

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE.

INTRODUCTION. Many works of literature are the product of human brilliance, but the Bible is the inspired Word of God, 2 Timothy. 3.16. Every Christian, male and female, should discipline their lives to read it regularly and systematically, for it is our source of guidance and growth, Psalm 119.105, 1 Peter 2.2. Regular reading will give a working knowledge of the Bible, but it is important to dig a little deeper, and to spend time **studying** the Scriptures. These notes give guidance for Bible Study, suggestions that can be adapted to suit your own particular style of study. Approach the Word with the prayer, ‘Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law’, Psalm 119.18.

WHAT YOU NEED. (Attitude).

- **Time.** Many things are bidding for your time including education, employment and even Christian service. Avoid being so occupied **for** Christ that you neglect to be occupied **with** Him, Luke 10.38-42. **Make time for Bible Study.**
- **Desire.** ‘I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food’, Job 23.12.
- **Solitude.** Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist and Paul are among those who had a time of spiritual education in isolation with God. I am not suggesting that you take a year out for concentrated Bible study! What I am saying is that you will have to be alone with Him, away from the crowd. At times, this may mean foregoing the companionship of friends, even when they have exciting plans for the day!
- **Perseverance.** The Bereans ‘**searched** the scriptures daily’, Acts 17.11. Nuggets of truth have to be **found**, Psalm 119.162. To be able to rightly divide the Word of Truth, you have to ‘**study**’, that is, *give diligence*, 2 Timothy 2.15. Secular studies require strenuous mental activity. So does Bible study, 2 Timothy 2.7. It is hard work. There is joy derived from it, but when discouragement sets in, persevere.
- **A Submissive Heart.** Bible Study is not an academic exercise to increase spiritual knowledge and provide material for preaching. It has to be done as Ezra did it. His first priority when seeking ‘the law of the LORD’ was ‘**to do it**’, Ezra 7.10. We must change our lives if our studies show it to be necessary.

WHAT YOU NEED (Practical).

- **A Desk and Chair.** An armchair does not lend itself to diligent study! Among other things, Elisha had a table, a stool, and a candlestick, 2 Kings 4.10.
- **Pen and Paper.** Never rely on memory. It is important to note your findings as you study. In this computer age, you might find it easy to record these electronically. Make sure you have backup! But Bible Study predates the computer age, and if you still operate with pen and paper, use a proper pad or notebook, and not just scraps of paper which could be easily lost. Margined paper is helpful in that you can put the verse number in the margin with all your thoughts on the verse along side it.

WHAT YOU NEED (Helps).

- **Bibles.** Obviously, you need a Bible, and an Authorised Version (KJV) is essential if you are going to get maximum help from concordances. Try to obtain one with a good margin which provides references to other passages which are relevant to your studies. Many find a **Newberry Bible** helpful from the point of view of explaining exact verb tenses. Comparisons

can be made with other translations such as the Revised Version (RV) and J.N. Darby's New Translation (JND). Modern translations can sometimes help to explain an archaic phrase in the KJV, but there are those who question the accuracy of some of these translations.

- **Concordance.** A concordance will help you to locate a Bible verse if you have difficulty in remembering its whereabouts. It will also give the expanded meaning of any Bible word, and the various ways it is translated. Most helpful is **Strong's Concordance** in which words are now numerically linked to other helpful word-study books. It is also linked to computer based helps such as the Online Bible and E-Sword. **W.E. Vine's** dictionary of Bible words is also highly recommended, particularly the New Testament section.
- **Commentaries.** This is a term for books which help us to understand the Scriptures. The writers are not inspired! Often, you discover that they have had difficulty in understanding the parts which puzzle you! However, commentaries can be helpful, and for young believers starting out, writers like William MacDonald and Warren Wiersbe are easy to understand. (This is not an endorsement of everything they write).

Getting Down to Study.

- **Select a book, prayerfully**, e.g. 1 Thessalonians.
- **Read the background history.** Acts 17.
- **Read and re-read the book.** Note recurring words and phrases. Establish the main themes.
- **Approach the first chapter, and divide it into sections.** Give each section a caption which will help you to remember it. (The theme of the final section of any chapter may spill over into the next chapter. Remember that chapter divisions are not inspired).
- **Against the verse number, note your impressions.** Meanings of words can be noted, and parallel passages. Jot down any illustration of the teaching of the verse, e.g. from an OT story, or from a parable.
- **Proceed through the book in this way. Never forget your dependence on the Holy Spirit in your reading, 1 Corinthians 2.6-16.**

PASSAGES TO STUDY AND QUESTIONS TO ANSWER.

- 1) Read about Martha and Mary in Luke 10. Using marginal references or a concordance, find another two occasions when Mary was at the Lord's feet.
- 2) Who regarded God's words more than his necessary food?
- 3) Read 1 Timothy 4.6. What was it that nourished Timothy?
- 4) In which of his letters (first chapter) does Paul tell us that he went into Arabia?
- 5) Read James 1.21-27 to see the importance of practising what you learn from your studies of the Scriptures.
- 6) Who provided Elisha with all he required for his comfort and studies?
- 7) In Acts 17, where did Paul visit before and after Berea?
- 8) In 1 Thessalonians, find the following:
 - References to faith, hope and love.
 - References to the coming of the Lord.
 - References to labour.
 - References to the will of God.