

Eight Reasons to Study God's Word

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6-3-07

Introduction.

- A. Now that we have begun the month of June, we are rapidly approaching the halfway point of 2007. January is receding into the distance, and with it, the memory of all of those New Year's resolutions that we've made. Our houses are now once again a mess, our finances are once again a muddle, we haven't been to the gym since St. Patrick's Day, and, last but not least, our daily Bible reading program died somewhere in Leviticus.
- B. Let me be honest with you, folks—the same thing happened to MY daily Bible reading program. I know, I know—I'm a preacher and I'm supposed to be above that, but never in my life have I been able to stick to one of those study schedules. If you're among those who can, that's wonderful. I applaud you. But this morning, I'm primarily talking to those who can't. I'm going to talk about how we can study the Bible anyway.
- C. You see, I know exactly why it is that I can't keep one of those Bible-reading schedules. It's because some part of me demands a reason. Just ask my wife about me and reasons for doing anything. If you ask me to do something and persuade me that it's a good idea, I'll happily do it. On the other hand, if you ask me to do something but don't give me a reason, I will argue with you until the stars fall out of the sky. In the realm of Bible study, the generic reason that I ought to read the Bible just because won't move me to do it.
- D. What I have to do, then, and, in fact, what all of us have to do, is to find things in our lives that give us a reason to study the Bible. They are there, friends. The Bible is the most relevant book in human history, and once we find that connection between the word and our lives, we'll quickly see just how relevant it is. There are important, concrete things that we must do that we can't do unless we study, and the more we do them, the more we'll want to study. Let's look this morning, then, at eight reasons to study God's word.

I. God, Wisdom, Classes, the Lost

- A. As we consider these reasons, the first one we encounter is that we should study the Bible **TO COME TO KNOW GOD**. We can talk to God whenever we want, of course. Prayer is always available to the Christian. However, we don't get our replies in the form of a voice echoing out of the clouds. Instead, God talks to us through the medium of the word. Look at what the Hebrews writer says about this in Hebrews 1:1-2.
- B. Now, this might seem like a very diffuse reason to study, but there are times in our lives when it becomes very real. Our salvation depends on our relationship with God, and Satan often plays on our ignorance of the Father to undermine that relationship. Satan tries to persuade us that God doesn't really love us, or that He doesn't hate sin enough to send us to hell, or isn't going to honor the promises He makes in His word, or any number of other things. When we start feeling that way, it's a sign that we need to reconnect. We need to remind ourselves who God is again. There are a number of ways to do this. In no other part of the Bible does God speak more directly to us than in the books of the prophets, and thousands of years later, those books still record His voice for us. If we want to understand God in human terms, we should look at the gospels that chronicle the life of Christ. Only by regular study of this sort can we truly understand our Creator.
- C. It's also important for us to study in order **TO MAKE WISE DECISIONS**. Certainly, the primary aim of the Scripture is to get us to heaven, but it also has a lot to say about how we should live here on earth. These are not just things that God wants from us. These are things that are good for us and will benefit us if we listen. Let's examine what Solomon says about this in Proverbs 2:6. The fact is, Bible study will make us wiser.
- D. So what's that mean for us? To understand that, we have to understand what wisdom is. Wisdom isn't abstract useless knowledge. Instead, wisdom is practical common sense that we use to make good life decisions. It is a commodity of great earthly value as well as great spiritual value. Of course, there are no guarantees associated with wisdom, but in general, if we follow the wisdom of the word, we will be more financially prosperous, happier in our relationships, more successful in our employment, and better liked by everyone around us. The Bible is the greatest self-help book ever written. Let's use it to become wise.
- E. Beyond this, the Bible is also important because it helps us **TO WORK IN OUR CLASSES**. If we wish to be an asset in the time we are here for Bible classes, that must begin with study of the word. There are several different ways in which this is true. In the first place, there are plenty of supposed Bible-class teachers out there who keep the class amused with funny stories or unstructured, rambling "discussions," but at any level, whether we're teaching children or adults, it is essential that we base our teaching on the Bible. Look, for instance, at the example of Apollos in Acts 18:28. Apollos was a skilled speaker, but he knew what counted.
- F. However, friends, it's just as important for us to study when we are learning as when we are teaching. Our adult classes here are designed to be discussion-based, and the broader the discussion, the more productive the class is. The best comments we can make aren't the ones that come off the tops of our heads. They're the ones we've thought of beforehand, during our own study, and they enrich both us and the whole class.

