

Bible Research

Developing your ability
to study the scriptures

BIBLE RESEARCH

Revised Edition
1990

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Believing that Bible study is an essential foundation to both Christian life and ministry, this text has been designed to assist the Bible student in developing his research skills. It was originally developed for the Bible study skills courses at Portland Bible College (Portland, Oregon, USA) and has since been widely used in Bible Colleges, Sunday School classes and Bible study groups of all kinds. Though there are several advantages to group study, this text has been prepared to be effective for individual study as well.

This workbook is also one of the texts used for the "Key of Knowledge" Seminars designed to assist pastors and ministers increase their abilities in Bible study and sermon preparation.

After three introductory chapters, the text is divided into two main sections: Tools for Research and Methods of Research. Both of these sections will include explanations as well as programmed workshop assignments. The assignments are an integral part of the instruction and each should be completed before moving on to a new area. In the "tools" section a group of reference books are dealt with. These study aids have been selected as being basic to Bible study and as representing major areas of Bible research. The design, purpose, and use of each book is explained, followed by its respective workshop assignments. In the "methods" section several ways of studying Scripture are explained and demonstrated. The student will find these to be keys that will unlock the meaning of Scripture to him.

Note to Instructors: This text may be tailored to your needs by omitting or adding certain sections at your discretion. The workshop assignments may be torn out and handed in to you for grading, graded in class or left in the book for grading. Please feel free to communicate with the author concerning the use of this text.

CHAPTER ONE

IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING THE BIBLE

1. IMPORTANCE OF THE BIBLE

A. How The Bible Is Superior

The Bible far surpasses any other book as to its relevancy and importance to mankind. It is the only book in man's possession written by God and infallibly revealing His Will. It is the most reliable means of knowing both God and man.

The Bible is a source of many things to those who believe. The following is a condensed list of some of these.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Salvation | 11 Timothy 3:15; James 1:21 |
| 2. Life | John 20:31; Psalm 119:93 |
| 3. Divine Nature | 11 Peter 2:2 |
| 4. Growth | 1 Peter 2:2 |
| 5. Sanctification | Psalm 119:9, 11 |
| 6. Peace | Psalm 85:8; 119:165 |
| 7. Joy | Jeremiah 15:16; Ps 1:2 |
| 8. Guidance | Psalm 119:105 |
| 9. Wisdom | Psalm 119:98 |
| 10. Faith | Romans 10:17 |

Though not an end in itself, the Bible, as no other book, leads us to a knowledge of God and of all the basic issues of life. It is an invaluable tool to help man fulfill the reason for his existence.

B. How The Bible Meets The Needs Of Mankind

1. Man needs communication from God. Sin created a communication gap between God and man. The means that God chose to bridge this communication gap was THE WORD. Occultism abounds because man is seeking to bridge the gap between himself and the spirit world. God has already done this in Christ.

2. Man needs revelation. Man can only know God through God revealing Himself to man. The Lord reveals Himself by His Word (1 Samuel 3:21). It is the only tangible infallible revelation given to man from God. It is the mind of God. Creation reveals God's power. The Scriptures reveal God's person and character.

3. Man needs Divine adjustment.
11 Timothy 3:16. The fourfold use of the words of Scripture:
a. Doctrine - Teaching, instruction.
b. Reproof.
c. Correction.
d. Instruction.

The purpose Is that man may be thoroughly perfected, or adjusted, unto Divine righteousness. Psalm 19:7-9. The end of all Bible study Is that man may be conformed to the Image and likeness of God In Christ.

4. What Man Is Like Without The Word

Without the Word of God In a persons life, man Is likened unto:

- a. A man in the darkness without a lighted lamp. Psalm 119:105.
- b. A car without a steering wheel - cannot be driven.
- c. A ship without a rudder -directionless.
- d. A boat without a sail - just drifting.
- e. A person without a compass - lost.
- f. A house without a foundation - unstable and unable to withstand storms.
- g. A child without any education - ignorant.
- h. A planet without a sun - lifeless.
- i. A man without a map - no sense of his position.

Each of these things are a means to an end, not the end In themselves. All are to bring us to the desired destination, to bring us to HIM, John 5:39,40. The Bible explains mans origin, the entrance of sin, the purpose of our existence, the meaning of life and eternal destinies. It cannot be compared with the totality of the books of men.

