

THE WHY AND HOW OF PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY – Ursula Kemp, 1977

Lesson 2: HOW-TO

REVIEW

Let me briefly recap the basic elements we brought out in our first lesson. These were:

1. The believer's need to study the Word on his own.
2. The two ways of studying.
3. The motivation for getting into the Word.
4. The response and dividends of personal Bible study.

APPROACH

With the "WHY OF BIBLE STUDY" answered, we are ready to examine the "HOW-TO" aspect.

OUTLINE

I. THE APPROACH TO BIBLE STUDY

LESSON

Since we discussed the proper motivation toward personal Bible study in our first lesson, we need only assume that this is your attitude: you are hungry for the Word and eager to explore it. Now, HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT IT?

THE APPROACH TO BIBLE STUDY

A. Preparation

As a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, you have your own personal Tutor indwelling you to teach you and guide you into all truth (John 14:16, 17, 26; 16:13,14). You have the perfect Manual, the Bible, as your guidebook through life. You have an activated human spirit which

enables you to understand and categorize divine phenomena. ALL THESE THINGS WERE PROVIDED FOR YOU WITHOUT YOUR HELP AND TOTALLY APART FROM HUMAN MERIT!!!

"...as it is written (in 1 Cor. 2:9—a quotation from Isaiah 64:4), Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (v. 10), But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

Not only did God make these gracious provisions, He also offered a continuous and generous supply of the wisdom from above.

"...that ye may be perfect (mature) and entire (complete) wanting (lacking) nothing. If any (one) of you lack wisdom (discerning knowledge, skill—σοφία), let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth (reviles, insults) not; AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN HIM. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (Jas. 1:4b-6a).

Whether you will or will not take God up on His offer is left up to you. But HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT IT IN THE RIGHT MANNER?

FIRST THINGS FIRST: The Ten "Commandments" for Personal Bible Study

1. Be prepared!

a. Physical preparation

Pick a time when you are least likely to be interrupted, and a place where you can spread out your "tools" for unhurried study of the Scriptures.

Gather up the most essential equipment: your Bible, notebook, a good dictionary, a Bible dictionary and, if you own one, a concordance. Some Bibles have a brief concordance in the back, which is better than none at all. Also, have handy a pen, colored pencils (5), and an encyclopedia.

What is a concordance? A concordance is an alphabetical index of words found in the Bible, given in their exact context. For those who have some knowledge of Greek or Hebrew I would

recommend a concordance which lists the words in these languages as well as in English and in anglicized form, also, lexicons in the original languages of Scripture. However, because linguistic scholars have done a superior job in the past, you can benefit from their knowledge even without the mastery of the languages of the Bible.

b. Mental preparation

Unclutter your mind of what the Bible terms "the cares and riches and pleasures of this life" (Luke 8:14). In short, cast "down...every...thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God," and bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). THIS REQUIRES SELF-DISCIPLINE AND SELF EVALUATION which, in turn, leads to point c. in our outline:

c. SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

In my own notes I have capitalized SPIRITUAL PREPARATION. Without it you short circuit the relay of divine information from its power source--God the Holy Spirit. Because he is spiritually dead, the unbeliever is incapable of understanding divine phenomena (I Cor. 1:18, cf. 1 Cor. 2:14). And out of fellowship, the believer in carnality—that is, the believer who has failed to confess any known sin in his life—is limited in his spiritual progress (1 Cor. 3:1-3); he lacks spiritual perception.

Before you open the pages of God's Word make sure that you are in fellowship with God.

Recognizing this need in his own life, David recorded:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts (attitudes, ideas): And see if there be any wicked way (any element of resemblance to the life of an unbeliever) in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (day to day life of the believer in fellowship)" (Psa. 139:23, 24).

What David requested should be our own prayer—a thorough divine investigation. Let no one presume that he can hide any area of his life from omniscient God. God can see through us as we would through a glass of water. Hebrews 4:13 puts it this way:

"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

SELF-EVALUATION SHOULD RESULT IN SELF-JUDGMENT, IF SUCH IS NECESSARY!

2. Be in fellowship with God!

God's gracious provision for pardon from the penalty of sin—past, present and future—and power and victory over the presence of sin hinges on the appropriation of the work of Christ on the cross.

"If we (as believers) confess our sins, he (God) is faithful and just (righteous) to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

If we discern the Word of God correctly this verse guarantees RESTORATION TO FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, nothing more and nothing less! It does not imply that FELLOWSHIP IS SYNONYMOUS WITH THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT! Nor does it state that upon confession of sin the believer is automatically empowered by the Spirit of God. To maintain this is to oversimplify the specific commands of Scripture relative to the filling of the Spirit.

THE COMMAND "BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT" (Eph. 5:18) is realized by THREE CONDITIONS. These are delineated in the Bible as follows:

(1) QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT (I Thess. 5:19). That term denotes a resistance or opposition to the WILL of God as revealed to us in His Word. (Jas. 4:17—to know to do good and not doing it! Thus, quenching the Spirit would be characterized by an UNYIELDED LIFE! It would be putting our will before that of God and preclude any filling of the Spirit.

