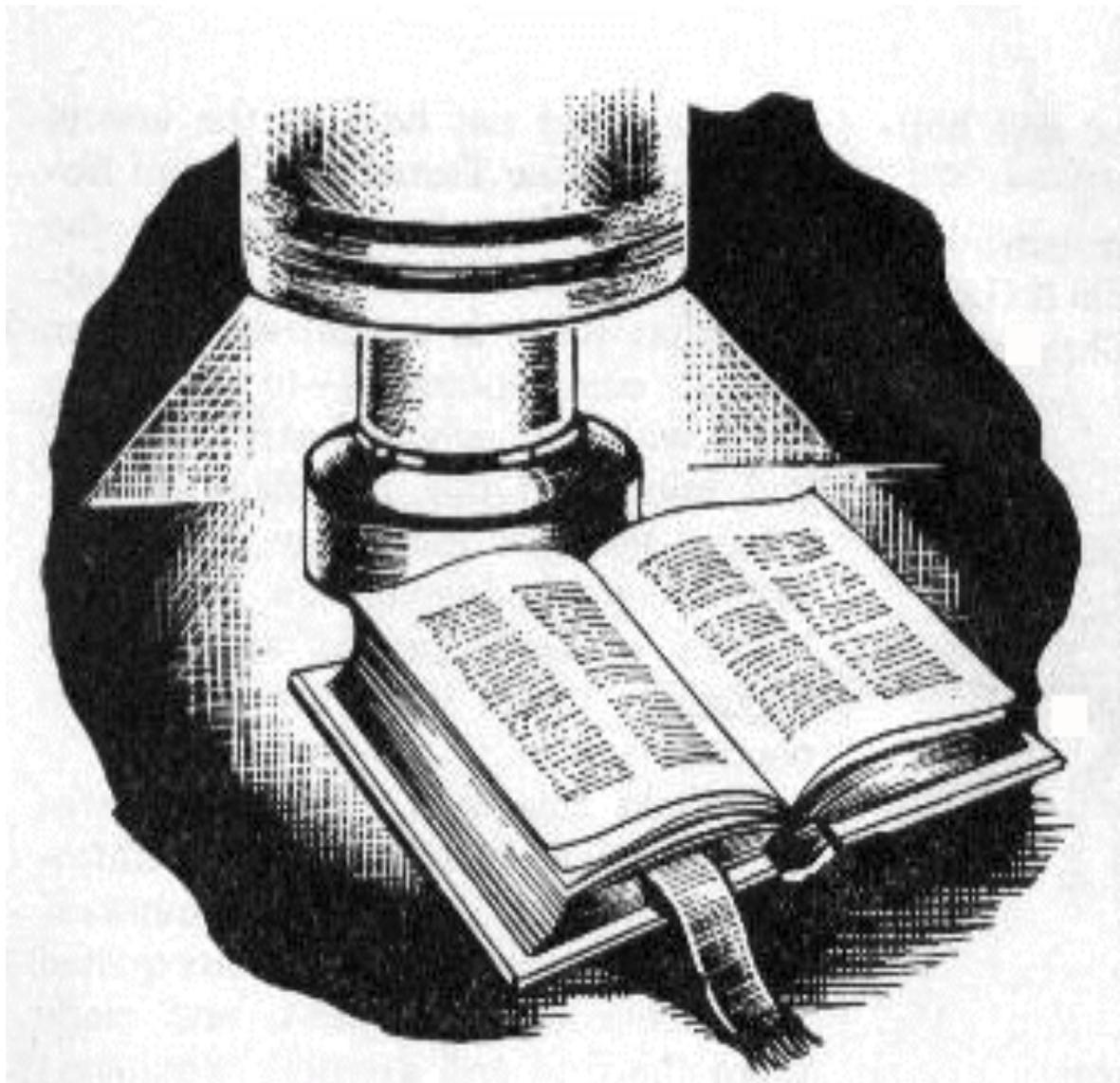


HOW TO STUDY



Earl R. Borders



2 Timothy 2:15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Here the Apostle Paul was giving admonition to the younger minister, Timothy, who historians tell us was about eighteen years old at this juncture. In our Scripture text, Paul enjoined Timothy, as verse 15 declares, to study. In dealing with people, I find one of the most common difficulties many face is not altogether having a lack of desire to study, but rather, knowing how to study. These are not isolated incidents. Over the years, I have met numerous people who simply ask the question: "How do you study?" They desire to study; however, they feel confused by not having the knowledge or

by not being equipped to rightfully know how. By the help of God, this is what we definitely feel burdened to consider in this booklet—*How to Study*.

