

# **With Open Hearts and Open Minds**

## **Reading the Bible with Purpose series – week 4**

### **by Chris Famisaran**

Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you Lord, for the opportunity to gather together once again as we close out our reading the Bible with purpose and guide us in Jesus name. Amen.

How many of you love change? I've asked this before. Majority said no. How many of you now appreciate and like change more? Oh, a few more. Okay. Thank you for being honest.

How many of you hate change? Okay. I am mixed. There's some things that I love to see that has changed. And then there are things, as I get older, I realize I do not want to change. There are certain things that I've become comfortable with that I do not want to change. There are some things that are just you cannot change. For instance, my wife. She's perfect for me, right? I don't want to change that. Is it always great? No. There are times when we have to work more specifically for her because I'm not as smart as her. There are things, though, that we get comfortable with and we don't want to change. And yet the reality is life. We cannot stay static.

For our graduates, just a bit of information, little life advice. Just because you graduated does not mean that you have stopped learning. Life is a lifelong endeavor for learning. We're going to talk about that in a couple of weeks. Change, change, change, change. What does do life events change? Your personality.

Ross Pomeroy shared an article or wrote an article. He says that over time your personality will change in big ways. But psychologists allegedly sometimes think that's maybe not so true. While one person's personality might subtly shift at the periphery, scientists consider it to be largely fixed. Now, when we think about the big five traits that are in when psychologists are

thinking, they come up with this, okay, there are five big traits when it comes to personality. Conscientiousness.

Are you impulsive? Are you organized? Are you disciplined? Are you agreeable with other people? Do you get along with people? Or do you disagree? Are you somebody who seeks other people socially? Or do you prefer to be step back and say, I'd rather just stay home and read a book? Are you open to trying something new, something different? Or neuroticism, A person's overall emotional stability.

What challenges or triggers these personalities? Number one, a new relationship. Marriage, birth of a child or separation. Divorce. Widowhood. Graduation. One's first job. You remember your first job. Were you scared when you started your first job? I was petrified. Unemployment, retirement. All of these things, all of these life events affect us. And they found that graduation, okay, one's first job, a new relationship. All these are linked with your greatest personality changes.

And so studies have revealed that personalities often improve with age, maturity, and what psychologists have dubbed the maturity principle. People tend to grow more extroverted, agreeable and conscientious as they grow older and maybe less neurotic. I don't know about that. The years everyone almost can, as we reflect on their past selves and be amazed at the differences. I was reflecting on the last roughly 20, 25 years of my life. And as I entered adulthood, I had all of these grand ideas of what I thought life is and how I was going to take on the world and, and how I thought I was so right.

And yet in the last 20 to 25 years, what I have learned is, well, I'm not so right. And the world is not so black and white. Sometimes it is gray. And sometimes change comes at unexpected times of your life. You don't always maybe make big decisions, but time, hopefully, if you are open and willing to listen, will change you.

There are some things that I'm still very firm and convicted about and there are some things that I just. I can't believe I thought that way. It makes me shudder.

My question to you now as well. Are you open to change? Are you open to change? Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to change your life? And if so, how do we do that?

One of the greatest ways that we can do that is obviously through the Scripture. If you truly want to understand and be changed by God, you have to know who God is and you have to allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart and influence you. Okay, I want to go to Hebrews, chapter four. Hebrews, chapter four.

Hebrews is right before James, first and second Peter, for second, third John and Revelation. Okay, **Hebrews 4:12**. We all there.

All right. Verse 12 says, for the Word of God is alive and active. Think about this. For the Word of God is alive and active. What does that mean? I'm referring here to Scripture. Okay. The Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to Whom we must give.

This is one of those passages that I just... To me, it speaks to the heart of if you truly want to allow God to change who you are for the better, look no further than this. When it says the Word of God Is alive and active. Is the word of God alive and active in your own hearts and in your own minds? And to do so, some think that's a great experience.