The Bible Is heavens education and wisdom Q Corinthians chapters 1-2). It Is more valuable than all earth's educational courses. It prepares men for earth and heaven, for time and eternity.

The Bible Is a means to an end, not the end In Itself. Otherwise we can become guilty of worshipping a book Instead of the PERSON the book points to.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

Realizing the Importance of the Bible In the Christian life, It becomes essential that we understand how to use the Bible. Most Christians have understood that they should read, meditate on, memorize, and live the Bible, but now a rapidly increasing number are realizing that to better facilitate all these they must also study the Bible.

The Bible Is a book that Is at times easy and at other times difficult to understand. Anyone who has read very far In Its pages has soon discovered that there are many things that must be Interpreted In order to discern their meaning. This is true not only because the Bible Is deity speaking to humanity but also because God used human vessels through which to communicate His truth. In many ways He adapted and communicated His message through their own frames of reference. For this reason, study that goes far beyond mere reading is essential to fully understand the Word of God. There Is no substitute for diligent Bible study.

Understanding the Bible not only involves substantial effort but also requires having a right heart. A person's attitude toward the Scriptures will determine what he receives from them. All Bible students should cultivate the following attitudes:

- A. Attitude of hunger for the Word - Proverbs 2:1-11; Psalm 119:20; Job 23:12; Psalm 19:7-10; Ezekiel 3:11-3; Matthew 4: Revelation 10:1-10. A passion for the Word is needed.
- B. Attitude of love for the Word - Psalm 119:47, 97, 113, 119, 127. This comes through knowing Its Author.
- C. Attitude of enjoyment of the Word - 1 Peter 2:2; Ephesians 5:26; Jeremiah 15:16; Psalm 119:16. One learns most what he enjoys the most. Psalm 21:2; 37:4.
- D. Attitude of respect for the Word - Psalm 119:6, 15.
- E. Attitude of teachableness - Psalm 119:33-40; Matthew 6:33; Mark 7:7.
- F. Attitude of meekness of spirit - James 1:21. Humility of mind - Philippians 2:3; Acts 20:19; 1 Peter 5:5. Pride and arrogance bring spiritual blindness. NA know-it-all" discovers very little Acts 13:27; Isaiah 66:1-5; 1 Corinthians 1:25-29; Jeremiah 4:22.
- G. Attitude of meditation In the Word - Psalm 1:2; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 119:48, 78,148. The Ethiopian eunuch read and pondered the Word and the Lord sent the right ministry at the right time to instruct him. Acts 8:27-40.
- H. Attitude of a worshipful spirit - Revelation chapters 4-5. The book remained sealed until the worship arose.
- I. Attitude of desiring personal and practical application. The goal of Bible study and reading should be personal and practical application of the truths to one's daily lifestyle. Our desire should be not just for information, but also for formation of character.

CHAPTER TWO

BRIDGING THE COMMUNICATION GAP

I. BECOMING DIVINE COMMUNICATORS

Beyond personal devotion In one's life there should be another purpose In the study and research of the Word of God, that is, to be a communicator of God's Word. There is no greater calling than to be a skilled communicator of the Divine revelation.

Jeremiah 1:9. God told Jeremiah, "I have put MY WORDS In YOUR MOUTH!" The mouth does not originate the words but only speaks them. The mouth is the channel of communication of the thoughts of the mind.

The word originates In God's mind. It Is our responsibility to speak with words that God gives thus becoming God's mouthpiece to His people, or mankind.

Jeremiah 15:19. Take the precious from the vile (no mixture of the word), and you shall be as my Mouth (mouthpiece).

I Peter 4:11. Speak as the oracles of God. I Kings 6:11-36. The Holiest of All In the Temple was "the oracle" - lit. "The speaking place" of God's voice, from off the blood-stained mercy-seat of the Ark of the Covenant. Believers are to be God's speaking place. His mouthpiece, His oracle.

Acts 10:22; 11:14. Cornelius was to hear words from Peter, whereby he would be saved.

Our purpose and motive In study is to be the best communicators of the Word of God that we can be to please God and to see His Word live in others.