It is one thing to herald forth the scriptural admonition, as our text does, to study. We tell people, "Study to show yourself approved. Study the Bible." It is easy to chide and chastise those who fail to do so, but my burden is to supply you with knowledge so that by the time you finish reading this booklet, you will be equipped to know how to study.

The Purpose of Bible Study

I trust you will hold your Bible ever before you, as we will use many Scriptures in our study. As we begin, we want to address six questions, the first of which is: Why should I study? Or what is the merit, the benefit, or that which can be gained through study?

The first and foremost reason why we should study is that it is a Bible commandment. Our text verifies this fact in 2 Timothy 2:15 which enjoins, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." We see that it is a Bible command. Now we want to look behind the command to determine why we should study. To answer this question, we have to recognize some spiritual truths, the first of which is that the Word of God has cleansing power as well as life-giving and life-sustaining qualities that nothing else has.

Go with me to John 15:3 where Jesus says, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." Here we find the Word has cleansing quality. The Psalmist posed the question in Psalm 119:9, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word."

In 1 Peter 1:23 the Apostle Peter says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God. . . ." Here we see that the Word of God has a quality that can cause believers to be able to experience a new birth. It brings life. Let us consider John 6:63 where Jesus said, "It is the spirit that quickeneth [or it means, 'makes alive']; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

Back up now to John 6:56. Here, Jesus speaking in a figure, says, "He that eateth [notice the present and continual tense of that] my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." He is actually saying, "He that eats and keeps eating; or drinks and keeps drinking." Eating and drinking are what allow us to continue to sustain natural life. This metaphor talks about eating His flesh and drinking His blood: Everyone knows this is not a literal expression, but rather, it speaks of your and my continually and constantly taking in His Word and His Spirit. Why? That is what sustains spiritual life.

In Hebrews 4:12 we read that the Word of God is quick. If you read the Greek, that word quick means, "alive." For you and me to ask why we should study would be like a child asking a parent, with the table spread, "Why should I eat?" Because what eating does for the natural body, studying also does for the spiritual man—it gives and sustains life.

The second reason we should study is because there is spiritual merit and growth incorporated in studying. Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:13-15: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to

doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." In verse 15 he says, "That thy profiting may appear to all." What brings this profiting? In verse 13 Paul said to give attendance to reading, letting us know that there is spiritual profit to be gained thereby.

The Benefit of Study

Now, what type of profit will we gain from studying? Go with me to 2 Timothy 3:14-15 where it says: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith . . ." What kind of profiting will you gain if we give attendance to reading and to studying? Spiritual profit. It will make you wise, it will lead you to salvation and keep you saved; it will inspire your faith. So there is spiritual merit, my friend, in the study of God's eternal Word.

We also read in 1 Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Another benefit of study is spiritual growth. Someone may say, "I will pray harder." Or, "I will witness more." However, neither of these activities will take the place of studying. In 1 Peter 2:2 we read, "that ye may grow thereby." What type of growth was Peter talking about? Spiritual growth. Turn to 2 Peter 3:16-17 where it says: "As also in all his [Paul's] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, [Don't be troubled if you can't clearly, rightfully, or initially understand everything you read. Peter had the same trouble.] which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

What is "the error of the wicked"? Wresting Scriptures to get them to teach what you want them to say. Peter said to be careful, to beware, that we don't wrest the Scriptures to our own destruction. He continues by saying in verse 18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge. . . ." Again, he is speaking of growing. What type of growth is he talking about? Growing in grace. There is, my friend, spiritual grace and knowledge that comes only through studying God's Word.

