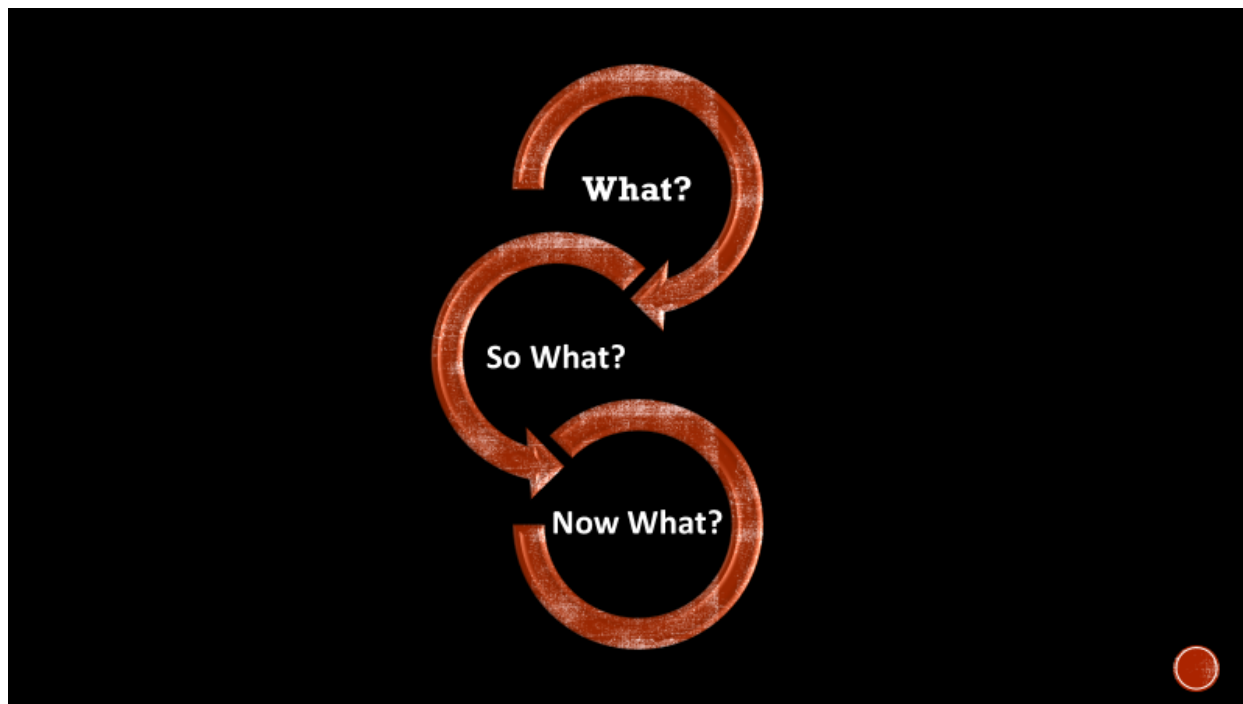


## Engage the Bible Such That It Engages You

As I have had the privilege to share with you over the past couple of years, I keep coming back to a simple model for engaging with God's Word. The mnemonic, that I take no credit for originating, is three simple questions: *What? So what? and Now what?*



Let me briefly review the *Whats* again. When we look at a verse or passage in the Bible we first ask "What?" *What* is the verse saying? *What* did the author mean by the words (terms) he used in the context of the original audience? *What* are the facts and how do they align with what Scripture says elsewhere?

Once we understand all the nuances of *what* is actually being said, we ask "So what?" *So, what* is the significance of what is said? *So, what* are the principles and applications that we take away from the passage?

Understanding the principles derived from the text, and how they can be applied, we ask "Now what" do I do about it? *Now, what* actions or changes do I need to take in my life because of the significance of the text?

These are three easy questions to help remember how to engage with the Bible.

During the past few months, I have been muddling with expanding on the *What, So what, Now what?* model to provide more guidance in its use.

But as I have been working through it, I keep getting this feeling that I am missing a key element. I find that it is possible to study the Bible following the *What, So what, Now what* model, but still have a dry, stale, or distant experience with God. My desire is to encourage others to engage with the Bible such that it leads into a growing (and "enchanted") relationship with our living God?