And then some of you are thinking that's a horrible experience because what's that, what's happening internally? You are being challenged, you're being provoked to think about is the way that I'm living, reflecting who God is, God's character, what God has called for me to do. And then it says again, sharper than any double edged sword. Those of you who know, I love to look at knives

and collect knives, specifically cutlery knives, because there is nothing easier. Was it yesterday I was cutting a sweet potato? How many of you have cut a sweet potato? It's not easy, right? And especially when you have a dull knife, it's borderline dangerous. But when you have a really good, finely sharpened knife, it cuts like butter. And when we allow God's word and apply it to our lives, sometimes God's word reveals things about us that maybe we don't want to admit and definitely do not want to share with others. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit. That can be very scary sometimes because then you realize, I have a decision to make. Am I going to continue on this path? Am I going to allow this to control my life? Joints and marrow gets to the nitty gritty. The joints and the marrow, it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. How many of you have read scripture and you realize I don't like that because it means that I'm wrong. How many of you love to admit that you're wrong? Okay, now look, if I have to admit that I'm wrong, I'm wrong. I don't like it.

Nothing in all creation, though, guess what? Nothing is hidden from God. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give accounts. So where am I going with this? When we go to read to the Bible, what's your attitude when you go to Scripture? Is it one of great courage and happiness? Is it maybe frustration? I'm gonna go to the Bible and see what God tells me so I can use that scripture against somebody else. Sad to say I've been there before. Not a good feeling. I would hope and pray that as we go to the scriptures, when we seek God's wisdom, when we want to be transformed by God, I pray that we **approach the Bible with prayer and humility**. Okay? In fact, let's do this.

Father. In heaven. Lord, we've opened the Bible, and we're going to open it a little bit more. But before we do so, Lord, we come before you with humility that as we read scripture, open and soften our hearts, open our minds. What you want us to learn today. In Jesus name, Amen.

We approach the Bible with prayer and with humility. And why is that? Well, number one, we approach it with humility because we're not as smart as we

think we are. It is only by God's divine wisdom that he that God shares with us can we learn anything.

God inspires us. God provokes us. God moves us.

And as you open your heart, you come with a sense of reverence. Because this isn't just any book. It's a wonderful book that has many lessons for your life to help you grow. One, how to treat other people, how to know who God is, to know how to reflect God.

There's all kinds of lessons that we can take. And it's not just a book with pages and ink on it. If we truly study the Bible, it has the power to change your life.

So being humble, considering that this is a sacred book, but also when you go into a conversation, okay, maybe you got to go with, you got it. You're a boss and you have to talk to somebody. Maybe their job performance is not up to par. How would you go in and approach that individual? Do you go in and say, okay, here's where you're going. Here's what you're doing Great, but the majority of it is wrong. How does that employee feel? Not great. Right. You truly want to make a difference in that person's life. You want to help them and just say, hey, here's some things that you're doing well, but I notice that there's some areas maybe that you're struggling. How can I help you when we go to Scripture? Are we asking God, help me to grow? Because what you're also having to do is you're having to humble yourself and admit that there is one that is stronger and bigger and more powerful than you. Amen.

But that's a great thing. We truly want to know God. We have to recognize that I am not the best. God is the best. And we have to look at ourselves as followers. You want to lead actually, too. You got to be a follower. You got to know and understand who your people are, who you're working with, have humility. So approach Scripture with prayer and with humility.

And as you read. Come on. All right. Our screen is not working right now. Read the Bible with an open mind and a willingness to listen. Okay. **Read the Bible with an open heart and mind**, a willingness to listen.

Again, going back, you know, when you're young, you think you know everything. The joke is, you know, bring a teenager and ask them because they know everything. And the truth is, as you get older, you realize there's less that you know. There's only more questions than answers, and that's okay. Would you want to grow older and then know everything? To me, that seems boring. There has to be a wonder that we have about life, about God.

