



# EFFECTUAL BIBLE STUDENT

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*The Effectual Bible Student*

## **Note to Teachers and Students**

The *Effectual Bible Student* is one of the Way of Life Bible courses. The book can be read alone for great benefit, but we highly encourage you to take the complete course. It will benefit you greatly.

The course is a package with a textbook, a series of videos, a syllabus (to guide the teacher or private student through the course), review questions, tests, and answer sheets.

Refer to *Effectual Bible Student* course page on the Way of Life Literature website <https://www.wayoflife.org>.

The video series can be found at:

<https://www.wayoflife.org/media/>

# Introduction

## Outline

- Spiritual Requirements for Bible Study
- A Habit of Daily Bible Study
- Sound Rules of Bible Interpretation
- Bible Study Tools
- Aim to Obtain Extensive Knowledge of the Bible
- Beginning Bible Study Projects

This is a new edition of the course that was published in 2015. It is being video recorded for publication.

*Our goal is to enrich your life, to give you more joy and blessing and fruitfulness, to bring eternity into your life.* The goal is not to bring you into religious bondage. It is not to make your life more difficult or to increase your work load.

*To take this course seriously you must pay close attention and try to capture everything that is taught.* Don't let yourself be distracted. You must answer the review questions. You must take the final test. You must put it into practice.

*This is a beginner course. Understanding the Bible for Yourself* is our advanced course. The *Effectual Bible Student* is intended to whet your appetite for Bible study and to get your started. It should not be the end, it should be the very beginning. I have studied about 30 courses on Bible study.

*Our goal is that every one of our church members will be a serious Bible student, from the youngest to the oldest.* It is the only way to have a true New Testament church in fulfillment of God's clear commands. It is the only way to obey Matthew 28:19, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." It is the only way to obey Colossians 1:28, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." It is

the only way to obey Hebrews 5:12-14, that every child of God should be skillful in God's Word, able to eat the meat and exercise their spiritual senses to discern good from evil. Fathers are to be teachers of their homes (Eph. 6:4); mothers of their children (2 Ti. 1:15; 3:15); aged women of the younger (Tit. 2:3-5). It is the only way to honor 2 Timothy 3:16-17. All Scripture is necessary for perfection in God's will. Every believer needs every book (of the Bible)! To be a serious Bible student is the only way to prepare for God's service in this world. A good and increasing knowledge of the whole Bible is necessary to be accomplish God's will. Every believer is a teacher (Heb. 5:12-14), an ambassador (2 Co. 5:20), a soldier (Eph. 6:10-19), a minister of spiritual gifts (Ro. 12:3-8), an edifier of the body (1 Co. 3:9-15; Eph. 4:16), a defender of the faith (Jude 1:3), an exhorter (Heb. 3:13; 10:25). These ministries require that every believer be a serious, lifelong Bible student.

*That every one of our church members be a serious Bible student is the only way to have the families that please God and accomplish His will.* Fathers and mothers must be serious Bible students in order to educate and evangelize and disciple their children (De. 6:4-9). The children and youth must be serious Bible students, for it is by the Scripture that they are made wise unto salvation and perfected unto all good works (2 Ti. 3:15-17).

*Bible study is not an end unto itself.* First, it is for the purpose of knowing God. The Bible is first of all a revelation of God. He is life! Second, it is for the purpose of knowing God's will. It is impossible to know God's will without a strong knowledge of His Word. No man or woman can tell you God's will. They can help you, but only God can lead you, and He does this by His Word. Third, it is for the purpose of preparing for God's service (as ambassador, priest, soldier, teacher, builder). Fourth, it is for the purpose of preparing for eternity (judgment seat of Christ, positions of ruling)

You *can* be an effectual Bible student if you are saved and if you have a love for Christ and truth and if you are willing to do what is required. A great many of the most effectual Bible students and teachers began with a weak education but were motivated to become serious students of the Bible because of salvation and love for God. That is my testimony. I always loved to read, but I was not a serious student. Throughout my youth, I didn't take education seriously. I did enough to get by, barely passing high school. But as soon as I was saved, I was passionate about learning the Bible and *anything* pertaining to truth and wisdom. Consider missionary Bill Hardecker, who is a very serious Bible student. He was saved as a teenager, and at the time he was a video gamer who never read books. But he became eager to study truth and became a serious reader.

