

Some History

Throughout my career as a pastor at a local church, I was always desirous and saw my lessons/sermons as a means to help encourage people to study the Word for themselves. From youth group “synergy studies” (years ago) to various handouts for parishioners to study at home — especially in the last 3 years.

This idea had taken a bit of shape at Alongside in March of 2025 when I was there seeking help, perspective, and recovery from a difficult ministry situation I was in. In the third week, we were asked to start putting the future together and make some plans as to what to do with what we were learning and processing. This idea sprung out of one of those exercises as I realized or re-expressed the idea of first-hand connection to the Word of God being superior to second-hand exposure. The phrase First Hand Truth dates back to those days.

Then by August, after thinking about this idea and thinking about the possibilities, I came up with a rough “what-if” proposal that I sent to a few friends (and down Facebook) — this received quite a few positive comments and encouragements. I began thinking of it more.

By October, I had begun preparing for the possibility of holding such workshops.

First Hand Truth has sponsored and conducted six workshops since November. These were all two-hour workshops, except for Grace Christian Academy, which was 2x 45-min workshops over two days. As you can see, most of these were local to the Battle Creek area, except for one set of classes in a Christian school in West Allis, Wisconsin.

1. **How to Study the Bible** / Nov 6, 2025 / Continental Bakery / 9 participants
2. **How to Use Tech to Deepen Bible Study** / Nov 22, 2025 / Calvary Baptist Church / 3
3. **How to Study the Bible** / Dec 4-5, 2025 / Grace Christian Academy, WI / 60 participants
4. **How to Use Tech to Deepen Bible Study** / Jan 8, 2026 / JPG Resources / 7 participants
5. **How to Study the Bible** / Jan 24, 2026 / Calvary Baptist Church / 12 participants
6. **How to Study the Psalms** / Jan 29, 2026 / JPG Resources / 12 participants

One more evening workshop is planned at JPG for February;

- **How to Study the Bible for Spiritual Growth / February 26, 6:30-8:30pm** / We will discuss and study some of the theology behind spiritual growth, which will be the overarching emphasis of Saturday morning’s workshops.

Three other workshops in the planning stages with outside organizations. These are not quite as local as the other ones so far.

1. **Stockholm, Sweden** / Lauren Dahl Zapater / Zoom or equivalent / February 21 or 28, afternoon from 1-3pm.
2. **Grand Rapids, Michigan** / Bella Grogg / TBA
3. **Richland, Michigan** / Gull Lake Ministries / Josiah McNally / TBA

Some Planned or Future Things

Weekly Discipleship Bible Study Training

While providing periodical workshops is helpful, I believe greater impact can be accomplished by providing weekly local help and workshops to interested people. With this in mind, I'm going to start a Saturday morning "gym for the soul" and encourage people to come and learn from scripture — come and learn to study for yourself. The workshops will always be designed to enable people to get into the word with more confidence than they have — and to build up people's desire to do so.

Adventures in Bible Study / Weekly Open-House Type Workshops planned for Battle Creek beginning February 21 / These will include a mini-workshop in the middle of a larger time frame of 8:30-12 noon.

This part of the ministry is made possible by Jeff and Heather Grogg who have so generously and kindly provided space for such a thing as this ministry to have room to experiment and grow. Thank you so much!

10-11 am **workshops** that are planned for the first few weeks...

- **February 21** / The basics of Spiritual Growth; Faith+Passion+Knowledge
- **February 28** / Using Technology to Study the Bible: The Incredible Power of Searching
- **March 7** / Bible Study for Recovery: Hard Times and Discouragement
- **March 14** / Personal Bible Study: How to Do a Great Topical Study

Workshops I would like to do or have already done*:

- How to Study the Bible for Yourself *
- How to Use Technology for Deeper Bible Study *
- How to Study the Psalms for Yourself *
- How to Study the Bible for Spiritual Growth
- How to Study the Bible for Personal Recovery
- Overview of the Old Testament / special study hints for each type of book
- Overview of the New Testament / special study hints for each type of book
- Jesus in Both Testaments / Messianic Prophecy
- What is Spiritual Abuse? The Limits of Biblical Church Authority

Some avenues for ministry include churches, local workshops, Christian schools, and families as well as some individual tutoring and/or consulting.

Retreats

I would like to set a goal (Lord willing) of holding **two retreats** before the end of the calendar year; one on **spiritual growth** and one on **Slowing Down and Listening to the Psalms** (or perhaps a retreat focusing on **messianic prophecy** would be so fun). I would envision these to be a night over somewhere like Gull Lake or Ao-wa-Kaya, with workshops in the evening of the first night and the bulk of the next (perhaps till 3 p.m.).