I realized that a different question is missing from the model. As I have pondered this more and more, I believe it is actually the most important and primary of the questions: *WHY?*



Why am I looking to engage with Scripture at all? What is the purpose? I have all the “What’s” but I am missing the “Why?”

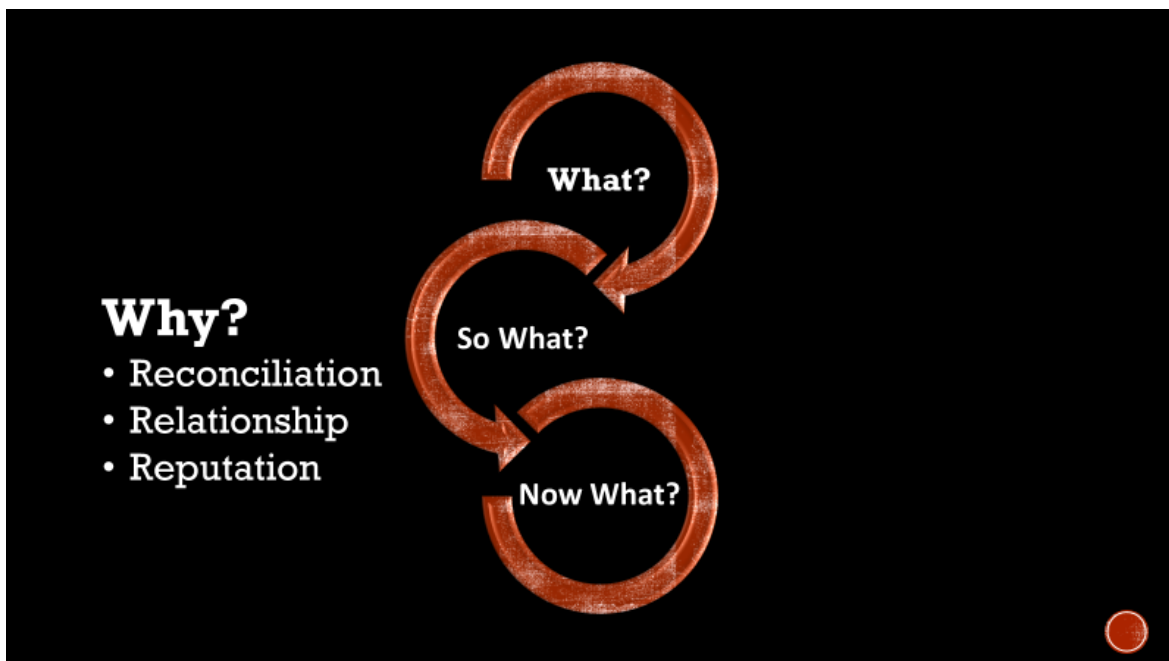
Comedian, Michael Jr., explains the relationship between “what” and “why” this way:

*“People would start calling me up and asking me different questions . . . they would ask me questions about purpose, which is crazy because I do jokes, but what is crazier is that I would have answers that made sense. Then I realized that what was happening was they would ask me questions like, “What should I do about this or what should I do here?” but the question they should really be asking is, that is the wrong one, the question they really should be asking is, Why? If you understand your why, you have more options for what, but your why never changes.*

*“When you know your “why,” your “what” becomes more impactful because you are walking towards, or in, your purpose. The key is to understand your why.”*

**Michael Jr. Video 4:45 minute mark:** <https://thriveconference.org/blog/2020/06/17/have-a-laugh-with-michael-jr-at-thrive-summit-2020/>

Why engage with Scripture? There are many reasons to engage with God’s Word, but I believe the primary reason is to understand the heart of God:



God is **RELATIONAL**. Before he created, he was in community, completely satisfied, and in perfect harmony as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He created mankind good, but mankind rebelled creating a rift between God and mankind. In love, knowing that mankind is most fulfilled when glorifying God, he provided a path for **RECONCILING** mankind to himself, for his name's sake. When the Bible speaks of God's name and his name's sake, it is referring to God's **REPUTATION** among all creation. Take note on these passages:

**Isaiah 43:6b-7** Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth— everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

**1 Samuel 12:22** For the sake of his great name the Lord will not reject his people, because the Lord was pleased to make you his own.

**Isaiah 48:9-11** For my own name's sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you, so as not to destroy you completely. <sup>10</sup> See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. <sup>11</sup> For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another.