You can be an effectual Bible student if you have the heart for it, but *you have to learn how to study the Bible*. Consider the following testimony: "Not long after I became a Christian, someone encouraged me, 'Now that you've come to faith, you need to get into the Word.' 'Wonderful,' I said. 'Where do I start?' 'Start anywhere, brother. It's all profitable.' So I went home and opened my Bible--and landed in Ezekiel. Right in the middle of the wheels. I struggled with that passage for a while, until I thought, This has to be an exception. So I tried the other end of the Bible--Revelation. Bowls and vials and wrath, which completely confused me. So, I'm ashamed to say, I closed the Book for one solid year" (Howard Hendricks).



# Spiritual Requirements for Bible Study

## **Outline**

- Spiritual life
- Reverence
- Obedience
- Prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit
- Humility
- Patience and persistence
- A good church
- The right Bible

Effectual Bible study requires a certain kind of student. The Bible is a spiritual book and spiritual requirements are necessary to understand it. This section must not be skipped over or taken lightly. It is fundamental. Even if you have been saved for some time, you should pay attention to these things and be reminded of what is necessary to be an effectual Bible student. Being put in remembrance of things is an essential part of spiritual growth (2 Ti. 1:6; 2:14; 2 Pe.1:12-13, 15; 3:1; Jude 1:5). The Lord's Supper, for example, is sanctification through remembrance (1 Co. 11:24-25).

## **1. Understanding the Bible requires SPIRITUAL LIFE (1 Co. 2:14 - 3:3).**

The first and foremost requirement for fruitful Bible study is a saved, Spirit-led life. Unlike other books, the Bible is a spiritual book and can only be understood by people with spiritual discernment. This is so basic but so important.

There are three types of people described in 1 Corinthians chapters two and three: the *natural* man, the *spiritual* man, and the *carnal* man.

**The natural man** is the unsaved person who is spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-3). His mind is blinded (2 Co. 4:4). He does not have spiritual eyes. He cannot understand the things of God. When the heart turns to the Lord, though, and receives Jesus Christ, the blindness is lifted (2 Co. 3:14-17). When I was growing up in a Baptist church, I had a Bible and I studied the Bible in Sunday School and knew it well enough to win sword drills, but the Bible didn't become a living Book for me until I was converted. "The deepest biblical scholar, if he fails to find Christ, knows less of the real meaning of the Gospel than the humblest Christian who is living in the faith of the Son of God" (*Pulpit Commentary*).

**The spiritual man** is the believer who lives for Christ (1 Co. 2:15-16). The believer is either spiritual or carnal depending on his walk with Christ, depending on whether he is walking in the flesh or the Spirit (Ga. 5:16-25). The spiritual man has the Spirit (Ro. 8:9) and walks in the Spirit (Ga. 5:16). He is filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18) and prays in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18).

**The carnal man** is the believer who walks after the flesh rather than the Spirit (1 Co. 3:1-4). Because he is not walking in the Spirit, he cannot understand the difficult things of Scripture. He can take milk but not meat. See also Hebrews 5:12-14. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus warned that the Word of God can be "choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection" (Lu. 8:14). In Bible study, spiritual life is at least as important as technical skills. R.A. Torrey, a graduate of Yale Divinity School who did postgraduate studies in Germany, said, "A person who understands the language of the Holy Spirit, but who does not understand a word of Greek or Hebrew or Aramaic, will get more out of the Bible than one who knows all about Greek and Hebrew but is not born again. It is a well-demonstrated fact that many plain men and women who possess no knowledge of the original languages in which the

Bible was written have knowledge of the real contents of the Bible. Their understanding of its actual teaching and its depth, fullness, and beauty far surpasses that of many learned professors in theological faculties.”

Since salvation is so essential in effective Bible study and since there are so many nominal Christians in churches, let's consider 9 biblical evidences of salvation.