Also, our Scripture text tells us in 2 Timothy 2:15 that only through study can we be properly equipped to be an effective Gospel worker. We read, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. . . ." Only through study can we become knowledgeable of the Scriptures to such an extent that we don't have to be ashamed when people ask us a question. We can know where the answer is located and be able to convince the gainsayer. So, to answer the question of, "Why should I study?" we find the first reason is because the Word has cleansing power and life-giving and life-sustaining qualities. If we want to maintain our experience, we must study. The second reason is because there is spiritual merit and growth incorporated in studying.

Length of Study

The second question is posed, How long should I study? There are those who feel they have arrived; since they have read it once, what is the use of reading it again? Therefore, the question arises, "Will I ever reach a point of maturity where studying is no longer necessary?" No, you will never reach that point. As long as you want to maintain life, you must feed it!

Down through the ages, all great men of God have never ceased from studying the Scriptures. The more greatly they were used of God, the closer they stayed to His Word. One may ask, "Are you certain of that?" I will state only that which the Bible substantiates. In 2 Timothy, Chapter 4, we find the Apostle Paul imprisoned in Roman confinement. He was in Rome, ready to be brought before Nero the second time, where he would receive the sentence of death. Consider his last words in verse 13 where he says, "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments."

Here is a man who had the sentence of death pronounced upon him. Paul was in the very autumn of life, a man of advanced age at this point, facing sure death at the chopping block. Back in verse 6 we read, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." He said, in so many words, "The time of my departure is at hand, but I hope you get here with the parchments before I have to go. I want to read and study more.

Fifteen hundred years later a man by the name of William Tyndale, who translated the Bible into English, was lying in prison in Ville Verde, waiting for death because he dared to give people the Bible in their own language. As he was there in that cold cell through the winter months, he wrote to a friend, "Send me for Jesus' sake a warmer cap, something to pack my leggings, a woolen shirt, and above all, my Hebrew Bible." He still wanted to study. Here he was ready to be martyred, but he said, "Bring my Bible. I am not done yet." I want you to see that the greatest of men have always realized the supreme value of God's Word, and the tighter the place they were in, the more they wanted it.

Basic Principles

Question number three is: How should I approach study? To answer this we will look first at basic principles and then at practical considerations. There are some basic principles that must be assumed before a proper study of the Scriptures can ever be undertaken. First of all, we must remember that the Bible is a spiritual Book. It takes the Spirit of God to show us the Truth. We can't obtain understanding by merely studying words. The Bible is written by the Holy Spirit, and He is the only means through which we are able to understand it.

In 2 Samuel 23:1-2 we read: "Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said [How were the Psalms penned?], The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." They were not David's words or words of any of the other psalmists; they were the Spirit of the Lord's. We need to understand that the Bible is a spiritual Book.

How to Obtain True Understanding

In 2 Peter 1:21 it says, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." So we see that prophecy was spiritual, as well as the writing of the Psalms. True understanding of God's Word doesn't come through natural learning. You can't go to any school, sign up for any college, or take any course and learn Truth-it is spiritual.

In Isaiah 29:11-12 Isaiah prophesied of how it would be: "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned."

This is a picture of what we see today in Babylon (false religion). They have an educated ministry, so people ask, "Reverend, can you explain this?" Then the minister replies, "Oh, that is a sealed Book. I can't answer that." Still yet, one may go to an illiterate ministry that has not gone through any schooling, but still does not have the Spirit of God. The uneducated minister says, "Oh, I can't give you understanding on that. I am not learned." For the most part, this is where false religion falls, in one of those two categories.

Let's look a little closer at this. In Isaiah 29:11 we read, "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed." We need to understand that to a natural mind, Truth is sealed; it will never see it. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:9, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Truth does not come through the natural senses. However, Verse 10 tells us that we who are saved have the seal, God's Spirit, that can loose the understanding so His Word can be revealed to us.

We read in Revelation 5:1 where John caught a vision, "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed [there is the Book, sealed] with seven seals." You know the story of how John began to weep (Revelation 5:3-4) because no man was found worthy.

They looked on the earth, under the earth, and in Heaven; they looked everywhere but couldn't find any man worthy to loose the seals. Go to verse 5 where it says, "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."

