

THE JOY OF DISCOVERY

IN BIBLE STUDY

Revised Edition

OLETTA WALD



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INTRODUCTION

This book is a revised edition of my book, *The Joy of Discovery*. I wrote the first edition soon after I attended the former Biblical Seminary in New York, where I was introduced to what is called *inductive Bible study*. In this book, I shall call the process *discovery Bible study*. While this revised edition contains the same basic principles described in the first edition, I have changed the format and rearranged the material. The focus now is only on *Bible study*. The section on *Bible teaching* has been omitted. This will be included in a companion book. The purpose of this book is to involve you in Bible study skills which will enable you to experience the joy that can be yours as you learn to become a discoverer of the truths in the Bible.

A “Flounderer” in Bible Study

I had been a student of the Bible several years before I learned how to become a discoverer on my own. I could follow the suggestions of others and answer the questions they asked, but I floundered when I tried to launch out for myself. I did not know where to start or what to do. The treasures of the Bible seemed locked behind abstract words. I always had to depend on someone else to open the door.

Learning the Secret

While a student at the former Biblical Seminary in New York, I was taught how to explore the truths of the Bible in a methodical and systematic way. I learned some steps to take when studying a passage. I found that it was like working a combination lock. When I followed the steps, the Word opened up to me. I felt free. I realized that I was no longer dependent on others to gain insights into Scripture. I had become a discoverer. In a new way, Bible study had become more meaningful and personal. Most of all it was deeply satisfying to know how to discover the truths in God’s Word. I had experienced *the joy of discovery* in Bible study!

Sharing My Discoveries with Others

My new discoveries were too good to keep to myself. I began to teach the skills which I had learned to my students at the Lutheran Bible Institute and to lay persons in congregations. I found that whenever people would conscientiously apply the principles and follow the steps they too became discoverers and experienced greater joy in their study. I felt the need for a resource which would help them in their study; therefore, I wrote *The Joy of Discovery*. But I wrote the book mainly for students in colleges and seminaries. It was prepared to be a textbook in an academic situation.

Need for Revision

Since the writing of the first edition of *The Joy of Discovery* I have been involved in teaching the skills in many situations, both to students in colleges and to lay persons in congregations. Through these many experiences, I began to realize the necessity of revising the book to better meet the needs of those who were using it.

NEED FOR INTRODUCING THE SKILLS GRADUALLY: I have found that it is very important to introduce the skills in discovery Bible study slowly and gradually. If persons were introduced to too many skills at one time or spent too little time on each skill, they became frustrated and discouraged. They were apt to think that the process was too difficult for them and reject the validity of the skills.

NEED FOR SATISFACTION: I found that persons needed to have a measure of satisfaction as they learned each skill. When learning a skill, there is always some frustration in the beginning. But in the process, persons have to experience enough satisfaction to want to continue the learning of the skill. They are not satisfied with the assurance that some day they will find value in what they are learning. They have to see some value in each step of the process.

NEED FOR RECOGNIZING VARIED ABILITIES: Reactions to these discovery skills will vary with people. The degree to which persons become involved in the skills will vary with interests and background, but all can find a measure of satisfaction in the process.

Pattern for This Revision

I have tried to meet these needs in the way I have patterned this book. I am trying to introduce the skills from the easiest to the more complex, beginning with the very simplest and gradually introducing the more difficult ones. The book is divided into two phases: Phase One—The Discovering Phase, chapters 1-6; Phase Two—The Expanding Phase, chapters 7-14. If you are interested in learning the basics in Bible study, you might find Phase One enough for you. But if you are interested in learning how to go more deeply into Bible study, you will want to continue in Phase Two. The hope is that through

this pattern, the skills will be introduced gradually enough for you to grasp the process, yet challenging enough to encourage you to continue the study.

My Indebtedness

The methods presented in this book are not new. They have been advocated by biblical scholars down through the years. One of the greatest exponents of methodical Bible study was the late Dr. Wilbur W. White, the founder of the Biblical Seminary in New York, now called the New York Seminary. Charles R. Eberhardt said of him:

He vowed that as a teacher he would assist the students not only to learn but pre-eminently to learn *how* he learns. The student must be "taught to believe that he is to be throughout life an independent, yet humble, investigator of truth as it presents itself in living form in the literature of Scripture and to find in the Christ its highest and complete personal manifestation."

He wanted his students to be able to go "anywhere with a Bible and an unabridged dictionary" and with these make themselves ready for classroom and the pulpit.

These principles which Dr. White set forth have been proclaimed by his successors at the Seminary and by its countless graduates in all parts of the world. These principles are the background for this booklet.

I am indebted to the many fine teachers at the Biblical Seminary who taught me the methodical principles of Bible study, but in a special way to Professor Robert Traina whose book *Methodical Bible Study* is the basis for this manual. I am grateful to Mr. Traina for permission to use his book as a basis. I urge those who desire a more comprehensive study of methods to read Professor Traina's book. His is the textbook; mine is more of a workbook applying the principles he sets forth.

My Hope

The purpose of this book is to help you become a discoverer in Bible study and experience joy in the process. Most of the chapters contain two aspects of the study: 1) information about the discovery skills and 2) practices which will help you develop the skills. You will learn very little unless you *practice* the suggested skills. They are the most important aspect of the book. Since the purpose of this resource is to teach you *how* to study, do not be too concerned about your results, that is whether you are right or wrong in what you are doing. If you faithfully practice some of the skills, no matter how inadequate you feel, you will soon realize that you are learning to *discover* some of the truths in a passage. Do not become discouraged in the process. Learning skills does take time. The Lord will increase your capacity to gain deeper insight into the Word as you pray, practice, and persevere. Give him—and yourself—time!