

# How to Study The Bible

MATERIAL COMPOSED BY

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Forward:

**2 Timothy 2:15** Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

No verse of scripture relates more responsibility to the soul of man than this verse. Within it, man notices the following requirements:

- **STUDY** – the process of gaining knowledge
- **YOURSELF** – the only soul for which the individual is directly responsible
- **APPROVED** – found acceptable of value and purpose
- **OF GOD** – the Supreme Being, Judge and Creator
- **WORKMAN** – one intent on the craftsmanship of labor
- **UNASHAMED** – without embarrassment or ruin
- **RIGHTLY DIVIDING** – handling rightly
- **WORD OF TRUTH** – the only topic of which no lie exists

When obeyed, this single verse reveals the following essentials:

- **KNOWLEDGE THAT GOD IS**
- **THAT CHRIST IS HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON**
- **THAT THE SPIRIT INSPIRED THIS WORD**
- **THAT OBEDIENCE TO ITS COMMANDMENTS SAVES THE SOUL**
- **THAT WITHOUT IT, THE SOUL IS ETERNALLY LOST**

Granted, there are many more particulars to the Word of God. Nonetheless, these facts fulfill the proof of our statement: viz. 2 Timothy 2:15 relates more responsibility to the soul than any other verse of scripture! It is *not the most important*, neither is it the least important. It is the **ACTION OF OBEYING THE VERSE** wherein one finds its immeasurable merit of responsibility!

Therefore, we rejoice in your expression of interest in this discussion of **HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE**. During the next few weeks, this study will help you

develop a greater appreciation for God's Book and an ability to read it, study it and obey it with prayerfully greater enthusiasm. A wise preacher once described this Book of all Books in the following fashion:

"It contains the mind of God, the state of man, and the happiness of Christians. Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its history is true, and its decisions are immutable. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. It involves the highest responsibility. It will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents. It is given to you in life. It will go with you through death. It will be opened at the judgment. Read it to be wise. Believe it to be safe. Practice it to be saved.

His description may be quite accurate, however he did not obtain such a noteworthy estimation of the Book without study of its inspired contents!

Each person studious of this inspired work (2 Timothy 3:16 – 17) will have his/her own "method" of study. It is not our intention to change workable habits. It is our intent to form habits that work! So many souls believe reading alone is the art of study. It is not! While an element of study, it is not the **only** element. Notice Paul's admonition of *Ephesians 3:4: Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*. It is critical to read the scriptures (*1 Timothy 4:13: Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*) Yet we say again, ***it is not the only critical element of study.***

You will need the following items to complete this course of discussion:

- YOUR BIBLE
- PAPER AND PENCIL FOR RECORDING NOTES
- A FERVENT DESIRE TO LEARN

With these items, the rest of the "tools" for good and profitable Bible study come easily. Remember that God's Word contains all things that pertain until life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Therefore, the way to obtain these items essential for eternity, is to learn to practice in great diligence the commandment of 2 Timothy 2:15!

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## CHAPTER ONE:

# USING THE PROPER TOOLS --- ESPECIALLY THE BIBLE

Several years ago, I "broke family tradition" when I declined an offer to go to college and become a schoolteacher. Perhaps one of the "reasons" was my changing from "pupil" to "student". In my family, (where both parents and one grandparent were "professional" teachers), we learned early in life the difference! A student is *one who studies* while a pupil is *one occupying a seat and wasting everyone's time!* Granted, you will not find those stated definitions in any dictionary, but you will find that sentiment.

The same point is true regarding study of God's word. There is a difference between the **STUDENT** of the Bible, and the **PUPIL**. Usually, one notices the chasm between these souls when observing **ATTITUDE**. The student actually studies the context of the Bible and exhibits a hunger and thirst for its contents. The pupil may attend the appointed hour of bible study, but seldom expresses any interest other than being counted "faithful" to the assembling.

Examine the following verses:

Romans 8:1 – 10

Philippians 2:1-12

Romans 10:17

Hebrews 11:1; 6

2 Peter 1:5 – 11

1 Timothy 4:11 - 16

These and many other verses, when studied, fully convey the necessity of *right attitude* regarding study of the scriptures. Let us understand that the first and primary "tool" needed to study the Bible is this "right attitude". Without it, you waste your time, the time of the teacher and most importantly, the time God grants for us to prepare for eternity (2 Corinthians 6:2). [By the way, did you notice in examining these passages you actually took the first step in "studying"?]

The difference between a SPIRITUAL MIND and a carnal mind is what you want in return for your efforts. If all you want is the praise of men for "knowing your Bible" then you really cannot study it for heaven's sake (Matthew 6:5-8; John 12:43). If you want the approval of God (2 Timothy 2:15), then not so strangely, men find you eloquent in the knowledge of the scriptures besides (1 Corinthians 2:1 – 16). Since we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7) and since faith comes from hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17), then it behooves us to have a SPIRITUAL MIND by which to gain the lessons spiritually discerned! (1 Corinthians 2:14)

The second "tool" is the Bible. I hesitate to say "second" because for obvious reasons, one cannot know of spiritual things without the Bible. However, one cannot accept the Bible as the truth, i.e. God's Word, without some fashion of a spiritual mind. Nonetheless, the Bible is the text of study and therefore a required element! As suggested in the Forward of this material, *reading alone does not constitute study*. Nonetheless, be honest: **YOU CANNOT STUDY THE BIBLE WITHOUT HAVING A BIBLE TO STUDY!** (This congregation will gladly furnish you a Bible to keep, read, study, learn and obey if you do not have a Bible!)

With so many "translations" of the Bible, several pupils in their growing maturity toward being students need to know which version is best for their study. Asking such a question invariably creates controversy, but we accept the question as a challenge: provided you accept the answer as an equal challenge! Throughout this study, this written material will use the King James Version for its quotations from scripture. There is a simple reason for this use: IT IS THE VERSION WITH WHICH THIS AUTHOR IS MOST FAMILIAR. That is not to say it is the "only right translation" for to say so is simply not the truth! Through several years of study, I find the following versions accurate in their translations and list them in order of *my personal preference*:

- New American Standard Updated
- New King James Version
- New American Standard
- Revised Standard
- Englishman's Translation (Phillips)

While some argue in favor of the following versions for their personal study, I do not favor them for various and sundry reasons (most within the realm of personal opinion). In many verses, the "translation" is inaccurate. More frequently, the use of "paraphrasing" scripture depletes from God's Word and lends support to man's opinion.

- Good News for Modern Man
- Contemporary English Version
- The Living Bible (admitted paraphrase)
- The Everyday Bible
- The Twentieth Century New Testament
- The Oxford Annotated Bible
- New International Version

(This list is not in any order of discomfort to me. I simply find each to have various faults and therefore use none of them in usual Bible Study. I do have them in my library, however, and sometimes find the "comparison study" helpful. I must reiterate again, I do not recommend any of these for the "average" student of the Bible.)

As we discuss these "translations" and "versions" in our class, please understand only the **PROVEN ACCURATE** will benefit the student! (1 Thessalonians 5:21) The process by which one proves their accuracy is indeed part of this discussion. Put simply, scripture cannot contradict itself and remain credible. The most popular of translations (KJV) often finds itself in defense of its wording because of apparent contradictions. The same is true of the NASU. Briefly stated, these contradictions vanish with **CAREFUL** study of apparently conflicting texts.

Another valued point of this discussion is the fact you grow accustomed to the Bible you most frequently use. As you study, finding various texts becomes "second nature" the more you study. For example, I know that Romans 8 is on the left hand page, inside column. While this is true with *my* Bible, it may not hold true with yours. The point is **familiarity** with the book you most often use. To a student of the Bible, the "well used" look of the tattered and torn Bible magnifies its beauty, for it is proof of its studied content.

**When and where** you study constitutes the next "tools" for proper study. Let us be perfectly clear in this point: **ATTENDING A BIBLE STUDY CLASS DOES NOT IN AND OF ITSELF CONSTITUTE A BIBLE STUDY!** Those of us who remember a little about "yesteryear" schools remember the classroom was the place for **reciting the lessons learned!** We had studied them some place and sometime other than during the "discussion" and/or "recital" time of class work. That's right, we did **HOMEWORK!** Granted, many parents and modern day students think modern day teachers assign too much homework and should take some extra time actually teaching in the classroom. While we could make a case for such (pro and con), the point of **this** discussion is **WE HAVE TO HAVE A TIME AND A PLACE TO STUDY** and neither are commonly found in the hour's time of our customary Bible study classes.

We suggest doing as the great men of the Bible did. Daniel, Mordecai, Peter, Paul and others had "times of prayer." We sing, "take time to be holy" and in exchange, try to "fit it in if anything is left at the end of the day". I know a man who is an insurance salesman. His day at the office begins around 8:00 A.M. and often lasts well into the evening hours. Both he and his wife are active in civic affairs for their community, and certainly wish to spend time with their children and grandchildren. They both teach Bible classes at their congregation. For him, he considers the best time for quiet, and meditation of the scriptures (1 Timothy 4:15; Psalms 1) is the very early morning. He begins his study at 5:00 A.M.!

