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DIGGING
DEEP
2018-19

Month 1: The Importance of Bible Study

Introduction: Preparing our minds for the study.

- A. Read Psalms 1. What does this psalm tell us about the need for and method of studying the Bible? Find another psalm that illustrates the importance of Bible study, and note three similarities between the two passages.
- B. The internet and computer technology has changed how we learn. In what ways has the helped and/or harmed our ability to do serious Bible study? Find five resources that are helpful for Bible study and list three ways in which technology may be a hindrance. Thinking introspectively, are there any changes that you personally should make about how you steward God's gift of technology (1 Corinthians 4:1)?

I. Blessings that result from Bible study.

- A. Read 2 Timothy 2 and locate the blessing promised for those who study.
- B. Read Ephesians 5 and locate the blessing for those who study.
- C. Write down the blessing that you found in Psalms 1:1-3.
- D. Read John 8 and when you locate the blessing for Bible study, write it down.
- E. Contemplate and answer the following questions, citing the appropriate scripture (If you have a group, discuss):
 1. Why is the Bible more valuable than any other book?
 2. Why is the Bible so little studied today, even in our congregations? Are there cures for this problem? List several practical ways in which you can encourage Bible study in your congregation. Comment on the Facebook page if you have idea that would help others in the group.

II. Curses that result from ignorance of the Bible.

- A. Read the book of Hosea and list the sins of the people that are highlighted in this book. Then specify the passage that mentions the curse for people who are ignorant about the Word of God. What is the curse?
- B. Read Ephesians 4 and when you locate the curse, write it down.
- C. Read Acts 3 and when you locate the curse, write it down.
- D. What curse(s) is indicated in Matthew 15? Read the chapter and write down the curse.

- E. Read John 12. Locate the curse and write it down.
- F. Think about the following questions. Comment on the Facebook page if you have suggestions to help us be better students and teachers.
 - 1. About what part of the Bible are most people most ignorant? Why?
 - 2. What makes for a good Bible class or group study? If each of us wanted to learn how to be a skilled Bible class leader, what would he need to do?

III. Methods for jump-starting Bible study. Select one of these for your own growth and the growth of the group.

- A. If you have not already, develop a daily Bible study schedule to which you can stick. Discuss with your group or on the group page how you plan to make daily Bible study a part of your regular routine.
- B. Go to your Bible class teacher and ask for his lesson plan for the quarter so you can read ahead and be better prepared to take part in the class. A good teacher will appreciate an eager student who makes helpful comments and asks constructive questions in class.
- C. Pick a book of the Bible that you would like to understand better. Read it through at one sitting, three times, with paper beside you. Record five verses that you'd like to commit to memory and memorize them. Write down every passage you don't understand. Get recommendations from folks on the Facebook group about their favorite study resource on that passage. Then find multiple commentaries and work through every question until you're satisfied. You'll know the book better than you can imagine.
- D. Pick a subject that you would like to fully understand, and find a good topical Bible *and* concordance (A topical Bible is not the same as a concordance). Use these resources to locate every verse and its context which contains the word. Make a list
- E. Listen closely to every sermon and Bible class this month, and record one key passage/ thought you'd like to research. Follow up with study during the week, and have a conversation with the preacher or teacher about what you found concerning that passage.

Month 2: Benefits of Bible Study

Introduction: The Bible is different from every other book.