- G. Fourth, it's important for us to study the Bible **TO REACH THE LOST**. At Margaret St., this is something we believe in. We know that it is important to God that we devote ourselves to bringing the gospel to the community around us so that everyone can come to know their Savior. If we don't know the gospel ourselves, though, we're going into battle without our swords. We tell our denominational friend that he has to be baptized to be saved. He replies, "Oh, yeah? Where's that?" We say, "It's in the Bible." He answers, "Where in the Bible," we don't know, and the conversation dies. Those are opportunities lost because of ignorance.
- H. Instead, we need to listen to what Peter says in 1 Peter 3:15. We have to be ready to make a defense. This doesn't mean that we have to have the whole Bible memorized, but it does mean that we have to know enough about where things are to keep the discussion rolling. Better still, the process of studying with someone else forces us to study more. The guy who's in the next cubicle over at work wants to know if his baptism as an infant was good enough to save him, and we have to study to find the answer.

II. Children, Teachers, Church, Souls.

- A. Along similar lines, we need to devote ourselves to the word **TO TEACH OUR CHILDREN**. As any parent knows, kids are unpredictable. Your eight-year-old is never going to say to you, "Mom, in two weeks I'm going to have a question about whether I should help my friend cheat on his test or not, so be ready for that." Instead, we have to be ready to ace all of the little pop quizzes that our children are going to spring on us through the years, and the way we do that is by pointing them to book, chapter, and verse when they need it.
- B. More than that, though, we need to be leaders of the spiritual conversation ourselves. It's not the Bible-class teachers here whom God holds responsible for teaching our kids. It's us. Look at the way that Moses describes this in Deuteronomy 6:6-7. We need to love the Bible, study the Bible, and talk about the Bible, because that's the way they learn to do the same thing. Let's consider our children, think about the things they need to learn from Scripture, and make sure they hear those things from us.
- C. However, we don't need the Bible just when we're the ones presenting information. We also need it **TO MONITOR OUR TEACHERS**. That includes the preacher, too. Friends, I'm committed to my responsibilities as a servant of God, and I study carefully to make sure that what I'm saying is the truth, but you should never, ever believe something about God's will for us just because I say it. I am not the standard; the Bible is the standard, and if we ever forget that, it will not be long before our teachers lead us into apostasy.
- D. Instead, we need to have the attitude of the Bereans in Acts 17:10-11. We love to talk about the Bereans and their noble mind, but there's an equally important lesson in the context here. Paul came to them, claiming to be sent from God and telling them what they needed to do to be saved. The Bereans weren't rude about it. They didn't run Paul out of the city without giving him a hearing. What they did do, though, is check Paul's gospel against the Scripture to see if it was true. We need to share that healthy, Bible-centered skepticism.
- E. In a much larger sense, we also need to study the word **TO PROTECT OUR CHURCH**. I don't know whether you know it or not, friends, but ever since the Restoration, the Lord's church has been heir to a pattern of terribly destructive brotherhood-wide church splits. In about 1850, the church split over the issue of whether missionary societies were Scripturally acceptable. In about 1900, the church split over whether musical instruments were acceptable in worship. In about 1950, it split over whether churches could support human institutions from the church treasury. Just a look at that timeline tells me that we're about due. I don't know what it will be, but it will be something, and history tells me what basic pattern it will follow. Just ask some of the brethren who were around for the last split what its causes were. Ask men like Karl Diestelkamp and Ray Farris. They'll tell you that the basic problem was Scriptural ignorance. Much of the church in the middle of the 20th century was led into apostasy because those Christians didn't know their Bibles.
- F. That's the way it's always been, and that's the way it will be for us if we aren't careful. Consider Hosea's sobering warning in Hosea 4:6. Oh, the issues were certainly different 2700 years ago, but the basic problem was the same. God's people were destroyed for lack of knowledge. They forgot what God wanted, and that left them vulnerable to the schemes of Satan. Let's not allow lack of knowledge to destroy us too.
- G. Finally, we need to study the Bible to **SAVE OUR SOULS**. We talked earlier about the earthly utility of the Bible, but although those things are certainly true, they are hardly the most significant use of the Scripture. Instead, the word is the only thing that we possess that tells us how to get right with God. Consider Paul's instruction to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:14-15. The interesting thing about this passage is that in context, Paul is talking about the Old Testament. Even the Old Testament is important to our salvation, even though it was completed 400 years before the birth of Christ. How much more important, then, is the New Testament?
- H. Here's what we need to take from this, friends. When it comes to the journey to heaven, the Bible is both our map and our compass. It tells us how to get there and if we're heading in the right direction. Without it, we are hopelessly adrift. We need its help to mark out the spiritual challenges we are facing, and we need its help to tell us how to overcome those challenges. If we're struggling with pride in our lives, the answer is in the Bible. If we're struggling with lust in our lives, the answer is in the Bible. If we're struggling with love of money, bitterness, anger, self-control problems, you name it, the answer is in the Bible. We need to find it.

Conclusion. If your life hasn't been governed by God through His word, now is the time to begin.