

WHEREBY WHEN YE READ

Ephesians 3:1-5

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. Several weeks ago we began a series of lessons with the general theme of “grow[ing] in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.” (2 Pet. 3:18)
 - A. These lessons are designed to help Christians grow and be strong in the Lord (1 Pet. 2:2).
 - B. **2** We cannot remain “babes” in Christ (1 Cor. 14:20); and even if we’ve been Christians for many years, we need to be reminded of these first principles (2 Pet. 3:1)
 - ❶ Lesson #1: Christians must put first things first (Matt. 6:33).
 - ❷ Lesson #2: Christians must strive to attain spiritual maturity (2 Pet. 1:5-11).
 - ❸ Lesson #3: Christians must turn away from “worldliness” and “keep oneself unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:27).
 - ❹ Lesson #4: Christians must remain faithful after baptism and some of the things involved in remaining faithful (worshiping, moral purity, and bearing fruit).
2. **3** For anything to grow properly (e.g., plants and animals) the things needed for growth must be supplied and assimilated:
 - A. Plants need sunshine, fertilizer and water for a plant to grow and live.
 - B. Animals need food, water, exercise, etc.; for an animal to grow and live.
3. **4** The same is true in the spiritual realm. For a Christian to grow he/she needs to consume and utilize the food that produces faith (Rom. 10:17; **1 Pet. 2:2**: “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,”).
 - A. The Bible is the greatest book ever written. Even though it is the greatest and most widely published book, it is also the most misused and underused book!
 - B. We need to remember that if read with the proper attitude! It is understandable (**Eph. 3:4**: “by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ...”).
 - C. Like any subject, understanding the Bible requires diligent study (**2 Tim. 2:15**: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”).
4. **5** As we turn to God’s word today, let’s consider five important principles we must follow when we consider studying God’s word: 1) Bible study is required by God, 2) Use of the word “study,” 3) Reasons why studying the Bible is so important, 4) Why people fail to study the Bible, and 5) Rules we must observe when studying the Scriptures.

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **6** Bible study is required by God:
 - A. God has always required His people to be knowledgeable insofar as His will is concerned.
 - (1) Ezra taught the people from the book of God: **Neh. 8:8**: “So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”
 - (2) Jesus said “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (Jn. 8:32). In order to know the truth we must study to understand it!
 - (3) Lack of knowledge of God’s will is a dangerous thing! **Hos. 4:6**: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee,

that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”; Jn. 6:68

- B. Christianity is a “taught religion.” **Jn. 6:44-45:** “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.”

(1) We are not born into it! Neither is it a mysterious “better felt than told” experience!

(2) God has chosen His word as the vehicle to express His will to man:

1 Cor. 1:21: “...it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”

Mk. 16:15: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Matt. 28:18-20: “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...’”; Eph. 3:1-5

(3) Therefore, must study! **Rom. 10:17**

- C. Rightly dividing the word is critical to understanding it (**2 Tim. 2:15:** “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”).

(1) “rightly dividing” means “to hold a straight course”; “plow a straight furrow”; Paul was a tent maker and new the importance of cutting tent material straight.

(2) We must handle God’s word properly and not “cut corners” in our study.

(3) I’m not boasting, but only wish to more fully illustrate the point. I have two advanced degrees (MS, PhD). Proper study is “work”, it requires diligence, patience, repetition and time, lots of time! There are no shortcuts to fruitful study!

- D. Bible study is also unique from at least two aspects:

(1) We need to remember the ramifications of inspiration (**1 Cor. 2:3-13**; esp. vs. 9 & 13).

(2) No matter the depth of our study; our study is useless unless we obey and apply what the Bible teaches! **2 Tim. 3:16-17:** “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.”

2. **7** Use of the word “study”:

- A. The word “study” means more than to read casually or infrequently.

- B. The word “study” means “to exert oneself, endeavor, give diligence” (Vines).

(1) Suppose there was a book that you needed to read before you left the house each day or it was an absolute guarantee that you would die that day: How much effort would you put into reading that book each morning?

(2) Suppose someone gave you a book and guaranteed you that if you read the book you would be given a billion dollars. How quickly would you finish that book?

- C. Bible study is even more important because it concerns not our temporal existence and happiness, but our eternal! Jn. 6:68; Matt. 16:26

- (1) There will be a test! **Rev. 20:12, 15:** “*And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*”
- (2) Judgment is coming! **Rom. 2:5-11:** “*the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who "will render to each one according to his deeds: 7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; 8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness — indignation and wrath, 9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; 10 but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*”
- D. Bible study is hard work; many not willing to put in the work so they can understand the will of the Lord. Solomon said that “*much study is a weariness of the flesh*” (Eccl. 12:12).
- (1) But it is more than well worth the effort! **Eccl. 12:13-14:** “*Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.*”
- (2) How do you think most people will answer this question on the day of judgment?
****True or False:** I wish I had spent more time studying the Bible.