The important fact is you need **TIME** and you need **QUIET** in order to concentrate. Most people do not read fast, or well. Of those with sixth grade reading skills, (and by population in the United States, most citizens read on this level) less than 30% of these readers retain more than 50% of what they read



with only one reading of any text. This statistic proves one factor greater than all others do: ***MOST WILL HAVE TO READ THE SAME THING TWO OR THREE TIMES TO RETAIN ONLY PART OF THE TEXT!***

Finally, as you study, TAKE NOTES! None of us have, "perfect memory recall". My wife often says, "You might remember scripture, but you can't remember to bring home a gallon of milk." Well, if truth be known, I don't remember scripture that well, either! The point is, taking notes permits our writing down the IMMEDIATE POINTS OF INTEREST OR CONCERN. A word or a phrase triggers another thought. If you fail to write it down, you fail to remember that thought that once intrigued your interest. Scripture references especially pose a problem in our memories. We need to write it down and put some sort of notation with it, which reminds us to "study this further." Most students find it helpful to carry a notebook and pencil to every class (and every sermon) and then do their REAL STUDY at home! Questions arise with frequency and we need to write them down immediately so we may reference our thoughts to the serious matters. Remember Paul requested of Timothy "the books and the parchments" (2Timothy 4:13). No one knows what books, or what parchments Paul meant ... ***BUT PAUL AND TIMOTHY KNEW!*** Undoubtedly, they accompanied his study of God's Word and the work at Paul's hands. It certainly lends credence to ***TAKING NOTES.***

Before our next study time in class, do the following exercises:

1. LIST AT LEAST FIVE PASSAGES VERIFYING THE NEED TO PREPARE THE MIND (SOUL, SPIRITUAL THINKING) MORE THAN THE CARNAL MIND FOR JUDGMENT. TRY NOT TO REPEAT THE ONES LISTED IN THIS CHAPTER: THAT WOULD BE LESS THAN "FAIR" IN DOING YOUR "HOMEWORK".
2. WRITE A PARAGRAPH PROVING YOUR USE OF THE TRANSLATION/VERSION YOU PRESENTLY USE.
3. ESTABLISH A TIME AND PLACE EACH DAY FOR YOUR PERSONAL STUDY OF GOD'S WORD. RECORD THIS TIME AND TELL US HOW WELL YOU KEPT IT FOR THE WEEK.
4. YOU WILL NOT NEED TO SHOW US YOUR NOTES. WE EACH WILL SEE HOW WELL YOU TAKE NOTES AS WE SHARE CLASS TIME!

## CHAPTER TWO:

# WHERE DO I START?

Let's start this chapter with a little "test". In the space below, write the quotation of 2 Timothy 2:15. Be very careful to emphasize the last phrase of the verse.

Notice what you wrote (even if you had to look it up before completing the assignment.) By inspiration, Paul says, "**rightly dividing the word of truth.**" This phrase means, "handling correctly; retaining the context". Mishandling of the scriptures creates as much distortion to truth as any false doctrine. For example, do you remember the story of the depressed man who wanted comfort from the scriptures? He simply opened the Bible, and began reading, "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself." (Matt. 27:5). He recognized this talked about Judas Iscariot, and was not encouraged! Turning to another passage, he noted red letters. Surely, these being the "words of Jesus" they would encourage him. "Go and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37) is all he saw, but obviously was not encouraged! So, with one final, desperate appeal to scripture, he reads the words of Jesus (they were red letter!), "That thou doest, do quickly." (John 13:27) He depression ended ... but not to the advantage he desired! His problem was in not "rightly dividing the word of truth." Yet, he did one thing correctly: **HE READ THE SCRIPTURES.** Keep in mind reading alone does *not* constitute study. However, in order to study, ***YOU HAVE TO READ THE MATERIAL!***

Perhaps adults would do well to rehearse the basics taught young children. From a very early age, they learn the following:

\_\_\_\_\_ books in the Bible.

\_\_\_\_\_ books in the Old Testament.

\_\_\_\_\_ books in the New Testament.

The first five books of the O.T. are the books of \_\_\_\_\_. From Joshua to Esther are books of \_\_\_\_\_. The next five books (name

them) are books of \_\_\_\_\_. The remaining \_\_\_\_\_ books of the O.T. are books of prophesy and determined by their length are either \_\_\_\_\_ prophets or \_\_\_\_\_ prophets. How many books in each division? \_\_\_\_\_

The New Testament has five divisions: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are called \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ is the book of history. Paul wrote \_\_\_\_\_ books of the N.T. (if you include Hebrews, of which book no one is absolutely certain of the author. Most, however, attribute the book to Paul.) From Romans through Jude, we note two divisions called \_\_\_\_\_ epistles (or letters) and \_\_\_\_\_ epistles (or letters). The final book of the N.T., the book of \_\_\_\_\_ written by \_\_\_\_\_ is as a book of \_\_\_\_\_.

What we just completed is the most basic of "rightly dividing" the word of truth. Other basic principles include:

1. Saying the books of the Bible in order ... saying the author's names in order ... naming the judges, kings, apostles, etc. in order.
2. The Old Testament law is no longer binding. (Colossians 2:14)
3. The New Testament is called the "gospel" (Romans 1:16) and yet the gospel is specifically defined as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
4. Just as there is a difference between "general letters" and "specific letters", there are "general commands" and "specific commands" within the scriptures.

**NONE OF THESE "BASICS" IN AND OF THEMSELVES CAN SAVE THE SOUL. NONETHELESS, KNOWING THESE THINGS HELPS THE STUDENT UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES SO THE SCRIPTURES AND OBEDIENCE TO THEM CAN SAVE THE SOUL!**

The student of the Bible quickly learns to examine three things with each study:

1. Who is speaking?
2. To whom is this one speaking?
3. Does this apply to me?

While every lesson of the Bible has some application to the well being of our souls (2 Peter 1:3), some commandments have no bearing at all upon us. For

example, no one today need concern himself with bringing Paul's cloak, books and parchments! Neither should we be concerned about keeping a vow to return to Jerusalem. However, we should understand the need for caring for our personal belongings, and we should understand what promises mean!

Therefore, "rightly dividing the word of truth" means simply, "handle the truth with care; keep it in the context!" Someone wisely stated, "Any doctrine known to man has a proof within scripture if you twist the truth enough." While a true statement, note the caution Peter gives by inspiration: "As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." (2 Peter 3:16)

If you don't know the basic divisions of the Bible, we strongly suggest you learn them. "But I'm an adult! I don't belong in a children's class." While that may be true chronologically, it is not always true SPIRITUALLY! Remember, the **student examines himself to see if he/she is in the faith** (2 Corinthians 13:5). The Hebrew writer explains two distinctively separate "groups" of souls: babes and those of full age. Examine carefully Hebrews 5:12 – 14. Notice the word "exercise" in verse 14. It means just what you think it means --- "put in motion for the purpose of improving." We find the word "exercise" in several other passages. The **APPLICATION** of the text tells us whether the "exercise" is profitable for the soul, or someone's selfish ego! For the **student**, "exercise" in the scriptures has a similarity with **DILIGENCE**. Study the following scriptures and examine the use of the word "diligence" as it applies to you and your study!

Hebrews 6:11 – 12	}	2 Timothy 2:15
Hebrews 11:6		
2 Peter 1:5 – 11		
2 Peter 3:14		

The fact is, many "older" folks are "babes" in Christ and cannot yet discern the things of "strong meat." There is no shame in saying, "I don't understand." The shame is in not studying to learn! Only **YOU** can determine your "spiritual age" and from that established admission, you must grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Once you establish your "spiritual age", then you must determine where to start in your study. No one can learn the entirety of scripture overnight and need not try. Your growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ requires a lifetime of commitment. Nonetheless, you have to start somewhere and it seems the best place is always at the beginning!

For the young student of the Bible (not necessarily speaking chronologically) we suggest the book of John. Notice it starts "In the beginning." Some may question, "Why not start with the Old Testament and read it all the way through?" That's a good question and deserves a good answer. While we certainly need a knowledge of the Old Testament to understand much of the New Testament, one

can gain that knowledge and understanding while reading and studying the New Testament and using the references. Please do not think I am discouraging the reading or the study of the Old Testament! Quite the contrary I would encourage it for young and old alike! However, we just discussed the “spiritual age” of the student, (thus requiring the SPIRITUAL MIND – see chapter one), and noted that each individual must determine by an honest estimation his SPIRITUAL AGE. If you are a **babe**, start with the milk of the word of God. If you are somewhat older, but not full grown, then review the “milk” of the word and begin examining the weightier matters of the law (Matt. 23:23). If you are of full age, your reading and study of the scriptures must continue in the more difficult areas. Nonetheless, **never forget the basics!** Faith is the foundation of our existence in Christ Jesus (Hebrews 11:1; 6) and comes from hearing God’s Word (Romans 10:17). Will you ever know too much? Is it not the case that the most expert in any subject retains the basics for a strong foundation of his proven understanding?

