

Bible is the most fascinating book in print. It is also the most important because it is the only book that gives reliable information about God and the universe that He created and sustains.

What the Bible Teaches. The first book of the Bible, Genesis, which means "beginnings," furnishes us with a clear record of the beginning of time, creation, man, sin, salvation, the Flood, and the various divisions of the human race.

The Bible truly records the creation of man, his fall, his redemption, and his future state. It is the only book that prepares us for eternity. All other studies prepare us for a life of usefulness in this present world and lose their value to us when we pass through the experience called death. But the study of the Bible also prepares us for the life that is to come. Is this a matter of importance to you?

The Importance of Bible Study. The Christian cannot get along without Bible study. It is vital to his spiritual growth. In 1 Peter 2:2 the apostle writes, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Our Lord Jesus admonishes us in John 5:39 to "search the Scriptures"; and Isaiah urges us to "seek ye out of the book of the Lord and read" (Isa. 34:16). Paul warns of the possibility of being "carried about with every wind of doctrine," and counsels us to "study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (Eph. 4:14; 2 Tim. 2:15).

The General Plan of Study. The discerning mind will soon discover that God's program of learning is geared to man's thinking processes. There is an orderly progression from the simple truths to the more profound. God's program in brief for Bible study has been recorded by the Holy Spirit through the pen of the Prophet Isaiah: "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (28:9, 10).

Studying the Bible takes time. Your heart and your mind must be prepared to receive new light. This is a process that cannot be hurried. Our Lord said to His disciples in John 16:12, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Why not? Their hearts and minds were not prepared to accept or digest this new revelation. He had given them a brief introduction to the truth, but they would have to be brought to the fullness of it gradually.

It was to be the prerogative of the Holy Spirit to "guide [them] into all truth" (John 16:13). How? By taking the words of Christ, already spoken, and unfolding the meaning of what had been said. In John 14:26 Jesus said, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

The various passages of Scripture quoted in this brief article give us an insight into God's provision for our knowledge, and His method of instruction. A serious-minded Christian will soon realize that there are no shortcuts to a knowledge of God's Word. It takes time to teach it, and it takes time to absorb the teaching. But the reward for patient study exceeds by far the time and effort expended.

Let us approach the study of God's Holy Word humbly, realizing that "if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (1 Cor. 8:2), and with the prayer of the psalmist upon our lips, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psa. 119:18).

PHILADELPHIA.

Learning From Others

By Charles C. Ryrie, Th.D., Ph.D.
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PAUL'S prayers are interesting. When he prays for the church at large he seems to have one burden—that knowledge might increase. The prayer for the church at Ephesus was "that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe" (Eph. 1:18, 19). For the Philippians he prayed for the increase of their love, but love that was bounded by knowledge and discernment (Phil. 1:9). Concerning the Colossians, his burden was that they might be fruitful, but this depended on their being "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" and their "increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:9, 10). In each case knowledge was the need.

How can we learn about the hope of our calling? Where can we be instructed how to love intelligently? How can we be tutored in the knowledge of God's will? The answer to all these questions is in God's Word. Bible study is the answer to these prayers.

There are many needs in the church of Christ today, but the basic need is still that of increasing knowledge of the truth of God as revealed in His written Word. Instructed Christians will experience power (Eph. 1:19), will love the brethren (Phil. 1:9), and will live fruitful lives (Col. 1:10). Could it be that we have sought these desirable ends without using the means to those ends? And those means all boil down to one—knowing the contents of the Bible.

Now there are many ways to study the Bible, but one of the most efficient and beneficial is to study it with the help of others. Indeed, Paul reminds us that gifted people, including pastors and teachers, are given to the church in order that Christians might be built up in the knowledge of the truth (Eph.

4:11-14). To overlook the benefit to be gained from sitting under gifted teachers of God's Word is to miss one of the most useful methods of Bible study. If God intended that you should learn everything by yourself, there would have been no need for the gift of teaching. But since He has given teachers to the church, it behooves us to make use of them.

This can be done in several ways.

First, pay careful attention to your Bible-preaching pastor. Take notes on his sermons, and when you get home talk about it in the family group so that what God has given him may be implanted in your mind.

Second, read Christian books that teach sound doctrine. It is well and good to read devotional books, but they should not be the sole item on your diet. You should also read doctrinal books and commentaries on books of the Bible. In this way you can profit from the work of other godly men.

Third, if there is in your city a Bible school, enroll in some of their classes, particularly the evening classes. You will be able to find time if you consider it important enough to learn the Word.

Fourth, if you cannot attend a Bible school personally, enroll in a correspondence course from some reputable Bible school. In this way you can profit from the knowledge of those who write these courses, and you will progress systematically in the truth. Procrastination and laziness are faults of most of us, but the regular prodding of lessons coming to your home will help overcome these problems.

These are some of the ways that you can enter into the labor of others in helping yourself meet the need in your own life to know the Bible better.

PHILADELPHIA.

The Pastor and Bible Study

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ONE of the pastor's primary concerns is that his people "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). Since Christ is the grand subject of the Bible, the better acquainted one is with the Bible, the better acquainted one should be with the Lord Jesus. And the more one is occupied with Him, the more like Him one should become. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). These considerations make Bible study an indispensable part of the Christian's life and of the church's program.

How can a pastor encourage Bible study in his congregation?

1. He must *want* to do this. That may seem like an unnecessary assertion,