

Introduction

The Purpose of This Commentary

The purpose of this commentary is to serve as a tool for discipleship.

How can a Christian's faith be built apart from the knowledge of God's word? The answer is, "It can't." This commentary provides a tool for building faith. It is designed so that it can be used by an individual, by someone who is discipling another person one-on-one, or in a small group setting such as a Sunday school class or a home Bible study. Besides the commentary itself, study questions are provided for small group discussion, and fill-in-the-blank outlines are available for individual use or for groups. The outlines are useful primarily for the transfer of information and knowledge about the chapter being studied. They provide an overview of the contents of the chapter, with a few practical implications presented in order to apply personally the scriptural lessons in the text. The study questions are geared more in the direction of increasing critical thinking skills about the lessons from the text, and stimulating thinking about how to apply the scriptural lessons to one's life, values, and relationships, both to God and to others.

In short, the purpose of this commentary is to make disciples who understand the teachings of Scripture and process those teachings in such a manner that the result is changed values and changed behavior, particularly in the realm of relationships. Only then does one become a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

About the Author

When I was a pastor, I had at my fingertips—and still have access to—an abundance of Bible resources. Over the years, I collected an impressive library of commentaries, dictionaries, encyclopedias, maps, lexicons, concordances and study Bibles. When I first began in ministry, all of my resources consisted of books—there were no personal computers at that time. Then desktop computers, Bible programs and the Internet came along. Regardless of the source for information and facts, however, all of my resources lacked one thing in common—really good application and practical ways to enhance critical thinking skills; that is, taking Bible truths and applying them to real-life, relevant situations to the degree that values and behavior are challenged. Indeed, the latter point became the purpose of all my teaching and preaching—to change behavior. I suppose the reason that commentaries provide facts and information and not much application or promotion of

critical thinking skills is the notion that making application of any Bible passage is left up to the pastor or Bible teacher. This notion is somewhat understandable. It is difficult to make application on an individual level. Therefore, the attempts Bible study resources make to provide application tend to be very general in nature and not relevant to the individual Bible student.

Part of my training in Bible teaching was learning what is called the “Inductive Bible Study Method.” Inductive Bible study is probably the best and simplest Bible study method around. One does not need knowledge of original languages, a theological degree, or a computer full of Bible study programs to perform good Scripture study. The approach is simple: starting with the Bible text only, make observation of the passage, make interpretation of the passage (here’s where Bible resources might be most helpful), and then make application. The inductive Bible study method is an excellent tool for meditating on God’s word and taking the time to truly understand and appropriately apply biblical teachings. *The Discippler’s Commentary* employs the inductive study method, verse by verse, word by word.

In the inductive Bible study method, it is the areas of observation and interpretation that most Bible resources are able to address. It is up to the student, however, to create application. Unfortunately, application is the area that is perhaps most neglected. Yet, application is probably the single most important element of good Bible study. Without application—personal application—how can the student of the Bible have God’s word incarnated into his or her life, and therefore make lifestyle and behavioral changes? This neglected area of the inductive method is addressed exceptionally well in the online program *Walk With the Word*. (Visit www.walkwiththeword.org for details.)

When it comes to the application portion of the Scripture being studied, *Walk With the Word* teaches the student to constantly ask questions like, “What is God telling me through His word?” and “How is God speaking to me *personally* through His word in this passage?” “How do I personally apply this word to my life?” *Walk With the Word* teaches that God’s word is *literally* God’s voice. The Bible is God speaking to us today. All that a Christian needs to know concerning how to live in a manner that is pleasing to God is contained in His word.

It is with the concept of hearing God’s voice through His word that *The Discippler’s Commentary* is written. The application section is how the author “hears” God speaking through His word. There is an inherent problem, however, with any application: it can only be specific and personal to a degree. When a Bible teacher makes public application to a passage of Scripture

(such as a pastor giving a sermon), he or she is necessarily relegated to generalities. That is, it is difficult—if not a little risky—to get too specific in the pulpit. The application, therefore, tends to be drawn from the personal experiences of the pastor or Bible teacher. Specific application also runs the risk of being controversial, particularly if social issues are addressed. For example, when teaching on the subject of “stumbling” blocks (Rom. 14:13), how does a Bible teacher make application in today’s world without opening Pandora’s box? When it comes to making contemporary application of “doubtful things,” I’ve heard other pastors mention such examples as R-rated movies, use of alcohol or tobacco, plunging necklines and cleavage, dancing, certain types of music, certain programs on TV (or television altogether), and even which translation of the Bible should be used. There is also the cross-cultural (or sub-cultural) problem. What may be taboo in one culture or region of the country may not be frowned upon in another (e.g., use of alcohol or tobacco). Therefore, application for some passages will be quite general in nature. This is why I have provided application questions at the end of each chapter. The questions are designed to stimulate discussion and enhance critical thinking skills about the principles that are being taught in the word, so that they can be applied on a very personal, individual level.

The method I found most helpful in making personal application from Scripture was the practice of journaling. While I was in the ministry, I completed a journal entry for every chapter of the Old Testament one time and every half chapter of the New Testament three times. Not only was journaling a life-changing experience, but it forced me to ask the question, “Lord, what are you teaching me personally through Your word today?” For those who desire to dig deeper into God’s word, meditate on it, and have His word change your values and belief system, I highly recommend journaling. There is a section on journaling in the *Walk With the Word* website.