Philemon 6. That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which Is in thee In Christ Jesus. When It is effectual It really works. It Is real "koinonia", communication, sharing, participation, fellowship of the Word of God. It Is communicating our faith to others!

II. CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION

The following article, by Jay Green, Is taken from The Christian Literature World, P.O. Box 5103, Marshallton, Delaware, December 1974, Number 9:

CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION

In an age where Christian values can be plainly seen vanishing from both public and private lives, the communication of the good news about Jesus Christ becomes a must If we are to avoid the repetition of the dark ages.

Alas! Hardly anyone is giving any attention to defining communication, much less to refining their own ability to communicate the Gospel and all its wonders. As a starter toward

your personal study of this art, please accept the following pointers. You, too, can be a master communicator -- all you need to do is to try hard to become one of those who has organized himself and his message to be God's tools in turning the world back right-side up.

WHAT COMMUNICATION IS

The dictionary definition of communication is, in part, (a) the act of imparting

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or bestowing; (b) the act of sharing or participating; (c) the Interchange of thoughts or opinions by speech or writing, etc. This, In brief, means that to communicate, one must send a message which will be received. If the message Is not received, therefore, you have not successfully communicated. It Is not enough to place the blame on the receiver, for It Is the responsibility of the communicator to see that his message is received.

WHAT IT IS TO SEND

A message cannot be said to be sent unless It obeys the fundamental rules of communication.

1. The sender must know the nature of the recipient, how he thinks and reacts, what he likes, and particularly what he dislikes. It is said of Aristotle that "he sought (his principles) In the living pattern of the human heart, all the recesses and windings of that hidden region he has explored; all Its caprices and affections, whatever tends to excite, ruffle, amuse, gratify, or to offend It, have been carefully examined..." - Copieston, A Reply to the Calumnies of the Edinburgh Review Against Oxford, 1810, p. 26.

2. The sender must have a definite purpose, that of transferring a central Idea or theme. Usually this will be done by stating a proposition, then presenting ft.

3. The sender must select pertinent, adequate and efficient materials In order to arrest the attention of the recipient, gain his assent, and In order to produce the desired reaction.

4. This requires that the sender organize the material sent on a definite pattern, using methods that are best fitted for the purpose.

5. This also requires that the sender have a thorough knowledge of words, their meaning, their connotations, their force, etc. It is Important that he know what they mean to the one he addresses.

6. Lastly, a message cannot be said to be sent unless ft is sent in a fashion acceptable to the recipient.

[The above rules and other useful Information available in Fundamentals of Communication, Wayne Thompson.]

WHAT A MESSAGE IS

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In communication, the message Is that thought, idea, theme, or proposition which the sender intends to impart to the recipient. It will not be a proper message unless ft conveys the thought of the sender in Its entirety. Therefore, the message must be given in words that exactly transfer the meaning of the sender to the recipient. The message will be defective if it does not fulfill the intention of the sender.

WHAT RECEIVING IS

A communication is not received, then, unless the recipient knows and understands the thought or idea intended by the sender. You have not communicated unless your idea is transferred to the recipient. Usually receiving is accompanied by some acknowledgment of the message, such as a corresponding action which can be traced to the message. This could take the form of (1) a readjustment of the thinking of the recipient, or (2) a return message for clarification, or for further information, or for additional motivation; or (3) an action which can be seen to be based on the content of the message.

In summary, at the very least a true communication is one that has been properly prepared and sent so as to succeed in informing, enlightening, and/or motivating the receiver of it.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION

While the rules of communication strictly apply, it still must be recognized that Christian communication differs from all other types of communication. It is different in its aim, in its message, in the originator of its message, and in its desired result.

1. The aim of Christian communication is to convey God's thoughts to your intended recipient. In this the Christian is only a vessel in which God's message is carried. The word of God is perfect. It is the ultimate communication to man, being prepared specifically by the Creator for the benefit of the creatures He has chosen to be partakers of the divine nature. Since a Christian is also a sinner, it is obvious that the pure message from God can be contaminated by human carriers. Therefore, if we as Christians desire to fulfill the aim of Christian communication, we must be aware of our uncleanness, we must purify ourselves, being