In Revelation 6:1 it says, "And I saw when the lamb opened one of the seals. . . ." These are figurative expressions, but what does it mean when it says, "The Lamb opened one of the seals"? It is nothing more than what Jesus said in John 16:13-14: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." The Lamb's opening one of the seals is nothing more than Christ letting the Spirit of God take the things of God, show them unto us, and give us understanding.

The Spirit of God Is the Seal

Someone may ask, "Is the Holy Ghost the seal?" Well, let's find out. Ephesians 1:13 says, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed [with what?] with that holy Spirit of promise." Who is the seal? The Holy Spirit is the seal.

The Book's being sealed with seven seals meant the Spirit of God had the understanding closed until the Lamb, Jesus Christ, paid the price to loose the seals. At that time He sent forth the Holy Spirit. In each age the Holy Spirit has taken the things of Christ and shown them unto a people and given them understanding. That is how the Lamb, by the understanding that the Spirit brought, went forth and loosed the sealed Book. Ephesians 1:13 says, and I paraphrase, "You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

Then if you go to Ephesians 1:17-18 it says: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened. . . ." Here we find that the seal or the Holy Spirit is what brings enlightenment, or understanding. Therefore, we see in a clear manner that the Spirit of God is the seal, and He is the One employed to bring understanding.

Someone asked, "Are you sure?" Turn to Ephesians 4:30 where it says, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." So, what is the seal? It is the Holy Spirit. We need to understand that Truth is spiritual and cannot be ascertained by merely arguing and jangling over words. Look at 2 Timothy 2:14 where it says, "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers."

The Spirit of God Is the Teacher

Some people think to study is just digging into the meaning of a word to prove that it means what they want it to mean so they can explain away Truth to subvert its intended result. I want you to see, my friend, we have to get past mere mechanics alone, that of just studying words with a natural mind. First Corinthians 2:4 says, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

Real Truth is spiritual Truth. That is why some people are a million miles from it. They don't have the Spirit; therefore, they don't have the teacher. The Spirit of God is the teacher. You can come to class, but if you don't have the teacher, you aren't going to learn anything. So now, we've learned that the first principle which we must acknowledge is that Truth is spiritual and that our reliance must be on the Holy Spirit to give us the revelation.

Truth Comes by Revelation

The Bible teaches us to strive to enter in (Luke 13:24). While it's true that we must labor and work, my friend, Truth doesn't come merely through our efforts. God honors our efforts by giving revelation. If we really reach a point where we are a "workman that needeth not to be ashamed" as our Scripture text admonishes, we can preach certified seed. Luke 8:11 says, "The seed is the word of God." Every farmer knows the best seed you can have is certified seed. We can have some certified seed if we will study to show ourselves approved.

Galatians 1:11-12 says: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." That doesn't do away with pastors and teachers; it merely means that if you get a revelation of Truth in your innermost being, it will come from Jesus Christ. Truth must be revealed. You can hear preaching week in and week out and never understand it if you don't allow the Spirit to bring that revelation. I repeat, Truth is a revelation.

Look at Galatians 1:17-18 where Paul said: "Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. [Some people say Paul spent three years in Arabia. The Scripture says he returned again unto Damascus.] Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem." Paul spent three years in Damascus, not Arabia, but he spent that time in study.

I want you to see that Truth comes by revelation. In Galatians 2:2 Paul says, "And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain." You can read on through the chapter and find that the Gospel Paul preached was the same Gospel they preached because they got it from the same source-it came by revelation.

So let's summarize what we've learned about the first principle of studying God's Word. We found that we can't just sit down to read the Bible as though we were reading the daily newspaper. The first thing we need to do before we ever open the cover is to ask the Spirit of God to enlighten our understanding and reveal the Truth to us. So the first principle is that it is a spiritual Book.

God's Word Is the Authority

Now let us consider the second principle. In Romans 3:4a Paul says, "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." The second principle is that we must approach the study of God's Word with the fact that the Bible is not contradictory, no matter how it may appear at casual reading. We must take the position that God's Word is the authority; it is Truth.