**Psalms 23:1-3** The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup> He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

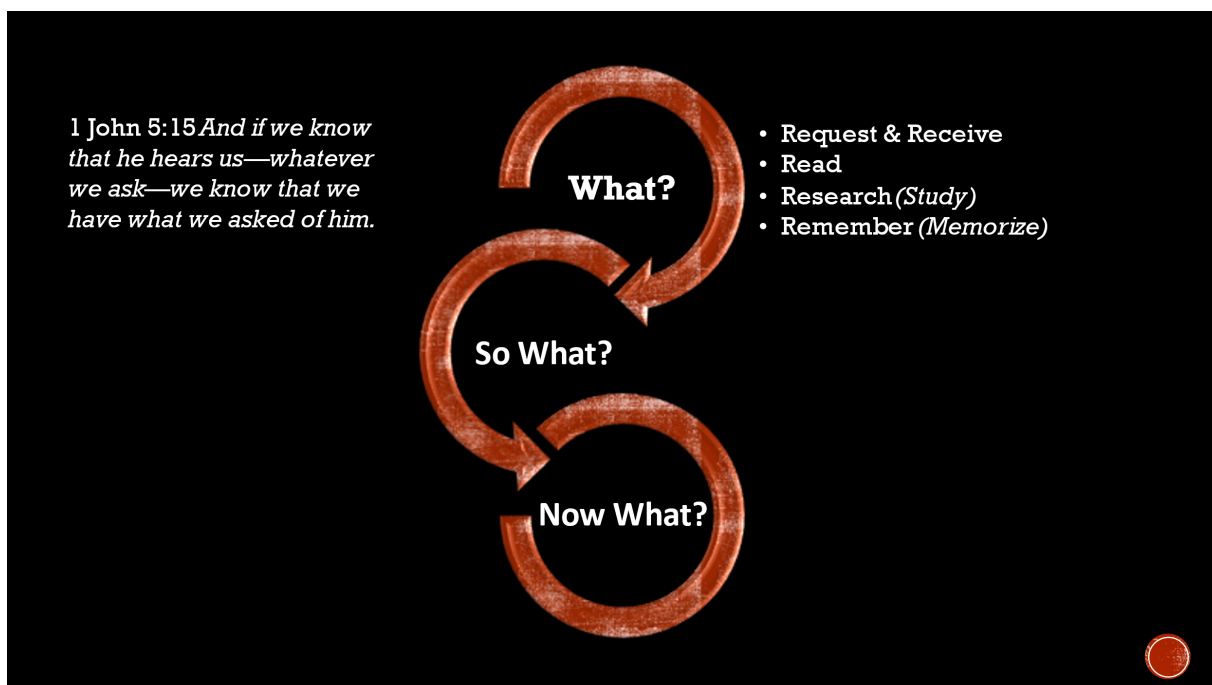
<sup>3</sup> He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

**John 12:27-28** <sup>27</sup> “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

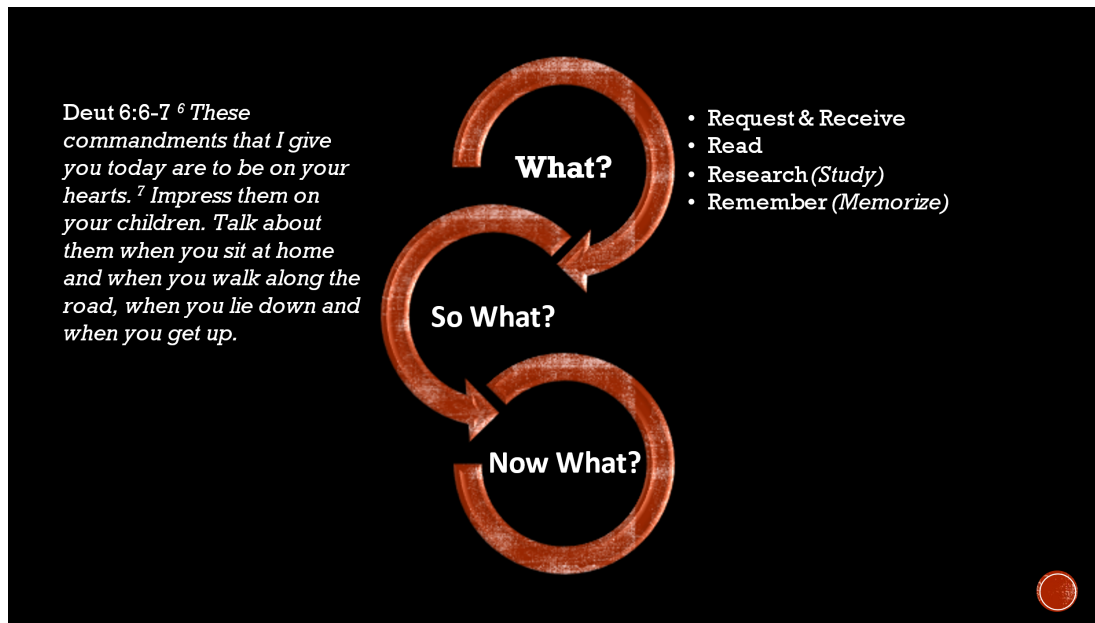
Let's look closer at the *What, So what, Now what* model through the lens of *Why*.

