

# Why Should I Study the Bible?

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## Introduction.

- A. In Hosea 4:6, God pronounces a powerful condemnation against His people. Their lack of knowledge is going to cause them to be destroyed. If God still spoke to His prophets today, they might well pronounce the same judgment against the United States. On at least one level, this seems like an odd thing to say because of the focus that our nation puts on education. We have thousands of colleges, tens of thousands of high schools, and elementary schools beyond number. How, then, could our LACK of knowledge destroy us?
- B. The problem is that the education our schools provide isn't the right kind of education. Our country spends years teaching our children about reading and writing and arithmetic, but no time at all teaching them about justice and mercy and faithfulness. The result is that we are becoming a nation of mental giants but moral midgets, and we can see this lack of spiritual knowledge destroying lives around us every day.
- C. If we don't want ourselves and our families to be destroyed in this way, we can't count on the government to step in and save us. Instead, we have to take the lead ourselves. With this in mind, for our second spiritual New Year's resolution, let's resolve to study the Bible more. In particular, let's each one of us resolve to do our Bible lesson before every Bible class. This isn't scribbling a few notes in the pews five minutes before services start. This isn't our kids filling in blanks at the stoplights on the way to church. This is sitting down with our families Saturday evening, Sunday morning, or Wednesday afternoon and doing our lessons together.
- D. This is not a massive time commitment here. It probably amounts to about half an hour a week, but it will have a profound effect on us if we follow through on it. God's word provides us with a number of reasons why we should study. Let's look at some of these in answer to the question, "Why should I study the Bible?"

## I. General Reasons.

- A. The first of these reasons is that we should study the Bible **TO LISTEN TO GOD**. There's an old joke that goes that if you talk to God, you're religious, but if God talks back, you're crazy. That's not entirely true. God speaks to all of us today, not through little voices in our heads, but through His word. Look at Peter's comments on the subject in 2 Peter 1:20-21. In understanding this passage, we need first of all to understand what Peter is talking about. When he says "prophecy," he isn't just referring to predictions of the future, but to everything contained in Scripture. All of that information, Peter says, is not composed of the prophets' own ideas, but of God talking to His people. Friends, if we care about God at all, we need to be listening. There is no relationship in life that works without constant two-way communication. If we never listen to our spouses, our marriages fall apart. If we never listen to our bosses, pretty soon we get fired. Why should our interaction with God be any different? We have to listen when He talks if we want to do what He wants.
- B. We also need to study our Bibles, especially by doing our Bible lessons, **TO GET UNDERSTANDING**. Consider the words of the psalmist in Psalm 119:104. He tells us that studying the word makes us wiser, and that newly acquired wisdom leads us to hate evil. Want to know why the world around us is so evil? Want to know why the people we interact with are so consumed by sexual immorality, drunkenness, lying, and a hundred other sins? Simple. They practice evil because they've never learned to hate it. They've never learned to hate it because they've never studied God's word. Friends, if we aren't careful, the same thing will happen to us. Righteousness is not something that happens naturally. Instead, we have to devote ourselves to constant education and re-education if we want to remain pure. We have to study the word.
- C. In addition, we need to do our lessons and study the word generally in order **TO EXAMINE OURSELVES**. James tells us why this is important in James 1:23-25. Interestingly enough, he describes an experience that all of us are familiar with. I suspect that just about every one of us, after we've wiped the shower fog off the mirror and brushed our teeth and so forth, we pause a moment to consider how we look. Sometimes, we're fairly pleased with what we see. Other times, we look in the mirror and kind of cringe a little bit. We say to ourselves, "Man! I need a haircut," or "Man, I need to drop a few pounds!" Everything we decide to do about our appearance starts with that look in the mirror, and without the mirror, we wouldn't know where to begin.
- D. God's word is precisely the same way. James in this passage describes two people: one who looks in the mirror and forgets what he sees, and another who looks in the mirror and acts on it. However, there's another kind of person, who's arguably even worse off than the forgetful man: the one who never looks into the mirror at all. Friends, if we never study the word, we are ignoring the only thing that can direct our spiritual lives. We are ignoring our mirror. A lot of the time, we try to use the people around us for our mirrors, but that's pointless. They are not the standard. They do not reveal us as we really are, with all the flaws and imperfections that we need to work on. The only way to truly see ourselves is in the reflection of God's word.
- E. Likewise, we need to make this determination to do our lessons **TO EQUIP OURSELVES**. Paul describes this use of the word in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. There's lots in here we could look at, but let's focus on the last idea,

the idea that the Scripture completes us and equips us for every good work. As we've observed on a number of occasions, every one of us has some spiritual work that God wants us to do. We're expected to produce, and if we don't have the equipment we need to produce, how likely are we to meet God's expectations? In the congregation here, both Pete and Matt are electricians. Although I barely know enough about electricity to turn on a light switch, I'm sure that both of them are conscientious, hard-working men who are good at what they do. Now, let's say that we took Pete and Matt in their church clothes, without any tools, dropped them off at a building, and said, "Do the electrical wiring for this building," how successful do you think they'd be at that? I guarantee you, they aren't going to be cutting a lot of wire with their teeth and fingernails! Any workman, no matter how skilled, needs his tools to succeed. We are spiritual workmen, and if we want to succeed at God's work, we need to study the word so that it will equip us to labor in the kingdom of God.