3. 8 Reasons for studying the Bible:

A. Bible study promotes spiritual growth.

- (1) We are commanded to “*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord...*” (2 Pet. 3:18). Diligent Bible study is an absolute necessity in order to obey that command.
- (2) Peter said, “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*” (1 Pet. 2:2).
- (a) There is nothing more frustrating and nauseating than to see a child that should be mature not acting his age. In fact, as parents when we correct our children we often say, “*Act your age!*”
- (b) The same is true in a spiritual realm; there is nothing more frustrating and nauseating than to see a Christian acting in a spiritually immature way:
Heb. 5:12-14: “*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.*”
- (c) Failing to gain Bible knowledge and grow is very dangerous! **2 Pet. 1:8-11:** “*For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*”

- B. The Scriptures are profitable: **2 Tim. 3:16-17:** “*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.*”

- (1) 2 Timothy 3:16-17 enumerates four things the Scriptures are profitable for:
 - (a) “doctrine” (teaching),
 - (b) “reproof” (conviction),
 - (c) “correction” (restoring to an upright state),
 - (d) “instruction in righteousness” (education, training, nurture).
 - (2) By studying the inspired Word of God, we have within it “*all things that pertain to life and godliness*” (1 Pet. 1:3).
- C. Study will equip us to recognize false doctrine (Eph. 4:11-14).
- (1) There are many false teachers in the religious world and each of us is responsible for studying to know whether the truth is being taught.
 - (2) False doctrines are taught using the Bible! Even the devil quoted Scripture! (Matt. 4:6)
 - (3) We are warned to examine what is taught (1 Jn. 4:1: “*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*”; Acts 17:11; Westside in Indy and 70 AD heresy).
- D. We will be judged by the Word of God.
- (1) The Bible teaches we will be judged by the words of Christ in the gospel (Jn. 12:48: “*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*”; Rom. 2:16).
 - (2) Since we will be called on to give account and be judged by the Bible, doesn’t it seem reasonable that we should read and study so that we understand it?

4. **9** Some reasons why people fail to study the Bible:

- A. Just too busy: Really people just don’t take the time! We often waste so much time on frivolous pursuits!
 - (1) Speed is the order of the day and one of the tragedies of our society is that people are too busy to study the Bible.
 - (2) Most people find the time to read newspapers, magazines, popular novels; material that at best informs you of temporal things and at worst fills your mind with filth.
 - (a) Most people find the time to watch TV! In fact, the average American watches about 7 hours of TV everyday! **Eph. 5:15-16:** “*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*”

The Bible and the TV Guide

On the table side by side:
 The holy Bible and the TV Guide.
 One is well worn but cherished with pride,
 (Not the Bible, the TV Guide.)
 One is used daily to help folks decide.
 No! It isn’t the Bible; it’s the TV Guide.
 As the pages are turned what shall they see?
 Oh, what does it matter, turn on the TV.
 Then confusion reigns, they can’t all agree
 On what they shall watch on the old TV.
 So they open the book in which they confide
 (No, not the Bible, the TV Guide.)

The Word of God is seldom read.
 Maybe a verse as they fall into bed.
 Exhausted and sleepy and tired as can be,
 Not from reading the Bible; from watching TV.
 So, then back to the table, side by side,
 Is the Holy Bible and the TV Guide.
 No time for prayer, no time for the Word.
 The plan of salvation is seldom heard.
 Forgiveness of sin so full and free
 But, it's found in the Bible, not on TV.

Kenneth E. Thomas

- (b) Internet: 2013 the average time spent on the internet was >5 hours per day.
- (c) Social media: Average person has 5 social media accounts, checks them ~17 times per day! The average teen spends 9 hours per day on social media!
- (d) Smart phone: The average American spends 4.7 hours per day on their smart phone!

B. Don't like to study:

- (1) One must develop a desire for Bible study just as a musician must develop a desire and appreciation for music. We must learn to appreciate good food.
- (2) We need to appreciate the great value of knowing the Word of God: **Psa. 19:7-11:**

*"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;
 The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
 The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
 The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
 10 More to be desired are they than gold,
 Yea, than much fine gold;
 Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
 And in keeping them there is great reward."*

C. Don't know how to study:

- (1) We can learn how to study and understand the Bible (**Eph. 5:17:** *"Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is."*).
- (2) Must approach the study of the Bible with the right attitude!
Matt. 4:4: *"But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" "I can't get enough of it!"*
 Jn. 6:68; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 2 (esp. vv. 9-10); 2 Thess. 2:10-12
- (3) Profitable study requires work! Read, notes, meditate, ask questions!
- (4) Must prepare our lessons for every Bible class and attend every Bible class!
- (5) Pays to have a good concordance (Strong's, Young's, etc.), Bible dictionary (Nelson's, Unger's, etc.), word study/lexicon (Vine, Thayer).
- (6) Even if you are not a preacher, you should constantly build your "Bible Library" with good, helpful, sound study aids.

