

How To Study the Bible (1)

Recently, I received a request to present a lesson addressing how to study the Bible. This is certainly a topic worthy of consideration and as a reminder to Christians. It is also a crucial subject when we understand the importance of God's word. But it is a challenging topic because to adequately address it requires multiple lessons. I am going to attempt to present this topic in 2 lessons – thus it will only be an introduction to Bible study. If you are interested in further details, I will gladly provide access to recommended resources that can give you deeper understanding in this.

In this lesson, I want to talk about attitude necessary for proper Bible study and in the next lesson we will look at some suggestions to aid you about how to study.

I. Why study the Bible?

- a. **Because of what it is – the word of God.** 2 Timothy 3:16 – describes it as “given by inspiration.” Paul commended the Thessalonians because they welcomed it as the word of God – 1 Thessalonians 2:13.
- b. **To help us better appreciate God and our salvation** - Romans 1:16 – it is the power of God unto salvation; 1 Corinthians 2:10-12 – we know who God is because He took the time to reveal Himself to us. This is imperative if you want to be pleasing to Him.
- c. **Because it gives us the answers to the questions men ask** – Who am I? why am I here? What is my purpose? Where am I headed? Beginning with Genesis 1:1 we find how this world was created, then the origins of life, etc.
Our study of the book of Ecclesiastes has led us to this conclusion (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). In that letter we find the emptiness of appealing to worldly pursuits for true and lasting satisfaction.
- d. **Because we are told to by Him** – 2 Timothy 2:15 we are told to give diligence to present ourselves approved unto God as workers not needing to be ashamed.
1 Peter 2:2 calls for us to desire the pure milk of the word that we may grow thereby
2 Peter 3:18 concludes his final letter with the admonition to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
other passages also imply this – cf. Hebrews 5:12-14, etc.
- e. **To learn how to live so that we can be pleasing to Him** – 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that scripture is profitable for teaching (doctrine); reproof – exposing sin, rebuke; for correction – showing how to right our wrongs; and instruction (training) in righteousness – how to live righteous lives, leading to completion.
- f. **To help us defend the faith** – 1 Peter 3:15. You have to know it, to be able to defend it. Jude 3 calls for us to contend earnestly for the faith once (for all) delivered to the saints.
Paul used scripture (in his case, the Old Law) to reason – Acts 17:2 – in Thessalonica. Some were persuaded, while others were not.

II. Attitudes that will help you study effectively

- a. **Understand the purpose of Bible study** - to glean from the text the intended meaning.
Acts 17:11, Hebrews 5:12-14.
Many approach God's words with wrong motives – prejudice and preconceived ideas, to prove something you already believe, for curiosity's sake, to see what you can find wrong with it (the approach of the skeptic and critic), to learn its trivia, etc.
- b. **With reverence** – again, be reminded we are dealing with the word of God. This is not a novel, or even a typical book of history. Rather it is God's history and revelation to us. It must be treated with that respect.
2 Timothy 3:15 – Paul described it as “the holy scriptures”. IT needs to be approached with that

attitude.

Again 1 Thessalonians 2:13 which notes that they welcomed it as the word of God. That shows respect for what it is.

Under the Old Law, in the days of restoration as Nehemiah read the word, we read that the people stood – Nehemiah 8:5, *And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.*

I am fearful that many today do not approach His word with reverence – they treat it like any other book by watering down its message and dismissing the parts they do not like.

Some of our modern-day translations, especially paraphrases, (the Word, the Message, the Living Bible, etc.), while well intentioned, they remove much of its sacred character.

A paraphrase MIGHT have a place in our libraries, but it is NOT a good Bible to study the text!

- c. **A belief that you can understand it** – Ephesians 5:17, 3:3-4, etc.

Far too many have been convinced that we cannot understand the word of God. Some believe it is corrupted and thus is not understandable (I categorically deny this - TT), while others believe you need the help of experts to be able to interpret the meaning of a text.

While there are challenging sections in scripture (2 Peter 3:16), and those who are mature are a good source for help – do not think you cannot learn what to do and how to live without their help. The fundamentals of the faith and Christian living are plainly revealed (not necessarily easy to apply, but understandable).

Men are ALWAYS fallible, and their direction is only useful so far as it is true to God's word.

YOU have the responsibility to verify – 1 John 4:1.

Psalm 119:104, *Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I have every false way.* Notice where understanding came from.

- d. **With an open mind and love for truth** – recently, we have discussed in lessons about open and closed minds. We have noted that Jesus taught in parables because some had closed minds.

(Matthew:13:14-15) They refused to hear the truth and to even consider honestly whether or not Jesus was their promised Messiah.

WE need to be like David - Psalm 119:97, *Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.*

We need to be like the Bereans and search the scriptures daily – Acts 17:11.

Like Cornelius in Acts 10:33, *So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.*

It is a love for truth that keeps us studying AND keeps us from being deceived (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12)

- e. **With a desire to learn** – often people do not study as they should because they simply do not have the desire they ought to have. This can be for many reasons, but any of them is detrimental to one's faith.

As Christians, we are to be seeking first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33) which means we want to know what God expects. Matthew 5:6 speaks of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Again that only happens with a desire to study.

2 Timothy 2:15, "Be diligent", the actual meaning of the word points toward this desire.

When we realize that we are dealing with that which will judge us in the last day, we ought to put forth every possible effort to learn as much as we can. John 12:48 notes that His words will judge us in the last day. Consider also again 1 Peter 2:1-2 – desire the milk of the word that you may grow thereby.

- f. **A desire to obey what it says** – Finally, we consider a desire to obey. All the knowledge in the world is inadequate if we do not intend to obey it. God's word is not just a book of suggestions. It is a way of life and that is continually emphasized.

Matthew 28:18-20 – disciples must be taught to obey "all that I commanded you."

Luke 6:46, *Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?*

James 1:22-25 emphasizes this point clearly. We are to be doers of the word and not hearers only.

These are some reasons and attitudes we must give consideration to as we consider studying God's word. I have always emphasized that Bible study is a spiritual indicator in your life, meaning something that is directly related to how faithful you are. I believe you will not be faithful if you have no desire to learn more of His word continually. So let Bible study be a part of your daily routine. Next week, we will address some things that can help you study the word of God. Meanwhile, I commend this lesson to you by asking, "How important is God's word to you? Think about it!"