

## Why Should I Study?

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*What's all the fuss about?*

*But it's so much work, and who cares anyway?*

**W**hy study is a basic question, and one that may seem so self-evident that we should not even discuss it. You've heard it said countless times by the preacher, your Bible class teacher, maybe your parents. Study the Bible! Study to complete your lesson for the next class period. Study to know more about God. Study. Study. Study. The sad fact is that very few, even among God's people, do much studying of God's Word for themselves, even though they are continually hearing that they should. Why is that? Should we just accept that most will continue to get all that they know about the Bible from those who teach them from the pulpit and rostrum?

If most are learning something from those who teach, what's all the fuss about? The fact is, somehow we need to find the motivation to study for ourselves. Why should you study? Well, there are many reasons. You already know several, but let's review why every one of us should study for ourselves.

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### **Reasons to Study the Bible**

#### **Study to Know the Truth**

Here is a grand reason to study. Jesus said, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32) Ignorance enslaves. Worse, the Bible says that sin is transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4), and the wages or payment for sin is death (Romans 6:23). Did you know that truth can set you free from sin and death? It can, and the fact is that there is nothing else that can do that. “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” This alone is reason enough to study, and unless you study for yourself, how would you know that what you are learning is the truth?

#### **Study to Increase Faith**

The Bible says faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). If you are a child of God, you should realize the importance of strong faith. If you are not yet saved, you will never receive and enjoy the blessing of God’s saving mercy without first becoming an obedient believer. That process requires learning some fundamental things about Christ, who He is and what He has done for you and me. As you learn and come to believe the things that you study, convictions will be formed within, convictions which will constrain you to become a disciple of Jesus and make you want to follow Him. Why, even the word “disciple” means “learner,” one who embraces the teaching of another and then spreads that word to others.

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, a young man who had decided to become a disciple of Jesus and share his faith with others, instructions that are very interesting. He said, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15) The King James Version of this verse begins with “Study to shew thyself approved...” Be diligent is the more understand-

able translation of the two, but study is still involved. Did you notice that if you are to be approved of God as a worker who has no reason to be ashamed, you must be able to rightly divide the Word of truth? That means dissecting it into its component parts, knowing how to apply what to whom. We will discuss all of this later, but for now, please understand that individual study is necessary if one is to be in a successful relationship with God.

### **Study to Please God**

Throughout the Bible, from the beginning to the end, emphasis is placed upon knowing the Word of God. In the Garden of Eden, it is obvious that God was displeased because Adam and Eve ignored His command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God challenged them about whom they had listened to besides Him, and showed them plainly that they had disobeyed His command (Genesis 3:11, 17). Among the last few words of the Bible is a warning that there will be sad consequences for anyone who adds to or takes away from the words of that book (Revelation 22:18, 19). Early and often in the history of God's people He promised to bless and keep them if they knew and kept His commands (Deuteronomy 7:12-16). The New Testament is no less emphatic than the Old Testament about the need to know and obey God's will. The apostle Paul affirmed that knowing God's Word and walking according to His commandments pleases God (1 Thessalonians 4:1, 2).

### **Study to Experience the Joy of Discovery**

I have used the word "study" frequently in this book, and will continue to do so even though the word itself may carry a negative connotation for many. If you have negative thoughts about studying, I want to confront that feeling head on. Why? Because study is not negative! It is a joyous endeavor, and if you have not yet known the joy that comes from studying, from discovering new ideas and new ways of doing things, from unlocking the

mysteries of a previously unknown realm, you have missed something wonderful. I hope I can show you how to tap the joy of study for yourself.

At the beginning, you may consider everything about Bible study to be tedious work and totally devoid of fun. Please keep an open mind, apply yourself to the things we will discuss, and allow yourself to experience the shear joy of discovering the new concepts and principles that God would have you know. As a place to begin, consider this principle that Jesus taught: "...where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21) Jesus said this after giving the admonition that we should lay up treasures in heaven rather than on earth (Matthew 6:19-20). Let me suggest, however, that this principle is actually true in regard to any treasure we may have, wherever we may put it. As an illustration, if you invested all of your money in a particular stock, you would watch its performance daily, maybe check on it several times a day, to gauge its performance. Where your treasure is, there will be your heart, your emotions, also. Also, if a young man sees an attractive young woman and begins to invest his time, money and energies in wooing her, his interest and fondness for her will grow. Placing one's time, resources and thoughts in a particular cause or project will increase interest in that project more and more; its value to the investor will grow. Because of this principle, Jesus said we should invest in heaven. One of the ways you can do that is to spend your time, resources and energy in Bible study. If you do that with a good, positive attitude, I guarantee that you will begin to enjoy study of the Bible. You will discover the joy of learning. And you will experience the joy of teaching, a different joy, if you go on to share with another the knowledge you acquire.

### **Study to Change Behavior**

James, the brother of Jesus, said, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (James 1:22) James under-

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stood that knowledge just for the sake of knowledge is devoid of its real value. The true worth of knowing is in putting what you know to use. God made us for a glorious purpose. He placed us here for a reason. Fundamental to why we are here is growing in knowledge that changes us to be more like Him. It is our goal, our true purpose for existing. The apostle Paul tells us that followers of Jesus have citizenship in heaven, and that when this life is over all of those who have been faithful in the Lord will be transformed that we may be conformed to His glorious body (Philippians 3:20, 21). Actually, our lives should be looked at as a process of change by which we are conformed day by day into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Paul warned "...do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Romans 12:2)

Of this you can be certain: if you make no effort to change your life for the better, you will be pushed and shoved and shaped by the world into the kind of person the world wants you to be. On the other hand, if you renew your mind by regular, systematic and directed study of God's will, and you put the things you learn into practice, you will be transforming your life into the godly creature that God had in mind when He gave you life and being. Study to become godlier. There is no more worthy reason to study. Always remember: life should be a journey between who you think you are and who God wants you to be. And God asks nothing more of you than that which you, with His help, can achieve.

### **Study to Teach Others**

Study is all about knowing Jesus and becoming like Him. Jesus was a teacher. It is impossible to be like the Master without teaching others in some capacity. Of course, not all are teachers at the same level, but all can teach if they prepare themselves with proper study. The expected process of growth in faith demands that we use our knowledge instructing others (Hebrews 5:12-14). Paul instructed Timothy to teach others who in turn would teach

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