

## Read the Bible for Yourself!

There are many reasons to read the Bible. In this example, the author of Proverbs explains the main reason:

**For the LORD gives wisdom;  
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.**

He holds success in store for the upright,  
he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,  
for he guards the course of the just  
and protects the way of his faithful ones.

**Then you will understand what is right and just  
and fair—every good path.** (Prov 2:6-9, NIV)

But most people don't read the Bible; instead, they read a commentary...

1. What is a Bible commentary? How is this Bible study tool helpful? When is it not helpful?

2. Carefully observe this passage. What do you do with God's commands? What are the benefits of following God's commands? What key teachings should be prioritized?

My son, do not forget my teaching,  
but keep my commands in your heart,  
for they will prolong your life many years  
and bring you peace and prosperity.  
Let love and faithfulness never leave you;  
bind them around your neck,  
write them on the tablet of your heart.  
Then you will win favor and a good name  
in the sight of God and man.  
**Trust in the LORD with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding;**  
in all your ways submit to him,  
and he will make your paths straight. (Prov 3:1-6, NIV)

3. When you examine the **bold** print of Proverbs 3:1-6 seen above, what do the words imply about Bible study?

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### Teacher Notes

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Review with the student the importance of observing the text. In this example, have the student circle the bold text to show that marking up and making notes in a Bible is fine. With good observation, understanding a passage becomes easier.

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Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path.**

1. What is a Bible commentary? How is this Bible study tool helpful? When is it not helpful?

Ask the student: what is a Bible commentary? If you have a commentary book in possession, show the student what it looks like and let him peruse it.

A Bible commentary is someone's explanation of a passage. It is someone's interpretation that includes that person's biases and presuppositions.

Ask the student: how is this Bible study tool helpful?

It is easier to read than the Bible itself, because it provides background information and context to the passage of interest.

Ask the student: when is it not helpful? Can you think of any reason this could be a problem?

Bible commentaries can be a problem if a person relies on it in lieu of reading the Bible itself. In contrast to God's word, Bible commentaries have interpretive errors introduced by the commentator, which are unconsciously assumed by the reader.

The Pharisees were guilty of this problem of building their theology on their commentaries rather than studying God's word itself – they ended up not knowing God's word.

This problem exists today.

2. Carefully observe this passage. What do you do with God's commands? What are the benefits of following God's commands? What key teachings should be prioritized?

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For this question, provide a piece of paper and have the student learn how to make a chart like the one below. Then list their observations:

What do you do with God's commands?	What are the benefits?

Their list of observations might look like this example:

What do you do with God's commands?	What are the benefits?
Do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart	for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity.
Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.	Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.
Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him,	and he will make your paths straight.

3. When you examine the **bold** print of Proverbs 3:1-6 seen above, what do the words imply about Bible study?

Encourage the student to think out loud what this means in light of the passage and the popular use of commentaries.

The author of Proverbs is emphasizing the importance of knowing God's word: 1) trusting God's word is better than not in living life, and 2) rather than trusting an interpreter to explain challenging passages of the Bible, learn how to use God's word itself to interpret difficult passages of the Bible.