Finally, I have written *The Discippler’s Commentary* to bring to the forefront the message of God’s love. The observations and applications found in this commentary reflect the principles and teachings found in my book [*The Love Revelation: Book 1—The Royal Law*](#). In *The Love Revelation*, the author believes that one of the most neglected teachings of the Bible is the love message. God clearly states in His word that He wants His children to experience His love and learn to express that love to others. However, because love is defined and perceived in so many different ways by the world, the concept of love requires definition. That is, true love must be defined, and that can only be done by the truth found in God’s word. Truth, therefore, always trumps love because biblical love requires *biblical* definition. The love message in God’s word, as

defined by the truth in God's word, is the primary emphasis of this commentary.

If there is anything the reader of this commentary walks away with, I hope it is a new awareness of the wonder of God's love, and how love permeates nearly every aspect of biblical truth. Indeed, I believe all biblical truth points to love; God's love through Jesus Christ, and the Christian's need to love one another. One evangelistic booklet I have used in the past said it perfectly: "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." I believe that the purpose of the New Testament is not only to draw us to the Savior, but to help us experience God's love and express that love to others.

About the Bible Used in the Commentary

The author believes in the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible, and that the Bible was written without error in the original manuscripts. The Bible we have today, in the more literal versions, is God's word; every letter and every word of the Bible has been preserved by God for a reason, and every portion of God's word has benefit for the reader. That is not to say that even the literal translations are completely without error, or that there may be some question as to how the original text actually read. Having noted that, studies indicate that the Greek text we have today is over 99.9% accurate and consistent, and that no areas of question affect basic Christian doctrine.

About the Version Used

The version of the Bible used in this commentary is *The New American Standard Bible—Updated Edition* published by [The Lockman Foundation](#) (NASB)¹. The author has found this version of the Bible to be the most effective for in-depth, inductive Bible study. In the literal versus paraphrase approach to Bible translations, the NASB is more literal, which makes for more accurate study. A particular benefit of the NASB is its very accurate and consistent rendering of verbs from the New Testament Greek to the English. Greek verb tenses and moods have very specific meanings that carry important information for the serious student of the Bible.

About Spelling, Grammar, and Other Stuff

My three main reference books are *The Chicago Manual of Style (16th Edition)*, *The Christian Writer's Manual of Style* (Robert Hudson, Editor), and *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (11th Edition)*. I also wish to acknowledge Kathy Ide's neat little book *Polishing the*

“*Pugs*,” which condenses much of the material found in the other three sources (UpWrite Press, 2007).

Regarding capitalization, I have chosen to retain what is called “reverential capitalization” of pronouns referring to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. There are two reasons for this: first, reverential capitalization helps with clarification of antecedents; that is, to whom the pronoun is referring. Second, reverential capitalization is the style used in the NASB, and therefore, the author desires to be consistent with the source.

About the Format

I have written this commentary in Microsoft Word 2010. Use of an earlier version of Word may skew some of the formatting, making reading awkward (paragraph changes, et cetera). For this reason, I have included .pdf files to maintain the formatting proper. For those using MS Word, however, there is the option to change formatting to suit one’s taste, such as enlarging font, et cetera.

This commentary is available only in digital form, but may be printed at one’s own discretion.

About the Title

The title I’ve chosen is *The Discippler’s Commentary*. I chose that title so as to communicate that the layout of the commentary, as stated earlier, is for the purpose of teaching and discipling others. Therefore, I have arranged each chapter with a design that includes:

- A brief summary of the chapter (“Overview”).
- Events or topics that the reader or teacher is to look for (“Discovery”).
- The author’s commentary placed alongside the biblical text (as much as permitted) so as to make comparison and reference as easy as possible. (Note: for those reading the commentary in MS Word, a vertical “split screen” effect can be useful for keeping the text in view while reading the commentary.)
- Included in the commentary are the author’s comments that pertain to application to the church and to Christians today. (Warning: some thoughts may be offensive. There are prophetic elements in this commentary.)

- At the end of each chapter are discussion questions that can be used in a group setting. The leader will have no difficulty answering the questions if he or she has read the commentary beforehand.
- After the discussion questions, there are outlines for leaders to use when teaching the Gospel of Luke or leading a discipleship group. The first page is a blank outline for fill-ins. (They may be freely reproduced and distributed without permission from the author.) The second page is the fill-in answers and brief notes for the leader or teacher.
- There are no references or bibliography because the author has chosen to quote no one. However, much historical and textual detail has been gleaned from a number of resources without plagiarizing, including Bibles with commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and resources found on [Logos Bible Software 5](#).

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge and thank my good friend Danny Isom, author of the *Walk With the Word* website, for his proof-reading and valuable suggestions in the formatting and content of the commentary.

About Copyright and Distribution

This commentary is entirely free of charge, and may be freely distributed. It is the author's desire that this commentary be used for teaching and discipleship to anyone at any time in any place. However, *it is copyrighted* by virtue of its publication on the *Walk With the Word* website, and on the author's personal and book websites. Therefore, no one is to profit monetarily from use of this commentary. I only ask that no content changes be made without first consulting with the author.

And on that note, I am quite confident that the commentary itself is *not* error free. Therefore, the author accepts input from readers regarding typos and/or errors, even disagreements on content. One must remember, however, that much of the commentary contains personal opinion and observation, with which readers may or may not agree.

Using the Table of Contents (TOC) or “Bookmark” in MS Word

If the reader is using MS Word or the .pdf file (vs. hard copy), the chapter headings in the TOC are linked.

If the reader is using MS Word only, the “Bookmark” icon can also take one to the desired location. The abbreviations are as follows:

C01 = Chapter 1 (C10 = Chapter 10), et cetera

C01Q = “Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection”

C01O = “Fill-in Outline for the Disciple”

C01A = “Answer Outline for the Discipler”

Index

An index has not been developed. If a reader is so inclined to create one, that would be greatly appreciated. Once completed, please forward it to the author for review and inclusion into the commentary. It may be sent to bill.walthall@walkwiththeword.org

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