D. Don't want to study: Romans 1: without excuse, not thankful, futile in their thoughts, foolish hearts darkened, thought they were wise but were fools, "God gave them up"!

5. **10** Some rules to observe when you study the Scriptures:

A. Eliminate distractions: turn off TV, shut down your computer, smart phone, etc.

B. Ten simple rules of Bible study:

① Consider who is speaking:

- The Bible is from God, but even the devil has some speeches in it.
- Who told Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil "*for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*" (Gen. 2:16-17). Who said to Adam and Eve, "*Ye shall not surely die.*" (Gen. 3:4)?
- Who said one should curse God and die? (Job 2:9)
- Was Jesus a glutton and winebibber? (Matt. 11:19)

② Understand who is being spoken to:

- Sometimes God speaks to the man, the woman, to Jews, to Gentiles, to the church, to individual Christians, to the apostles, to elders, to husbands, to wives, etc.
- Example: Many take a passage like John 16:13 and try to apply it to all Christians; or James 1:27 and apply it to the church collectively.

③ Understand the writer's purpose: What is the writer was trying to accomplish?

- What was Paul trying to get across when he said, "*I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius*" (1 Cor. 1:14)?
- Was, as some contend, Paul opposing baptism, teaching that baptism is not essential to salvation? (cf. 1 Cor. 1:12-13; Acts 18:8; Gal. 3:26-27)

④ Understand the setting of the passage:

- A passage must not be taken out of its context. It has been said, "A text without a context is a pretext."
- Sometimes a context may be a verse, paragraph, chapter, or even a whole book.
- Example: Read Jn. 6:44-45 and Rom. 10:13-17 and apply this rule.

⑤ Read and study all God has said on a given subject: i.e., Truth does not contradict itself!

- A partial view is a dangerous view. Most religious error is taught by using only part of what God has said.
- Psa. 119:160: ASV says, "*The sum of thy word is truth.*" Don't be lazy!
- Some read Romans 5:1 ("*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*") and conclude that we are saved by faith only. When studying faith, or any Bible subject, we need to read all that God has said about the topic (**Jas. 2:24**: "*You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.*").

⑥ **11** Respect the silence of the Scriptures:

- Where God has not spoken, we have no right to act or speak (2 Jn. 9; **Heb. 7:12-14**: "*For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. 13 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated*")

at the altar. I 4 For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.”; restaurant example)

- We must learn to only do what the Bible says, and be silent where the Bible is silent (1 Pet. 4:11)
- ⑦ Be a very careful reader: So many people are just poor readers. They totally miss important points, important words (**Gal. 3:26-27**).
- ⑧ Must recognize and respect figurative language:
 - The use of figurative language is the process of “expressing one thing in terms normally denoting another with which it may be regarded as analogous” (Webster).
 - We must interpret figurative passages figuratively, and literal passages literally.
 - Some misuse figurative language to teach false doctrine:
 - Jehovah’s Witnesses and the 144,000 (Rev. 14:1, 3; but note v. 4; Rev. 7:4-8).
 - Premillennialists: Rev. 20:4; but Acts 2 & Col. 1:13
- ⑨ Must study with a desire to obey:
 - **Jn. 7:17:** “If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.”
 - If our hearts are not prepared to do God’s Word, Bible study will be in vain.
- ⑩ Must know the proper divisions of the Bible:
 - Some try to read and do whatever the Bible says regardless of where it falls open!
 - We must know the three dispensations (Patriarchal, Mosaic, Gospel) and know how to apply passages in each. Did Abraham Lincoln pay income taxes? No, because the laws governing such did not come into existence until 1913! **Gal. 3:23-25: v. 25:** “But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”
 - We must understand the Law of Moses was done away; no longer under it (Heb. 10:9; Gal. 5:4). But, the study of the OT is still profitable (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).

III. CONCLUSION: 12

1. Let us heed 2 Tim. 2:15. As we read the Bible let us never forget: A) It is the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13), B) It is the power of God (Rom. 1:16-17; Heb. 4:11-12), C) It is important! (Jn. 12:48).
2. Invitation

Adapted from: *Growing in Grace and Knowledge of the Lord*, by Johnie Edwards, Titus Edwards, Johnie P. Edwards, Edwards Publishing, pp. 15-17)