The following outline of study from “babe” to “full grown” has only my **opinion** for its validity. As we stated, we do not wish to establish new habits with any student of the Bible: we wish only to establish habits that work! Therefore, I suggest this course for the New Testament:

John --- Matthew --- Mark --- Luke --- Acts (only because the last chapter of Luke introduces the first chapter of Acts).

If one follows the above course of study, one learns the life of Jesus Christ, what one must do to be saved and the only inspired history of the Lord’s church as it grew throughout the world. Now, that soul is ready to learn what he/she must do within the work of the church. Therefore, this suggested order of study:

Philippians --- Colossians --- Ephesians --- 1 Timothy --- 2 Timothy --- Titus --- Galatians --- Philemon --- 1 Peter --- 2 Peter --- 1 Thessalonians --- 2 Thessalonians --- 1 Corinthians --- 2 Corinthians --- 1, 2 and 3 John

This order of study progressively shows the student the trials of individual faithfulness and the increasing responsibility of remaining faithful in all we say and do. When that study concludes, the student should be able to accept the more “meaty” substance of the remaining books of the New Testament.

James. (Though usually considered the first of the letters within the New Testament, this book is a “meaty book” for most souls. Its last chapter may confuse the babes in Christ, whose understanding of spiritual gifts and the subsequent ending of these miraculous abilities is lacking.) Jude – Romans --- Hebrews --- Revelation: these books contain very “meaty” material. While “babes” in Christ may read them, their understanding and acceptance of their content may “choke” them. Even those of “full age” have serious difficulty in these books unless they truly **study** them. Often, these latter books require some “external help” in determining their proper meaning. We will discuss “What about the externals?” in a coming chapter of this material.

For a study of the Old Testament, I suggest the order from Genesis through Malachi. Perhaps not so strangely, the assembled order (though not chronological by any description) does reveal the sequence of the creation of man (Patriarchal Law) through the rise of God's chosen people, Israel (The Mosaic Law or Ten Commandment Law) and their fall (through the various judges, kings, captivities, prophecies, etc.) Granted, some books like Daniel, Zechariah, Zephaniah and others contain many "apocalyptic statements". However, these become clearer when you have a good working knowledge of the New Testament and the fact the New Testament is our law today (Colossians 2:14). As well, to fully understand Romans, Hebrews, and especially the Revelation letter, an awareness of the Old Testament usage of these terms and the Law of Moses make the understanding of the New Testament much easier. Nonetheless, these things belong to the "full age" and not to babes. ***Govern your spiritual age as you continue growing*** (2 Peter 3:18).

Before we leave this chapter of study, we need to examine the use of a few "man made tools" of study. While authored by uninspired men, they are usually accurate and reliable. In fact, many bibles have these "tools" built into the reading of your bible.

A **CONCORDANCE** is a listing of key words within the scriptures and where you can find that word. Often, concordances contain definitions of the words. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (just one of many concordances) contains a numerical listing of definitions and their original Hebrew, Chaldean or Greek meaning. Cruden's Complete Concordance is another very reliable concordance, though less "analytical" than other concordances. In class, we will show you the proper use of a concordance. Though not classified as a "concordance", books that give various "study definitions" to various individual words are great helps in one's personal study. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words is one such book. Other books (usually limited to the New Testament) that grant helpful insight are ones like The Four Translation New Testament. This book places four separate translations side by side and permits the student a ready "overview" of four readings of the same passage. (As within our discussion of translations, be careful to **examine the text** and see if the translations remain consistent with the working of truth and righteousness.)

Bible **DICTIONARIES** such as Smith's or Davis' contain historical commentary of people and places within the Bible. These books often help the student learn the essential facts of particular places, people or events and guide your study with various scriptural references. The danger of dictionaries is that they often take on the "flavor" of their author. For example, some "extend" the definitions of words like "baptism" and attempt "twisting" the word to include infant baptism, or sprinkling as a scripturally acceptable tenant. Obviously, the scriptures themselves must prevail in the use of any such material!

**MARGINAL REFERENCES** or **END VERSE REFERENCES** help refer the student to other passages of scripture containing like phrases or situations. Reading all the references will give you a good view of the use of the phrase, but may not always answer your questions as to the “reason” or “use” or “action” of the subject of study. In class, we will examine how to use marginal references. Some bibles (depending on the manufacturer or printing company and always depending on the cost of your bible) contain “study helps”. In addition to maps, or “quick references”, some provide historical data at the beginning of each book of the Bible. Other study helps include “commentary” or “foot notes” (see following chapters of this study regarding the use of commentaries) and others “synchronized reading” where you will find discussion of like passages of the same event. This is especially helpful when studying the life of Christ.

As with any such manmade help, you must be careful. If in doubt, ask someone you respect regarding its use. Remember most, however, **YOU NEVER GO WRONG WITH STAYING WITH JUST THE BIBLE AND READING, STUDYING, LEARNING AND OBEYING ITS CONTENT ALONE!**

Finally, question books (often called “quarterlies”) or other such study guides help you in going from verse to verse or point to point within a topical study. However, remember these study guides are man made and therefore not always accurate or complete! Usually “structured for class use” in their composition, we often see their use in the bible classes of the young (chronologically). *As a personal preference*, I would suggest their use in **private study only**, and use **ONLY THE BIBLE**, in directing the minds of a class situation. Having said such, please notice that this material (written by an uninspired man) is **not** the primary text of our discussion in this class! It is an “outline”, yes. But as good students, you are expected to use it at home in your **private study**. **THE MAIN OBJECT OF OUR STUDY FOR ANY TOPIC OR TEXT MUST BE THE WORD OF GOD.**

The best advice is to remember this fact: **THE BIBLE IS ITS OWN BEST DICTIONARY, CONCORDANCE AND COMMENTARY.** The more study you give the Bible, the more you find it explains itself. This is why a notebook and pen are so handy. Write down the verses that seemingly “associate” themselves with your present study and examine them carefully. **ALWAYS KEEP THE PASSAGES WITHIN CONTEXT**, but study the subject as thoroughly as you can. The best “rule of thumb” for understanding any passage is:

1. Read the verse preceding and following the verse of study: **THE WHOLE SENTENCE.** Paul, for example, wrote in very long sentences. The exacting thought is rarely found within just one verse of text!
2. If you still have difficulty understanding the text, read the whole chapter. Notice that chapters and verses are divisions placed by man (the translators) and sometimes should **NOT** be divided. Carefully read the **ENTIRE** text before you surrender in defeat of understanding!

3. If you still have difficulty understanding text, read the entire book and **READ IT ALOUD**. Often, this provides the greater inflection and emphasis of the text. Since the Bible was in large part dictated, reading out loud should help you consider the meaning of the text with greater *personal* influence.
4. If you still have difficulty understanding it, ask someone to study with you!

The Bible cannot and does not contradict itself. Therefore, any apparent contradiction must be studied to remedy the conflict. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). Therefore, "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21) demands using God's Word as proof over any and all of man's word!

Before our next study time in class, do the following exercises:

1. ESTABLISH YOUR SPIRITUAL AGE. DETERMINE TO LEARN THE "BASICS" AND GROW.
2. BEGIN NOT ONLY A **READING** BUT ALSO A **STUDY** OF SOME BOOK OF THE BIBLE. WHETHER A STUDY OF CURRENT DISCUSSION (AS LORD'S DAY MORNING AND WEDNESDAY EVENING CLASSES) OR YOUR PRIVATE INVESTIGATION, BEGIN STUDYING THE TEXT WITH GREATER DESIRE FOR PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT!
3. PRACTICE USING A CONCORDANCE, DICTIONARY AND MARGINAL REFERENCES. USE A NOTEBOOK TO RECORD YOUR NOTES OF STUDY REGARDING WORDS, PHRASES OR TOPICS.
4. ESTABLISH A DAILY PATTERN OF STUDY (2 Corinthians 4:16).



## CHAPTER THREE:

# “HOW DO I STUDY? LET ME COUNT THE WAYS!”

Perhaps **pupils** thought this chapter would be first. **Students** recognize we “laid the foundation” upon which to build our skills of study! (1 Corinthians 3:11) Nonetheless, this chapter comes to the point of “How do I study?” We do not intend to change anyone’s “method” of study unless that “method doesn’t work! As we stated, it is not our intention to change workable habits. It is our intention to form habits that work!

