



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V28 N33 August 16, 2026

UNHINDERED

“The Power of the Word”

Acts 17:1-15

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Bible Study

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

Hebrews 4:12



Q?

Is making time for Bible study worth it?

Howard Hendricks taught for more than sixty years at Dallas Theological Seminary, starting in 1951 until his passing in 2013. Known affectionately by his students as “Prof,” he instructed more than 10,000 of us during his career. When I arrived at DTS in 1973, Prof was teaching his iconic Bible Study Methods course—a kindergarten class required in graduate school? The crux of that course can be found in *Living by the Book*, an indispensable work coauthored with his son, William D. Hendricks. Prof was not eloquent in the traditional sense, but he had a memorable way of saying things. Speaking to his all-male class, he told us more than once, “Men, it is a sin to bore people with the Bible.”

In Chapter 2, “Why Study the Bible,” Howie lists three reasons to do so: 1) Bible study is essential to growth; 2) Bible study is essential to spiritual maturity; and 3) Bible study is essential to spiritual effectiveness. These are certainly not the only reasons to study the Bible; they may not even be the best reasons. But they are Prof’s reasons.

To sample his writing style, let me randomly quote from what he said about each. Regarding the *first*, after quoting 1 Peter 2:2, he writes: “Peter says a word about your appetite for the Word. You should ‘long’ for it. You’re to crave the spiritual milk of God’s Word.” And then he goes on to write: “Psalm 19:10 says that Scripture is sweeter than honey, but you’d never know that judging by some believers. You see, there are three basic kinds of Bible students. There are the ‘castor oil’ types. To them the Word is bitter—*Yech!*—but it’s good for what ails them. Then there is the ‘shredded wheat’ kind. To them Scripture is nourishing but dry. It’s like eating a bale of hay. But the third kind is what I call ‘strawberries-and-cream’ folks. They just can’t get enough of the stuff. How did they acquire that taste? By feasting on the Word. They’ve

cultivated what Peter describes here—an insatiable appetite for spiritual truth. Which of these three types are you?” (p. 19).

Regarding the *second*, after quoting Hebrews 5:11-14, he writes: “Solid food is for the mature. Who are the mature? Are they the people who go to seminary? Who can whip anyone in a theological duel? Who know the most Bible verses? No, the writer says you are mature if you’ve trained yourself through constant use of Scripture to distinguish good from evil. The mark of spiritual maturity is not how much you understand, but how much you use. In the spiritual realm, the opposite of ignorance is not knowledge but obedience” (p. 21).

Regarding the *third*, after quoting 2 Timothy 3:16-17, he writes concerning the purpose of Scripture: “What is the overall purpose? In order that you might be equipped for every good work. Have you ever said, ‘I wish my life were more effective for Jesus Christ’? If so, what have you done to prepare yourself? Bible study is a primary means to becoming an effective servant of Jesus Christ. One time I asked a group of businessmen, ‘If you didn’t know any more about your business or profession than you know about Christianity after the same number of years of exposure, what would happen?’

“One guy blurted out, ‘They’d ship me.’

“He was right, you know. The reason God can’t use you more than He wants to may well be that you are not prepared. Maybe you’ve attended church for five, ten, or even twenty years, but you’ve never cracked open the Bible to prepare yourself for effectiveness as His instrument. You’ve been under the Word but not in it for yourself” (p. 22).

I spent many profitable years attending seminary. But I think I can safely say, all I really needed to know—about Bible study, anyway—I learned in Prof’s kindergarten class.

Read Acts 17:1-15

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." 4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. 5 But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. 6 And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, 7 and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." 8 And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. 9 And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

