

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

Introduction

The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is uniquely privileged in this Dispensation—the Church Age. Not only has he immediate access into the presence of God's throne of grace (Heb. 4:16), but he also has available to him the completed Canon of Scripture—the revealed mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16).

And if this were not sufficient, God added the permanent indwelling presence and ministry of a personal Tutor, none other than God the Holy Spirit, the Divine Author of the Scriptures (1 Pet. 1:21). It is He who leads us into all Truth (John 14:26; 16:14) and gives us spiritual discernment that we might know the things that are freely given to us (1 Cor. 2:9-12).

Yet, sad to say, Christians rarely become spiritually self-sustaining because all their life they are dependent on others to prepare for them their spiritual sustenance! They were never taught HOW TO STUDY for themselves! Consequently, they lack purpose, incentive, know-how and methodology. They approach personal Bible study in a hit-and-miss manner and become easily discouraged. Soon they will go back to mere Scripture reading, when they could benefit more from SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES on a personal and daily basis. The Bereans did the latter, and they were commended for it (Acts 17:11)!

This Series of Lessons was prepared to show interested Christians how they may become students of the Word. The principles set forth are simple, proven and workable. They present practical guidelines for personal Bible study but are by no means exhaustive.

Properly applied by the earnest Spirit-filled believer, these principles should open up a new vista of spiritual perception, giving the student deeper insight into the truths of the Word and a greater love and appreciation for the God of the Scriptures.

To aid in applying these principles in personal study, a Practice Exercise Sheet with assignments is presented with each lesson. Answers to worksheets are furnished.

It is our earnest prayer that once daily Bible study habits are established, each student will make rapid strides toward growth in grace and knowledge of his Savior (2 Pet. 3:18), ultimately reaching spiritual maturity!

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Lesson 1: WHY

OUTLINE:

- I. ANTICIPATION
- II. AUTHORIZATION
- III. MOTIVATION
- IV. REALIZATION

A. APPROACH: Someone once said, "YOU WILL NEVER KNOW MORE ABOUT GOD THAN YOU KNOW ABOUT HIS SON; AND YOU WILL NEVER KNOW MORE ABOUT THE SON THAN YOU KNOW ABOUT THE WORD."

Yet there is a great difference between knowing ABOUT someone and something and knowing that Person or something! Hence I would like to put it this way: YOU WILL NEVER COME TO KNOW GOD UNTIL YOU KNOW HIS SON, AND YOU WILL NEVER COME TO KNOW THE SON UNTIL YOU KNOW HIS WORD!

Coming to know the Scriptures is what this course is all about, and you are entitled to a preview of where we are going.

PRECISELY WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM THIS COURSE?

WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE? WHAT WILL IT AND WHAT WILL IT NOT DO FOR YOU?

Properly taught and applied, it should give you a keener insight into the truths of God's Word, sharpen your discernment, help you to discover God's will for your life and God's solutions to your problems. It should help make you spiritually self-sustaining. It should lead you to a closer personal relationship with God. It will furnish you with the most basic tools you will need.

It is NOT A SUBSTITUTE for the local fellowship of a Christ-honoring, Bible-teaching Church, nor DOES IT PRESUME TO INTRUDE UPON THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF PASTOR-TEACHER!!!!

B. METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY: (Two basic forms: PASSIVE and ACTIVE).

1. In PASSIVE Bible study the student is the recipient of truths another has discovered.
2. In ACTIVE Bible study he is the participant and is himself involved in making his own discoveries; he becomes an explorer, and there is no greater thrill than the joy of discovery!

In her booklet, "THE JOY OF DISCOVERY," Oletta Wald describes the difference between these two forms of Bible study. She illustrates them in this way: "In the field of music, the student can just listen to the teacher play the piano, or he can himself learn how to play it."

AGAIN, LET ME POINT OUT THAT THIS DOES NOT DO AWAY WITH THE TEACHER. RATHER, IT PUTS A BURDEN ON THE TEACHER'S SHOULDERS TO MOTIVATE AND INSPIRE THE STUDENT TO DEVELOP SKILLS ON HIS OWN. THUS, HE, IN TURN, WILL BECOME A TEACHER OF OTHERS.

C. PASSIVE VS. ACTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Many of you have been students of the Bible for a number of years, yet few have been accustomed to go directly to the Word of God to search the Scriptures on your own. What time you may have spent in the Word was probably limited to a simple or meditative reading of Scriptures or to a looking up of specific verses or passages. Those of you who have studied on their own will hopefully gain some additional methods you may not have employed thus far; and all, I pray, will become truly enthusiastic investigators of the Word.

Because we are all plagued to some degree with mental laziness we find it easy to go the route of PASSIVE BIBLE STUDY. It is so much easier to call a knowledgeable friend and ask him or her where a certain verse is found or what a passage says than it is to delve into the Word for ourselves. Because the PASSIVE method takes less effort we have become used to the idea to let someone else do our thinking or to assimilate what others have prepared. Many have accepted unquestioningly what they were taught without heeding the divine injunction to "PROVE ALL THINGS, and then to "HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD" (I Thess. 5:21).

THUS, WHILE WE HAVE LEARNED, WE HAVE NOT LEARNED HOW TO LEARN!

A Word of Caution

*KNOWLEDGE IS NOT THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE. TECHNICAL OR THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE IS OCEANS REMOVED FROM EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE!!!!

Both the Old and the New Testament testify to that fact: WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE ARE OFTEN COUPLED, AND WISDOM IS THE APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE TO EXPERIENCE!

Our Lord spoke of the application of what we know in John 13:17: IF YE KNOW THESE THINGS, HAPPY ARE YE IF YE DO THEM! The O.T. counterpart is found in PROVERBS 3:13:

"HAPPY IS THE MAN (PERSON) THAT FINDETH WISDOM."