There's something that we have to strive for, to learn. Because if we know everything well, what are you going to do with that knowledge? Are you just going to keep it to yourself or should you share it with others? When you have something awesome and great, do you keep it to yourself or do you share it with your family? So read the Bible with an open heart and a mind means you have to be willing to listen.

And as you read, what is God trying to tell me? Are you willing and humble as we, as we approach the Bible? The willingness to maybe reflect and see, well, maybe there's some areas for growth. Last week we talked about **the SOAP, okay, the Scripture, Observation, Application and Prayer. And as you take that principle, use those principles, okay?**

Find a passage, read it, how does this apply? And pray about it, but also apply the critical questions of who's in this passage, what is happening, where is it taking place, when is it taking place, why is it taking place, and how? Okay, because it's important that as we read scripture, we don't just read it. If you truly want to understand scripture, you have to know the whole context, not just one verse. Because one verse, while it may be powerful, what does it mean in the greater context of what is that paragraph, that chapter, the whole book or the whole letter that the author is trying to convey.

Okay? Now, we're going to do a practical lesson on this in a little bit, but some of you are wondering, Pastor, where do I start? Okay. Where do I start to learn about the Bible? Glad you asked.

Here are some tools, okay? These are resources, these are apps, and these are websites. I'm intentionally bringing this up because I want you to see for yourselves right now. Okay? So applications, if you have.

Especially if you have an iPhone, but I believe also if you. If I have an Android, just search for the 28 fundamental beliefs. There is an app you can go and download, and within it gives explanations and verses. And guess what? You can go to those Verses and read them for yourself.

These are the basic tenet beliefs of the church. We also have a Sabbath school app that you can also learn, and there's a daily lesson that you can learn and read. Right now, we're doing a very fascinating study and would love to see you there in the morning at 9:45 if you'd like to join us. But most importantly as well, youversion. How many of you do not have youversion on your phone? What is youversion? It's a Bible app, and it has a plethora of Bible versions and translations. Some that you can read, some that you can actually listen to, some that might have a little drama in the back. I believe even James Earl Jones. Also, there's a translation on there.

Okay. Also on YouTube. And now I believe there's also there's an app because I have it on my phone. The Bible Project. What does the Bible Project do? They share an overview of each biblical book. And sometimes they'll take different topics and they'll share. These are all tools that you can have at your fingertips that even 20, 30 years ago, how much more would your life have been better if you'd had that to where you are now? Okay. These are at our fingertips.

And they're all, guess what, they're all free. Okay. Secondly, you want to dig deeper, go to [mybible.com](http://mybible.com) there you have reading plans. Okay. You wondered, how can I, where do I start?

Okay, Maybe it's too much to just try to read all at once. You can break it up. Go to [mybible.com](http://mybible.com) and then [mybiblehub.com](http://mybiblehub.com) sorry, [www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com) and [logos.com](http://logos.com). If you really want to get into the nitty gritty, if you want to understand the background, the context, commentaries, okay? Because it's great to read the Bible, but sometimes when you read the Bible, do you always have questions?

Is that really what it means? Or how does it fit in the bigger context? Or maybe there's meaning behind that we don't understand. There's more depth than we could have ever imagined. Use these tools, okay?

Now, if you're. I hope you're not driving and watching this. Okay, come back. We'll have this sermon, a separate sermon, within the next couple days. Or you can go under the live. And also if you go to our website, there are all of this here, plus the notes that you can always go back to. Okay? So this is here. Please write these down. Take a screenshot if you want to do this right now. These are tools, and these are resources that can help better your experience as you read scripture.

All right, so let's put this all together, okay? Because what I want you to experience is this. **The Bible should provoke us into action.** Okay? The Bible should provoke. And I intentionally use provoke. Provoke isn't just like, oh, I'm going to read the Bible. It should move you. It's a verb.

Go. I want to go to second Samuel, chapter 12. Second Samuel, chapter 12. It's a story that many of us are probably familiar with. We're not going to be able to go through the whole passage. But I want to look at this passage, okay? Because to me, this is one of the passages that just. If you literally want to be provoked, this passage provokes me. Those of you who are not aware, this is a passage that is something that is a follow up to another story. How many of you have heard the story of David and Bathsheba?