10 The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. 11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. 12 Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. 13 But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds. 14 Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. 15 Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "Amphipolis," "Apollonia," and "Thessalonica" in v. 1.
- Underline "reasoned" in v. 2.
- Underline "explaining" and "proving" in v. 3.
- Circle "necessary" in v. 3.
- Bracket "to suffer" and "to rise from the dead" in v. 3.
- Circle "the Christ" in v. 3.
- Circle "devout Greeks" in v. 4.
- Underline "not a few" in vv. 4, 12.
- Circle "leading women" in v. 4.
- Box "But" in vv. 5, 13.
- Bracket "wicked men of the rabble" in v. 5.
- Bracket "taken money as security" v. 9.
- Circle "more noble" in v. 11.
- Underline "received" and "examining" in v. 11.
- Circle "the sea" in v. 14.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. *Why* did Paul and Silas stop in Thessalonica and not in Amphipolis and Apollonia along the way?
2. *Why* was it necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead? And *what* does that have to do with Jesus?
3. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 5.
4. Summarize the charges the Jews leveled against “Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities.”
5. What has verse 9 got to do with 1 Thessalonians 2:18?
6. In what sense were the Jews in Berea “more noble” than those in Thessalonica?
7. Luke mentions the conversion of “leading women” in Thessalonica and “women of high standing” in Berea. Why so?
8. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 13.
9. Describe the dispersion of the missionaries after the Jews stirred up crowds against them.
10. **Discussion.** Paul, Silas, and Timothy could not have ministered in Thessalonica and Berea without their “support team.” Talk about the team of people that enabled their ministry.

Commentary On The Text

Luke continues to report on Paul's second missionary journey (Ac 15:36-18:22) *geographically* as the missionary band moved from one city to another. Along the way, Paul followed his "custom" (17:2) of going to the synagogue to reason from the Scriptures with the Jews and God-fearers in attendance. (Perhaps there were no synagogues in Amphipolis and Apollonia, which would explain why he did not stop in those towns.) *First*, he would explain that the Christ had to suffer and to rise from the dead and then *second*, that Jesus is the Christ (v. 3).

Acts 17:1-15 contains a ministry tale of two cities—Thessalonica (vv. 1-9) and Berea (vv. 10-15). One commentator observes: "Overall, in the description of Paul's ministry in these two cities, a familiar pattern of *initial acceptance* and *rising opposition* repeats itself. At Thessalonica the Jews initiated the resistance to Paul's witness, as was the case at Pisidian Antioch (13:50) and Iconium (14:2) on his first missionary journey. At Berea the opposition was instigated by Jews coming from Thessalonica, just as previously Jews from Antioch and Iconium imitated his difficulties at Lystra (14:19)" (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 358-59, italics added). The transition from initial acceptance to rising opposition in each narrative account is introduced by a strong contrast—"but" in verse 5 and "but" again in verse 13.

According to Acts 17:2 Paul spent three sabbath days with the Jews in Thessalonica, but this doesn't mean that he spent just two to four weeks in the city. Commentators suspect he spent more like two to three months there—November, A.D. 50 to January A.D. 51 (see Harold Hoehner, "A Chronological Table of the Apostolic Age," in H. Wayne House, *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*, 130). Here are three reasons why they suspect as much: "(1) The Philippian church sent money to Paul at least twice during this visit (Phil. 4:15-16) . . . (2) In addition, Paul supported himself by manual labor (1 Thes. 2:9; 2 Thes. 3:7-10) . . . (3) Most of the converts at Thessalonica were not from the synagogue but were Gentiles steeped in idolatry (c. 1 Thes. 1:9)" (Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 401).

On three successive Sabbath days, Paul preached his "customary" message in the synagogue. This time it received an encouraging initial response. Some of the Jews were persuaded that Jesus was, in fact, the Christ, and joined Paul and Silas, along with a great many devout Greeks—among them a large number of the leading women (v. 4). "The Jason mentioned in v.5 as Paul's host was probably one of the Jewish converts; Aristarchus and Secundus, who are identified as Thessalonians in 20:4, may have also been converted at this time" (Richard N. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apos-

ties," in *John-Acts*, vol. 9, EBC, 469). Paul writes that news of how the Thessalonians "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" spread quickly throughout Macedonia and Achaia (1Th 1:8-9; cf. 2:1-2, 13-14a), and how receiving "the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit" (1Th 1:6), they became "an example" for those believers to follow (v. 7). However, the encouraging *initial acceptance* generated *rising opposition* from the Jews, who in a failed effort to locate Paul, Silas, and Timothy, dragged Jason before the authorities (politarchs), and accused him of harboring men "who have turned the world upside down" (v. 6) and acted "against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus" (v. 7). The whole ugly affair ended somewhat anticlimactically, with Jason posting bond, which he would evidently forfeit if Paul returned to the city.

