of the 27 books of the New Testament carry the authority of Christ and his apostles. We understand that they, along with the Old Testament, are to teach us, rebuke us, correct us and train us. You might want to underline those words as well.

Think of a path to righteous relationships. Teaching shows us that path. Rebuking warns us when we are off it. Correcting shows us how to get back on it, and training shows us how stay walking on it. That is how the Bible helps you.

Where are you at with the Bible? Do you have a personal Bible? If your Bible is too big to take everywhere, get a smaller one like I have (get tapes or cds if you can't read). Throw it in the pickup. Put it in your desk. Make sure you're not caught without it. It has wisdom for every setting and God's Spirit will prompt you. Don't treat it as a religious icon that can be desecrated if you set something on it. The only way you can defile the Bible is not to read or obey it.

If you are not hungry for its words, then something is hindering your relationship with your heavenly Father. Let's address that now as we prepare for Holy Communion.