Okay, David and Bathsheba. King David went onto his roof and across the way he saw a wonderful, beautiful woman who was bathing. And what did he say to himself? I like that woman. And he tells his staff to bring her over here. Problem, though. What was the problem? She was married to Uriah. Now, that didn't matter in David's mind. So what does he do? Well, they get together and guess what happens? She becomes pregnant. Now, what was Uriah doing? Uriah was the faithful commander. Loyal to who? David. And several times. What does David try to do? Put Uriah at the front. Because then what would happen? Hopefully he would die and his whole little mess would be covered up. Well, eventually, if you read the whole story, it's a very tragic story on

where greed and selfishness can take you. Let's follow up part two. Second Samuel, chapter 12. It says, then the Lord sent Nathan.

And who is Nathan? He's a prophet. Sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said there were two men in a certain town, one rich and one very poor. The other rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle. But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, grew up with his children, it shared his food, drank from his cup, and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. Right? Very happy story. Here's the twist. Now, a traveler came to the rich man. But the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. And instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.

How many of you are raging right now? How many of you are provoked? Now I'm also. Let me be clear as well, okay? Sometimes scripture can cause us to have emotions. I'm not saying that we take this and then lead with anger. Okay, let me be clear about that, okay? Because if you're going to live your life as an angry person, how well do you think you're going to do? You're going to have mixed results. You're going to inspire some people maybe, but are you going to be want to be somebody who's people are going to want to gather to and hang out with?

Okay, so David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, as surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must what, die? He must pay that pay for that lamb four times over because he did such a thing and had no pity. Then Nathan said to David, you are that man. This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says. I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all of this had been too little, I would have given you even what more. Why do you despise the word of the Lord by doubling by doing what is evil in his eyes. You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore, the sword will never depart from your

house. Because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own. This is what the Lord says out of your own household. I am going to bring calamity to you before the very eyes. I will take your wives and give you to one who, who is close to you. And he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret. But I will do all this in broad daylight before all Israel. Verse 13. Then David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. Very powerful story because it highlights who David was. Although we can say he was a man after God's own heart, he was also a very broken man. He had everything. Remember too, when he became king, he didn't become king, but he was anointed. But he didn't actually become king until later. And all this while he was having to battle Saul. He was faithful to Saul, even though Saul was trying to kill him. And when he finally takes over, he has Everything. And in his own eyes, was it enough? It wasn't.

So who's in this story? David and Nathan. And of course, you have the characters in the parable of the rich man, the poor man and the little ewe. Right. And then you could say the people. What's happening? Nathan is called by God to go and essentially call out David for what he has done.

Where? I'm not exactly sure. Well, near the palace. Why is this important? Because it shows that even people who are. Were all fallible. Again. Was. Was David faithful to God? He was in many respects. But he was also a broken man.

Are we always faithful or sometimes, are we also broken people? How does this apply? Number one. Number one, don't be selfish and don't be greedy. Don't be selfish and don't be greedy. Be content with what you have. But they're actually. One of the more tragic lessons of this story is that there are consequences to your actions. Because if you continue to read the story, what happened to that child that he and Bathsheba have, It dies. And not only that, basically what is prophetically said. What is Nathan telling David? Is your life going to end with joy and grace and harmony? No.

If you read David's story, you realize he dies a very broken man, in fact, who tries to kill him, one of his own sons. And so while David was a very. He tried to

be faithful and he recognized him. And I also. We don't have time today, but I want you to go to Psalm 51. Actually, no, let's. Real quick, real quick. Okay. Psalm 51. I want to read a particular passage, Psalm 51. I want to highlight this very briefly. This is a psalm that if you're ever wanting to lead somebody as well to forgiveness, they want to change their life. Go to this psalm. Okay, Psalm 51. And here it talks about.