Events unfolded similarly in Berea, the big difference being that the Jews in Berea "were more noble" than the Jews in Thessalonica, that is, more "open minded, fair, and thoughtful" (*ESV Study Bible*, note on Ac 17:11). That is to say, "They received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scripture daily to see if these things [i.e., that the Christ had to suffer and to rise from the dead, and that Jesus is the Christ] were so" (v. 11). One commentator writes: "Their example of 'daily' Bible study has inspired Christians ever since to do the same. Anyone who listens to new religious truth would do well to compare it with Scripture, as these Jews did. Many of these 'noble' skeptics believed because Paul's teaching was consistent with the Old Testament" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Acts," 2026 ed., 332, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf).

Among the many Jews who believed, there were also many "Greek women of high standing as well as men" (v. 12). But as in Thessalonica, the *initial acceptance* of the gospel generated *rising opposition* again from unbelieving Jews. However, no one was arrested and accused before city authorities this time. This time "the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, while Silas and Timothy remained in Berea" (v. 14). Luke doesn't specify whether Paul then traveled to Athens by ship or by land, along the coastal road, a distance of more than 200 miles. Once in Athens, the men who accompanied Paul returned to Berea with a command from him directing Silas and Timothy to join him ASAP.

Humanly speaking, the gospel ministry in Thessalonica and Berea succeeded because of the support Paul, Silas, and Timothy received from the believers like Jason to whom they ministered—not to mention the financial support the missionaries received from the church in Philippi.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *Amphipolis* . . . “Paul and Silas probably stayed overnight in ‘Amphipolis,’ which is 33 miles (a day’s journey by horse) down the Egnatian Road. It stood at the mouth of the Strymon River. The next day they traveled another 27 miles, farther west-southwest, to ‘Apollonia.’ Lastly, a 35-mile day of travel farther west on the Via Egnatia took them to ‘Thessalonica’ (modern Salonika), which was situated on the Thermaic Gulf of the Aegean Sea” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 2026 ed., 328, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf). “Their desire was to reach Thessalonica, the capital of the province of Macedonia and the largest [pop. 200,000] and most prosperous city of all in Macedonia” (Richard N. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *John-Acts*, vol. 9, EBC, 468).

v. 2 *reasoned* “Luke used the terminology of formal rhetoric, the art of persuasion. Paul appealed to the reason of the Jews and persuaded them with scriptural demonstrations” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 360).

v. 3 *explaining* . . . Lit. “opening” and “setting forth;” cf. “explaining and showing” (HCSB); “explaining and demonstrating” (NET). Paul’s “explanation and apologetic are described as revealing (*dianoigōn*) and setting before (*parathithemenos*) them a case. The opening of Scripture recalls Luke 24:31-32, 45, where Jesus opened both the Scripture and the eyes of his followers after his resurrection. The second participle carries the idea of commending something or someone (Acts 14:23; 20:32). Here Paul makes the case that God is at work through Jesus” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 550).

v. 3 *necessary* Cf. “the Christ had to suffer and to rise from the dead” (NET). “The Christ had to suffer and to rise from the dead. These two points (suffering and resurrection) would have been among the more controversial aspects of Paul’s messianic preaching. The term translated ‘had to’ (*dei*) shows how divine design and scripture corresponded here” (NET Bible, 10sn on Ac 17:3).

v. 3 *to suffer, to rise* Cf. Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:34. Paul’s “Jewish hearers needed convincing that their ‘Scriptures’ taught that Messiah would ‘suffer’ death and ‘rise from the dead’ (cf. 3:18; 13:30, 34; Luke 24:13-27; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Paul used the Old Testament to prove that Jesus was the Messiah (Christ).

v. 3 *the Christ* Cf. “This is the Messiah, Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you” (NRSV).

v. 4 *devout Greeks* Cf. “God-fearing Greeks” (NET). Or ‘of devout Greeks,’ but this is practically a technical term for the category called *God-fearers*, Gentiles

who worshiped the God of Israel and in many cases kept the Mosaic law, but did not take the final step of circumcision necessary to become a proselyte to Judaism” (NET Bible, 15tn on Ac 17:4).