To provide more direction in using the *What, So what, Now what* model, I have added “RE” elements. Another mnemonic to help me remember the different elements within each section of the model.

## What?



- **Request** and **Receive** – Start off engaging with the Bible in prayer. Quiet and focus your heart, setting aside the distractions of life. Ask the Holy Spirit for discernment and wisdom as you approach his Word. Slow down and listen for the Spirit’s often quiet voice, expecting to receive his guidance in your study time.



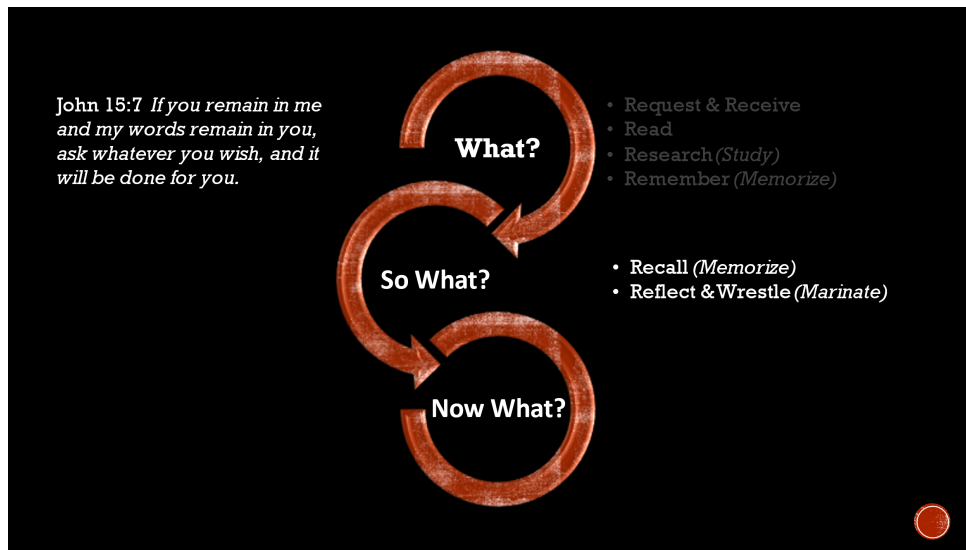
- **Read** – When seeking to understand *What* the Bible is saying, the main mode is reading; although, listening to an audio version of the Bible is another viable mode also.
- **Research** – To gain deeper insights from Scripture, we study the Word and use biblical resources to research the meaning of words in their context (terms) and the literary and historical context in which the author was writing.
- **Remember** – The third element in “What” is memorization. Many people read the Bible, a few people study the Bible. Fewer yet have hidden the Word in their heart such that their lives are transformed. I believe that memorizing Scripture will have the biggest impact in our quest to engage the Bible.
  - Deut 6:6-9 <sup>6</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. <sup>7</sup> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

When memorizing Scripture, it forces our minds to contemplate and meditate on the Word. It stamps it, or hides it, in our hearts and minds for future reference. We will talk about that more in the elements to come. The Navigators’ Topical Memory System, encourages us to remember key Bible passages beyond just being able to recite them back like a parrot. We remember the significance of the passage in our lives.

