

In Romans 12:1-2, the apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” In this passage, Paul challenged Christians to change how they think. We need to change our values, our beliefs, and our attitudes to match God’s point of view. We must unlearn the ungodly concepts of this world and cultivate a completely biblical point of view.

Having taught Bible classes for many years now, I’ve noticed that the two main sources of theological error are ignorance and personal bias. People today usually don’t know very much about the history, culture, ecology, economy or politics of the ancient Middle East, so they misunderstand the message of the Bible. On the other hand, there are many times when people clearly understand what is being said, but they twist the Bible into a theological pretzel because they don’t want to do what God commands. The purpose of this seminar is to help you overcome these obstacles to developing a biblical worldview.

The first point is that daily, personal Bible study is essential for spiritual growth. Today, there is a nearly endless supply of books, articles, devotionals, podcasts, videos and sermons that will give you man's thoughts on any given biblical topic, but there really is no substitute for daily, personal interaction with God's inspired Word if you really want to learn what God thinks straight from the source and allow the transforming power of God’s Word to work in your life.

The second point is that inductive Bible study is a proven method for efficient and effective Bible study. Inductive Bible study is a systematic, three-step process that involves observation, interpretation and application of the biblical text. The observation phase is a careful examination of a passage to get as much information as possible directly from the text. During interpretation, the student lists any unanswered questions and uses Bible study aids to find the answers; this is the time to consult a concordance, lexicon, interlinear, Bible dictionary, Bible encyclopedia, atlas, or commentary. During the application phase, the student identifies any commands that have a universal and timeless nature. Then, those general commands need to be properly applied in the modern world. On the Didactic Ministries YouTube channel, you will find a seminar on “How to Study the Bible” that explains this three-step method in greater detail.

The third point is that we need to beware of personal bias in ourselves and theological bias in others. Someone once said that a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still, and that is certainly true in religion and politics. People generally have deeply held views that are motivated by self interest; but Bible study is an encounter with God Almighty who calls on us to change our ways. So, Bible study will always create tension because God is going to challenge us to repent and change, so we need to be absolutely honest with the text and with ourselves.

Now, people have been studying the Bible for centuries, and it is very hard to think of a brand new question that has never been asked before. Over the centuries, various Bible scholars have researched and answered a vast array of common Bible questions, and the most common questions generally have only one or two possible answers.

But, theological bias is a real problem, and you may find many different opinions for a given question. There are Jewish theologians, Catholic theologians, Eastern Orthodox theologians, Protestant theologians, and Pentecostal theologians, and they all have a different philosophical point of view. Clearly, if they all disagree about the answer for a given question, someone's got to be wrong. So, one of the ways that we can deal with this problem is to be aware of the theological bias of the given teacher, but being forewarned is only half the battle.

The fourth point is that it's important to examine all sides of a given issue to be able to separate the wheat from the chaff. In 1Thes 5:21, Paul encouraged Christians to "examine everything carefully hold fast to that which is good." As you consider the pros and cons of several different possible answers, one is usually going to emerge as the most likely answer, and that may be the best that we can do in this life.

In many ways, theology is like mathematics. When we first go to school, we learn the basics of how to add, subtract, multiply and divide. If you take additional classes, you would study geometry next, then trigonometry, algebra and calculus. Each subject gets progressively harder and builds on the skills that you learn in earlier classes.

The same thing is true in the realm of theology because Bible questions get progressively harder as you continue to study. A child who is able to read can understand a significant portion of the Bible at a basic level. Using the principles of inductive Bible study, teenagers and adults can gradually understand more and more of the Bible. But, some questions will require the ability to translate Hebrew and Greek. Other questions may require advanced understanding biblical history, culture and geography; and a seminary trained pastor should be able to guide you to solid answers for those tougher questions. But, there are some passages that scholars are still debating to this day.

The fifth point is don't tackle problems that are beyond your skill level; grow your skills first. As you study the Bible you may encounter hard questions that you are not able to answer. You may just have to put some questions aside for a few years until you are able to tackle them. So, be patient; you don't have to answer every single question today. Sometimes, you're just going to have to write those questions down in a notebook or journal and come back to them later.

The sixth point is that you need to choose your teachers carefully. Beware of sloppy amateurs; these days, anyone can put up website or create YouTube videos but that doesn't mean that they are trained biblical scholars. Someone might be a doctor, lawyer, or engineer, but that doesn't mean that they are qualified to teach theology or

biblical studies. If you check a person's background and listen carefully, it doesn't take too long to determine if someone is a skilled teacher or not.

In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul warned Timothy to "be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed accurately handling the word of truth." But today, many Bible teachers have far more zeal than knowledge, and they are busy on the Internet recycling the errors of other theological quacks or generating their own new errors. So, when it comes to finding answers for advanced questions or spiritual mentorship, be sure to consult conservative, well-trained pastors or biblical scholars.

In addition to regular, Inductive Bible study, there are a wide range of theological topics that you could study. For example, there is Apologetics, Historical Theology, Practical Theology, Systematic Theology, Biblical Theology, Hermeneutics, Old Testament Studies, New Testament Studies and Biblical Languages. And, there are many subdivisions under each of these topics. For example, Practical Theology deals with many different aspects of daily Christian living such as Bible study, prayer, meditation, fasting, fellowship, overcoming sin, doing good works, and worship. Systematic Theology deals with biblical doctrines such as Bibliology, Theology Proper, Angelology, Anthropology, Hamartology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology and Eschatology.

As you can see, theology is vast subject. You could study each one of these topics and the associated subdivisions at a rate of one per year and just barely scratch the surface of what the Bible teaches.

But, my last point is that academic study without personal holiness is worthless. As James 1:22 says, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (ESV). The purpose of Bible study is to transform our lives, and that can only happen when we put the truth into practice.

It is possible to know a great deal about the Bible but not know God at all. We must allow God to change us through His Spirit and His Word. God responds to a humble and repentant attitude (Isa 66:2), but He can't work with a stubborn and unrepentant attitude and He will turn away from anyone who refuses to obey.

I hope that you found these points to be helpful and that you will be ever more successful in your quest to renew your mind and develop a biblical worldview.