v. 4 *not a few* A figure of speech called *litotes*, an understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of the contrary. Here “not a few” means “many.” In this case many “leading women” among the “great many of the devout Greeks” (v. 4). “The attention given to women among the converts is noteworthy . . . The references in 17:4, 12 seem to acknowledge that women of economic means and social influence played an important role in the growth of the church in certain localities” (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, vol. 2, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 208).

v. 5 *wicked men . . . rabble* “Beginning with the gang of ruffians who hung around the marketplace, the Jews succeeded in rousing the Gentiles into mob action against Paul and Silas” (Polhill, 361).

v. 9 *money as security* Cf. 1Th 2:18. “This probably meant that Paul and Silas had to leave Thessalonica and that their friends promised they would not come back, at least during the term of office of the present politarchs . . . [in 1Th 2:18] Likely Paul had in mind the fact that bond had been posted assuring his nonreturn, and therefore his hands were tied” (Longenecker, 470). If he returned, the bond would be forfeited.

v. 11 *received, examining* “They did not accept his word uncritically but did their own examination of the Scripture to see if they really did point to the death and resurrection of the Messiah as Paul claimed (cf. 17:3). This was no cursory investigation either, no weekly sabbath service, as at Thessalonica. They met daily to search the Scriptures” (Polhill, 363). “The implication is that the synagogue in Berea functioned as house of study, where the scrolls were kept, and where members of the Jewish community could attend daily (not just on the sabbath) for scripture study” (James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 229).

v. 14 *the sea* “Luke was not clear as to whether Paul took a ship from Berea to Athens or traveled there by land. Perhaps his pursuers did not know either. Paul’s escorts may have taken him ‘as far as the sea’ to give the impression that they intended to put him on a ship, but then they accompanied him to Athens by land instead. 1 On the other hand, he may have traveled by sea. In any case he reached ‘Athens,’ which was 195 miles south-southwest of Berea, safely” (Constable, 333).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

Gospel ministry doesn't succeed anywhere apart from support for the ministry that comes from mission-minded believers everywhere.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does the author of this passage want me to *know*?

2. What does the author of this passage want me to *do*?

3. What does the author of this passage want me to *be*?



PARENT CONNECTION

Stand for something or fall for anything – words of wisdom from Memaw, my best friend’s grandmother. Boy, that’s easier said than done. We can talk about it all day long and even preach it to our kids, but what matters is how this is played out in the real world. As southerners, there’s something in us that requires us to be generally kind, go-with-the-flow, peacemakers. Standing up against other people’s ideas feels confrontational at best and abrasive or aggressive at worst. When it comes to God’s Word, however, we must stand up and draw the line in the sand. Sometimes that looks like a respectful conversation, other times it looks like walking away. How do we know which way we’re supposed to go? That’s up to the Holy Spirit. After the Thessalonian Jews violently disagreed with the message from Paul and Silas, they walked away. Sometimes there’s just no way to move forward with a rational conversation. In contrast, after introducing the Gospel to the Bereans and witnessing their eagerness in testing the Scripture, Paul and Silas stuck around (at least until those nasty Thessalonian agitators began to stir up trouble). As we encourage our kids to share the truth of the Gospel, let’s help them practice discernment as well. Teach them to present Jesus with a gentle word, trusting the Spirit to soften hearts. Help them understand rejection isn’t personal, for the Lord says people hated Him first (John 15:18). Model for them discernment, trusting the Spirit for guidance. Above all, remind them to stand strong for Jesus, He is the way, the truth and the life. We’re praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 17:1-15.

1. How did people react to Paul’s message in Thessalonica?
2. How are the Berean Jews described?
3. How did the Berean Jews react to Paul’s message?

What Do You Think?

Why did the Jews from Thessalonica try to stir up trouble for Paul?

What Do You Do?

The Bereans examined the scriptures every day (v. 11). This week, read and examine Psalm 1 every day and record what you learn.

CORE COMPETENCY: Bible Study

I read the Bible to know who God is and what He wants from my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 26:3

“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.”

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week’s verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.