- *A conversion experience and new spiritual life and direction* (Joh. 3:3; Mt. 18:3; 2 Co. 5:17). The testimonies we find in the Bible emphasize this experience (e.g., Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10; the woman at the well in John 4:4-42; the Jews converted on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:37-42; the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-39; the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:23-34; and the idolaters at Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 1:9. Biblical salvation is not a process; it is a conversion experience!
- *A personal relationship with Jesus Christ* (Joh. 17:3; Mt. 7:21-23). Biblical salvation is not changing religions; it is knowing Christ personally as one's Lord and Saviour.
- *Knowing God as Abba, Father* (Ro. 8:15).
- *The witness of the Spirit* (Ro. 8:16).
- *Love of God's Word* (Joh. 8:31-32, 47; 10:27-28). One of the greatest evidences of salvation is one's attitude toward the Bible.
- *Continuing in God's Word* (Joh. 8:31-32).
- *Following Christ* (Joh. 10:27).
- *Love of righteousness* (1 Jo. 2:3-4). The true believer can sin, because the “old man” still resides in him, but he has an entirely different attitude toward sin. He can no longer enjoy sin, no longer be content to sin. He has been converted and the Holy Spirit lives within him and God is his Father. The

# A Habit of Daily Bible Study

## *Outline*

- Make this a high priority
- Establish a time
- Establish a place
- Have your own study tools
- Have a reading/study plan
- Study with prayer
- Study with concentration
- Pay attention to details
- Try to get something practical each day
- Maintain a prayer diary
- Don't get into a rut
- Meditate in Scripture day and night

It is important to develop godly habits in the Christian life. Jesus had “the custom” of attending the synagogue services (Lu. 4:16). This was His habit. Likewise the believer must have habits of church attendance and daily Bible study.

Following are some tips for effectual daily Bible study.

### **1. Make Bible study a high priority.**

God requires first place (“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,” Mt. 6:33). And since He has magnified His Word above His very name (Ps. 138:2), it is evident that He intends that we should make the study of His Word the very highest priority.

Jesus likened the Word of God to one's daily food (Mt. 4:4). As food is necessary for physical growth and health, so the Word of God is necessary for spiritual growth and health. As food must be eaten daily, so the Word of God must be consumed daily. When the Israelites were in the wilderness, God gave them manna to eat, and it had to be gathered and

eaten every day. It could not be left over for the next day. Likewise, the believer must have a habit of consistent, daily Bible study if he wants to grow strong and develop in God's will.

The habit of daily Bible study needs to be like the law of the Medes and Persians, which could not be changed even by the king (Est. 1:9; Da. 6:8).

Following are some of the ways that we can do this:

*The study of the Bible should come first in the day* when we are still fresh and our minds are uncluttered with the concerns of life. Some have vowed to the Lord that they will not eat food until they have eaten God's Word. That is a noble thing. As a rule, I don't read anything else or get on the computer or reply to emails, etc., until I have read God's Word. When I was engaged to my wife and she was still living in a foreign country and our only form of communication was by mail, I determined before the Lord that I would never read one of her letters until I had first spent time in His Word. I believe such things please the Lord, because they demonstrate our zeal toward Him.

*The study of the Bible should be given sufficient time.* It is not honoring to God to apply a tiny amount of time to the study of His Word or to read some little two-minute devotional in the place of serious Bible study. To learn the Bible properly, one must carve out significant time to read and study it. This means you will have to give up some other things.

*The study of the Bible should be a priority above the study of other books.* It is not honoring to God to spend most of one's time reading *about* the Bible while neglecting the actual study of the Bible itself. While we do not despise the value of sound doctrinal books, they should not take the place of the Bible itself.

## **2. Establish a time.**

Understanding the Bible for yourself requires a serious commitment of time.

It requires carving out an amount of time and keeping that time as your Bible time with God. If you do not develop a habit of daily Bible reading at a certain time each day, you will probably only read and study it hit and miss.

Look at your schedule and decide what time would be best for your situation. At different periods in my life I have had different times for my devotions, depending on the situation. Usually first thing in the morning is best, before your mind becomes filled with the business of the day. But other times of the day might work better for you. It is something to pray about.

## **3. Establish a place**

A quiet, private place is necessary, if at all possible.