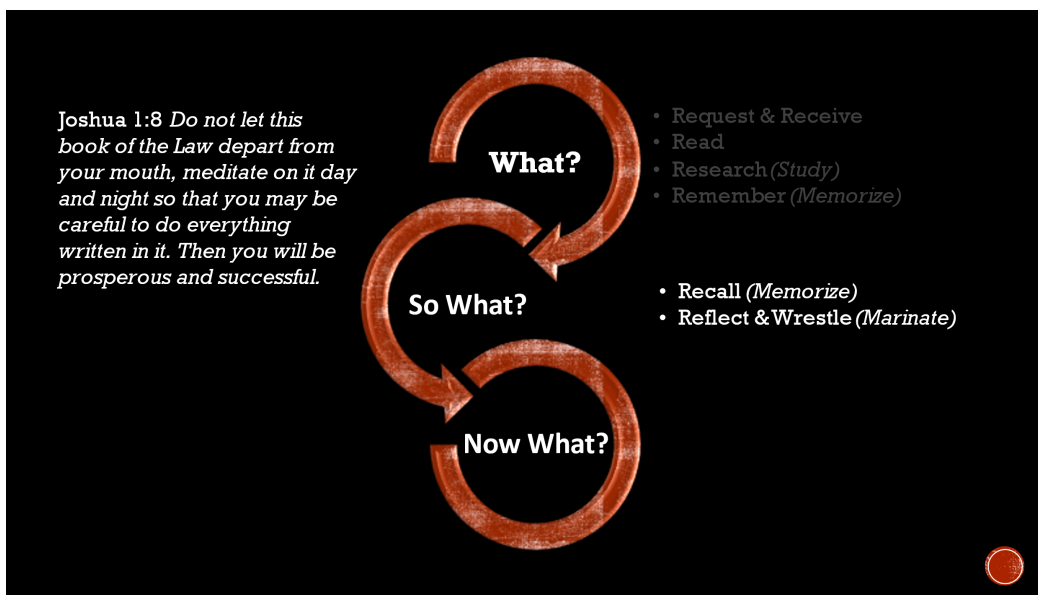
## So What?

As we said earlier, “So what” is gleaning the significance and the principles the original author was trying to communicate to his original audience. “So what” asks us determine how the instructions, warnings, and encouragements given in the Bible are relevant to us today considering the historical, political, economic, and literary differences.





- **Recall** – As we explore elements within the “So what” we come back to memorizing, but I refer to this element as Recall. When we memorize Scripture passages, and hid them in our hearts, we can recall them readily when life throws us curves and we need a word from the Lord. Oh, the comfort and strength available from the Word of God when tragedy comes calling.
  - Ps 119:9,11 How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. *I have hidden your word in my heart* that I might not sin against you.
  - John 15:7 *‘If you remain in me and my words remain in you,* ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.



- **Reflect** and **Wrestle** – Additionally, when memorizing, it forces our minds to contemplate, meditate, or what I like to call, marinate, in the Word. We allow the Scriptures to tenderize our hearts and our minds.

It is possible to read the Bible and do in depth Bible study, yet keep the Word at an “intellectual arm’s length”. The Word gets dissected, poked, prodded, and analyzed, like a specimen on a lab table. By asking how we experience the truths of the passage we are memorizing, can often lead to significant wrestling with God. When we are in midst of the deep pain of loss and we happen to be working on a memory James 1:2 *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials*