Let's take, for example, the accounts we read of the Resurrection. Some passages say there were two angels and some passages say there was one angel. One may ask, "How do you reconcile that?" Very simply: if it says there was one angel, that doesn't mean there weren't two. It just means one writer noted, for specific purposes, that there were two angels. The other writer, for other purposes, merely seemed led to mention only one.

Take, for example, if two people would come to an altar and one of those would show more emotion when they prayed through. One might relate the account to their friend, and mention only one person's initial experience, even though there were more than just one person who got saved that day. Another might mention two; that doesn't mean one of the accounts was untrue.

This goes to show how there can be different accounts for various reasons, with different perspectives, to portray different truths. When we begin to study the Bible, we must have it settled in our heart before we ever open the cover, that it is true and right, and doesn't contradict. If a contradiction appears to be before us, we must conclude it is our understanding that needs enlightened.

It is vital that we lay these principles down before we study; they must be firmly ingrained in our heart and mind. Otherwise, the enemy will use any supposed contradictions to sow confusion in our minds. In Mark, Chapter 5, we read the account of Legion. Other Gospel writers talk about the "two" men who were

demoniacs. Why didn't Mark speak of the second man? Because Legion was the outstanding one. That doesn't discount the fact that there were two. Other Scripture writers teach that there were two.

I repeat, God's Word does not contradict, regardless of how it may appear to the casual observer. If the Word seems as though it doesn't make sense, then we need to study a little more. In Psalm 119:160 the Psalmist declares, "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever." We find here that His Word is Truth, every jot and every tittle of it.

Pray for Understanding

Here is how we need to pray when we lack understanding. Psalm 119:18 says, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Verse 27a says, "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts." We need to pray just like this. Don't try to throw your misunderstanding off on God and say, "This doesn't make any sense." Instead say, "Make me to understand. It makes sense to you, Lord; now please send the understanding down to me through your Spirit." We need to understand that for every dark saying in the Scriptures, there is a passage somewhere else that will shed light on it.

Matthew recorded the activity of Jesus in the Scripture where it says, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet [quoting Psalm 78:2], saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 13:35). Matthew was quoting from the Book of Psalms. If you would go back and catch the original saying of the Psalmist, you'd find that what he was actually speaking of here were those dark sayings.

We know that Jesus came as the light of the world. When He began to speak, things that had been dark and not understandable were made light. He still does the same thing yet today, through His Spirit. Psalm 78:2 says, "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old." What was Jesus doing in our New Testament reading in Matthew 13:35? He was bringing those dark sayings to light, and the Spirit of God does the same thing yet today.

In Isaiah 34:16 it says, "Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read [right back to the same message]: no one of these shall fail, [God's Word will not fail. It is infallible and eternal. As the Psalmist said, 'It is forever settled in Heaven' (Psalm 119:89).] none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them."

How will we gain understanding? How can we rightly divide the Scriptures? His Spirit is going to do it. Since it is a spiritual Book, if we ever get the right scriptural mate, receive the proper understanding, and have the dark saying lightened, it will take the Spirit of God to show us. Through study the Spirit will take a dark passage and mate it with a passage which will shed light. So we've now learned that the second principle is that the Bible is not contradictory. It is the authority and is accurate, regardless of how it may seem.

Every Word of God Is Pure

The final principle we need to realize is that there are no nonessential words in the Scriptures. Every verse, every line, every phrase, and every word is impregnated with Truth. Proverbs 30:5 says, "Every word of God is pure." The Scriptures are verbally inspired.

There is a great assault today against the doctrine of verbal inspiration. Every Word of God is pure and there is Truth incorporated within all the Scriptures. In 2 Timothy 3:16 the Apostle Paul says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

Let us understand that we are considering principles of study. If you approach the Scriptures and begin to read thinking, "Well, that isn't right," then you are in trouble. "The Bible talks about the four corners of the earth when everybody knows the world is round. Since it isn't flat, the Bible must be wrong." Again, we have to understand that every line of God's Word is inspired and when it seems to be contradictory, it merely means that there is a fallibility in our understanding and that God's Word speaks in figurative expressions.

