

The Importance of Effective Bible Study

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One of the most tragic statements in scripture is found in Hosea 4:6—“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” God had given His people everything that they needed to know in order to please Him. He had clearly revealed His will in the Law, and sent prophets to them time and again to plead with them to repent of their sins and live righteously. But they continually rejected Him, and consequently He rejected them (Hos. 4:6b). Another tragedy is found in Amos 8:11—“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.” How sad it is that God’s people had neglected one of God’s richest blessings—His revealed will. Unfortunately, there are many people today who fall under the same heartbreaking consequence of these two passages. God’s word is absent from their lives and they are, therefore, walking down the path of destruction.

The apostle Paul’s desire for the Colossians was that they “be filled with the knowledge of His will” (Col. 1:9). He wanted them to know more and more of God’s word because “it is not good” to be without it (Prov. 19:2). To know God’s will is to know God (Col. 1:10), and what could be more important? But, being filled with the knowledge of God’s word does not happen by accident. It does not come by osmosis or direct action from the Holy Spirit. The only way that I will be able to know God’s word is by studying it effectively (2 Tim. 2:15).

Webster’s collegiate dictionary defines the word “effective” as “producing a decided, decisive, or desired effect.” There are a number of effects that come as a result of bible study. When we study we show ourselves “approved unto God” (2 Tim. 2:15). We study the bible because it provides us everything we need to know in order to please God and be with Him in eternity (2 Pet. 1:3). Scripture has the ability to make us complete (2 Tim. 3:17). It is “a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105). The new birth is produced by the word of God (1 Pet. 1:23). Studying God’s word will help to strengthen our faith so that we may withstand the attacks of the devil (Ps. 1; Col. 1:9-11). These things are only possible when we study effectively. We must study with the proper attitude. We must understand the nature of what we’re studying. We must respect its author, its authority, and its power. We must dedicate ourselves completely to being “filled with the knowledge of His will” (Col. 1:9).

The opposite of effective bible study is, of course, ineffective bible study. Something that is ineffective is “not capable of performing efficiently or as expected.” There are many people who study the bible with negative results because they do so with for the wrong reasons or in the wrong manner (c.f. Jas. 3:13-4:4). Some completely ignore the things that they do not like; some study only to find justification for the way that they live; and others study only to find reasons to reject God. There are people who believe in God but do not believe that His word is completely inspired. Some believe that the scripture is only a part of what we need and the Holy Spirit directly provides the rest. Still, there are those who are sincere in their efforts to study God’s word but simply do not know how or where to begin. The number of reasons why people study scripture ineffectively is endless. But, the result is always the same.

Our hope is that this issue of the Christian Worker, and the one to follow, will help to provide practical instruction on how to study the bible effectively. Some articles

will deal with foundational aspects such as having the proper attitude, and understanding bible authority. Others will be very practical by providing step-by-step instructions for different methods of studying. We pray that God is glorified through this effort and that His people will have a revived desire to “study to show themselves approved” (2 Tim. 2:15).