Within that very statement the first “key” to “how to study” is **FORM A HABIT**. We discussed the fact of needing **TIME** to study. Among the examples written for our learning (Romans 15:4) are the great men of the Bible who set specific **TIMES** for prayer. These examples work well for study! We are a people of schedules and usually keep these schedules rather rigid. We eat at a certain **TIME**. We work at a certain **TIME**. Folks know some of us will be assembling with the saints at a specific **TIME**. (Hebrews 10:25) If our priorities are set as they **must** be (Matthew 6:33; Colossians 1:18) then we should set a specific **TIME** to study!

Remember, however, there is no “magic pill” to **teach** you how to **study**. Various secular books relate “how to” and some schools have classes in which they teach the subject of “study.” This course is not as “professional” as those means, yet perhaps just as effective. The reason: **STUDY IS SELF-MOTIVATED!**

The dictionary defines **STUDY** as: 1. Effort to learn by reading or thinking. 2. A careful examination; investigation. 3. Earnest effort, of the object of endeavor or effort. 4. Deep thought. Though the last two are redundant statements, they emphasize the point that study requires **EFFORT** and **THINKING**. From that premise, let us examine the scriptures to prove whether the definition is correct.

**1 Timothy 4:13** *Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.* We could use other passages, but this is enough to prove the necessity of **READING**. Develop the **habit of reading** every day ~~~ **at a specified time every day!** Remember, reading alone is **not** study. Yet, reading is the first step (or “key”) to profitable study. Not only does reading agree with the definition of study, it is a commandment of Holy Writ!

**Philippians 4:8** *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* Once again,

we could site several other passages to prove our need to **THINK**, but this one suffices. Thinking is a “lost art” in many ways. Most of us aged fifty or more never brought a calculator into a math class with the intention of receiving permission to use it! Most of us aged fifty or more never had the benefit of “spell checker” when writing compositions. We never had “Internet” to quickly access data of any kind. We quite frankly were at the mercy of hundreds of books, “stuffed shirt” librarians and/or teachers, paper and pencil and our minds! We had to **THINK!** Interestingly, a group of teachers once studied the imaginations of children in the sixth grade. To half the group they gave books with stories and no pictures. To the other half, they gave the same storybooks *with* pictures. Then they asked each student to describe what they read. Not so surprisingly, the students who read books with pictures varied very little in their descriptions. Those without pictures, however, described some of the most eloquent and thought provoking descriptions of the same stories, and with much greater detail! The difference was the “**forced**” **creativity of thought!** Instead of someone doing their thinking for them, those who **READ** and **THOUGHT** gained the greater portion of understanding. Additionally, this latter group **RETAINED** more knowledge of what they read and studied than their peers. The process of **READING** and **THINKING** brings about righteous results.

A similar study divided students into three groups of “intellectually equal” students. The first group received no books, but only **listened** to the lesson. The second group received books and read the lesson silently while the teacher read it aloud. Further, this group received some visual aides with the explanation of the lesson. The third group received books, read their own lessons aloud, received the same visual aides in explanation and was encouraged to participate in an open discussion of the lesson. Of the three groups, the later obviously retained the most information from what they studied. The other two groups retained some; the group reading with the teacher and seeing the visual aides in explanation of the lesson retained nearly 60% more of the material than those merely listening. The point is, **reading, thinking, visually observing, and participating in discussion of the text** always brings the best results!

As many “styles” of study exist, as there are students to study! However, most congregations of the church of Christ tend to limit the “public” style of study to three or four. Because of our need to do all things decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40) we unfortunately equate this with “time elements”. (What a shame if the class or sermon should last fifteen minutes beyond the “customary” time limit!) Decency and orderliness do not necessarily require rigid time schedules: they do require wise use of time (Ephesians 5:15 – 16).

The most common “style” is **verse-by-verse** study. While this is convenient for the teacher, it is not always the most helpful for a student! This style permits us to announce, “The lesson for this Lord’s Day morning is 1 Corinthians 3:11”, and usually permits us to prepare for the following lesson without much challenge. The greatest “negative” to this style of study is that is seldom

encourages the participants in the class to look much farther than the verses at hand to learn the meaning of the text. In other words, it tends to create an "I read the chapter and so I've studied it" attitude.

Nonetheless, there are some "positives" to this style of study. It does let the student read *in context* and learn well, WHO SAID IT, TO WHOM IS IT SAID AND WHY. It tends to help the reader see immediate applications to situations, but often these applications defer to "someone else" more than self (compare 2 Corinthians 13:5). Another "plus" is for the diligent student. He/she will learn with a verse-by-verse study to use **marginal references**, and **dictionaries**. Often, the student will find the reading of study of various **translations** helpful in the researching of the text of study. Perhaps of greater benefit is that of **taking notes**. When finished with a verse-by-verse study, the student essentially compiled his/her own commentary! It is interesting to review these study notes a year or so later and amaze yourself how much you learned since last studying that passage!

Another typical style of study is **topical study**. This class is "topical" in that it focuses on one subject: HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE. If conducted properly, these studies are decent and orderly, and with proper planning, can fit much better into an "organized system of study" (meaning six weeks on this topic, six on another, ten on a third, etc.) Many congregations like to "rotate" teachers and classes and topical studies permit this advantage. If there are any disadvantages (i.e. negatives) to this style of study, it seems to be the time limitation. Most topics could occupy several weeks or years if we permitted. One preaching friend and I started preaching about the same time. We challenged each other to examine John 11:35 and see how many verses we could associate with it as we studied. After a few years, we stopped ... we discovered nearly the whole New Testament (and most of the Old Testament) could in some fashion find association with John 11:35.

Nonetheless, the advantages are many! Students know to use **the entire** Bible to find various passages support each aspect of the topic. They learn to make more personal applications to their lives. They also learn to locate the various books, chapters and verses with greater ease. Perhaps the greatest "plus" is the fact this style of study generates additional study of additional topics. Nave's Topical Bible is another very helpful "tool" to this type of study. Some publishers have included similar "topical study guides" in the Bible. The point is this is an excellent means of "diligently approving yourself to God" (2 Timothy 2:15). Remember to take copious notes ... even topical studies permit room for additional learning!

Still another "style" of study is the "workbook" type. Many good "question and answer books" exist for nearly every book of the Bible. As a point of "caution" however, I strongly suggest you do **not** purchase this type of study material from the local bookstore! The reason is simple: most "general book stores" are only

interested in selling books – *not truth!* Workbooks, if you choose this manner of study, are available from several brethren (ex. Truth Bookstore, C.E.I., Faith and Facts) whose interest is in teaching **TRUTH**. These works sometimes contain a bit of commentary, but for the most part, these materials instruct the student to read a particular text of scripture and then answer the questions. True and false questions, fill in the blank, and sometimes a few essay questions fill the pages of these study materials. They are a great benefit to **babes** in Christ and/or young children. However, it is my experience they seldom challenge those of **full age**. Remember we must **grow** (2 Peter 3:18) and if we stifle ourselves from this growth, we sin (James 4:17).

As an aside, the material you use right now (HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE) obviously falls into the “workbook” style of study. Yet, a difference exists as it directs you in a certain TOPIC of study. In chapter four, WHAT ABOUT THE EXTERNALS, we will devote a little more attention to this difference and how it can benefit the diligent student.

The fourth manner of study among churches of Christ is seldom considered as “Bible study”. However, it is the most prolific of all studies! It is WORSHIP. No, I am not wishing to deplete from the reverence, spirit and understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15) required to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Yet we cannot deny the worship services grant an abundance of opportunity to seriously study the word of God!

Sing teaches and admonishes (Colossians 3:16) and therefore, someone has to be learning in the process! **Think** of the songs we sing and what they teach. Jim Kennedy, now deceased, taught me to lead the singing. He insisted that I “read and study the content of the song before I lead the congregation in singing the song.” If I lead them in a song that does not agree with God’s Word, then I become guilty of teaching error and the brethren become guilty of following error (Matthew 5:17 – 20). Notice the topics of spiritual songs, the flow of scripture in many of the psalms we sing (ex. Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah), and the several addresses of hymns (ex. How Great Thou Art). A good bible study can exist with using the songbook as a “guide” to the study. You will find some songs that “test” your mind as to their scriptural agreement!

Prayer, the taking of the communion, giving, and certainly the sermon contain several aspects of good study if we **take notes**, listen and reason of these matters. Use the time with the saints to discuss these matters (“exhorting one another” – Hebrews 10:25; “building up in the most holy faith” – Jude 20 – 25) motivates the **student** to take something of value home for private study. Further, if the **family** discusses these matters, it usually builds a positive attitude toward worship and the brethren assembled. Be sure to discuss the **BIBLE** in these discussions. Critique of the preacher, song leader, and others creates only a dinner of “fried preacher and roasted brethren” and depletes all motivation to love the brethren with a pure heart fervently (1 Peter 1:18 – 25).

