

When I was in Socorro, a teacher told me that he wished he had a dollar for every time he had to explain to his High School students who the Good Samaritan was, and what is meant by this phrase. It appears that our nation is biblically illiterate.

According to the Barna Research group, almost two of every five adults (38 percent) believe that the entire Bible was written several decades after Jesus' death. Amazingly, ten percent of adults believe that the name of Noah's wife was Joan of Arc. Forty-nine percent believe that money is the root of all evil when it is really the love of money. Other surveys revealed that people not know even half of the Ten Commandments, do not know who preached the Sermon on the Mount, do not know the story of Jonah and the fish, and believe the expression "God helps those who help themselves" is a direct quote from the Bible, when in reality it was penned by Benjamin Franklin in the late 1700's. When asked what are the epistles, someone replied: "They were the wives of the apostles." Some people also believed that Habakkuk is a disease of the lower back, instead of an Old Testament prophet. Do you see yourself in any of these answers?

When Judy and I taught the Junior High Sunday School class when we lived in Santa Fe, we occasionally had a game called Bible Jeopardy to help the students grow in their knowledge of the Bible and to keep their interest up; we had the boys competing against the girls and it got heated at times. It was a good thing that we were in the basement where the noise would not disturb anyone.

Now you may be thinking that knowing the Bible may be okay for Jeopardy, but why do I need to know the Bible; why should I send my time reading and studying it. Good question and that is the point of our discussion this morning. Let me try to convince you that daily Bible reading is not only essential to your spiritual growth, but also to your quality of life. I want to start by reading two passages from the Apostle Paul's second letter to his student Timothy starting with the passage from the second chapter of 2 Timothy, verses 14-15.

Read 2 Timothy 2:14-15 and 3:16-17

The *Message* paraphrases verse 15 of the second chapter this way: "Concentrate on doing your best for God, work you won't be ashamed of, laying out the truth plain and simple." *The New English Bible* says: "Try hard to show yourself worthy of God's approval, as a laborer who needs not be ashamed, be straightforward in your proclamation of the truth." Now while we do not need to have a graduate degree in theology to serve the Lord, a working knowledge of the Bible is essential to our spiritual growth and for living life as God intended it. The Bible is our instruction manual for daily life, for dealing with all the problems and demands placed upon us by the world.

How many of you have tried to assemble something without first reading the instructions? You might get it right once in a while, but more often you are going to make a mess of things. On most of the items that you purchase that require assembly, there is a warning on the box stating “read the instructions first.” God gives us a warning “read the Bible daily.” If we are going to be of service to the Lord, if we are going to truly enjoy this life and make a difference, then we need to read and be aware of the instructions.

In the time we have remaining, we are going to do something different this morning. Instead, of you having to sit there and try not to fall asleep during my sermon, we are going to play Bible Jeopardy. Let’s see how much we know about the Bible.

QUESTION: How many books are there in the Bible?

ANSWER: 66

QUESTION: How many books are there in the New Testament?

ANSWER: 27

QUESTION: Which came first in the Bible: Tower of Babel, the Flood or call to Abraham?

ANSWER: Flood

QUESTION: Who wrote the first of the four Gospels?

ANSWER: Mark

QUESTION: Name the first and last sons of Jacob?

ANSWER: Reuben & Benjamin

QUESTION: What were the names of Jacob’s two wives?

ANSWER: Leah & Rachel

QUESTION: What did the Israelites worship while Moses was up on Mount Sinai getting the Ten Commandments?

ANSWER: A Golden Calf

QUESTION: What was the name of the female judge in the Bible?

ANSWER: Deborah

QUESTION: When boys made fun of this prophet’s baldness, he called two bears to attack them?

ANSWER: Elisha

QUESTION: Besides being a Pharisee, what did Paul do for a living?

ANSWER: Tentmaker

QUESTION: Who was the mother of Samuel?

ANSWER: Hannah

QUESTION: How many plagues did God inflict on Egypt to let the Israelites go?

ANSWER: Ten

QUESTION: In the second plague on Egypt, what animals covered the land?

ANSWER: Frogs

QUESTION: Elisha cured him of leprosy.

ANSWER: Naaman

QUESTION: Who was the evil queen who led Israel to Baal and threatened Elijah.

ANSWER: Jezebel

QUESTION: Who was the first disciple to be martyred.

ANSWER: James

QUESTION: Isaac's name means what?

ANSWER: Laughter

QUESTION: Daniel interpreted the dreams of this king.

ANSWER: Nebuchadnezzar

QUESTION: Who was the prophet that saw a valley of dry bones?

ANSWER: Ezekiel

QUESTION: The number of people who joined the church at Pentecost.

ANSWER: 3,000

QUESTION: God told this prophet to marry a prostitute.

ANSWER: Hosea

QUESTION: Tradition says he wrote Lamentations.

ANSWER: Jeremiah

QUESTION: Who was the man sent by God to restore the sight of Saul, the former Pharisee.

ANSWER: Ananias

QUESTION: What job did Nehemiah have in the king's court?

ANSWER: Cupbearer

QUESTION: What is the last word in the Bible?

ANSWER: Amen

Now I hope you enjoyed this session of Bible Jeopardy. The purpose of this exercise was not to embarrass anyone, but to point out how important it is to know the Bible. While Biblical knowledge will help you answer the questions on the TV show Jeopardy, the real purpose for having a working knowledge of the Bible to help you navigate your journey through life. We are all old enough to recognize that life is not easy, it is a series of ups and downs.

Psalm 119: 105 states: "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." Or as the *Message* paraphrases it: "By your words I can see where I am going; they throw a beam of light on my dark path." The Bible is a roadmap for life, thus one of the best tools for getting us through each day – those that are joyful, and especially those that are disasters. The Bible helps us find our way through the wilderness of life; it's really a navigation system, pointing us in the right direction.

So, how do you grow in your knowledge of the Bible? First, you need to read the Bible regularly, not just following along with me on Sunday morning on the screen. As I have said often, we should spend time alone with God every day listening to what He has to say to us through His Word. It's amazing how many of us can't start our day without checking the internet, television, or our smartphone, but never take time to sit down with God's Word. Which one of these do you think has the most truth in it, or will make you feel better about the day ahead?

Next get involved in a Bible study. We have several studies dealing with different subjects such as Matthew, Romans, and Moses. One of the benefits of these studies is the group discussion, listening to different viewpoints from other believers based on their diverse backgrounds and experience. Charles Spurgeon, the great British preacher, said that a Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who is not. The length of time that we spend in reading and studying God's Word determines how deeply we get into it and how deeply it gets into us. The more time we spend in God's Word, the stronger we become. Unfortunately, it is also true that the person who only occasionally samples the Word of God never acquires a taste for it.

Charles Spurgeon also said that nobody ever outgrows the Bible; the book widens and deepens with our years. And that is one of the things that has fascinated me over the years. You know you can read a book and the subject matter and characters will always remain the same, and you will always have the same ending. But not so with the Bible; it changes and evolves as we go through the experiences and situations of life.

I can read a scripture verse today that I have read hundreds of times over the years, and I will continue to find new meanings and applications for my daily life as the situations in my life change. As things happen in my life, God opens the Bible up to me in new ways to help me navigate this highway of life. Saint Augustine said: "The Bible was composed in such a way that as beginners mature, its meaning grows with them."

Make the Bible your daily companion; you will never regret it. God's Word for God's people.
Thanks be to God. Amen