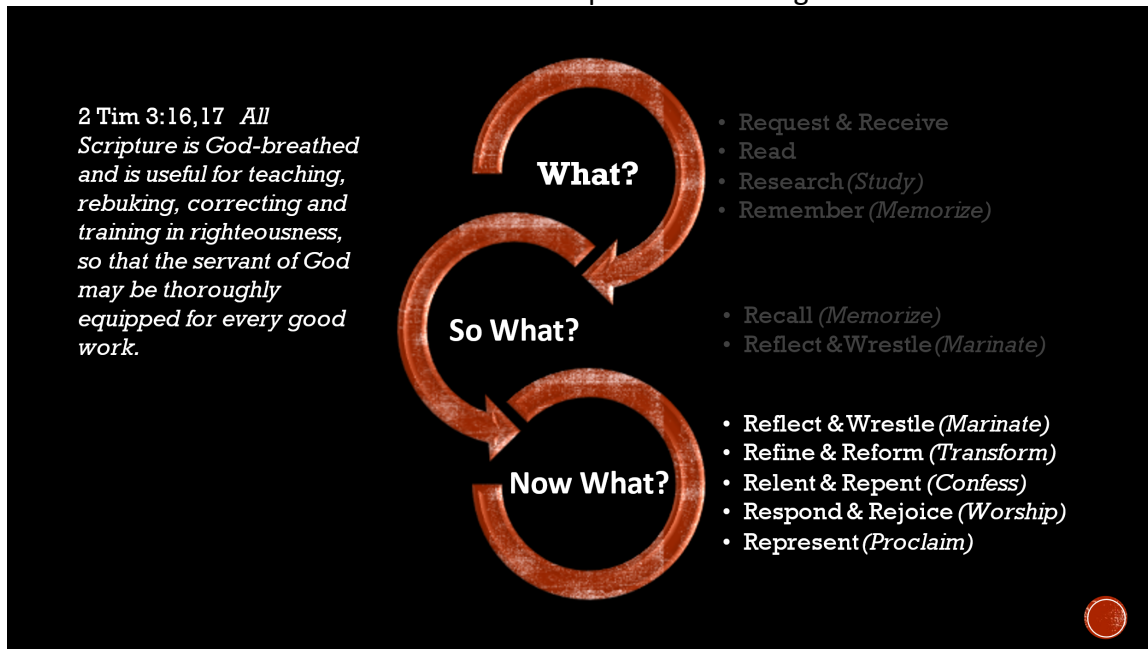
of many kinds,” it may mean emotional wrestling with God for many days or weeks as you let the verse marinate in your life.

Know this dear friends, wrestling and marinating, cannot be done from a distance. These are close contact processes with our Living God. This is the difference between merely “studying” the Bible and fully “engaging” the Bible.

- Joshua 1:8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

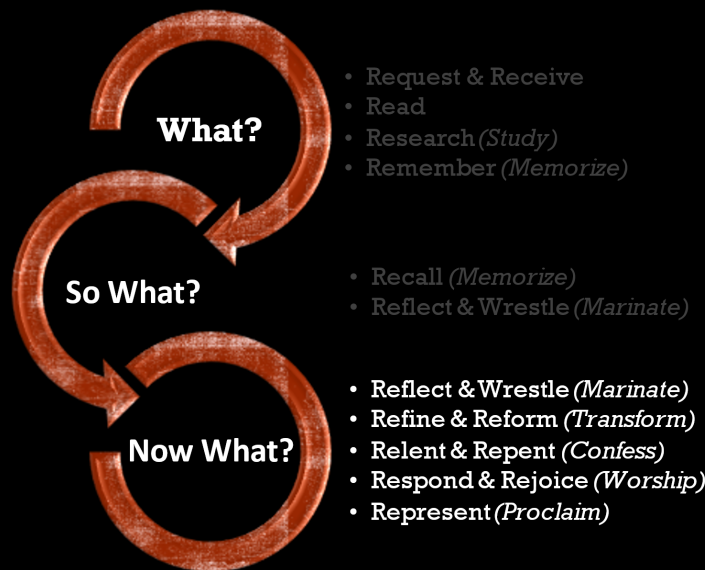
## Now What?

“Now what” do I do? Having understood *what* the passage is saying, and principles and significance of the passage today, it is time to contemplate *Now what* we must do to further our transformation into the likeness of Jesus. There are four elements here to help us work through the “Now what”.



- **Reflect** and **Wrestle** – As we continue to let our lives marinate on the passage we are memorizing, we move our attention from the significance of the passage to applying the truths of its principles in our lives.
  - 2 Tim 3:16,17 <sup>6</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*



- **Refine** and **Reform** – It is in the “Now what” that we examine and evaluate our lives to see where we can act to renew, reform, and refine our lives to be more like Jesus. In this element we are talking about being more intentional about making our common everyday tasks an act of worship, giving God glory and thanks for every aspect of our lives. Becoming FULLY devoted followers of Christ.
  - Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will*
- **Relent** and **Repent** – Where the Refine and Reform element guides us to take the common and make it “holy,” dedicated to God, Relent and Repent addresses those areas of sin in our lives. This element of “Now what” guides us in humility to examine ourselves and root out sin. When we do, the result is reconciliation and restoration with God.

