

God's Word – Starting To Study It (#6)

Text : **Psalms 1:1-6 & 138:1-5**

INTRODUCTION :

A. We serve the one true and living God.

1. He is the creator and the sustainer of all things.
2. As creator, our God both owns and reigns over all that He has created.

B. As the sovereign ruler of all creation, God has a law by which He governs.

1. Our sovereign God reveals His law (His will) to His creatures in two ways.
 - a. All men are born with consciousness of God. (*not who or what, just that He is*)
 - b. God reveals Himself and His will for man **only** in the Holy Scriptures, the bible.
2. The bible reveals how God enforces His will. (*Many illustrations, e.g., Israel*)
 - a. God rewards those who are loyal to Him.
 - b. He punishes those who are disobedient ... rebellious.
 - c. Reward and punishment is a recurring theme in the scriptures.
3. THEREFORE, man is responsible to learn God's will for him, to learn His law.
 - a. They can learn about God's law only in that which He revealed.
 - b. **ONLY** the bible is God's revealed words. (*Verbal, plenary, confluent*)
 - c. Because the bible is God's revealed words it is **inerrant and authoritative**.

C. One cannot establish a relationship with God without first having a relationship with His inspired words of truth.

1. One cannot have faith without learning the gospel. **Eph. 2: 8-10 -cf- Rom. 10: 17**
2. Salvation requires obedience to what is learned. **Heb. 5:9 -cf- Rom. 6: 16-17, 1-7**
3. Even when God miraculously appears to someone, they must then learn the inspired words (the gospel) before they can be saved. (e.g. *Saul .. Acts 9*)

D. In order to maintain a relationship with God, one must maintain a relationship with God's word, the bible.

1. One can only “grow” by receiving the “**pure milk of the word.**” **I Pet. 2:2**
2. It is the inspired word that teaches the Christian how to live pleasing to God.
II Pet. 1: 2-3 **Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.**

3. God word keeps us on the straight and narrow road by : **II Tim. 3:14 - 4:4**
 - a. Showing us the right way. (**teaching**)
 - b. Pointing out our errors. (**reproof**)
 - c. Showing us the right way. (**correction**)
 - d. Preparing us to serve God. (**training**)

E. In order to gain these benefits from the inspired words of God, we must search them with the right kind of heart. Our heart must :

1. Be longing to hear a message from God.
 - a. Jesus referred to that as having “**ears to hear.**” **Mark 4:9**
 - b. The psalmist said it very poetically :
Psa. 42: 1- As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.
2. Be willing to change its beliefs and its actions to conform to God’s will. **Luke 6:46**
3. Accept God’s word as God’s only authority on earth.
4. Be steadfast enough not to give up.

With this lesson we will begin to learn some of the practical steps employed in successful bible study.

I. Once one has prepared his heart to begin studying, he must commit both time and resources to it.

A. Being a student of the bible is a lifestyle, NOT an accomplishment.

1. The Christian is one who seeks after God.
 - a. Seeking after God’s will distinguishes Christians from the world.
 - b. **Eph. 5: 6-8,10** **Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them; 8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (9..) 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.**
2. By nature, Christians are people who desire to know what God expects from them.
 - a. We want to know God’s will so we can change to conform to His expectations.
 - b. **Rom. 12:2-** **Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (ESV)**

B. God requires that ALL Christians develop some level of skill with His word.

1. **Heb. 5: 11-14** Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.
 - a. If a child is normal he will grow and develop at a predictable rate.
 - b. As a child grows he becomes capable of consuming more substantial food.
 - c. By nature he prefers that substantial food and will not voluntarily return to milk.
 - d. *Part of growing up is learning how to feed yourself, to study on your own.*
2. One skill that is required of all Christians is to be able to share the faith with others.
 - a. **I Pet. 3: 13-16** Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, ¹⁵ but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; ¹⁶ and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

 - b. This is a command ... NOT a recommendation.
 - c. To “**sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts**” is to appoint Him ruler of your life.
 - d. As ruler of your life He commands you to be ready, willing and able to share Him.

