

COMMUNICATING WITH GOD (36)

Bible Study – Proper Attitudes

We are continuing our 2024 theme. We have been addressing Bible study and in our last lesson, we defined what it is and made a distinction between Bible reading and Bible study. We noted that we need both if we to handle God's word accurately. We concluded our lesson by noting some improper attitudes (or approaches) to Bible study. We talked about those who approach His word with prejudice and preconceived ideas. Some wish something to be true and will "make it so" as they study. Still others study as a trivial pursuit, or to find fault with it. Still others approach it by appealing to wrong standards – such as the teachings of men or traditions. Today we want to address some proper attitudes we need as we study.

- I. **A proper attitude is crucial to the study of God's word.** Everything in our faith begins with our attitude.
 - a. Attitude is defined as, "*A manner of thinking, feeling, or behaving that reflects a state of mind or disposition.*" American Heritage Dictionary
 - b. The NKJV does not use the word "attitude" (NASB does – 5x in NT), but you find it implied all throughout.
 - i. Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you..." (NASB – attitude)
 - ii. Philippians 3:15 says, *Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind (attitude – NASB); and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.*
 - iii. When we think of the beginning of the Sermon on the mount, Jesus taught 8 "attitudes" we ought to have (we call them the "beatitudes") (Matthew 5:3-10).
 - c. It is CLEAR the type of attitude we need as a Christian. We can choose to have a good attitude or a bad attitude.
 - d. As you approach God's word, your attitude will determine what you will do with it. That is why attitude is so important.
- II. **Proper attitudes toward God's word**
 - a. **Reverence** – to hold in high regard and respect. Hebrews 12:28, we serve God with reverence and godly fear. It only make sense that if we are to properly study God's word, it will begin with a reverent attitude to Him and all that belongs to Him. Recall
 - b. **Respect for the Bible as His word** – 1 Thessalonians 2:13. Paul commended the brethren because they welcomed the message as God's word. If we don't view it as God's word, then the faulty attitudes previously discussed could cloud our understanding and desire to properly learn it. After all, if it is NOT God's word, it's just another book of philosophy.
 - c. **Open-mindedness** – this means a willingness to consider and accept God's word for what it actually says. It means we approach His word intending to learn what it actually says, EVEN if it means we have to change. Acts 17:11 describes the Bereans who were open-minded (not blind followers). Acts 10:33 – Cornelius and his household were "*present before God to hear the things commanded you by God.*" Matthew 28:19, as we frequently emphasize, we obey the gospel and have the attitude that we will "observe all things commanded".
 - d. **Spiritual mindedness** – Romans 8 addresses the spiritual mind. Vs. 6 notes that *to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* The idea of being spiritually minded is you are thinking about things from a spiritual (i.e., Biblical) perspective. You are

determined to let God's will govern every aspect of your life. 1 Corinthians 2:13-16 contrasts the natural man with the spiritual man. Remember why Jesus taught in parables – so that they could grasp spiritual concepts (Matthew 13:10-11ff).

- e. **Humility** – a quality that will keep you from making His word about what you want. Recall Isaiah 55:8-9 where YHWH declares “*My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways.*” Says the LORD, *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.*” It is a realization that you need God's guidance in your life, and a realization that it is ONLY found in the Bible. James 4:10 calls for us to humble ourselves and let Him lift us up.
- f. **A passion for truth** – Proverbs 23:23 says, *Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Also wisdom and instruction and understanding.* The truth ought to be something we cherish. The sad reality is that we are living in a society that does NOT value truth. Far too many are more interested in hearing what they WANT to hear and villainizing anyone who challenges that. Because we are unwilling to face TRUTH, we are bitterly divided in so many ways. But even worse is our failure to love the truth of God's word. Consider John 17:17 as Jesus prayed. If we intend to properly handle God's word, we have to love the truth – MORE than our personal desires. And we not only want the truth, but we will also DEFEND the truth. That passion will help you in your studies.
- g. **A love for His word** – similar to the previous point, God's word ought to be special to us. We want to reach that point where we want to know more. It ought to be pleasurable to spend time listening to God - Psalm 119:97, Psalm 1:2, etc. Recall how Mary sat at the feet of Jesus listening to His word, while Martha frantically prepared the meal (Luke 10:38-42). Jesus noted what was most important.
- h. **Moral courage** – we sometimes hear the expression, “the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.” This is supposed to be the mantra of testimony in our courts. It must also be our attitude as we study God's word. Moral courage is the courage to ACCEPT the truth, even when it is hard and has consequences. An example of this is Luke 14:26ff, Jesus challenged His followers, “Are you willing to ‘hate’ anyone who stands in your way of serving Me?” He told the rich, young ruler he needed to sell everything because things were his idol (Luke 18:22). The young man went away sorrowful, unwilling to accept what Jesus said. If we study God's word long enough, we are going to come across passages that call for change and unpleasant consequences. If you love the Bible as truth, you MUST have the courage to accept it as is.
- i. **Reason** – we need to use good reasoning skills (applied logic). In our recent lessons about authority, I tried to emphasize the need to common sense and sound logic as we consider what we ought to do and HOW to do it. God gave us His word, expecting us to handle it with thought and objectivity. Ephesians 5:17 finds a command, “*understand what the will of the Lord is.*” 1 Thessalonians 5:21 calls for us to *test all things, hold fast to what is good and to abstain from every form (type) of evil.* We cannot let emotion explain away the rational meaning of a text.
- j. **Sincerity** – as we study God's word, we need to be genuine. It needs to stem from a real desire to be right. We're not playing games (as we cited examples in our last lesson). This is about our eternal destiny and living for Him. God has always demanded that we be sincere – Philippians 1:9-10, *And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ...* 1 Timothy 1:3-5, Timothy was to teach the Ephesians to not get caught up in “fables”, “endless genealogies”, etc. Vs. 5 notes, *Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.*

