

WHEREBY WHEN YE READ
Ephesians 3:3-4

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** 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. 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)
 - (1) **Lesson #1: ALL** Christians must put “first things first” (Matt. 6:33).
 - (2) **Lesson #2: ALL** Christians must diligently strive for spiritual maturity (2 Pet. 1:5-11).
 - (3) **Lesson #3: ALL** Christians must turn away from “worldliness” and “keep oneself unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:27).
 - (4) **Lesson #4: ALL** Christians must remain faithful after baptism (Rev. 2:10; e.g., worshiping, moral purity, and bearing fruit).
2. **3** In order 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; these must be supplied and utilized for life.
 - B. Animals need food, water, exercise, etc.; these must be supplied and utilized for life.
3. The same is true in the spiritual realm. For a Christian to grow he/she needs to consume and utilize the spiritual food that produces faith (Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 10:25).
 - 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, abused and unused book!
 - B. We need to remember that if read with the proper attitude it is understandable (Eph. 3:4).
 - C. **BUT** understanding the Bible does not come without diligent study.
4. **4** As we turn to God’s word today, let’s consider some things about studying God’s word (**Eph. 3:3-4**: “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.” KJV).

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **5** Bible Study is required by God:
 - A. God has always required His people to study and know His will.
 - (1) Ezra taught the people in his day as he opened the book of God (**Neh. 8:8-9**: “So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading. 9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, ‘This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn nor weep.’ For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law.”).
 - (2) Jesus had “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!
 - B. ****** Rightly dividing the word is **essential** 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.” KJV).

- (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).
 - (a) Proper study is “work,” it requires diligence, effort, perseverance, patience, time.
 - (b) There are no shortcuts to fruitful study!

C. **6** 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):

1 Cor. 2:9-13: “*But as it is written:*

*‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’*

10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches...”

- (2) ** No matter the depth of our study; our study is useless unless we study with a determination to 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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*” (KJV)

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 we needed to read before we left the house each day or it was an absolute guarantee that we would die that day.
 - (2) How much effort would we put into reading that book each morning?
- C. Bible study is even more important because it concerns not only our temporal existence and happiness, but our eternal!
- D. ** Bible study is hard work, and many are not willing to put the proper work into Bible study so as to understand and live the will of the Lord.
 - (1) Solomon said that “*much study is a weariness of the flesh*” (Eccl. 12:12).
 - (2) ** But diligent Bible study produces a good kind of “weariness”; it is well worth the effort because of the dividends it pays! **2 Tim. 3:15:** “*...the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation...*”; Jn. 6:68
 - (3) On the Day of Judgment will you:
 - ☛ Wish you had studied your Bible less?
 - ☛ Wish you had studied your Bible more?

3. **8** Some reasons for studying the Bible: Five reasons...

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 Pet. 1:3, 5).
- (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 downright maddening 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 the spiritual realm; there is nothing more frustrating and sad than to see a Christian acting in a spiritually immature way (Heb. 5:12-14).

B. **** The Scriptures are profitable:**

- (1) 2 Tim. 3:16-17 enumerates four things the Scriptures are profitable for: “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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (KJV)
 - (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. **** To be approved of God and to rightly divide the Word:**

- (1) God has told us to study and if we expect to be able to divide the Word of God properly, we will have to do diligent study.
- (2) We need put 2 Tim. 2:15 to memory and diligently apply the verse every day!

D. **** 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 (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.”).
- (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; Acts 17:11).

E. **** 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 in order to understand it?

4. **9** Why people fail to study the Bible: Three primary reasons...

A. **** Just too busy:**

- (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 (**Matt. 13:22**: “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” KJV).
- (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.
- (3) Most people find the time to watch TV, surf the internet, etc.
 - (a) In fact, the average American watches about 7 hours of TV every day!
 - (b) The typical person spends over 4 hours per day on their mobile device. (**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.

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B. **** Don't like to study:**

- (1) One has to develop a sincere desire for Bible study just as a musician has to develop a sincere desire and appreciation for music (Matt. 5:6; Jn. 6:68).
- (2) We need to appreciate the great value of knowing the Word of God:

Psa. 19:7-11:

*“7 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.
I I Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them there is great reward.” (Jn. 6:68)

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.”; Mk. 4:24; Lk. 8:18).
- (2) The basic principles of study applicable in the secular world are applicable to the Bible.
- (3) We need to do is prepare our lessons for every Bible class and attend every Bible class!

