

WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?

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We have some things that we know how to do, but we are not doing them because we do not know why. We do not see enough reasons to be concerned and to make an effort. Is Bible study one of those things about which you have not cared enough to try — and keep on trying?

Consider these important reasons for Bible study. Get your Bible and read the passages referred to in this chapter.

1. To receive the light of truth that God has given and escape the darkness of ignorance which engulfs the unbelieving mass of humanity (Eph. 4:17-24; Rom. 10:1-3).

2. To obtain the life that God gives us in Christ. He alone is the giver of life, and the Bible is His living Word that generates new life in us (Heb. 4:12; James 1:18; John 20:30,31; 17:3; I John 5:9-13).

3. To be renewed and transformed in our minds and hearts.

We are cleansed by the words of Christ (John 15:3; Eph. 5:26,27; 4:22-24; Rom. 12:2).

4. To be filled with the wisdom and understanding which comes from God, which is true to our nature as God made us, and is valid and valuable for all eternity as well as for earthly relationships and responsibilities (Phil. 1:9-11; 4:8,9; Col. 2:3-10; 3:1-4,16,17; 4:5).

5. To be able to practice the will of God, that we may please Him and glorify Him to whom we owe all love and service; also that we may be in blessed fellowship with our loving and perfect Heavenly Father (Col. 1:9-13; I John 1:5-9). To walk in the light as He is in the light we must know His will and avoid sin (Psa. 119:11; Matt. 4:1-11).

6. To strengthen our faith. The whole Christian life is believing the Lord and acting upon that faith (Rom. 10:17; Eph. 3:17; I John 5:4; I Tim. 1:3-19; Heb. 10:38,39; 11:1-12:2).

7. To be able to give an answer to everyone that asks a reason for the hope that is in us (I Pet. 3:15; II Pet. 1:16-21).

8. To be admonished and encouraged by the examples of men who lived before us (I Cor. 10:1-12; Rom. 15:4; Heb. 11).

9. To be real disciples of Jesus. The word translated *disciple* means a learner. Can we maintain our standing as His disciples without being learners of His Word? (See Matt. 28:19; II Pet. 1:3-19; 3:15,18; James 1:19-22).

10. To avoid false teachings and snares of Satan the deceiver (I Tim. 4:1-7; II Cor. 11:3,13-15; I Cor. 3:18; 6:9,10; 14:37; 15:33,34; Rom. 16:17,18; Col. 2:8; Titus 1:10; 3:9-11; I Thess. 2:3-10; II Tim. 2:14-18,23-26; 3:1-5,13).

11. To continue in His Word by which we know the truth and are made free (John 8:31,32; I John 5:20; II John 9).

12. To let His Word abide in us by which He promises great privileges of prayer (John 15:7), and by which we receive the power to bear fruit and to have the full joy of abiding in His love (John 15:3-15). This was spoken to the twelve at the Last Supper, but similar promises are given to anyone who loves Jesus

and keeps His Word (John 14:23).

*WHAT DO WE NEED TO
KNOW MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE?*

To know God and Christ is eternal life (John 17:3). But the Lord comes from Heaven in flaming fire to deal out retribution to those who know not God and obey not the gospel (II Thess. 1:6-9).

His divine power gives to us everything that pertains to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and excellence. We must be diligent to add to our faith knowledge (along with the practice of faith), to continue in the forgiveness of our sins, and to enter into the eternal kingdom of our Lord (II Pet. 1:3-11).

Paul counted all else as loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ, and he suffered the loss of all things that he might be in Christ and might know Him and know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil. 3:7-11).

Bible study is profitable — for now and for ever (II Tim. 3:16; I Tim. 4:8). It is precious (II Pet. 1:1,4). It is our treasure and our opportunity. It gives us understanding and courage, determination, and help which are necessary to life itself (Psa. 19:7-14). By these words anyone can receive help that is more valuable than a gold mine. By these words one can give to others the most valuable help which they can possibly receive in this world.

God communicates to us His love and His truth, for our minds to be awakened and directed, to be cleansed and renewed, to be set straight and made strong — by His message to us in the Bible (John 15:3; 17:17; Eph. 5:26).

As God gave to each of us a stomach and digestive system and gave also food to nurture our physical bodies, so He gave to each person a mind and He gives His Word to feed our minds and to form the thoughts that lead to life instead of death and condemnation.

Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread [food] alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). In fact, He said that was found in the written Word of God. Our notation system marks it as Deuteronomy 8:3. In the barren wilderness, weak and starving from lack of food for forty days, Jesus could answer decisively the deceptive suggestions of Satan, because He knew the Scriptures and relied upon the truth given in them.

We need guidance and we need understanding. We need to know who we are, where we are going and what to do. Without the revelation from God we are like one whose whole memory is gone and his identity is so wiped out that he must ask strangers, "Does anybody know who I am?" Without the knowledge of God's Word, you and I are lost waifs in a wicked world, being used and exploited by the enemy of our divine family connections, who keeps us deceived no matter how smart we think we are.

The mind of the flesh is death, enmity against God, not subject to the law of God. They that mind earthly things glory in their shame, serve their own belly as a god, and become enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18,19). Read Romans 8:5-11. We need our minds made over (Eph. 4:17-24).

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. . . . Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:1,2,16).

The way to know what God gives to us and what God wants from us is to give attention to His Book of promises and instructions in which He has made a covenant with us (II Pet. 1:3-11; Acts 20:32; Rom. 1:16,17; I Pet. 1:19-25; 2:2).

It is a matter of real concern that some brothers and sisters in Christ are being deprived by preachers whose sermons are not Bible studies, and by their congregations which neither provide good study opportunities nor urge them to fill their minds with the

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powerful, cleansing, enlightening and life-giving Word of God. Everyone needs the light and the motivating power of God's Word. If some cannot read, somebody needs to read it to them. If it is not in their language, someone needs to translate it for them.

The work of the church is done just where the Word of God is planted in the hearts of people to take root and take control of their lives.

Study Questions

1. List four reasons for Bible study which are most convincing to you.
2. What do you need to know more than anything else?
3. What responsibility do we have in the use of the mind God gave us?
4. What kind of sermons is needed to help the church accomplish its work?

Project

The following scriptures show that God expects His followers to read, understand and obey His word. Read the scriptures and summarize on a paper what each text teaches we are to do with the Word of God.

Your paper should look like this:

Exodus 24:3,4 — Moses taught the people the words of the Lord and the people agreed to do them.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 — Teach the commandments of God to your children daily.

LEARNING FROM GOD'S WORD

Deuteronomy 11:22; 27:1-10; 29:29; 31:9-13

Joshua 1:8; 8:34,35; 22:3-5; 23:6,14-16

Judges 2:1-3

I Samuel 12:14,15; 13:13; 15:19-24

I Kings 2:3

I Chronicles 10:13; 29:19

Psalms 1:1,2; 19:7-11; 119:9-11,34-105

Proverbs 1:2-5; 8:33; 19:20

Ezra 7:10

Nehemiah 8:1-10

Isaiah 34:16

Matthew 7:24; 13:19,23; 22:29; 24:15

Luke 1:4; 11:28; 16:29-31

John 5:39,40; 14:15; 15:10; 17:17; 20:31

Acts 17:11; 20:32

Romans 1:16; 15:4

I Corinthians 10:11; 15:1-4

II Corinthians 2:17; 4:2

Ephesians 3:3-6,9; 5:17

Colossians 3:16

I Timothy 4:13

II Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17

James 1:21

Revelation 1:3

In the light of this evidence who could doubt that God expects us to read, understand and obey His word?