(2) GRIEVE NOT THE SPIRIT (Eph. 4:30). Quenching comes before grieving! A person who is not yielded to the will of God will succumb to sin, and SIN grieves the Spirit whose very Being is Holiness. The remedy for sin is confession of sin, and this is where I John 1:9 comes into the picture.

(3) WALK IN THE SPIRIT (Gal. 5:16). How is the walk in the Spirit appropriated? I refer you back to Lesson 1, in which we discussed the two primary objectives of personal Bible study: CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD and CONFORMITY TO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST.

This requires first of all a

CONSCIOUS SEARCHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

and secondly,

TOTAL ABANDON TO THE WILL OF GOD.

Allow me to quote excerpts from a paragraph named, "The power of the Holy Spirit appropriated," from the book, *The Holy Spirit*:

The truth must be apprehended (relative these three commands) and the full will of God must be sought. The believer seeking the power of the Spirit must submit himself to the searching of the Word of God in its revelation of God's will. There must be waiting on God in prayer that we may be made willing to do His will. The inspiration of fellowship with God's people and sharing with them the blessings of God is an important source of help. Walking by the Spirit presumes activity... endeavoring to be active in the will of God as well as resting in His sufficiency. The heart of the matter remains in the continued dependence upon the Spirit to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, to be yielded to the Spirit in all His guidance, to confess every known sin, and to seek from the Spirit in faith that ministry which will work in us "both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). The walk by the Spirit is a delight to the heart of the believer in which the intimate joys of fellowship with God are known and the fruit of the Spirit is produced in the heart and life...¹

Perhaps it will help you to remember this distinction: Spirituality is the believer's status upon restoration to fellowship with God, whereas the filling of the Spirit is the activity of the

¹ John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Van Campen Press, 1954, p. 217)

believer who is both yielded and obedient to the expressed will of God, and executed by the power of God!

3. Be prayerful!

Once you are assured of unbroken communication with God, ask Him

- a. To open your eyes to be receptive to His truths (Psa. 119:18).
- b. To give you understanding (Psa. 119:130).
- c. To sharpen your discernment (Psa. 119:27).
- d. To help you concentrate (2 Cor. 10:5).

4. Be desirous to know!

1 Pet. 2:2—the "milk" of the Word; Heb. 5:14—the "meat" of the Word.

5. Be teachable!

Job 34:32a—Do not automatically reject a new or different concept. Do not reject what you don't understand; you simply may not have a frame of reference for it at that moment.

6. Be methodical!

Psa. 119:104a; Isa. 28:10—have purpose and direction in your study. Do not follow the hit and miss or wind-blown method.

7. Be patient!

Luke 8:15; 2 Pet. 3:18—there is no "instant maturity." The growth process is a matter of time and continuance in the Word.

Just think how patient the Lord is with us! Read James 5:7, 8!

8. Be constant!

2 Tim. 4:2 applies to us although it is addressed to pastors. The Christian life is characterized by steadfastness and perseverance. STABILITY IS AS CLOSE AS YOU AND I CAN COME TO GOD'S IMMUTABILITY!

9. Be faithful!

1 Cor. 4:2—God does not require of us that we be spectacular but that we be faithful. If you are faithful in the little things of life He will entrust you with bigger things.

We would hesitate to make an appointment with our physician and break it, yet we often stand up God. However, when we need Him we clamor for immediate attention to our problems!

10. Be willing to put into practice what you have learned!

(Rom. 12:1, 2; Phil.4:8, 9).

PROMPT OBEDIENCE IS YOUR PROOF THAT YOU LOVE THE LORD (John 14:21, 2).

During this coming week, I suggest you use the principles we have brought out in this lesson. Select a book of the Bible which contains approximately seven chapters. Read one chapter each day. Jot down one or more particular lessons the Lord brought to your attention!

PRACTICAL EXERCISES – Personal Bible Study Lesson 2

Lesson 2

1. Personal Bible study requires adequate preparation. List the areas of preparation and the most obvious reasons why these are necessary!

(1)

(2)

(3)

2. Delete all incorrect statements!

Although the believer's fellowship with God is broken by sin, it can be restored upon (genuine sorrow over the sin committed) (prayer for forgiveness and restoration) (confession of the known sin) (determination never to commit that sin again) (penance).

3. Fill in the blanks!

_____ negative and _____ positive conditions are given in Scripture for the filling of the Spirit. These are

(1) _____, (2) _____,
(3) _____.

4. In your own words, state some specific way in which a believer may disobey these commands.

5. Exercise your prayer privilege! Make your own prayer list; pray in specific terms!

6. Be methodical! Jot down the book of the Bible you have chosen for your daily reading.

Note chapter and verse along with the lesson the Lord has brought home to you personally as you read.

7. Determine with God's help to keep your daily appointment with Him!