Perhaps in worship is the only place we actually *hear* the scriptures read aloud. If you study the Old Testament, you will find numerous times when Moses assembled the people to *hear* the law. Josiah was a King who commanded the people to assemble for *hearing* the word of God. In Nehemiah's time, when the scriptures were read, the people stood up – paying attention to the words they *heard*. Jesus dictated to the apostle John the letters to seven congregations of His church in Asia (Revelation 2 –3). In each letter Jesus says, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit sayeth to the churches." Are we listening? Is this not additional reason to read these scriptures **OUT LOUD** in our own study time? We tend to listen and give greater attention to such reading when we *hear* it ... even if we are the reader!

Not so strangely, this very simple and easily accomplished task is the principle key to increasing our concentration level and ultimately our understanding **RETENTION** of God's Word. No, it is not the only element, for we have repeatedly said, "reading alone is not Bible study!" However, it does capture our attention. From this "capturing", I suggest the following to help every "style" of study:

- a. **PRAY** --- Ask God's blessings your work (effort of reading and thinking) that you might profit from your time well spent in study.
- b. **DO NOT ACCEPT INTERRUPTIONS** --- In our day and time, interruptions abound! Most of us have received the telemarketer's call just as we sit down to supper! It irritates us and we exclaim, "How rude of them!" Is there anything more important than the study of God's Word? Even sickness and death do not exceed that importance. The fact is we can control most of the interruptions. If something distracts your attention to God's Word, remove the distraction! Give God your attention, and realize the abundant rewards He grants in return!
- c. **HAVE YOUR TOOLS WITHIN REACH** – Your Bible, paper and pencil, a concordance, dictionary, and if you use a "guide" should be your only "tools on the work bench." Set your time and keep it. Enjoy the riches of reading, thinking, and gaining from the greatest Book of all the ages!
- d. **READ IT TWO, THREE, FOUR OR MORE TIMES** – Do not be ashamed of multiple readings of the scriptures. They are like a deep well of water. Every time you let the bucket down into the well, you get water ... but it is a bucket full you never had before!

Before our next study time in class, do the following exercises:

1. **ESTABLISH A SET TIME EACH DAY RESERVED FOR YOUR PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY.** Try establishing the habit that nothing will interfere with this time ... it is reserved for you and God together in His Word.

2. ESTABLISH A "STYLE" OF STUDY BEST SUITED TO YOUR SPIRITUAL AGE. Next week, share with us what you found works for you!
3. READ THE SCRIPTURES ALOUD!
4. DURING THE ASSEMBLING WHERE YOU WORSHIP, TAKE NOTES CONCERNING THE TEACHING OF THE SONGS AND THE SERMON. Determine what "theme" (if any) the song leader established with his songs. Take notes on the sermon: how did those thoughts apply to you and what changes would you make to the lesson to make it more effective to you and/or others?

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### “WHAT ABOUT THE EXTERNALS?”

Through the years, several gospel preachers have given me their libraries, either in part or in whole. Most of the books are “Sermon Outline Books”. The rest consist of a variety of resource material: biographies, church history, various dictionaries and concordances, debates on various subjects, discussions of particular concerns and a host of commentaries by various authors. I value these books for various reasons; not the least of which is the memory of their previous owners. They fill my shelves and to some, might appear rather impressive. I use them and benefit from reading them, but when asked, “Have you read all of those books?” I can’t help but laugh!

Paul evidently had some type of “external” material pertaining to his work of preaching. To Timothy he says, “The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.” (2 Tim. 4:13). Whatever these books and parchments contained was of great interest and value to Paul. **However, he did not use them as proof of what he preached!** He used God’s Word for that purpose!

The point is this: **IF YOU HAVE GOD’S WORD (THE BIBLE) YOU HAVE ALL YOU REALLY NEED IN ORDER TO LEARN WHAT YOU MUST DO TO PLEASE GOD.** Read carefully 2 Peter 1:1 – 4. Did God leave us lacking any information regarding our spiritual needs? If so, then God lied. Since that is impossible (Hebrews 6:17-20; Titus 1:1-4), we know we have all the information we need to save our souls from Hell (Romans 1:16-17; et al). Read carefully Revelation 22:18 – 19. One with whom I studied claimed these verses pertain *only* to the book of Revelation. All right: even if we accept that theory, by what authority would we say we need more than we have, or have more than we need in that book? Read carefully, John 20:30 – 31. We admit the scriptures are lacking in some things regarding the life of Jesus Christ. For example, what did He do during the first twelve years of His life? For that matter, what did He do for the next eighteen years? John says what we do have is enough to cause our belief in Jesus as Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, have life in His name. Do we believe? Read also John 21:24 – 25 and note John’s own admission that if everything that could be written of Jesus were written, the world could not contain the books that would be written! Now, do we need (or could we really use) more than what we have of ***inspired writing?***

Man foolishly suggests he (man) can know things the scriptures do not reveal ***by inspiration.*** Look carefully at 2 Timothy 3:16 – 17. Now examine Hebrews 1:1-2 and 2:1-4. Add to it Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32 to consider the law of Israel. Remember Moses’ charge to Israel in Deuteronomy 29:29: “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed

belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." The fact is that we *by inspiration* cannot change the established word of God! Psalms 119:89 ~~ For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. Matthew 24:35 ~~ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. These and other passages simply prohibit our addition to the scriptures!

God permits our investigation of this world with its content and history. God never condemns "true science". Though the Bible is not a "science text", it does speak of various matters which scientists have proven accurate. For example, the world is round (Isaiah 40:22), the rain cycle (Ecclesiastes 1:7) the "black hole" of northern space (Job 26:7). While these and other "sciences" of the Bible come under great scrutiny, we must remember that the Bible is not a book intent on "proving science right or wrong." It is a book intent on saving the soul. Psalms 19 is one of the more prolific chapters of scripture combining the evidence of creation with the law of God as being Jehovah's flawless design! Nonetheless, God permits man to "investigate" His creation, and in fact, encourages such investigation (ex. Job 38:23). These studies we call *external evidences*. An abundance of man written books (i.e. without the benefit of miraculous inspiration) exist with *verified accuracy* of various matters: archaeology, history, etc. Such books prove helpful to the student desirous of **EXTERNAL EVIDENCES** of God's majesty in this world and proof of people and places recorded in Sacred Writ.

Solomon's wisdom experienced life and its "science" and recorded his findings in the book of Ecclesiastes. He concludes his "book report" of such experiments in life by saying, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity. And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh." (Ecclesiastes 12:8 – 12). Paul however, warns Timothy against "vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Timothy 6:20 – 21) --- or as the NASU translates the passage "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge" -- which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you." Remember then, "much study ("excessive devotion" -- NASU; "reading" -- marginal) is a weariness of the flesh." Be careful and regulate your reading of these "external evidences" of God's works and words. More importantly, "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21) by the authority of God's Word.



Before leaving this point, may I suggest a few “types” of history books that may help your “external study”? Histories like FOXES BOOK OF MARTYRS and APOSTOLIC FATHERS record writings of some notables of the first century such as Clement of Rome, Barnabas, Polycarp, and Ignatius. These men lived during or shortly after the time of the Apostles of Christ and several of their writings have endured the ages. Flavius Josephus is another noted historian whose life began shortly after the death of Jesus Christ (circa A.S. 35). His writings record matters of that era and mention of several names and places recorded as well in Holy Writ.

Nearly any archaeology study has some proof of its authenticity. They help the serious student gain an appreciation for the places and peoples mentioned in the scriptures. Some television programs have begun broadcasting “biblically oriented” archaeology shows. Discovery Channel in cooperation with The National Geographic Society usually verifies the accuracy of their findings and tries to correlate them with the scriptures. As an aside, Discovery Channel recently began airing shows called Biblical Mysteries. My personal observation of these shows fosters the following considerations:

1. While challenging, such shows I would not recommend for babes in Christ. The mixing of religions in explanation of various texts of scripture can be detrimental to the proper learning and understanding of God’s Word.
2. A value of these programs is the insight given to Jewish customs (i.e. Hebrew) and their antiquities. Sadly, these commentators seldom relate similar insights to the customs and traditions of the Gentile nations and their subsequent influence upon Israel.
3. The narration of scripture usually comes from either the King James Version or New King James Version. I have not seen them deny the authenticity of Holy Writ ... albeit they often ask, “Is this particular account mythical, legend or reality?” Usually, they present it as truth and explore the **external evidences** in search of proof of the scriptures.
4. At times, they attempt an equation of “natural calamity and God’s hand”. One example is their recent explanation of the ten plagues of Egypt as being “natural calamities” instead of God’s powerful hand. The one plague they could not explain in such fashion was the last ... the death of the first born in Egypt!

Biographical books of preachers are interesting, and sometimes helpful if the student has an interest in who did what, when and where. The biographies of “Restoration Leaders” help us understand many of the perils confronting those who determined to “restore New Testament Christianity to its righteous stature.” However, it is my experience some of these biographies do not agree one with

the other. Depending on the author and the *author's orientation toward the truth of the scriptures*, many biographies tilt their literature to agree with their belief. As with any non-inspired writing, consider the source and return to the Bible for ALL doctrinal authority (2 Timothy 3:16 – 17).