- A. Read Psalms 119. List 10 things that this psalm teaches us about the benefits we can receive from Bible study.
- B. We may not use the word “meditation” very often, because it has become associated unfortunately with Eastern mysticism. And yet the Bible teaches that we must meditate on God’s word. Find some verses (from Psalms 119 and elsewhere) that teach the need to focus on God’s word. If you do not already do daily meditation on the Scriptures, then make your own, personalized plan to meditate on God’s word each day. Write down exactly what you plan to do.
- C. Since Bible study benefits everyone, obviously a person does not have to be a Bible expert in order to benefit from study. Still, the more we know about the Bible, the more we can learn. The principle of Matthew 25:29 holds in this area. Think of some ways in which the study of God’s word opens up new possibilities for understanding more of what God has revealed to us in the Bible. (For example, a person who already knows the basics of the Levitical priesthood will be in a better position to learn from the book of Leviticus than someone who is totally new to the Law of Moses.) Write down these examples in such a way that you could them to a non-Christian. (This is especially important because a non-Christian likely has very little Bible study experience and may see it as only marginally important.)
- D. Unfortunately many do not read the Bible. A 2013 Barna survey found that the majority of Americans (57 percent) read their Bibles only four times a year or less. Only 26 percent of Americans said they read their Bible on a regular basis (four or more times a week). Younger people also seem to be moving away from the Bible. A majority (57 percent) of those ages 18-28 read their Bibles less than three times a year, if at all. List three reasons you have heard people give for not studying the Bible, and discuss how we can respond to these reasons.
- E. In this lesson, let us consider the benefits of Bible study by following the outline of just one verse: Acts 20:32. To prepare, read all of Acts 20, to understand the context of our verse.

I. The word of God gives us His grace.

- A. In Acts 20:32, Paul commends (literally “deposits”) his audience to God, but in so doing commends them to the word of His grace. We cannot be in God’s favor, or grace, without being in His word. What is His “word,” here?
 - 1. Some have understood the “word” to be Christ Himself. What Bible passages might lead one to think this?

2. Others have understood the “word” to denote the gospel of Christ. This is more plausible, because “word of God” more commonly refers to the Gospel in the New Testament. In our context, in Acts 20:24, Paul said he was testifying to the gospel of the grace of God. Paul elsewhere wrote that the gospel was the power of God for salvation, just as he says in Acts 20:32 that the word leads to the inheritance (Romans 1:16).
3. But whether the “word” refers to Christ Himself or to the Gospel of Christ, observe that being connected to Christ and His blessings means, in practice, that one is applying the Bible to life properly. Read Titus 2:11-14 and list what the grace of God teaches us through the word of Christ.

II. In giving us God’s grace, His word builds us up.

- A. Next, in Acts 20:32, Paul says that the word of God’s grace is able to build us up. “Build up” is a perfect translation, because the word for “building up” literally refers to building a house.
 1. Compare this passage to Romans 15:4. Look up the Greek word translated “encouragement” or “hope” (παράκλησις), and record the definition. This word is a cognate of the word that Jesus used to denote the Holy Spirit’s role as “Helper” (John 16:7). This word literally portrays a person calling someone near who needs help. The Christian is comforted and encouraged to keep on going due to what the Spirit-inspired Scriptures teach Him. List several occasions in your own life when the Scriptures comforted you. With each occasion, write down at least one verse that especially helped.
 2. Hebrews 12:1 teaches that the examples of Old Testament heroes can inspire us to faithfulness. Which hero of faith encourages you the most? Read his account from Hebrews 11, and list five ways in which you want to conform your character to his. Provide Old Testament references for each point. Share your example with the Facebook group, and save your notes for a future Bible class or sermon.
- B. Notice that Paul says that the word is *able* to build us up. It will not build us up automatically, without our effort.
 1. Second Timothy 3:15 says that the Scriptures are able to make us wise for salvation. If we ask for God to help us and then we do not read His word, then we are really opposing one of God’s major avenues for helping us. Sometimes in personal Bible studies with non-Christians, we will hear the student say something like, “I just don’t feel close to God, and I don’t know why!” A big part of the answer often is that God’s word is not part of the student’s life. We must lovingly urge that Bible study (along with worship and fellowship with the saints) will bring one closer to God. Locate three passages that discuss God’s desire to have a relationship with mankind through

His word, and prepare to share these passages with someone who needs to bring the Bible into his life.

