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## How to Study the Bible

### Lesson 1 Introduction

Over the course of the next several weeks or maybe even longer I want to do something that the Lord has laid on my heart to do. I want to take however many weeks it might take and teach people how to properly study the Bible.

You know there's nothing I enjoy more than teaching verse by verse through the Bible unless maybe it's preaching evangelistic type sermons. But I really enjoy teaching and being taught the Word of God. And every Christian should enjoy learning what God's Word has to say. In fact, an insatiable desire to learn the Word of God should be present in the heart of every believer. And if you don't have that desire, then you may need to do a self examination to see if you're truly in Christ.

Now, that said, there are a lot of reasons people give for not studying the Bible. Among them are: the Bible doesn't seem relevant to my life or it's too hard to understand or it's confusing or I can't make sense out of it, or I don't have time or I'm too busy or maybe I don't how!

Well, though I can't take all those excuses away from you, I can help you with the last one if you'll just be willing to dedicate the time and the effort that is to come to learn.

Now, that was the negative. Those were a few of the reasons why people **don't** study the Bible and I'm sure there are many more, but let me

give you some reasons why we should study the Bible. In fact, I want to give you three very important reasons why Bible study is not an option, but actually essential for a Christian.

First, it's essential to grow. Turn to **1 Peter 2:2: as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,**

Just like a newborn baby, we're to long for the pure milk of the word. Why? So will grow in respect to our salvation.

Now, let me give you three words to unpack the truth contained here in this verse. Probably be good to write them in the margin of your Bible, next to this verse. The first one is attitude. Peter is describing the attitude of a newborn baby. Just as the baby grabs for the bottle, so you're to grab for the Book. The baby has to have milk to sustain its life physically; and so to; you have to have the Scriptures to sustain your life spiritually.

If you've ever had children, you learned that truth early on. Every three or four hours a timer goes off inside that baby's brain or stomach and if you ignore it, they'll let you know about it. Amen?

And Peter says, as Christians, we ought to have that same attitude when it comes to the Scripture. Every morning when the alarm clock goes off, that ought to be signal to us, it's time to spend some time with the Lord in His Word.

But then Peter also says a word about your appetite for the Word. He says, you should "long" for it. In other words, we should crave the spiritual milk of God's Word.

Just like some of us crave Blue Bell or chocolate or coffee or whatever, we should crave the Word of God.

Now, some things we have to cultivate a taste for. I don't think I particularly liked coffee growing up, but as I got older, I guess I cultivated a

taste for it. And a lot of drinks and foods are like that, some healthy, some not so healthy, but in the same way, we have to cultivate a taste or an appetite for the Word of God. And the more you eat it, the more you study it and the more you learn how to study it, the more you'll want to study it.

And that brings us to the third word, the word aim. And what is the aim of the Bible? Well, the text tells us: in order that you might grow!

It's not only that you might know, but that you will also grow. Now, obviously, you can't grow without knowing, but you can certainly know without growing. And the Bible wasn't written just to satisfy your curiosity; it was written to help you conform to Christ's image. It wasn't written to make you a smarter sinner, it was written to make you more like the Savior.

And the truth is, we're all growing in one way or two ways. We're all growing older, but are we also growing up. Are we growing more mature as Christians or are we just growing older as Christians.

You it doesn't really matter how long you've been a Christian. What matters most is, how much have you grown up?

If God were to have you step up to His growth chart on the wall that marked when you were first born again; how much have you grown above that mark?

Well, that's what this passage is teaching.

So the first reason to study the Bible is that it is meant to be a means of spiritual growth. And there is no spiritual growth apart from the Word of God. It is God's primary tool to develop you as an individual.

Secondly, Bible study is essential To spiritual maturity. Look at **Hebrews 5:11, of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach**

**you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**

So what's the writer of this passage of Scripture saying?

Well, he's saying he's got a lot to say, but that it's going to be really "hard for him to explain."

Now, why is it hard for him to explain?