D. ** Don't love the truth:

- (1) Many are in the worst category of all when it comes to being a failure at Bible study: They simply do not love the truth!

2 Thess. 2:9-12: “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

- (2) Sadly, many claiming to be Christians fall into this awful category.
- (3) They talk a good game, but don't follow what the Bible teaches:

Matt. 7:21-23: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

- (4) No worse words will an ear ever hear than, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”

5. 10 Some rules to observe when you study the Scriptures: Nine simple principles to follow...

A. ** Consider who is speaking:

- (1) The Bible is from God, but even the devil has some speeches in it.
- (2) 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).
- (3) Who said to Adam and Eve, “Ye shall not surely die.” (Gen. 3:4)?
- (4) Should we curse God and die? (Job 2:9)
- (5) Was Jesus a glutton and winebibber? (Matt. 11:19)

B. ** Understand who is being spoken to:

- (1) 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.
- (2) Example: A lot of people take the passage in John 16:13 (“when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth;”) and try to apply it to all Christians; or James 1:27 to the local church (**Jas. 1:27**: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” KJV).

C. ** Understand what the writer was trying to accomplish:

- (1) 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)?
- (2) Was, as some contend, Paul opposing baptism, teaching it’s not essential to salvation?
- (3) Or, was he concerned over their “divisions”:

1 Cor. 1:10-15: “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. 12 Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’ 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.”

Acts 18:8: “Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.”

D. ** Understand the setting of the passage:

- (1) Don’t take a passage out context; it has been said, “A text without a context is a pretext.”
- (2) Sometimes the context may be a verse, paragraph, chapter, or even a whole book.
- (3) Example: Read **John 6:44-45** and **Romans 10:13-17** and apply this rule.

E. ** Read and study everything God has said on a given subject:

- (1) A partial view is a dangerous view; most religious error is taught by using only part of what God has said.
- (2) **Psalm 119:160:** ASV says, “The sum of thy word is truth.”
- (3) Some read Ephesians 2:8 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.

Eph. 2:8-10: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Jas. 2:24, 25: “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

F. || We must respect the silence of the Scriptures:

- (1) 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. 14 For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.”

- (2) We must learn to only do what the Bible says but also be silent where the Bible is silent (1 Pet. 4:11). **Silence does not permit, it forbids!**

G. ** We must recognize figurative language:

- (1) 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).
- (2) We must interpret figurative passages figuratively, and literal passages literally.

- (3) Some misuse figurative language to teach false doctrine:
- (a) Jehovah's Witnesses and the 144,000 (Rev. 14:1, 3; but note v. 4; Rev. 7:4-8: v. 4: 12,000 from each tribe of Israel; **Rev. 7:9-10**: "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'"").
 - (b) Premillennialists: Rev. 20:4: "And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."; **BUT** Mk. 9:1; Dan. 2:44; Acts 2 and Col. 1:13

H. **** Must study with a desire to obey:**

- (1) **Jn. 7:16-17**: "Jesus answered them and said, 'My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. 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.'"; cf. Lk. 8:15
- (2) When our hearts are prepared to do God's Word; Bible study will not be in vain.
- (3) Also, don't fall into looking for loopholes to avoid obedience! Matt. 7:9-13

I. **** We must know the proper divisions of the Bible:**

- (1) Some try to read and do whatever the Bible says regardless of where it falls open!
- (2) We must know the three dispensations (Patriarchal, Mosaic, Gospel) and know how to apply passages in each.
 - (a) Did Abraham Lincoln pay federal income taxes?
 - (b) No, because the laws governing such did not come into existence until 1913!
 - (c) **Romans 7:1-6**
- (3) We must understand that the Law of Moses has been done away and we are no longer under it (Heb. 9:16-17; 10:9; Gal. 5:4); however, the study of the Old Testament is still profitable (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).

III. CONCLUSION: **12**

1. Let us heed 2 Timothy 2:15:

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." (KJV)

2. As we read the Bible let us never forget that it is indeed the Word of God (**1 Thess. 2:13-14**: "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." KJV).
3. As we read let us remember the power of the Word:

Heb. 4:11-12: "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. 12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (KJV); Jn. 12:48

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