III. In giving us God's grace, His word saves us.

- A. The "inheritance" Paul mentions is obviously heaven itself, where all those who are sanctified will be after the Judgment Day. Find and list the major New Testament passages about heaven. Post your list on Facebook and compare it to the lists that others have posted. By comparing our notes, we should be able to arrive at a fairly complete list for mutual benefit.
- B. Peter refers to heaven as our inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-4). Peter uses three descriptive words or phrases to describe this inheritance. What do they mean?
- C. While it certainly is true that Jesus saves us, nobody would know how to be saved through Jesus if it were not for the Holy Scriptures.
 1. How does Ephesians 5:25-27 connect salvation with the word of God?
 2. How does 1 Peter 1:23 connect salvation with the word of God?
- D. Write down and memorize a verse that teaches each step in the New Testament plan of salvation, i.e., the plan whereby a person changes his status before God from lost to saved. Memorize these passages so that you will be ready to share the power of the gospel with lost people.
 1. Hear the word of God: _____
 2. Believe in Jesus as the Son of God: _____
 3. Repent of one's sins: _____
 4. Confess Christ as the Son of God: _____
 5. Be baptized into water for the remission or forgiveness of sin:

IV. Methods for appreciating the profit available in Bible study:

- A. Study Acts 17:11. Why was it necessary for the Bereans to check the message they were hearing against what the Bible actually taught?
- B. Using Bible study software such as OliveTree, study the meanings of the Greek words translated "teaching," "reproof," "correction," and "training in righteousness" in 2 Timothy 3:17. What do these words say about the power of the word of God?

- C. Whereas 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:3 teach the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures (i.e., that the Scriptures are sufficient for authorizing all faith and practice), Catholicism teaches that church tradition is also required for authorizing faith and practice (and that church tradition actually supersedes Scripture's authority). In the *Ignatius Study Bible*, Hahn and Mitch write concerning 2 Timothy 3:17, "Paul extols Scripture as a preeminent guide for the moral life. He does not claim, however, that Scripture supplies us with comprehensive instruction in all matters of Christian doctrine, worship, and ecclesial government. Besides the divine authority of the biblical books, he also acknowledges the authority of apostolic tradition (1 Cor 11:1; 2 Thess 2:15) and sees the Church, built on the foundation of Christ and the apostles (1 Cor 3:11; Eph 2:20), as the bearer of God's truth to the world (1 Tim 3:15)." Read the passages cited in this quotation, and prepare a one-page, written response to the Catholic position that church tradition is required for equipping the Christian. As you formulate your response, feel free to consult any number of outside resources such as: (1) Moisés Pinedo's book, *What the Bible Says about the Catholic Church* (http://apologeticspress.org/pdfs/e-books_pdf/wtbsatcc.pdf) and (2) "Modern-Day Miracles, Tongue-Speaking, and Holy Spirit Baptism: A Refutation" by Dave Miller (<https://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=11&article=1399&topic=78>). Be sure to include answers to the following questions:
1. Does the Bible teach that miracles such as supernatural knowledge and prophecy would continue throughout church history, or that it was a first-century phenomenon? (What does 1 Corinthians 13 teach about this?)
 2. Does the Bible teach that there would be a chain or succession of apostolic authority starting with Peter and continuing to the present day?
 3. Indeed, the church was built on the foundation of Christ and the apostles, but what does this say about how the church should be organized today? (What does Matthew 28:19-20).
- D. When we say that the scriptures are all-sufficient, does that mean that we cease to be critical thinkers? How does our use of intellect and our use of Scripture coincide? As you formulate a written response, consult the article here: <http://www.calebcolley.com/philosophy-and-the-sufficiency-of-the-scriptures/>.
- E. Some of life's greatest questions are answered exclusively by the Bible. Find at least three passages that answer each the following questions:
1. From where did the Universe come?
 2. What is the purpose of an individual human life?
 3. What awaits man after death?