C. THEREFORE, bible study becomes a salvation issue.

1. No one can be saved who refuses to obey God.
 - a. To do so is rebellion against God.
 - b. Refusing to obey His command is to refuse His Lordship (*rule*) in one's life.
2. No one can choose which of God's commands he will obey. (*all or nothing*)
3. ***There are only two reasons people will put forth great effort to learn something :***
 - a. *They are required to do so.*
 - b. *They really want to learn it.*
 - c. ***God requires we learn His word and love will motivate us to want to do so.***

D. There is no easy way to learn ... it requires consistent study over a lifetime.

II. Bible knowledge is built in the same way a pyramid is built.

A. Pyramids are built on a broad base and become narrower as they extend upward.

1. The pyramid at Giza 490,000 sq. ft. at the base and only 45 ft. tall. (12.25 acres)
2. A tower 45 ft. tall could have been built much faster and cheaper.
3. Because of its broad base, the pyramid still stands.
 - a. 4570 years old.
 - b. For 3800 years it was the tallest manmade structure on the planet.

B. Secular education is built on the pyramid principle.

1. The freshman year is a broad base of general information courses.
2. Each year the courses are more centered on one's major.

ILL.- *One first gets a BA in metallurgy,
then a MS in heat resistant alloys,
then a PhD in Applications of Chromoly in Boiler Fabrication.*

3. Post graduate work is totally centered on a small portion of the major area.

C. One's spiritual education is built the same way.

1. The first step to understanding the bible is to develop a broad based knowledge.
2. Repeated reading of the entire text of the bible is required to learn content.
 - a. How many have read the book of Genesis more than other O.T. Books ?
 - b. Why ? Many start reading, but do not follow through until it is completely read.
 - c. For the same reason more people read the gospels than read the epistles.
3. ONLY by systematic and regular reading can one get an overview of the bible.
 - a. An overview is essential in order to identify the theme (plot) of the bible.
 - b. Repeated reading enables one to see how a particular book fits into the whole.
4. *Without an accurate overview of the bible,
one cannot properly understand the individual books.*

ILL.- *A trained mechanic can readily identify an unlabeled head gasket because he understands the engine. He knows the gasket's importance to the whole.*

- a. In the same way that each individual part of an engine has a function, so each individual book of the bible has a specific function.
- b. Likewise, there are no superfluous parts of the bible; every word is important.
- c. One does not fully understand the bible until he understands the value of each.

III. Reading is the base upon which the study that leads to understanding is built.**A. Reading is not study, but if done correctly it transitions into study.**

1. Reading that is not systematic is of limited value.
 - a. NEVER hop around aimlessly from book to book.
 - b. Devotional studies are fine, but they are neither study nor systematic reading.
2. Reading should follow a plan.
 - a. It should be done daily.
 - b. It should be done in a place where you will not be distracted.
 - c. The first few times through the bible should be straight through, cover to cover.

B. Take notes while you read.

1. When you don't understand something :
 - a. Don't stop and try to figure it out.
 - b. Write it down and study it after you finish reading. (*Include chapt & vs*)
2. If you don't know what a word means, write it down and look it up later.
3. Write down the theme of each chapter or section. (*Very brief*)
 - a. This is how you learn how to find things in the bible.
 - b. Over time, develop an outline of each book in the bible.
4. Each time you read, review your notes on the book to that point.
 - a. Review your notes frequently. (*It's important to use your OWN notes.*)
 - b. Correct, organize and rewrite your notes when you have completed a book.
 - c. Review your notes from the last reading before starting to read a book again.

C. Read looking for something specific and record your findings.

1. Look for great themes of the bible.
 - a. God's plan to save mankind.
 - b. Jesus in the Old Testament
2. Look for what is revealed about God :
 - a. Love, Mercy, and Compassion
 - b. Patience, Justice, and Judgments
3. Observe the attitudes of God toward actions of man.

D. Read sections repeatedly.

1. Read the same book over and over. (*Some read the same book for 30 days.*)
 - a. Read it at least 10 times. (*more is better*)
 - b. Review your notes each time you read the book. (*You will soon remember them.*)
2. Divide the book into its natural sections and read each section repeatedly.
 - a. This is a valuable use of your notes.
 - b. **Remember :** *Chapters and verses are NOT from God. In 1560 they were added by men for men.* (See article)
3. Reading the selected section in a variety of translation is helpful.