Here are the principles of studying God's Word:

1. The Bible is a spiritual Book.
2. The Bible is not contradictory. It is the authority.
3. Each article and word is impregnated with Truth.

Some men have proposed publishing a condensed version of the Bible, but I say they had best stay with condensing novels. If they try to condense Gods Word, they will be in trouble with the Author, because He still has the exclusive rights to it.

Let us read John 21:25, which says, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." This verse lets us know that God has condensed His Word as much as it can possibly be condensed. If it could have been condensed any more, He would have done so Himself.

Practical Application—How to Study

Since we have established the principles or premises with which we must enter study, let us now examine the practical application of how we actually begin. This brings us to our fourth question: How should I study? The Scriptures teach us that we must have questions and inquire of the Word. Never be afraid to ask questions. James 4:2 declares, "ye have not, because ye ask not." And this principle can apply to study as well.

In 1 Kings 22:5 we read, "And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day." Here we find that we are to inquire. The Hebrew word here is *darash*, which means, "to seek or ask, inquire, make inquisition." In other words, this is not something passive; it is an earnest interest. We only receive answers to those questions to which we are really, earnestly desiring an answer.

Inquire in Earnest

Have you ever been talking to someone in polite conversation and were able to tell whether or not they were interested. You might ask a question and they not even answer it, or they may even turn and walk away. Why is that? They weren't really interested. Remember, we get answers to those things that we are earnestly interested in having answers to. So in considering how to study we find that the first thing we must have is an inquiring mind that demands an answer and will stop at nothing short of receiving it.

We see this again in 2 Kings 1:16 where it says; "And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron, is it not because there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word? therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." Because he looked for the answer in the wrong place, God dropped judgment upon him. It was as if God were saying, "If you wanted to know, you should have gone to the Word." God wants us to inquire of His Word, and He gets rather stirred if we have questions but then go to other sources to find our answers.

Diligently Search the Scriptures

What is the next step after inquiry? Then we must do as Jesus taught in John 5:39, "Search the scriptures." What does this teach us? That the Truth is not always readily apparent. God, many times, wants to see how much effort we are going to put forth. How desirous are we to really get the answer? Are we just going through a form?

We must do as the prophet enjoins us in Isaiah 1:18 where he said, "Come now, and let us reason together." As you are searching, you need to allow the Spirit of God to reason with you. When certain things present themselves to your mind, you'll find there will be some things that are not reasonable. Some things the devil will bring to your mind and you will need to let the Spirit of God reason in accordance with

God's Word. Why? To make sure the thoughts and ideas you accept are in harmony and compatible with the whole context of the Scriptures. So we've learned that we must not only inquire and search, but also reason.

How Often Should I Study?

Now how often should we do this? How often should we study? The Scriptures speak of the men of Berea, in the Book of Acts, as being more noble. How often did they study? Well, let's read in Chapter 17, verse 11, to find our answer. "These were more noble [or, one rendering says, 'were finer spirits'] than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily." So, how often should we study? Those who had finer spirits searched the Scriptures daily. So the question is: How fine do you want your spirituality to be? If you want it to be a finer spirit, then search and study daily.

In our Scripture text in 2 Timothy 2:15 it says, "Study to show thyself approved." The word translated in English as study here in our text is the Greek word *spoudazo* which means, "to make effort, be prompt, or earnest, give diligence, endeavor, labor, and study." Study is something you cannot do passively. I'm reminded of how I get after my children for doing their homework while radios and tape players are running, for this same reason. The Bible says in James 1:8, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." You cannot give something all your effort and have something else going on at the same time.

When I study, I try hard to shut myself out from other distractions. Why? Because if your train of thought is broken over and over, your whole railroad is derailed by the time you get done. Study takes effort and requires diligence.

Ask Specific Questions

Now question number five is: How do we practically employ these Biblical injunctions to inquire, search, study, etc? To truly study, we must ask searching questions. How do we apply that to our everyday living? In Acts 8:32-36 it says: "The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth [he was reading Isaiah, Chapter 53]: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip [pay close attention], and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man [an inquiring mind asks questions when it gets into the Scriptures]?"