## II. Practical Applications.

- A. On a more specific level, one of the things that the word will equip us to do if we study it is **TO SAVE SOULS**. Consider Paul's description of the gospel in Romans 1:16. It's absolutely critical for us to remember that it's the word, not the Christian, that brings others to Christ. Our success at evangelism does not depend on our charismatic nature or our clever tongue. If we use those to persuade people who would not otherwise hear the gospel, we aren't actually converting them to Christ at all. In fact, the only thing we ourselves can do to the word is diminish it, by hiding it because of our fears or contaminating it with our insecurities. By contrast, though, if we present only the truth in a clear and straightforward manner, it is that truth that will reach the lost. Obviously, we can't do that if we don't know what the truth says in the first place, or if we don't know enough about the truth to answer questions. The solution to those problems is equally obvious: study.
- B. Yet another thing that we need to study to do, and especially that we need to study our Bible lessons to do, is **TO REFUTE ERROR**. Let's look together at Paul's words to Titus on the subject of elders in Titus 1:9. Certainly, this passage describes the qualifications of the elder specifically, but as with almost all of those qualifications, it is something for which every Christian should strive. We need to hold fast the faithful word so that we can both exhort and refute those who are in error. If we are willing to let the preacher or the elders tell us what the Bible says without studying it for ourselves, our mindset isn't any better than the mindset of the denominations. In fact, if that's our mindset, it won't be long before we become another denomination.
- C. Let me give you an example. Let's say, God forbid, that I'm teaching the adult Bible class, and I get some crazy idea in my head, and I get up here and I say that a passage says something it clearly does not say. If nobody in the Bible class has done their lessons, there's nobody to speak up. There's nobody to point my error out to me, and in so doing, to save both my soul and the souls of the congregation. Instead, everybody just swallows the error I'm teaching because they haven't done any studying for themselves. Of course, if people have studied, if they have done their lessons and thought about the teaching of the word, my crazy idea is going to have a short shelf life. The only way we can prevent apostasy is for every one of us to study.
- D. Another useful effect that doing our Bible lessons has is **TO TRAIN CHILDREN**. Paul speaks to this subject in Ephesians 6:4. First of all, let's notice that this passage makes clear that it is the father who is to be primarily responsible for teaching his children, so dads, this is something we need to man up and do. However, this is a work that mothers share in too, and minute for minute, can their be any more valuable time than the time that a family spends together doing their Bible lessons? Just think of the benefits! First of all, the child who's finished his lesson is going to learn more in Bible class itself. He's going to enjoy it more because he feels prepared and smart instead of unprepared and dumb. Mom and Dad are there to help their kids with difficult questions. Most important of all, though, is the example that it gives. The kids see Dad not reading the morning paper or watching the Saturday night football game, but spending his free time studying the word of God. We can say all we want that God is important, but until we live in a way that shows our children that God is important, they'll never listen. We need to train our children by setting them a good example of study.
- E. Finally, though, we need to study the Bible in order **TO GAIN THE INHERITANCE**. Paul describes the usefulness of the word for this in Acts 20:32. Sometimes, we forget about all of that. Sometimes, we get stuck in a rut of Christianity, where we just keep on going to church, living the same lifestyle, just because we're used to it, not because we care about it or are trying to accomplish something with it. It's like we're walking on a spiritual treadmill. The thing is, though, that Christianity isn't supposed to be a treadmill. It's supposed to be a race. It's a long race, but it has a beginning and it has an end, and everything in between is supposed to be about making it across the finish line. The only thing that tells us how to get there is the Scripture. Only the word of God can guide us to share in the heavenly inheritance of the saints. I'm not normally a big fan of preacher acrostics and things like that, but I heard one years ago that's stuck with me. It says that what "Bible" stands for is "Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth." Folks, that's really not a bad summary. We're here to get there, and it's the Bible that tells us how. If we obey the word, we'll make it; if we don't, we won't. Only by studying the word, then, can we learn how to make our lives worthwhile.

**Conclusion.** If you haven't been following the word, start following it this morning.