

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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The Importance of Regular Bible Study

by Dan Trygg

“Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you abide/continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; ³² and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free...’ ³⁴ ‘...Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. ³⁵ And the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. ³⁶ If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.”

John 8:31,32,34-36

“...like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation...”

1 Peter 2:2

“For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”

Hebrews 5:13-14

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.”

2 Timothy 2:15

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ that the man or woman of God may be proficient, fully-equipped for every good work.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Jesus pulled no punches. He was not afraid to state plainly what was true, or what He expected. He put it right out there. **He wasn't looking for people who merely *agreed* with Him, or even people who *acknowledged* who He was. He was calling people to be *disciples*, active followers, serious students, people who would actually pursue Him in their lifestyle, and who would do His will. A “disciple” is a student, but not just a classroom learner.** He or she is in an apprenticeship relationship with the master. **Disciples are learning to become *skilled* at something.**

Disciples are to listen to and study the master's teachings,
observe his or her example and technique,
ask questions, do assignments and projects assigned by the master,
work alongside him or her,
listen to advice and criticism,
and practice, practice, practice,
until they become skilled like the master.

This is not an overnight process, nor is it simply a cerebral activity. It requires experimentation, risk, effort and repetition. We must be doers of the word of God, not just hearers of it (Jas.1:22).

The Christian life can go in many different directions. The Lordship of Christ will affect nearly every aspect of my existence. **What is to be our main task, our main focus?** We have unique situations in life, personalities, natural abilities and even different spiritual gifts and duty assignments. Is there a main task, a main focus that underlies all of this incredible diversity and variation? Yes. Jesus stated it very plainly in Matthew 28:18-20. **We are to learn to be active followers of Jesus, ...and we are to be about the business of making active, obedient followers of Jesus of anyone and everyone we possibly can,** no matter who they are, where they live, or what their background may be. **We are to learn the skills of following Jesus, and become role models to help others to follow Him.**

Jesus, our Master, emphasized a key component for health and success in the areas of our personal growth and effectiveness at ministry. **If we are serious about our walk with Jesus, and our ability to mature in our spiritual lives, then we need to be in the Scriptures on a regular basis.** The testimony of the Bible is consistent on this point. We come to know God through the Word, and our faith is encouraged by it (Jas.1:18; Rom. 10:17). As the passages at the top of this page indicate, the Word is meant to be our spiritual milk, and, as we grow, our spiritual meat. **God uses it to teach us, confront us when we are in error, correct us and train us in righteous living.** Staying in it, through reading, study, meditation and obedience, will lead us to increasing freedom from sin in our lives. The Scriptures will teach us about our inheritance in Christ (Acts. 20:32), and equip us for life and to fulfill our spiritual calling.

Notice the II Timothy 2:15 passage, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the Word of truth.” This indicates that **effective, skillful Bible study does**

not just happen by itself. The “be diligent” portion of the verse means “to make every effort; to be eager and earnest; to treat with respect and care; to busy oneself with”, all of which implies serious work. In fact, **Paul calls us a “workman” or “laborer” with regard to the Word.** This word indicates “one who puts forth strenuous effort, one who works-hard, one who practices and does repeatedly, as in working the soil or in developing a skill”. Notice that **we are going to have to answer to God for how we work with the Word of truth.** The word for “approved” means “*tested and found pleasing and acceptable*”. This approval does not just happen, either. We will *all* be tested, yes. But **we will have to work hard to develop the skill to obtain God’s approval for how we handle the Word of truth.** The “handling accurately” part of the verse indicates that **there is a right interpretation and proper applications for God’s Word.** To misunderstand or to misuse the Scriptures is not ok with God, especially if we are foisting our ignorance on others, and leading them into error. **The King James Version translates the “be diligent” portion of the verse as “study”.** This certainly is where we must start, if we are to become effective at understanding, interpreting and applying the Scriptures with accuracy and skill.

To this end, there are several goals for the Christian student of the English Bible.

The first goal should be to master the content of the Bible:

- (1.) in its general *overall* message;
- (2.) in the basic overall teachings of *each book*; and,
- (3.) in the flow of thought, *chapter by chapter*.

In other words, we have to know what the authors have written in every chapter of the Bible. We need to know the material, especially since so much of it is interconnected.

There are many people who think they can accurately understand and interpret portions of the Bible, but *they haven’t even read the whole thing!* That would be akin to reading the last part of an article in a newspaper, but not reading the first part. How accurately do you think you would grasp the author’s argument, if you jump in the middle like that? The same is true of the Bible. **Do you think you can understand the NT without reading the OT?** You wouldn’t even know the many times it is *referencing* the OT, much less what the point of those references was! **Do you think you understand Jesus, apart from the OT?** *Jesus Himself felt it was necessary to take His disciples on a tour of the OT to explain who He was, why He came, and what He did* (Lk. 24:25-27,44-47)!

The second goal is to know, and be able to explain, the basic historical background and contemporary situation of each book of the Bible. This is a definite must, in order to fully understand the content and make healthy application. This is especially true for certain sections where a specific historical event or custom is referred to. Without understanding the historical background, we may grossly misunderstand what is being taught.

The third goal should be to develop the ability to understand and apply these teachings to my own life situations. This means asking myself, “What does it mean for me? Is my life consistent with this teaching?”

A fourth goal is to memorize vast portions of Scripture in an accurate translation. This is not to impress or overwhelm people with one’s Bible knowledge, but it is **to facilitate new insights through meditation.** These insights will come more readily if we can closely examine the constructions and meanings of the actual words in our minds. This also places the thoughts of the passage closer to one’s consciousness, where application in a situation can more readily be made, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. He is the Helper. Be sure to be asking for His help.

There are different things which you can do to achieve these goals. There are 1189 chapters in the Bible. If you read 20 chapters a day, you will complete the entire Bible in 60 days, or, if you read 10 chapters a day, you can finish the Bible in 119 days, just under four months. **A workable plan is to read 4 chapters a day. If you do this, you will complete the Bible in less than a year.** I have read through the Bible quickly (30 days and 60 days), and then concentrated on a single book – reading it, and re-reading it, thinking it through, outlining it, using study notes, a Bible handbook, and a commentary. During this time, I also had someone drill me on locating different verses from the book, i.e., they read a verse, and I was to tell them what chapter it was in. Another profitable study plan is to get a Bible with good cross references, and look them all up as you go through the Bible.

Of course, goals are not enough. In addition to a realistic strategy to obtain one’s goals, and an honest intent to work toward them, a person must put forth some consistent effort, or our goals are little more than wishful thinking. They have no practical meaning for one’s life. **Disciples are people who discipline themselves to carry out plans which are designed to reach their goals.** Do you lack self-control? It is a fruit of the Spirit’s working within you. Ask for His help, and be obedient to His inner promptings. He will be very practical.

Effective application of the truth of Scripture happens when we correctly interpret the teachings of Scripture for our lives today, and then live according to our new understanding. Are we living consistently with what we what God is showing us? Are we developing a Christ-like character in both our private and public life? Are we winning a hearing by being a blessing to others around us? **People will more readily listen and respond to our interpretations of Biblical truths when they see God producing positive changes in our lives.**