David acknowledges he takes ownership of his mistakes. I have. And if you read the top, it says for the director of music, a psalm of David. When prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love, according to your great compassion. Blot out my transgressions. Wipe away. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me against you and only you. Only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are right in your verdict and justified.

When you judge what has he done, he takes ownership of his mistakes. Okay. When you make a mistake and you realize I'm far from God, you can come back to God. But one of the things that I think we have to do is if we truly love God, we have to be repentant. We have to take ownership, as it says in verse five, really quickly. Surely I was sinful of birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Yet you desire your faithfulness. Even in the womb, you taught me wisdom in that secret place. Cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean. Wash me and I will be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness. Let the bones you have crushed rejoice, Hide your face from my sins and blot out my iniquity. And then here's what is, I think, very key. Verse 10. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Don't cast me from your presence or take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to save me. David recognized all of his past decisions that were not good decisions. He takes ownership of it, and he desires as well that God please change me, mold me, transform me. Does David have an open heart and a mind here at this point in his life?

Absolutely. Because he recognizes there's no other place to go. He can only go to God at this point. If you understand. If you keep reading in Samuel, 2nd Samuel 12, he is deeply depressed and despondent. And then he reaches out to God and he says, then I will teach transgressors your ways. I don't want to just change my life, but I also want to make a difference and help others to avoid the mistakes that I have made. Verse 16. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it. You don't take pleasure in burnt offerings.

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, you, God, will not despise. Folks, we all make mistakes. If you truly want to come to the Lord, this in many ways is a template. Have an open heart, be willing to listen, and be willing to listen to scripture. Because although we may not physically be able to hear God, we can always go to God as we read scriptures with an open heart and mind and a willingness to learn, to be transformed.

And as it says here, my sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, you, God, will not despise. When you come to the Lord with humility of owning your mistakes and sharing God, it is not my desire to continue on that path, but to follow yours, God can do wonderful and amazing things. You look at all the scriptures throughout the Bible. God doing wonderful, amazing things in people's lives. But it starts somewhere with an open heart and a mind.

And as you read scripture prayerfully and humbly, read it with an open heart and mind and ask the questions of the text to learn and grow from that. And God can do wonderful things in your life. **So pray and ask God to help apply these lessons learned to your life.** Because we can read everything, but if we don't apply it and we don't ask God for wisdom can be much more challenging. And as you read as well, this may be something I didn't have in the notes, but I would also encourage you read and study with others, because when you have multiple people walking together, the wisdom is amplified.

**Reflection. Where do you struggle and where do you want to be transformed by God?** Where do you struggle and where do you want to be transformed by God?

This week I want you to go to the list of resources that we talked about, the apps and the websites. Okay. I want you to either choose a fundamental belief or a book of the Bible or I'll actually say a reading plan. Okay. Within those apps. Okay. **So choose a fundamental belief, book of the Bible or one of the reading plans. Use the SOAP principles and the critical questions of who, what, where, when, and why and how. Pray over these lessons learned and apply it to your life.** Can we do that? All right. May God bless you.

Let us know as well. In the journey that you have with God, where there is blessings, where there's. There's triumphs, let us know, because we want to give you an opportunity to share those triumphs. There's so much good that can come from sharing your faith experiences because not only am I blessed, but I know all of you will be a blessed when your fellow brother and sister has gained victory in the Lord. Let us pray.

Father in heaven. Lord, as we go forth, as we continue to be faithful and to learn, Lord, we come to you with open hearts and minds. Lord, as we prayerfully and humbly submit to you as we read the scriptures, God may impact us. May the scriptures come alive. And every time, it may not be a huge salt Apollo experience, but, Lord, day by day, small things eventually build up to mounds and mountains. Help us to grow in faith, Lord, that even though it may be like a mustard seed, may it grow into a big mountain, Lord, and in all things, we give you thanks and praise. Be with us as we continue to minister in our community. Watch over us until we come back again. Next time in Jesus name. Everybody said Amen.

Grace and peace, everyone.