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" I want you to pay particular attention to how the eunuch received enlightenment and Truth. How were his questions constructed? Look at them in verse 34, "And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this?"

When you come to verse 36, he said in the latter portion of it, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me . . . ?" To truly study, we must ask what are called the basic journalistic questions: who? what? where? when? and why? or how? These questions will open the door for the Spirit of God to begin to give us understanding and enlighten our minds through the Truth.

Too many times, people read but they never study. They don't inquire; they don't ask. I want you to see how this inquiring eunuch gained the knowledge of Truth. Notice the structure of his questions. Look at them again in verse 34 where he asked "whom." Evidently he had read somewhere in the Scriptures about baptism while he and Philip talked, because he said in verse 36, "what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Here the eunuch asked "whom" and "what." When he asked, "who?" God's Spirit, through Philip, told him who. He asked him, "what doth hinder?" and he told him what. He got answers because he asked specific questions to specific points of Scripture.

In Matthew 2:1-6 we read: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King

of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet [and here they quote Micah 5:2], And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda." What did Herod ask? "Where?" He heard where. He asked a specific question and received a specific answer.

In John 7:41 it says speaking of Christ, "Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" Verse 42 says, "Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" Then drop to verses 50 and 52: "Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Again, their principle of practically applying the Scriptures was right; it was their understanding that was deficient.

We must do as Matthew 7:7 says, "Ask, and it shall be given you." What will be given to you? The very thing you ask for. The reason we have not, James 4:2 says, is because we ask not. We don't ask questions about specific texts, so we don't receive specific answers. If we will inquire, or study, then the Spirit of God will take the things of Christ, the precious Truths, and show them unto us. John 16:13-14 lets us know that the Spirit of Truth will guide us into all Truth, and He will take the things of mine, and show them unto you.

Examine Each Word

When we begin to study a passage or text, what should we look for? Proverbs 30:5 says, "Every word of God is pure." Psalm 119:86 says, "All thy commandments are faithful." We should consider and examine each word. Too many times we read over more Truth than we lay hold of.

If we only read two or three verses and gain understanding, it is far more beneficial than sitting down and trying to read two or three chapters. As we consider and examine each word, we need to ask some questions like this: "What does this word mean? How was it commonly employed by this particular writer?" Different writers have various styles. Some may use a word one way, while other writers may use it another way. So as we study the Word, we must ask: What does this word mean? How is it used in other texts? How was it originally used, and is it used in the same manner today? Have the semantics of the word changed?

We all know words change. In years gone by, you could talk about somebody being tough. You meant they were brawny; they were able to be a scrapper, able to be a fighter. The young people come along today and say, "Man, he is really tough." They don't mean the same thing at all. Instead, they mean that he is neat or cool. Words often change in meaning. Back when I learned the song, "My Old Kentucky Home," we sang about the people as being "gay." The song meant, that they were "happy." Today they might want to consider making some changes in the wording. So you can see that words have a way of changing over a period of time.

In considering how a word was originally used, we realize we have words in our King James version of the Bible that are completely archaic and obsolete. I can read to you in Matthew 13:20 where it says, ". . . and anon with joy receiveth it." Now what does *anon* mean? Anon is an archaic English word that we no longer use. So we need to study and ask, "How was the word used originally? Is it used in the same manner today, or have the semantics of the word changed?"

Obtain Good Study Aids

Now here is another point. To really be a student, you need to have some good study aids. I know there are some people who are against having any books in addition to a Bible. There are good brethren who say, "You don't need anything but the Bible." Well, that is not what the Bible says. That is not what Paul's practice was and I don't believe it will work successfully for us either.

In 2 Timothy 4:13 Paul said, "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books [plural], but especially the parchments." He not only asked for the parchments, or the

Scriptures, but he asked for the books to help him study the Scriptures. To truly be a good student, to properly study, some study aids are necessary. If we are going to consider (as Proverbs 30:5 says) every word, then we need to have some study aids to help us with the words. These study aids are necessities for a Bible student:

- A comprehensive, up-to-date *Webster's Dictionary*, to understand the current use of words.
- A Bible dictionary, to understand words in the biblical usage. One of the best is the *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*.
- A quality concordance, to have reference to other texts where a word is employed. Shedding light on its meaning and usage is important. *Strong's Exhaustive* is good because it also gives the Hebrew-Chaldee and the Greek. These dictionaries of the Bible are located in a section behind the Main Concordance.

