

Why Study The Bible?

Introduction

As someone who now considers himself to be a Bible believing Christian, I am interested in studying God's Word for what it is ... the Word of God! In particular, the Authorized Version, or King James Version, is my choice of Bible to use. Its history is well documented, and it was developed out of the line of Bibles that came from Antioch, where the Christian church was founded. Unfortunately, the newer versions of the Bible do not follow this same line, but come from manuscripts discovered in Alexandria, Egypt. Modern scholars consider them to be more trustworthy because they say the manuscripts they have found are older than supporting manuscripts for the King James Version. Older is better for these scholars, but just because something is older, it does not necessarily follow that it is better, only older.

Scripture Alone

But enough of this history, let us take a look at the Word of God. As I originally stated, I am a Bible believing Christian. Therefore, I am interested in studying what the Bible has to say, and am only secondarily interested in what men have to say. I believe Scripture is the test of what men say and not the other way around! Consider the Bereans mentioned in Acts 17,

¹⁰ And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews.

¹¹ These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

¹² Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

This is taken from Paul's second missionary trip and we see Paul going from Thessalonica to Berea. But what is important to notice here is what is said about the Bereans. Verse 11 tells us the Berean believers were "more noble" than those in Thessalonica for two reasons. One, they received the word with all readiness of mind; and two, they searched the scriptures daily, to see whether what was being said matched up with scripture. They used scripture as their test of what men said and did not form an opinion of what scripture said by what men spoke. This is what philosophy does and one reason for the statement God makes about these men in Romans 1:22, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became as fools." To be a Berean, or a Bible believing Christian for that matter, one must be willing to receive the word of God with all readiness of mind, and search the scriptures daily, to test whether what is being said is so. Verse 12 follows up with the results of this type of belief. This is probably old to some, but worth repeating. Whenever you see the word "therefore," read the line or lines before it to see what it

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is there for! Verse 12 states that because the Bereans received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things are so, there were many who believed. So much so that many honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, believed. It is good to notice that the word Greeks is used here. The Jews were the ones with the scripture; it was to them that the “oracles of God were intrusted” (cf. Romans 3:2), not the Greeks. But because of this way of Scripture alone, even the Greeks, otherwise known as the Gentiles, believed ... and not just a few!

Paul, when training up Timothy, taught this principle, although because of Timothy’s upbringing (cf. 2 Timothy 1:5), he was probably already aware of it. But, Paul being the teacher he was, did not leave this important principle to chance. I’m certain Paul also realized others would also be reading his letters and would benefit from this instruction. Let’s start with Paul’s instruction in 2 Timothy 2:15 and then follow up with some of those verses that surround this verse,

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

Here Paul emphasizes what Luke had emphasized in the section we have just looked at in the Book of Acts. Paul tells Timothy to “study to shew thyself approved unto God.” Since this sentence ends with “rightly dividing the word of truth,” we know Paul is speaking about the word of God, or scripture. Something important to interject here, is to realize scripture at this point was pretty much just what we now call the Old Testament. At the time of Paul’s letter, the New Testament was being written. These epistles were being written and the account of Jesus’ time on the earth was commonly known at this point. Scripture consisted of three sections in the Old Testament: The Law, The Prophets, and The Writings. While the Jews of the day considered the importance of the scripture in the order given, Jesus considered it all important. Jesus said in Matthew 4:4,

⁴ But he answered and said, **It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.**

So, all of Scripture is important. Incidentally, I added the red lettering in this verse for those who consider themselves to be “red letter Christians.” If you are one of them thinking you can use just the red letter words to justify your lifestyle, please remember this red letter section. If you are a red letter Christian, then you have to believe the entire Bible! Continuing on with our study, though, Paul is telling Timothy, if you are to be approved unto God, study His Word. When we study the word of God, knowing it is the word of God and we are not ashamed. We are also then able to be like those Bereans who were more noble than those in Thessalonica. For we will have rightly divided the word of God and will know whether those things were so. Paul, in verse 14 and verses 16 – 18, speaks about those who we should avoid and why they need to be avoided. They are shown here for your understanding,

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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.

¹⁶ But shun profane *and* vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

¹⁷ And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;

¹⁸ Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

These are just two examples of why scripture alone is needed. If men tells us or teach us things, we should check the scripture to make sure they are telling us or teaching us correctly. We can only do this by searching the scripture daily, as the Bereans did. Any preacher and/or teacher worth his salt will insist on this! One other note when considering the statement “rightly dividing the word of truth” is to make sure we apply the idea of taking things in context. Make sure that what is being spoken is being used in the context of scripture to what it refers to. If it talks about the nation of Israel, don’t try to make it match up with the Church. If it talks about unbelievers, don’t try to make it apply to believers. Context is of the utmost importance. Context, context, context!

Benefits of Bible Study

We have already brought out one of the benefits of Bible study. When we study, we are showing ourselves approved unto God. This idea can be further developed. Paul records in Romans 10:17 the following,

¹⁷ So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

In order for us to build up that measure of faith we have received, we must hear the word of God. Faith is important, because as Hebrews 11:5 – 6 records,

⁵ By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

⁶ But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

We are unable to please God without faith in Him. Our faith in God pleases Him and that faith comes by hearing his Word. To please God alone should be the only reason we study His word, but God is gracious, so the benefits extend beyond this. Here is a listing of some of these benefits:

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- To help keep us from sin:
 - Psalm 119:11 “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”
- To give us hope:
 - Psalm 119:49 “Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou has caused me to hope.”
- To comfort us and give us life:
 - Psalm 119:50 “This is my comfort in my affliction: for the word hath quickened me.”
- To teach us:
 - Psalm 119:66 “Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.”
- To show us the way:
 - Psalm 119:105 “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
- To cause us to rejoice:
 - Psalm 119:162 “I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.”
- To give us great peace:
 - Psalm 119:165 “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.”

A short list and all from Psalm 119, the longest chapter of the Bible and dealing with the Word of God!

So, why study the Bible? It is the word of God. It is meant to guide us, teach us, comfort us and give us hope. When we study, we are showing ourselves approved unto God and learn to rightly divide the word of God. We study to learn about God and to please Him. When Jesus was preparing the Apostles for his departure, he left them with these words from John 14:25 – 27,

²⁵ These things have I spoken unto you, being *yet* present with you.

²⁶ But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

²⁷ Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

I will leave you with a favorite section of Scripture for me. This is from Philippians 4:4 – 9 and sums up nicely the benefits of serving a loving God and the study of His words.

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⁴ Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice.

⁵ Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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.

⁹ Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.