John 3:30 *He must become greater;  
I must become less.*

Phil 2:3-4 <sup>3</sup>*Do nothing out of selfish  
ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in  
humility value others above  
yourselves, <sup>4</sup>not looking to your  
own interests but each of you to the  
interests of the others.*



- Relent & Repent (Confess)
  - **Reduce (HE>i)**
  - Remorse
  - Resist
  - Reset
  - Redirect
  - Remedy (and reconcile?)

- **Reduce** – First, relenting and repenting requires an attitude of humility, reducing ourselves in our own eyes and acknowledging how insignificant we are before the Creator and foolish our rebellion is before the Judge. And yet, realizing our priceless worth because of the work Jesus did on our behalf, to glorify the Father. Self-deprecation, in a Christian is either an unhealthy view of oneself, considering God's work in our lives, or is arrogance masquerading as humility. In community, humility calls us to consider others better than ourselves, not by lowering the view of ourselves, and devaluing the work of God in our lives, but by lifting others up.
  - John 3:30 He must become greater; I must become less.
  - Phil 2:3-4 <sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup>not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Ps 51:10-12 *Create in me a pure  
heart, O God, and renew a  
steadfast spirit within me.*

<sup>11</sup>*Do not cast me from your  
presence or take your Holy  
Spirit from me.*

<sup>12</sup>*Restore to me the joy of your  
salvation and grant me a willing  
spirit, to sustain me.*



- Relent & Repent (Confess)
  - **Reduce (HE>i)**
  - **Remorse**
  - Resist
  - Reset
  - Redirect
  - Remedy (and reconcile?)

- **Remorse** - are we really sorry? True repentance requires remorse, a deep sorrow for the sin in our lives. An understanding of the offense our sin is to God.

- Ps 51:10-12 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
<sup>11</sup>Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. <sup>12</sup>Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

I John 2:15-16 <sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. <sup>16</sup> For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — comes not from the Father but from the world.



- Relent & Repent (Confess)
  - Reduce
  - Remorse
  - **Resist (Stop)**
  - Reset
  - Redirect
  - Remedy (and reconcile?)

- **Resist** – Our remorse must lead us to put a complete stop to the sin. In considering these next three aspects of Relent and Repent: Resist, Reset, and Redirect, think of a GFI plug. When a faulty device (sin) is plugged in, it disconnects the device from the source of power. The faulty device (sin) that flipped the switch must be removed.

- I Jn 2:15-16 <sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father<sup>15</sup> is not in them. <sup>16</sup> For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.

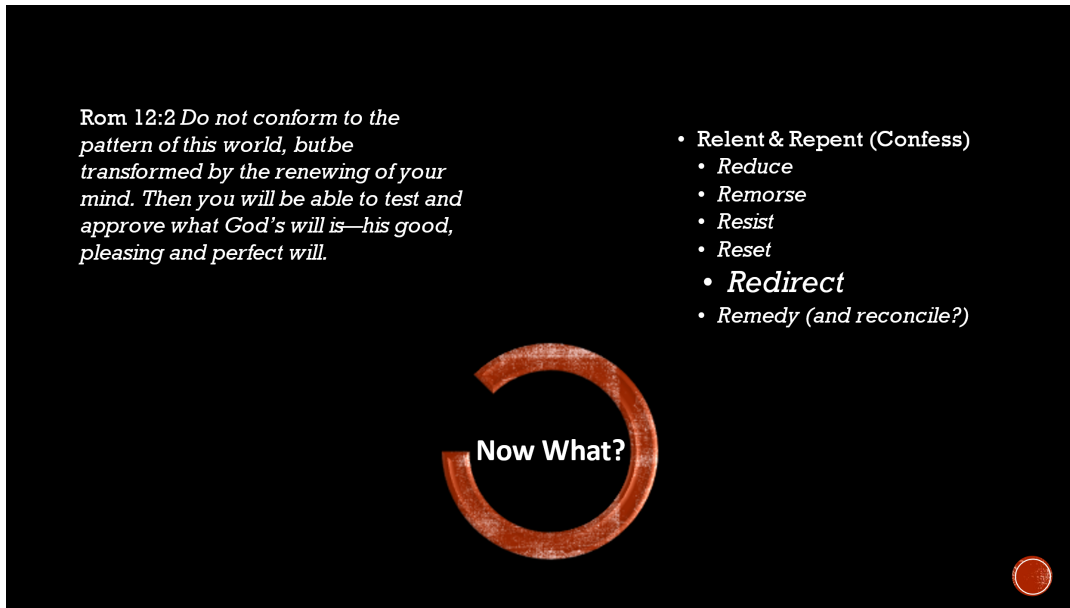
Col 1:21-22 <sup>21</sup> Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. <sup>22</sup> But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—