These study aids are non-sectarian materials that merely give us basic facts, not sectarian theology. They won't lace your mind with wrong doctrine, but give factual information pertaining to words, places, and such matters.

In our studying, what else must we consider, besides every word? We must also look at the context which surrounds the text. We can't isolate a text from the context. If you take a Scripture from the harmony of the rest of the Scriptures, you can get the Bible to say pretty much anything you want it to say. And there are some people who do just that.

Harmony of the Scriptures

In 2 Peter 1:20 Peter writes in very plain language, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." We must not separate a word or Scripture from other Scriptures. The word private comes from the Greek word *idios*, and it means, "private or separate." In this verse Peter is talking about not separating a verse, a passage, a word, a text, or a prophecy from the whole scheme of Scriptures, but instead looking at it in the light and harmony of all other Scriptures.

That which is the Truth in the Revelation will be the Truth in the Gospels and it will also line up with prophecy. Isaiah 34: 16 says, "Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them." If a teaching is true in one part of the Scriptures, it will be true in another part, as well. Let the Spirit gather the mates and make sure it is the Truth in the light 'of the rest of the Word of God.

Look at Isaiah 28:9-10: "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." What is the lesson here? That Truth is in harmony with the whole scheme of Scripture. You can lay line upon line, Truth upon Truth, and it will build and be compatible. The Scriptures hold and support one another.

We should study the context when we read an epistle, for instance, and ask questions such as: Who wrote this epistle? To whom was it written? Under what circumstances was it written? What is the writer trying to convey? Of what significance is it to you and me today? A good aid to study these background truths is a *Thompson Chain Reference Bible*, which I would encourage everyone to obtain. It is one of the best study Bibles that is available today. In the back section there is the "Analyses of the Books of the Bible" wherein you can find answers to some of these basic questions.

What Should I Study?

Last of all, here is a question many people face. Question number six is: What should I study? There are certainly several ways to approach this. You could do as the Bereans did in Acts, Chapter 17. When something was preached, they studied the Scriptures to see whether those things were so. If you are having difficulty in knowing what to study, this would be a good place to begin. If it has been preached, you

already have a basic understanding of it and can just begin to veer off into different directions with your study. You can get down into the depths of it because you've already heard the basic, working Truths explained.

Then there are other things you could study. You could study what is troubling you or anything you are questioning. That is what Herod did. He was troubled when he heard about Jesus, so he asked them to search the Scriptures to find out where He was born. He got an answer to what was troubling him. If nothing else, you could start through a study on a topic, go through a series, or study a particular book of the Bible. Greater than all that, you have the privilege to pray and let the Lord guide you into what to study. The main thing is not so much "what" you study, but the fact that you "do" study; that is the main thing.

If we will put these principles and practical considerations into practice, we will develop ourselves, grow, and mature to where it can be said of us as it was said of Apollos in Acts 18:24, that he was "an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures." I can't think of anything that would be better to have said of any saint than the words, "They are mighty in the Scriptures." If we will study, we will be equipped so that we can be a worker that needeth not to be ashamed, one that can work an effective work.

Someone asked, "Do you really think that studying and being an effective worker are important? Can I do an effective work?" Yes, by all means. In Titus 1:9-10 we read: "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers . . ." There still are many such ones today. Verse 11 says, "Whose mouths must be stopped." A workman that is equipped can stop their mouths.

I trust you can understand, friend, that there is great merit to studying God's Word. That merit is for us personally, as well as for our performance in the Church, collectively, and as an outreach to those who need to be persuaded of the Truth. Our text admonishes us in 2 Timothy 2:15 to, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." I trust that through reading this booklet, you can now understand in a greater way how to study. I desire for you to feel more equipped than ever before to be able to be a real student of God's Word.



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