Is it a difficult truth to explain?

No, it's the difficulty caused by the hearers. There's a "learning disability" Peter says, among the hearers. He says, "They've become dull of hearing," which means they've become slow to learn.

That word "time" in verse 12 tells it all. In fact, you ought underline it in your Bible. By this time, he says, you ought know a whole lot more than you know. Some of you ought to be in graduate school but you're still in kindergarten learning your ABC's. Some of you ought to be teachers, teaching others the truth of God's Word, but you still need somebody else to teach you.

You're still on the milk. You're still on the bottle, whining like a little baby every time somebody doesn't feed you just right.

And then he goes on to explain, it's not just knowledge that makes one mature. It's not just the people who go to seminary or the people who know the most Bible verses?

No, the writer says you're mature if you've trained yourself through constant use of Scripture to distinguish good from evil. In other words, the

mark of spiritual maturity is not how much you understand, but how much you use. In other words, in the spiritual realm, the opposite of ignorance is not knowledge, it's obedience.

So that's the second reason Bible study is essential, because the Bible is God's only way of developing in us spiritual maturity. And there's no substitute.

And then the third reason Bible study is essential to spiritual effectiveness.

**Look at 2 Timothy 3:16, All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

Paul says all Scripture is profitable. Even Leviticus. All Scripture is profitable. But profitable for what? Well, he mentions four things.

First, for doctrine, or teaching. That is, it will structure your thinking. And that's crucial, because if you are not thinking correctly, then chances are, you're not living correctly, because what you believe will determine how you behave.

He also says the Bible is profitable for rebuke. That is, it will tell you where you are out-of-bounds. It's like an umpire who cries, "You're out!" or, "You're safe!" It tells you what is sin. It tells you what God wants for your life.

Third, it is profitable for correction. Do you have a closet or a garage or a barn where you put all the junk you can't find room for anywhere else? You just cram it in, and then one day you forget and open the door and—whoosh!—it all comes crashing out. And you say, "Good night, I'd better clean this thing up." Well, the Bible is like that. It opens up those forgotten

doors in your life, and reminds you, you need to clean them out. You need to get rid of that sin and you need to learn how to conform to God's will.

And then a fourth advantage of the Bible is that it is profitable for training in righteous living. Once you get that closet cleaned out, God will use His Word to show you how to live. He'll show you how to correct all the negatives, and He'll reinforce the positives and He'll lead you and guide you as you go through life.

And the overall purpose? That you might be equipped for every good work.

Have you wished you could be used by God to do something special in the body of Christ? Well, if so, what have you done to prepare yourself? The truth is, the study of God's Word is the primary means by which to become an effective servant of Jesus Christ.

Somebody asked a group of businessmen one time, "If you didn't know any more about your business or profession than you know about Christianity after the same number of years of exposure, what would happen?"

One guy blurted out, "They'd fire me."

The speaker said, "Thank you, sir, for your honesty."

And he was right, you know. The reason God can't use you more than He wants to may well be that you are not prepared. Maybe you've attended church for five, ten, or even twenty years, but you've never even cracked open the Bible to prepare yourself so you could be used by Him. In other words, you've been under the Word for all those years, but you've not been in the Word for yourself.

So here's your chance. God's giving you a chance through this teaching to change that and you can of course do with that chance what you will.

And it's essential to equip you, and train you, so you can be used properly by God to accomplish His purposes and not just yours. want

Now, before we rush in and start learning how to study the Bible, there are a few things I want to point out about the Bible.

The first thing is its trustworthiness. Can we trust the what this book says? Is it credible? Is it reliable? Well, to answer that question let's just look at what the Bible says about itself.

But first, let me ask you a question. Have you ever studied a particular subject or maybe Googled a particular subject or how to do something only to find out several different people had several different opinions or ways in which they thought something ought to be done?

Well, the Bible, though it's made up of 66 smaller books, written over a period of more than sixteen hundred years, by more than forty different human authors, from a wide variety of backgrounds, is a single unit, bound together by one theme; and that one theme is God and His relationship to humankind.