*APPLICATION IS NOT AUTOMATIC! IT REQUIRES SUBMISSION TO THE DIVINE WILL MADE KNOWN.

*THUS KNOWLEDGE IS NEVER AN END IN ITSELF BUT THE MEANS TOWARD AN END!

In Bible study, that end is twofold:

1. CONFORMITY TO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST (Rom. 8:29).
2. CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD (Rom. 12:2).

A Second Warning

KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORD MUST NEVER BECOME A SOURCE OF PRIDE!

(1 Cor. 8:12: "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.")

Personally, the more I learn from God's Word the more I realize how much I have yet to learn!

When Paul thought about the inexhaustible storehouse of riches found in God and His Word, he exclaimed:

"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" (Rom. 11:33).

II. AUTHORIZATION

Are we, then, presumptuous to undertake such a study course? I think not, for there is ample biblical authorization found in Scripture in its favor. Let's look up some of these verses:

The Bible is God's message to mankind, specifically to His own. Its truths are not locked from us but revealed to us. We are to live by His Word (Deut. 8:3b—"Man shall not live by bread alone...").

Deut. 29:29:... the things which are revealed belong unto us...

Josh. 1:8 :....meditate therein, do all that is written...(applic.)

Isa. 34:16 : seek ye out of the book of the LORD...

Amos 4:13: declareth unto man what is his thought...

John 5:39: search the Scriptures...

Acts 17:11:.... searched the Script. daily whether things be so

Question: BUT WHAT ABOUT PASSAGES LIKE Acts 8:26-35 --Philip and the Ethiopian, particularly verses 30, 31? APPLIES TO AN UNBELIEVER (see also 1 Cor. 2:14, the natural man).

Question: WHAT ABOUT THE GIFT OF PASTOR-TEACHER?

A communication gift, not a study gift. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE REAL TEACHER OF THE WORD!

III. MOTIVATION

Motivation is of paramount importance in personal Bible study. It is not so much WHAT WE DO, but WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO that counts in the Christian life.

OUR MOTIVATION FOR BIBLE STUDY SHOULD BE THAT OF PAUL:

1. THAT WE MIGHT KNOW HIM (Phil. 3:10)
2. THAT WE MIGHT PLEASE HIM (2 Tim. 2:4).

Let me suggest five well-motivated attitudes toward Bible study: (By no means exhaustive; add your own to the list as you come across them.)

- (1) An earnest desire to be taught by the Spirit of God (Job 34:32).
- (2) To determine His ways, His paths (Psa. 25:4).
- (3) To obtain divine guidance and "truth" (emeth)--steadfastness (Psa. 25:5).
- (4) To be of quick and keen intellect and discernment in spiritual matters (Eph. 1:18) Psa. 119:18).
- (5) To be sensitive to the truths discovered (Psa. 119:15).

IV. REALIZATION

DIVINE REVELATION DEMANDS HUMAN RESPONSE.

Abraham, Moses, Joshua and a host of other believers, both in the Old and New Testaments received information from God and worshipping God, responded to it in obedience.

WHAT APPLIES TO THEM APPLIES TO US:

"FOR WHATSOEVER THINGS WERE WRITTEN AFORETIME WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING" (Rom. 15:4a)!

Once you learn what is God's specific mode of operation for you, you are responsible to God to put your knowledge into action.

James, an intensely practical man, put it this way: READ JAMES 1:22-25 !!!

He states in summary: James 4:17:

"THEREFORE TO HIM THAT KNOWETH TO DO GOOD, AND DOETH IT NOT, TO HIM IT IS SIN."

Finally, as you get into the Word on your own, follow these shining examples:

1. JOB -- Job 23:12: Faithful obedience to the divine commands, respect for the Word, BYPRODUCT: STEADFASTNESS! fixed priorities in life!
2. THE PSALMIST Psalm 119:24: Firm principles of action "testimonies"! (Your own cabinet of counselors) BYPRODUCT: DELIGHT!
3. JEREMIAH Jer. 15:16: Eagerness for ever greater knowledge. BYPRODUCT: JOY, REJOICING!

IN CLOSING, LET ME GIVE YOU A QUICK PREVIEW OF OUR STUDY COURSE:

In the lessons to follow we will examine several methods of personal Bible study: (none are original; all are tried and proven).

1. OBSERVATION
2. INTERPRETATION (analysis of content, background research, study helps)
3. APPLICATION (personal, social, national, in precedent, by principle).
4. RELATIONSHIP AND CORRELATION OF SCRIPTURE PASSAGES.
5. TOPICAL AND WORD STUDIES

6. BOOK STUDIES
7. CATEGORICAL STUDIES
8. CHARACTER STUDIES
9. OUTLINING OF PASSAGES
10. MAKING CHARTS

PRACTICAL EXERCISES – Personal Bible Study Lesson 1

A. Answer in your own words!

1. Why did God reveal His message to mankind?
2. In which way does ACTIVE Bible study differ from PASSIVE Bible study?
3. Who is best qualified to teach the Word of God? (1 Cor. 2:10)
4. What two nouns are generally coupled to show the need of truths applied?
5. What are the two primary purposes of personal and classroom Bible study?

B. Complete these sentences!

1. In PASSIVE study the Bible student learns, yet he does not _____.
2. Time spent in personal Bible study does not take the place of the _____
_____ local church.

C. Determine whether these individuals responded to divine revelation in a negative or positive way!

1. Matthew 19:16-22
2. 1 Kgs. 11:1-4; Deut. 17:14,15,17
3. Isaiah 6:1-8
4. Acts 8:26-39
5. Jeremiah 42:1-16; 43:7

D. List the divine requirements of the believer as stated in the following passages!

Deut. 10:12

Micah 6:8