**COMMENTARIES** often prove themselves “the most dangerous book in the library.” While history books, books of archaeology and such like prove very helpful in describing the times, places and peoples of biblical content, their accuracy rests in the tangible proof of documents and artifacts. Commentaries, however, are nothing more than “acquired comments of commentators.” Frankly, most are just that — just common tators! Nonetheless, if you have been attending worship services or Bible classes for any length of time, you have been exposed to commentaries. Every sermon you heard and every Bible class discussion you ever heard are merely “verbal commentaries.” You trust the preacher/teacher! Surely, they would not lead you astray and into perdition! No, not intentionally as **godly** proclaimers of the truth seriously study and rehearse their exegesis of scripture before they step before the audience! However, these men are not inspired! The **inspired** apostle John writes, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1) This examination of “spirits” (teachers) includes every preacher/teacher you will ever encounter ... even me! If the preacher/teacher takes exception to this fact, remind him of 1 Corinthians 3:5, and 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and especially Acts 17:11!

Anyone who “makes comment” of scripture becomes a “commentator”. His/her notes become “commentary”. Therefore, every **student** is a commentator to some extent. Make no mistake: there are some very good commentaries for sale! Yet, not a single one is written by an inspired man! Several years ago, a gospel preacher rightly observed, “The Bible is its own best commentary and dictionary. With enough study, the student can find the definitions of words and phrases including the understanding of apocryphal writings. With enough study, the Bible explains itself without contradiction. Perhaps this explains the multiplicity of letters speaking the same things!”<sup>1</sup> Please note this statement is *uninspired commentary* — yet, the conclusion is sound and acceptable!

Can we trust the commentaries? The answer rests in how well you trust your **own** understanding of the scriptures. We must never accept the teachings of any man merely because we like him or the “oratory sounds reasonable.” Some commentators never obeyed the gospel of Christ. We would never permit such a person to occupy our pulpits or teach in our classes: yet many quote their words of commentary with as much frequency and authority as the gospel itself! Other commentators have published very fine materials after years of study and painstakingly proven research. Still, these are merely men with no more **reading**

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<sup>1</sup> TEACHING TEACHERS TO TEACH, a typed, mimeographed, unpublished manuscript used by Claude S. Davis, circa 1970. The material used professional school techniques to train bible class teachers.

and **thinking** ability than you have! "Search the scriptures," says Jesus (John 5:39). Let that be our primary study book! (Colossians 1:18)

**Sermon books** fair some better in terms of helpful materials than commentaries. Usually, these books either contain outlines for your study or complete sermons in written form. Regardless of in which format these appear, the student must treat them as any other sermon: remember man wrote it (not God) and you must prove these matters as well! The value of sermon books actually increases when you use them as "study guides" as either topical or verse-by-verse. (See previous chapter.) Often, sermon books carry themes. For example, I have one that outlines only the parables as sermons; another outlines the life of Christ; still another outlines sermons regarding prayer. Most sermon books, however, contain a variety of topics and the careful student uses them as nothing more than study materials. We can give the same commendations regarding audiotapes or videotapes of various preachers.

With today's technology, several sermon outlines and/or topical studies exist via Internet. Since I do not have Internet, I cannot speak directly regarding these resources. However, several of my acquaintance have used Internet resources for their sermons, commentaries, background studies, etc. and done so quite successfully. My only comment here remains the same as mentioned in regard to all other man-made materials: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

**"Morally sound" books** are more popular today since talk show hosts (both radio and television) have reached popularity by discussing such issues. As a result, some morals have become immoral and some immoralities have become moral (Isaiah 5:20 – 23). Paul warned of such degradation (2 Timothy 3:12 – 13; Romans 1:26 – 32). Yet, some have not fallen astray and offer their well-considered opinions regarding "How to Fix It". Frankly, **if the Bible itself cannot teach me morality, then I seriously doubt any book of man will accomplish the task.** Having said such, I admit to reading a few: Let's Roll, by the widow of the late Todd Beamer, a victim of 9-11 when his plane crashed in Pennsylvania; THE BEST OF BARBARA JOHNSON, a compilation of her three most popular books; Good Homes in a Wicked World, by the late brother Irvin Lee. Yes, I've read many more, but these give you an "overview" of what I mean by "morally sound books." Each encouraged me, and certainly, brother Lee's book taught me a great deal with scripture. My caution is however, that we avoid exalting and believing these books, their reasons for existence and even their author's who are very well respected more than we exalt and believe God's Book ~~~ let us never exalt man's works as "righteous" above God's!

Finally, one "external" that we ought to use frequently is **EACH OTHER!** Jude 20 - 21 says, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." What a wonderful resource of study material to know we can discuss the scriptures with our brethren! The

earliest members of the church did so (Acts 2:46 – 47) and we have evidence of this fellowship continuing as righteous. The common, “Well I think” is just like the commentaries, sermons and such we examined earlier in this chapter. However, with one another, we have the opportunity to *reason*. Examine Isaiah 1:18-20. Note the speaker is God. Whenever we *reason* with the Bible opened, we *reason* with God. Sharing this experience with our brethren is an “external” element by which to increase our knowledge of scripture as we discuss these matters. Reason is “accumulating the facts, thinking about these facts, and reaching the conclusion demanded by the facts!”<sup>2</sup> When you use the Bible as the *only Book of inspired facts*, you have only **TRUTH**. When reasoning with one another concerning the contents of this Book, we learn from one another and consequently, build up one another in the most holy faith! We can compare this type of study to the old one-room schools. The older taught the younger, and the younger often challenged the older to learn more of the subject. That’s not a bad thing for members of the church!

Before our next discussion in class, do the following exercises:

1. If you have religious material in your library, examine the author. What do you know about the author and his/her “handling aright the word of truth”? Determine if this material would help or hinder a babe in Christ in their study.
2. Determine how much time you use in listening to or reading of sermons by a variety of gospel preachers. Do you take notes and do you examine their teaching with the Bible?
3. Study from the Bible a particular place or person. Try to find something “external” to use with this study and note what portions of the external(s) agrees with the scriptures and what disagrees with the scriptures. Take notes of these differences and share them with us.

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<sup>2</sup> PROVING THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, Michael J. Davis, 1990

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### “HOW DEEP DO I PLOW?”

Several years ago, when I concluded a gospel meeting in Illinois, one of the elders made one of most provocative statements I ever heard. Related as accurately as my mind permits, he said, “I recognize the significance of planting and watering seed. Paul spoke of it in 1 Corinthians 3:6. Usually, in gospel meetings, we expect to have seed planted and/or watered. But being a farmer, I know you have to plow the ground before you can successfully sow the seed. This week, we plowed some ground.” Well, whether my preaching had much effect or not upon those brethren, I offer no opinion. What was effective was that elder’s statement upon me! He is exactly right: unless the heart of the receiver is properly prepared to accept the seed and the water, that heart is either wayside soil, stony ground, or full of thorns (Luke 8:4 – 18).

In the student’s eagerness to learn, he often develops an insatiable appetite for truth and righteousness (Matthew 5:6). His intense craving for perfection in Christ Jesus becomes an obsession (Matt. 5:48; Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 3:18; Col. 1:28; Heb. 13:21; et al). He desires to be the epitome of Colossians 3:16 and prays to earn the distinction of being “a walking Bible.” Make no mistake: this is a noble quest and one commanded in inspiration! Note carefully Hebrews 6:1-3: “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.” No serious Bible student stops with “baby food” (Hebrews 5:12 - 14). The serious Bible student desires and *needs* the strong meat of the Word.

Unfortunately, the energy described in the previous paragraph often exists more prominently in “babes” than in many “older” Christians (i.e. those who have been members of the Lord’s church longer than these babes in Christ.) Sadly, many Christians become “fat and lazy” as they “age” within the Kingdom. They neither exercise their minds, nor add to their minds a nutritious meal of God’s Word. Seemingly, they prefer only to “piece” upon the “sweet tasting” passages (Compare Isaiah 30:8 –18 noting the eternal peril to such souls.) of scripture that do nothing to strengthen their souls to stand strong in the power of His might (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 6:10 – 11).

One of the deeper books of study (i.e. “strong meat” – Heb. 5:12 – 14) within the scriptures is the book of Revelation. One of the “scenes” John sees is an angel with a little book. John implores the angel for the book and was told, “Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make they belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.” (Revelation 10:8 – 11) Most accept this “book” as the recorded Word of God: its sweetness symbolic of a desire to eat it all, and its bitterness symbolic of its results when not handled rightly (2 Timothy 2:15). I use this passage as describing the initial desires of babes in Christ (1 Peter 2:1-3) and

the “sickening sweetness” that comes to those who fail in administering to their own souls a “proper diet” of truth and righteousness. Prayerfully, you see the need to carefully determine your “spiritual age” and therefore the correct spiritual food for your soul! Such a determination is *your* responsibility. Only *you* know the abilities of your mind. As a Christian, you also realize your responsibility to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). How much you grow and at what rate you increase in these commanded areas will reflect your diligence in seeking God’s approval (Hebrews 11:6; 2 Timothy 2:15).