And each book, and each section, and each paragraph, and every verse works together with all the others to reveal God's truth. And that's why when we study individual Scriptures, we understand them by relating them to the rest of the Bible. In other words, we use the Bible to explain the Bible.

Another fact that we need to keep in mind is that the Bible is not just God's word; it is a word from God. It is the revealed truth from God. In fact, the word it uses for "revelation" actually means "unveiling," like the pulling back of a curtain to show us what's behind it.

And in Scripture, God has revealed things to us that we wouldn't otherwise know. And everything He has unveiled is absolutely true. It's not speculation or conjecture or a hypothesis. It is truth that is entirely

consistent—never controverted, never compromised, and never contradicted by other parts of the revelation.

The third thing we need to remember is that the Word of God is inspired. In other words, when the Bible speaks, God speaks. That's why we call this book the Word of God because it's God speaking. It's God communicating to us what He wants us to hear and to know and more importantly to do.

And though the Bible was penned by human authors, 2 Timothy 3:16–17 says, “All Scripture is inspired by God.” And that Greek word translated “inspired” means “God-breathed.” In other words, it's like God “breathing out” the Scriptures. And since the word for “breath” can also be translated “spirit,” then we know that that breathing out was done through the work of the Holy Spirit as He superintended the writing of every word.

And so what part did humans play in those writings? God supernaturally used them to pen down the words, without compromising the perfection, integrity, or purity of the finished product. “God superintended the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded, without error, God's revelation to man in the words of the original manuscripts.”

That's what Peter was saying in 2 Peter 1:21, He said that “men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God”.

That word “moved” is the same word used to describe a ship moving along under the power of a blowing wind. In other words, the biblical writers were guided in their writing to go where God wanted them to go and to produce what God wanted them to produce. And though their personalities, and writing styles, and perspectives, and distinctives are



reflected in their words; their accounts are more than just the words of men—they're the Word of God.

And so every letter of the Bible is a product of the supernatural and the very Word of God.

And then the last thing we need to remember is that the Bible is inerrant.

In order to be authoritative, the Bible must also be true and without error. And like somebody said, "Either the Bible is without error in all, or it is not without error at all." Because there's no such thing as middle ground when it comes to inerrancy. A "partially inerrant" Bible is an errant Bible.

"Inerrancy" means without error—containing no mistakes or errors in the original writings, and having no errors in any area whatsoever.

And the truth is, that's a tough concept for our generation. Our generation tend to be relativists, for whom nothing can be true in an absolute sense. Also our culture would have us to believe that modern science has left the Bible far behind.

But the truth is, Scripture has also withstood the test of science. And some of our more learned scientists of our day are taking a "third" look at Scripture in light of recent developments and discoveries.

Believing in an error-free Bible does not mean that we take every statement in a wooden, rigidly literal way. As we're going to see, Scripture often speaks in figurative language. Furthermore, we accept that there have been errors in transmission of the Bible from copy to copy, over the years (though surprisingly few).

Nevertheless, the Bible bears witness to its own inerrancy. And the most powerful witness is the Lord Jesus Himself. In Matthew chapter 4, Jesus emphasizes that the actual written words of Scripture can be trusted,

not just the ideas they contain. And then in Matthew chapter 5, He extends that reliability all the way to individual letters, and even the parts of letters.

And all throughout the gospels, Jesus refers to different portions of Scripture and regards them as accurate, and reliable, and true.

And so inerrancy means that we have a Bible that is completely trustworthy, and reliable, and without error in its original form. As we study it, we can be assured that the truths we learn will be true and accurate and relevant.

Now, this was obviously just an introduction to the Bible and how to study it and maybe not what you expected tonight, but I think it's critical we not only know how to study the Bible, but also why we should study it, and the benefits thereof and the downside of not studying. And next week, we'll get more in depth as we begin to look at the process and the methods which we'll be learning how to use.

Let's pray.