- k. **Integrity** – tied to many of the qualities we just addressed (moral courage, sincerity and sound reasoning), we need to be people of integrity. Integrity means that we have high character and will not fold under pressure. Biblically, it means we are going to respect God’s boundaries as we study. 2 Peter 1:5 calls for us to build upon our faith with virtue and THEN knowledge. Virtue is moral excellence (an impeccable character). We need that to handle accurately God’s word. We need that to spot the false teacher Peter would warn about (ch. 2).
- l. **Persistence** – The Bible is a challenging book at times. There are challenging passages and pages of tedious (seemingly boring) readings that seem unimportant. We cannot let that keep us from continued study. Persistence means a willingness to work at it: 2 Timothy 2:15 – be diligent (study – KJV) implies a willingness to put forth effort to learn. As we study, not everything will come easy. Timothy was told, 1 Timothy 4:13 – give attention to reading, exhortation and doctrine. “Give attention” implies devotion. Vs. 15, “meditate on these things, give yourself entirely to them...” Again, we see an attitude that is not going to quit.
- m. **Trusting the word of God** – toward the beginning of this list we noted our need to respect it as God’s word. Building on that we must TRUST it as His word. This means we believe what He says. We believe the promises and that His ways will work. Far too many today, dismiss what God says because it is politically incorrect and uncomfortable. It calls for radical change within society. As I study the Bible I CANNOT doubt its inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and accuracy, even ~2000 years this side of its completion. Proverbs 3:5-6, *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.* James 1:21 calls for us to receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.
- n. **Expect to understand it** – Ephesians 5:17 (again). Many today approach God’s word thinking it is out of touch, or too difficult to understand. While I readily admit there are challenging passages (cf. 2 Peter 3:15-16), when it comes to what we need to do to be saved, stay saved, how to live and how to treat each other, His word is VERY understandable. The message is simple, though sometimes hard. But we must approach His word with the attitude that it is beneficial to us.
- o. **A prayerful attitude** – the first half of this year we devoted to a study of prayer, how we communicate to God. As we study God’s word, we need to be praying. James 1:5 says if you lack wisdom, ask of God. We will not receive miraculous wisdom, but as we study the Bible, it is always good seek His guidance. We pray for the godly attitudes we have discussed (and others). As we conclude our Bible studies, pray for WHAT you have just studied. Pray for strength to apply it to your life. James 5:16 tells us, “*the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*”
- p. **Desire to be obedient** – my final point is a reminder WHY we are studying. It is not simply about knowing accurately what God wants us to do. Our desire is to be complete (2 Timothy 3:16-17) by applying His word. James 1:22 -25 reminds us that we are not just hearers of the word, but doers. He further explains what God’s word means if we do NOT do what it says.

In this lesson we have addressed many attitudes that will help us ensure that we are properly applying God’s word. In summary, if you have a godly attitude and are seeking first His kingdom (Matthew 6:33), then that attitude will be reflected in your pursuit of truth through God’s word. Let us determine that we will have a godly attitude as we pursue the truth He has given us. Think about it!