Let us return to the illustration of “plowing, planting, and watering.” Any farmer who ever plowed a field or a garden realizes you have to recognize the limitations of two things before you ever set the plow to the ground. First, you must recognize the limited plowing depth of the plow. If you tilt the plow point at too steep of an angle, you can break the plow point and even ruin the plow! If you set it at too shallow of an angle, you will not turn enough soil to make your trips through the field profitable. Granted, you can keep plowing at that depth, but doing so until the field reaches its desired plowed depth, is a waste of valuable time. You could be planting instead of plowing if you set the point at the correct depth. Second, you have to recognize the limitations of your tractor. (Some may remember plowing with a team of horses, mules or oxen, but this illustration captures the same meaning.) The stronger the tractor, the greater the depth you can set the plow point. However, even the strongest of tractors have limits. If the plow is set too deep into the soil, the tractor just spins its wheels, and makes a horrible mess of the field! In fact, such abuse can even “blow up” the tractor!

Just as meat will choke the babe in Christ, “plowing too deep” will discourage the searching soul. Please do not misunderstand this point: ***EACH CHRISTIAN HAS THE OBLIGATION TO LEARN GOD’S WORD.*** Read Romans 11:33-36: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” God desires us to search, but never to the point of “breaking the plow” or “burying the tractor.” Each Christian must determine his/her own ability (1 Peter 4:11); for within yourself, you find the “tractor”. Coupled to the tractor is the “plow”. You might liken this to the “tools” we discussed earlier in this study. Remember also that the Bible is its own best dictionary and commentary. The more you study *it*, the stronger your “tool” in plowing the ground! Therefore, as a student, you must recognize just how strong your ability and how steep to set your plow!

Moses sets forth another caution when he said, “The secret things belong to God.” (Deuteronomy 29:29) No one needs to “figure out” what God has not revealed. However, if it is needful to the salvation of mankind, God has revealed it unto us through His spirit (1 Corinthians 2). Compare Daniel’s statement regarding God’s wisdom and power (Daniel 2:19 – 23). While in Daniel’s time

God worked miraculously, the principle of his statement remains true. Notice the marginal references of Job 12:22 and Psalms 25:14. These deep matters require not only a strong ability, but also, a correctly set "plow". Even then, ***only if the matter is crucial to our life and godliness*** (2 Peter 1:3) will we ever find the answer.

Chapter four, "What About the Externals" emphasized the need of ***proof*** (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Every student must accept the responsibility of this verse: it assuredly applies to ***SELF***. 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" It seems interesting to note many "knowledgeable" souls are knowledgeable only in ***things ABOUT the bible*** instead of ***THE BIBLE***. We discussed the fact that God does not withhold from us the investigation of this world and its content. However, this information must never be to the exclusion of what ***HE*** says! "Scholars" often prove their "intelligence" of the scriptures with their expositions of elaborate and ornate studies from other "scholars". (These kind remind me of the description of Tertullus [Acts 24:1-9]. He seems to be more "blow than go.") Though these men might have some Hebrew or Greek expertise, or even the achievements of diligent secular studies, it is not an "inspired" ability and therefore, they must attribute their knowledge to man's source. The same is true of acquired information of archeology, history and all other matters that pertain to things ***about*** the Bible instead of ***THE BIBLE***.

Even if these matters have proof (and they must have if we or others choose to repeat them as "facts") they are not "scripture". So, be careful in "plowing too deep" in such fields of study. It is not sinful, and at times, it is quite helpful in understanding peoples, cultures, places and events. It is always interesting! However, substantiating proof of man's findings has very little comparison to the factual findings of God's Word. For example, historians write a great deal about the "feast of Purim". The book of Esther speaks of it, but not in the detail of the several historians. Separating between "fact and fiction" becomes a "he said, she said" argument regarding the studied conclusions of such scholars. ***Don't plow too deep***. Remember God's Word tells us what we ***need*** to know and the rest is just "stuff".

Remember that the religious leaders of the Jews made a grievous error in relying more on their traditions than on the law of God (Matthew 15:1-9). Today, the same grievous errors will come to us (in both teaching and practicing truth) if we place more emphasis on customs and traditions than on truth and righteousness. Even the customs and traditions of a local congregation can wrongfully influence the understanding of truth and righteousness. The scriptures do not tell us an "order" of worship (two songs, scripture reading, prayer, another song, communion, giving, sermon, song, prayer, go home!) It might surprise you, however, to learn how many congregations think their way is absolutely "inspired commandment". ***STUDY*** reveals we must sing, pray, study, commune and give.

Two of these five actions God limits to the first day of the week for their practice. The “order” of such commanded things is left to the discretion of the local congregation. (This falls in the realm of “autonomy.”) Sometimes, we set the plow too deep when contending for opinions instead of book, chapter and verse for authority and the “tractors” just burn out! Is it any wonder some cherished souls just do not know God’s Word? Have we insisted on “study the way we do this ... it hasn’t changed in years” or, “study *why* we do these things ... it will meet us in judgment”? (John 12:44 – 50) Those who honestly and sincerely ***study the deep things of God*** will find their proof within God’s revealed Word (1 Corinthians 2). Their “tractor” increases in its strength, and they learn just how deep they can set the “plow” as they study!

Before we close this chapter, it seems wise to discuss “when to let it go.” Romans 14 is the passage many use in their attempt to “justify the unjustifiable.” “You can’t impose that ... you’ll offend a weak brother,” is the battle cry of those who desire acceptance of all and rejection of none. The fact is Romans 14 deals with how to treat opinions when held by a brother whose convictions do not agree with yours, yet neither do they contradict inspired commandments. Read carefully the comparison chapter of 1 Corinthians 8:12: “But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.” We need to remember no two minds mature at the same rate (chapter three). By the same reasoning, no two souls mature at the same rate. You may need to teach what you learned ***FROM THE SCRIPTURES*** to the weak brother. Likewise, you may ***be*** that weak soul and have need of someone teaching you! Then again, the whole matter may have nothing to do with anything God has ordained ... in which case, ***let it go!*** One of the best Bible illustrations regarding this type of “plowing” is 1 Corinthians 11:1 – 16 regarding the “head covering of women”. The “issue” caused division among these members and Paul had to address the divisive nature of the problem. Having told them the order of authority from God to man (verse 3) and that the covering of the hair was for the woman, not the man (verse 12) he concludes this discussion saying, “But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.” (Verse 16) In our vernacular, Paul would say, “Don’t divide over this ... let it go!”

The individual’s obligation is to learn of Christ (Matthew 11:28 – 30). There is no limitation as to how much scripture you may learn. In fact, the danger is in not learning enough of God’s Word (Matthew 4:4). Our study of God’s Word must be a daily task (2 Corinthians 4:16). You can never exhaust the Word of God. If you will pardon another analogy, I will close with this true story. As a child, I often studied the Bible with my grandmother Davis. When we finished, she would let me go to her well and draw a fresh bucket of water. She would tell me, “Bible study is a lot like getting water from my well. Every time you let the bucket down you get water; but it is a bucket of water you never had before.” She was right!



Enjoy your study, but be diligent in studying! As you grow stronger, you can set the plow a bit deeper and the tractor will still pull it though the field of study. Your study will never reveal something "new" from God's Word. Instead, it reveals what you have not fully studied to this point. As your intensity increases in study, your retention of what you study increases. Never satisfy yourself with the least of what you can know of His will ... study to learn every word! Set the plow deep enough to do the as much good as possible, and keep the tractor pulling with a steady pace as you keep you eye on the goal of heaven!

Before our next study time in class, do the following exercises:

- 1) Choose a subject or chapter of study and trace as many references as you can for that chapter. Examine dictionaries, concordances and if you like, commentaries to see if they add anything to your acquired understanding of the text. Be sure t5o note if any of the man-written information conflicts with the sacred text.
- 2) Prayerfully, you have been studying your Bible all through this series of studies. Go back to some of your earliest notes from BIBLE study and examine them with a little deeper thought and study. Are you able to set the "plow" a little deeper and is your "tractor" a little stronger?

## CHAPTER SIX:

# “RE STUDYING THE STUDIED”

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.” 2 Peter 3:18 Thus Peter concludes his eight brief chapters of inspired composition (five in 1 Peter and three in 2 Peter). Though the KJV gives this one verse as a complete sentence, the NASU uses verses 17 and 18 as a complete sentence. Frankly, this latter translation grants the entire thought: “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

Did you notice the need to “restudy the studied”? The complete thought of 2 Peter 3:18 really demands attention to verse seventeen. Actually, one does not gain the full understanding of these last two verses until he reads and studies the entire chapter! A wise instructor coined a rather quaint “rule” of reading. He said, “When you read the word ‘therefore’ in the scriptures, look to see what it is there for!” Many passages of scripture (especially in the KJV) begin with such words as “therefore”, “wherefore”, “nevertheless”, “seeing then”, “and”, etc. Such words and phrases require a **study** of the text in much greater detail than merely the single verse.