- Relent & Repent (Confess)
  - Reduce
  - Remorse
  - Resist
  - **Reset**
  - Redirect
  - Remedy (and reconcile?)

- **Reset** – Confessing our sin to God and ask for forgiveness resets our relationship with God like resetting the GFI plug.

- Col 1:21-22 21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—



Rom 12:2 *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

- Relent & Repent (Confess)
  - Reduce
  - Remorse
  - Resist
  - Reset
- Redirect
  - Remedy (and reconcile?)

Now What?

- **Redirect** - Not only must we resist sinning, we must stop staring it down (we typically blink first) we must turn from sin and go a new direction. Here we need to rid ourselves of the things that tempt us to sin. With the analogy of the GFI plug, we need to throw away the faulty device (sin) that was flipping breaker.
  - Rom 12:2 <sup>2</sup>Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
  - Matt 18:8-9 <sup>8</sup>If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. <sup>9</sup>And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

Acts 24:16 *So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.*

Matt 5:23-24 *“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,<sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.*

- Relent & Repent (Confess)
  - Reduce
  - Remorse
  - Resist
  - Reset
  - Redirect
- **Remedy and reconcile**



- **Remedy** – When our sin has negatively affected others we need to make amends to right the wrongs, and, where it is in our power, we should make every effort to **reconcile** with those we have wronged.
  - Acts 24:16 <sup>16</sup>So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.
  - Matt 5:23 <sup>23</sup>“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Psalm 145 *I will exalt you, my god the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.*

*Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.*

*Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise!*

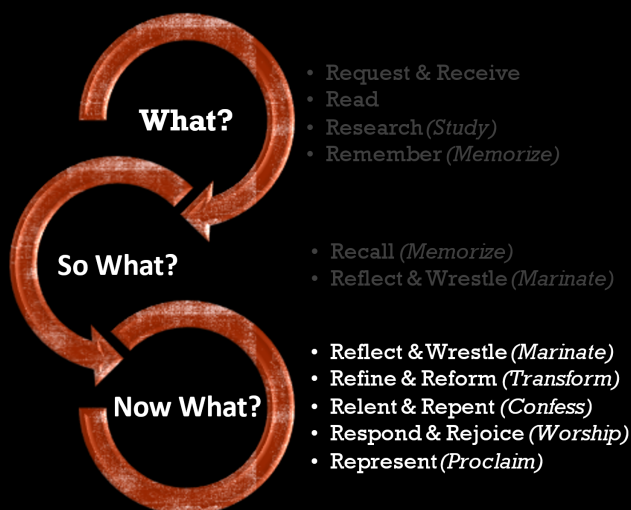


- Request & Receive
- Read
- Research (Study)
- Remember (Memorize)
- Recall (Memorize)
- Reflect & Wrestle (Meditate)
- Reflect & Wrestle (Meditate)
- Refine & Reform (Transform)
- Relent & Repent (Confess)
- Respond & Rejoice (Worship)
- Represent (Proclaim)

- **Respond and Rejoice** – When we reflect back on the Why of engaging with the Bible, that is, reconciliation with God, relationship with God, and lifting up God’s reputation, the fourth element in “Now what” drives us to response in joyful worship!
  - *Remember that our ultimate purpose in life is to bring glory to God. We are at our best when we glorify God in our daily living.*
    - Psalm 145 I will exalt you, my god the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise!



Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."



- **Represent** – If we claim to be followers of Christ then we are his witnesses and ambassadors. The question is, what kind of witnesses will we be. As we engage with the Bible in reading, researching, remembering, and reflecting, and the Bible engages us, we should be inclined to proclaim the gospel to the people around us and beyond.
  - Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

## Why?

- Reconciliation
- Relationship
- Reputation