Month 3: What the Word of God Can Do

Introduction: The obligation to preach the word

- A. Using your concordance, read (in context) and list every mention of Timothy in the New Testament. Make sure that you understand a basic timeline of Paul's and Timothy's interactions, and Timothy's involvement within the church.
- B. Read Philippians 2:19-22, and describe Paul's opinion of Timothy.
- C. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, likely the final extant epistle from Paul's pen, the apostle gave Timothy a solemn charge. Read 2 Timothy 4:1-4 to find this charge, and summarize it here. What does 1 Corinthians 9:16 say about the refusal to accept the charge to preach the gospel?
- D. Acts 8 has a great deal of information about preaching the word of God. Read this chapter, and find various expressions about what it means to preach the word (e.g., "to preach Christ," Acts 8:5).
- E. Is the obligation to preach the gospel only for apostles and those directly instructed by apostles? For an answer:
 - 1. Consider 2 Timothy 2:2. How many generations are involved in his passage?
 - 2. Read Matthew 28:19-20. For how long would the teachings of Christ would be authoritative for mankind?
 - 3. Find three other New Testament examples of "ordinary" people who shared the Gospel. What do they have in common?
- F. In this lesson, let us consider 12 things the word of God does for those who faithfully apply it. By each passage listed, briefly state what we learn, from at least one of the listed passage(s), about what the word of God does for us.

I. By the word of God we are born.

- A. 1 Corinthians 14:15
- B. James 1:18
- C. 1 Peter 1:23-25

II. By the word of God we are made alive.

- A. Psalms 119:50

B. Psalms 119:93

C. John 6:63

D. John 5:24-26

III. By the word of God we have faith.

A. Romans 10:17

B. Hebrews 11:6

C. John 6:44-45

D. Acts 15:9

IV. By the word of God we are converted.

A. Psalms 19:7

B. Matthew 13:15

V. By the word of God we are sanctified.

A. John 17:17

B. Ephesians 5:25-26

VI. By the word of God we are cleaned.

A. John 15:3

B. 1 Peter 1:22

VII. By the word of God we are saved.

A. James 1:21

VIII. By the word of God we grow.

A. 1 Peter 2:1-2

IX. By the word of God we turn on the light.

A. Psalms 119:105

B. Psalms 119:130

C. 2 Corinthians 4:4

X. By the word of God we get spiritual wisdom.

A. 2 Timothy 3:14-15

XI. By the word of God we become partakers of His nature.

A. 2 Peter 1:4

B. Hebrews 12:9

XII. By the word of God we are prepared for glory.

A. Colossians 1:12

B. Acts 20:32

Conclusion—Practical application

- A. Many people throughout the religious world are instructed from a wide variety of sources (creeds, manuals, legislation from conventions or councils, etc.). But there is no biblical authority for these sources of religious instruction. Furthermore, there is no New Testament example of conversion (where someone is saved from his sins) where anything was preached other than the word of God. Give at least two examples of New Testament conversion, and show how the word of God was preached to those who were converted.
1. Read the article here (<http://www.calebcolley.com/ive-taught-question-things/>). How might Acts 17:11 help make the point of this article?
- B. Many people in the religious world believe that it is necessary for God to operate in their minds/hearts directly (apart from the Scriptures) before they can be saved. How would you respond to someone with whom you were studying who claimed to be having direct revelations from God (the Father, the Son, or the Spirit)? In formulating your written answer, read the following two articles:
1. “Does God Speak Directly to Man Today?”, by Wayne Jackson (<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/595-does-god-speak-directly-to-man-today>).
 2. “False Ideas about the Holy Spirit,” by Wayne Jackson (<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/29-false-ideas-about-the-holy-spirit>).
- C. Paul told Timothy to be ready to preach the word “in season and out of season,” or during those times when the word was popular and when it was unpopular (2 Timothy 4:2). Read every speech in the book of Acts that ended with the audience interrupting or physically attacking the speaker due to their disagreement with the message, and make a note of the

specific point(s) that seemed to prompt the harsh response. Did the speaker do the right thing in choosing a controversial topic? What role ought controversy play in the life of a Christian teacher? What role did controversy play in the life of Christ?

