

Words of Wisdom for Better Bible Study Cody Westbrook

Our desire for this Christian Worker issue is to provide an extremely practical guide for effective Bible study. Because our great brotherhood has been blessed with so many capable Bible students, we wanted to select a few to ask for advice on how to be a better Bible student. The three men we selected are Paul Sain, Randall Morris, and Bill Burk. Each of these men are well respected for their work in the Kingdom, and their knowledge of God's word.

We asked each of them three questions:

Will you tell us a little about your study habits?

What tools, methods, and resources have you found helpful in your study?

What is the most important advice you could give to someone who desires to be a better Bible student?

Paul Sain

"With each passing year, a greater hunger exists to know every gem of truth, learn more about my Father in heaven, absorb the wealth of instruction in His Holy Word. I find myself eagerly beginning my devotional study time before daylight (when peace and quietness are enjoyed)."

"In addition to my physical library, I have developed a 4,000 (approximately) volume digital library which is comprised of searchable, copyable, printable PDF files. I have many of these on my work iPad as well as on an external hard drive. Accordance software is an absolutely powerful tool that is invaluable in my study." Begin a method of study and work that method. Stay with it. Do not grow weary but realize the value of adding one passage, one truth, one golden gem at a time and soon you will realize the result of faithful Bible study. Start a filing system and work the system. Several years ago I developed a 24 category system for the Christian that enables them to file sermon outlines, magazine articles, etc. in these categories that will provide future use of valuable information. The sermons, Bible class lessons etc are "numbered" to match this system. A copy of this FILING SYSTEM listing is free upon request (pain@sainpublications.com). On a personal note, please include in this filing system a systematic study through the Bible (with notes for future use). Each time you cover that portion of Scripture, add to your own commentary thoughts.

Randall Morris

"My study habits have tended along the lines of topical studies using concordances to run references on a Bible topic, word, or name. This allows me to study all that the Bible says on that subject, and draw a valid conclusion about what it teaches. "

"In recent years I have begun to do more studies in context, even my preaching has been more contextual: Books and chapters of the Bible; Bible verses and characters. I use those contexts to determine the points of the lesson while fleshing them out. I

think it is important to develop your own concordance as well as use the well established concordances. As you read through the Bible and become more familiar with it, verses will become a key in your mind to help explain other verses. That becomes your own concordance. I use several websites like Studylight.org which contain several good commentaries and other reference book.

“The most important advice that I can give is to be an independent thinker. What this means don’t just rely upon someone’s commentary to understand the passage of scripture. Most of the time I will study a verse of Scripture on my own, run references on it, and do some critical analysis before I consult with a commentary. The commentary then serves as a means of verification that someone sees in the passage what I saw, or informs me of a possible flaw in my reasoning. It can also add additional information to aid in understand the text and its context. “

Bill Burk

“I consider my study habits a work in progress. I’m seldom satisfied with where I am in my endeavors. I’m always trying to improve. At the same time, I tend to study all the time. I feel my best when I’m consistent in daily Bible reading and memory work. I find that when I am regular in these two exercises sermon and Bible class preparation become much easier and take on greater depth. While driving I enjoy listening to podcasts that discuss spiritual and cultural matters. Also, always have several books going. When these practices are constant, I tend to have more material to preach than I can use. “

“When preparing a sermon or class I begin with the text, my Bible and a journal that I use for writing notes and thoughts. I will then read to familiarize myself with my subject, jotting down insights, brief notes, outlines, etc. that come to mind as I go along. It is only after I have spent time with the text do I read other materials. Finally, using the notes I have gleaned from my studies I type up a detailed outline. Regarding sermons, I type a detailed outline, study it, memorize the main points and then preach extemporaneously. Regarding Bible classes, I keep my note taking to what I can write in the margin of my Bible.”

“As it pertains to important advice and Bible study, I have concluded that in order to get the most out of it the student needs to continually keep the big picture in mind. From Genesis to Revelation the story of the Bible is the salvation of man to the glory of God by Christ Jesus. When we see God’s plan regarding Jesus in every book we will put ourselves in the position to truly understand Scripture.