While 2 Peter 3:18 remains fresh in your mind, contemplate the word “grow”. We understand the word means “increase”. Peter said to “increase” in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The growth of a child seems slow to one observing the child every day. Only when one sees remembrances of that little baby, and then the one-month-old, two months, six months, then year old (etc.) pictures, does one realize how quickly time passed, and consequently, how quickly the child grew. The same principle is true of “growth” in grace and knowledge. Perhaps this is another reason for Peter’s inspired urging of **stirring up our minds** by way of remembrance. (2 Peter 1:13; 3:1). We need to see our growth and determine if indeed we have increased properly and proportionately in the Lord’s eyes! We should never consider ourselves “all knowing”, but rather, “always learning”, “always growing”.

Proof of the above observation is in the verse of our present study. We usually define **GRACE** as “unmerited favor of God”. In chapter four, we discussed the fact that, “The Bible is its own best commentary and dictionary.” What verse proves grace is the unmerited favor of God? Does it not take an array of verses, and study and reasoning to prove this as a valid statement? What if we presented grace as an acronym: **God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense**? Would you agree? Does this fact (if you believe it as fact) find proof with just one verse of scripture or does it require several scriptures and much

reasoning to reach that conclusion? Now consider this question: HOW DOES ONE GROW IN GRACE? I submit this question as the very evidence that **proves** we must continue growing! The "average" student cannot easily answer, "How does one grow in grace". It takes one of full age (Hebrews 5:14).

Second, Peter said to "increase" in **KNOWLEDGE**. Solomon's book of Proverbs frequently shows the value of knowledge and the urging to obtain it and **WISDOM**. The dictionary provides an understanding that wisdom is the wise use of knowledge. However, several verses of Solomon's proverbs define wisdom differently than Webster. Which meaning do you accept? Does it require a verse or several verses to prove the definition of wisdom? Does this study of the word "wisdom" pertain in any way to fulfillment of growing in **KNOWLEDGE**? Is not the very exercise of such study the proof of continued growth in knowledge? (Ibid)

Certainly, we see from these two points the necessity of "restudying the studied." Study is an ongoing endeavor that ends only when our earthly mentality will not permit "reasoning" or life itself ends the ability of "increasing", i.e. **LEARNING!** Much to the contrast of the silly women mentioned of Paul (2 Timothy 3:6-7) the **student** continually grows (increases) in God's continued favor upon us (i.e. grace). Likewise, he grows in the knowledge of His Word! He strives to prove all things; holding fast that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). He realizes the reality of Paul's statement, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33) Compare this inspired statement with 1 Corinthians 2. Since the Bible **student** agrees the Bible does not contradict itself, how do we harmonize these passages? Add to them Ephesians 3:1-7. Are we now convinced that we must "restudy the studied?"

Though the Greek (according to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance) uses different words, the translators used the word **REMEMBRANCE** in the following passages of scripture:

1 Timothy 4:6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

2 Timothy 1:5-6 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

2 Timothy 2:14 Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.

Jude 5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

Please note each of these passages deal with “putting the brethren in remembrance” and “stirring” the mind. Let’s look at the word “stir” in 2 Peter 1:13 and 3:1. Strong says, “NT:1326 diegeiro (dee-eg-i’-ro); from NT:1223 and NT:1453; to wake fully; i.e. arouse (literally or figuratively)” We might add Webster’s definition (he was just as “inspired” as Strong) who offers the following: 1. set in motion; move. 2. change the position or situation of. 3. mix by moving around with a spoon, fork, stick, etc. 4. set going; affect strongly; excite. 5. bring into notice or debate. 6. a public disturbance, tumult, or revolt. Now if we reason a bit on the word “stir”, you might think of a washing machine with an “agitator” in the middle of the drum! It “mixes” the clothes, water and detergent in a “stirring” manner and literally “beats” the dirt from the clothes; “awakening the brightness” of the material, “setting in motion” a newness, “changing the position” from dirty to clean ... you see the pattern! The point is this: our **study** of the scriptures must never lie dormant, but must be “provoked unto love and to good works” (Hebrews 10:23-25).

How often do we “reflect”, “recall” or “remember”? Obviously, Paul remembered several things as he “reflected” on the past (see verses above). He also said, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14) We cannot make the scriptures contradict themselves! What Paul says is, “I don’t dwell on the things past, but use the memory of those events to ‘stir’ me to greater diligence of obtaining heaven!” Therefore, the need to “put the brethren in remembrance” is a righteous thing: it creates an aura of “restudying the studied.”

In our Bible study “classes”, good teachers spend time “reviewing” lessons to assure their students learned what they endeavored to teach. This process is critical to the serious Bible student who wishes continued growth in grace and knowledge. Hebrews 6:1-3 does **not** mean we “forsake” the first principles of the doctrine of Christ: rather, we “go on unto perfection”. However, if we neglect the very foundation upon which we built the structure of our faith (see 1 Corinthians 3:10 –23) how are we to grow in grace or knowledge? Is it not the case that we must care for the foundation as well as the house built upon that foundation? Let me remind you of Ecclesiastes 10:18: “By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.” Now, examine 1 Corinthians 3:10 - 15 carefully:

- I. THE FOUNDATION IS CHRIST
  - A. 1 Corinthians 3:11
  - B. Hebrews 11:1; 6
  - C. Acts 4:11 – 12
  
- II. EVERY MAN MUST BUILD UPON THIS FOUNDATION
  - A. Jude 20 – 25

B. 2 Peter 3:18

C. Each piece is valued from the builder

1. Gold
2. Silver
3. Precious stones
4. Wood
5. Hay
6. Stubble

Make these the best you have to offer! Anything less than our best is insufficient for God!

D. Every man's work will be tried (tested; examined)

1. 1 Peter 1:3 – 9
2. James 1:12 – 16

E. Even those who loose their work have a soul worth saving

1. 1 Corinthians 3:13 – 14
2. Jude 23

Nehemiah 8:1-8 is an interesting passage. Remember that Israel was in bondage, Jerusalem had been destroyed and Nehemiah's desire was to rebuild the walls of the Holy City, Jerusalem. Ezra, the priest at this time, worked closely with Nehemiah as they instructed the people and persuaded them to have a single, united mind about the work (Nehemiah 4:6). Obviously, had Israel retained the Law of Moses with dignity, honor and respect from the beginning, they would have escaped their captivity. However, the people now realize the righteousness of Ezra and Nehemiah and remain attentive to their leadership. Notice the renewed reverence given to the reading of the law: "And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." (Nehemiah 8:5 – 8)

Remember Micah 6:8: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Do we not notice the example of "restudying the studied" from this passage? Once more, God's people had forgotten! Hosea 4:6 is another such passage reminding us that God's people forgot enough that they had only minimal knowledge: "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." Now when we contemplate Romans 15:4, we see the value, yea, the **necessity** of "stirring up our pure minds by way of remembrance."

A gospel preacher named Johnny Ramsey once said, "There are nine points to learning your Bible. They are: study, study, study, study, study, study, study, study, study and study!" Why not make a tenth point: **STUDY!** Within these series of lessons, our intention was not to set forth new and innovative methods of study. Instead, our desire remains to encourage the study that works! Determined by your desire of God's approval (2 Timothy 2:15) your study increases daily in both time allotted to the task and diligence given while serving the task. You should know more now than when you first began your study. In fact, you should learn something new every day. Now understand, there is nothing "new" within the scriptures for no man may add nor deplete from their content (Rev. 22:18-19). What we mean is that you as a *student* will find something a little deeper, a little more profoundly stated and meaningful to you in your daily study. Our souls continue to grow and mature and must never be willingly ignorant of God's Word.

Finally, remember there are two ways to pronounce the word IGNORANT: 1) ig' norant and 2) ig nor' ant. The former is the popular way of pronouncing the word and we understand it to mean, "lacking in knowledge". The latter has a different meaning. It means, "to ignore, stand aloof of, willingly dismiss as unimportant". Unfortunately, this latter is most often the case among those who claim to know God and Christ. 1 John 2:3 says, "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." Among the commandments is **STUDY**. To ignore it is sin (James 4:17). To sin in this fashion is to cast aside one's hope of heaven (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26 – 27). To those who are "ig' noant", they can learn and remove the lack of knowledge by filling their minds with proven righteousness from God's Word. To the "ig nor' ant", their only hope is to repent and LEARN!

To all of us, KEEP STUDYING ... it is the most rewarding effort any soul will even perform!