CONCLUSION :**A. We have seen that fundamental to productive bible study is :**

1. One must commit significant amounts of time to it on a daily basis.
 - a. Every person has 24 hours in his day.
 - b. How we choose to use our time reflects our attitude toward God.
 - c. God lives in the heart of the Christian NOT in the church building.
2. Bible knowledge is built like a pyramid.
 - a. Bible education is acquired in the same way secular education is acquired.
 - b. It starts off with a broad base ... a foundation of general knowledge.
3. Reading helps build general knowledge.
 - a. Reading must be regular and repeated.
 - b. Extended concentration on specific sections is helpful.

B. One's attitude toward the words of God IS his attitude toward God.

1. God demands first place in our lives. **Matt. 6:33, Luke 9:23 ff, 14:25 f**
2. We must schedule our life around God, **NOT** try to fit him in with our priorities.
3. God revealed His will; **now**, it is up to man to seek it out. **READ, READ, READ**

INVITATION :

Lesson Text :

Psalms 1: 1-6

1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! **2** But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. **3** He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.

4 The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. **5** Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. **6** For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalms 138: 1-5

1 I will give You thanks with all my heart; I will sing praises to You before the gods. **2** I will bow down toward Your holy temple And give thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word according to all Your name. **3** On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul.

4 All the kings of the earth will give thanks to You, O LORD, When they have heard the words of Your mouth. **5** And they will sing of the ways of the LORD, For great is the glory of the LORD.

Companion Article :

Thank God For Small Blessings

All of our lives are touched by the many great inventions which we use each day, things like electricity, telephones, air conditioners, televisions, automobiles and computer. In fact, we have become so used to having our modern conveniences that we take them for granted. Most Americans have grown up with such luxuries and we've come to view them as necessities to the point that we can't imagine life without them. Even more taken for granted are a host of little things such as can openers, ballpoint pens, paper products, etc. These are too numerous to mention. When is the last time you gave thanks for the many things that make our American lifestyle so comfortable? Though we now take all these and many more for granted, just imagine what our life would be like without these niceties.

Likewise, we American Christians have come to take many of our blessings for granted. For example, we have come to expect that we will always have a selection of inexpensive bibles at our disposal in the translation of our choice. Like the ballpoint pen we do not give a second thought to the convenience of having commonly recognized divisions in our bibles. We often complain about the location of chapter and verse divisions in the bible, but just imagine trying to locate things in the scriptures without them. However, they were not added for more than a thousand years after the New Testament was written.

Without chapters and verses we would read a lot more comments like that recorded by the Hebrew writer, **“one has testified somewhere, saying,”** If the Hebrew writer was writing today he would simply have said something like, **“In Psalms 8: 4-6 we read...”**, but there were no chapter divisions in the Old Testament scriptures when he wrote the Hebrew letter. It was not until 1227 A.D. that Stephen Langton who was the Archbishop of Canterbury in England devised them. The Wycliff English bible which was published in 1382 was the first bible to use the chapter divisions.

Chapters were added to the Hebrew Old Testament in 1445 by a Jewish rabii named, Mordecai Nathan. Three years later (1448) Ralii Nathan and a scholar named Athias divided the Old Testament into verses. In 1555, while he was preparing to print the Geneva Bible, that Robert Estiene divided the New Testament into verses. When he printed the Geneva Bible in 1560, he uses Langton's chapter divisions and added his own verse divisions. For the Old Testament, he us Rabii Nathan's chapter and verse divisions. The Geneva Bible of 1560 was the first complete bible published in the English language and it was the first bible to contain the chapters and verses which we take for granted today. Fifty years later the King James Version was printed using the same chapter and verse system. Thank God that since that time most credible translations of the scriptures have used the same systems of chapters and verses.

On a cautionary note, we must remain aware that these divisions are not from God. They were added by men for the convenience of men. Though they are very useful in facilitating

the location of scriptures, they have no other significance to the text. Both verses and chapters often divide sentences and paragraphs. Thus, we use them like grids on a map and thank God for those small blessings.