I have seen Christians trying to study the Bible in a room where other people are talking and a radio is playing, etc. That might be necessary on some occasions, but as an ongoing practice it is not wise and it is not honoring to the Lord who deserves our undivided attention. The Bible is the very Word of God. Would it be proper to invite God over for a visit and then have many other things going on at the same time as He was talking to us?

## **4. Have your own study tools and have them at hand.**

Every workman needs the right tools.

We will discuss these later in this course.

## **5. Have a reading/study plan.**

It is important both to **READ** the Bible (De. 17:18-19; Re. 1:3) and to **STUDY** the Bible (2 Ti. 2:15). Both disciplines are necessary. Reading and studying are two different things, and

both are necessary if you are going to understand the Bible for yourself.

It is important, first, simply to **READ** the Bible. There is probably no other one thing that can help a believer better understand the Bible than simply reading it and reading it and reading it. My mother started reading the Bible through twice a year when she was about 77 years old, and every time I saw her after that she told me what a great blessing it was and how that she so wished she had started that habit when she was young.

It is necessary, also, to **STUDY** the Bible. This involves slowing down the pace, doing word studies, analyzing individual passages, doing topical studies, outlining books, using commentaries, etc. We will teach many things about Bible study in this course.

### **Some Tips for Reading the Bible**

***Read the Bible systematically.*** That means read it through. Why should the Bible be read systematically? The Bible is not merely a collection of writings, it is one Book; and to be understood it needs to be read and studied as one Book. Each individual book of the Bible complements the other books and has its unique part in the whole, and as the Bible is read systematically, the pieces gradually fit together.

At the very least, the Bible should be read by individual books, starting at the beginning of the book and reading to the end.

One man told me that he reads two or three verses each day and meditates on them, but it is impossible to understand the Bible that way. It is impossible to learn the whole Bible and how each part fits into the whole, and it is impossible to rightly interpret the verses in context.

# Sound Rules of Bible Interpretation

## Outline

- Context
- Comparing Scripture with Scripture
- Doctrine is built on the whole of Scripture, not any one proof text
- The consistent literal method
- Figurative language is defined in Scripture
- Clear passages interpret the less clear
- Christ is the theme of Scripture
- The law of Moses prepared the way for Christ
- Dispensations
- The transitional element in the Gospels and Acts

These principles are connected and interwoven, but we are considering them separately for teaching purposes.

I am going to teach you how to study the Bible with books first, then discuss computer software and apps. I encourage new Bible students to start with books, especially children and young people, but older students as well. There are great advantages to electronic Bible study, but there are also advantages to using books and paper and pen. I love ebooks and eBibles, but I am glad that I spent 10 years using books for Bible study before I obtained my first computer (Osborne, about 1981) and 15 years before obtaining my first electronic Bible software (Online Bible, about 1990).

*With an actual Bible, the student can better learn to envision the whole Book and the individual parts.* When the student is studying a certain chapter or book, he can see exactly where it is located in the larger picture.

*Books (e.g., Strong's Concordance, Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, Bible Believer's Commentary) require the student*



*to work harder in study*, which is a necessary part of learning the Bible. See Proverbs 2:4, which says wisdom is found by those who seek it as silver and hid treasures, and 2 Timothy 2:15, which says “study” is necessary, which is the Greek *spoudazo*, translated “endeavor” (1 Th. 2:17), “diligence” (2 Ti. 4:9, 21; Tit. 3:12), and “labor” (Heb. 4:11).

*Books avoid the distractions inherent in electronic devices.* There is the constant temptation to write an email, respond to notifications, get sidetracked by the web or social media, etc.

*Studies have shown that writing by hand has multiple benefits.* Many successful businessmen find benefit in keeping handwritten notes and journals even in this computer age. The founders of Habit Nest were selected as Amazon’s Best Small Business Owners Under 30 for 2019 for their writing journals, and four of Amazon’s Small Business of the Year finalists “said they rely on pen and paper as they run e-commerce brands” (“Entrepreneurs swear by Bullet Journals and other paper notebooks to organize their lives,” *Business Insider*, Dec. 8, 2019). They use paper and pen to develop their creative and strategic ideas. “Psychology researchers have found in various studies that handwritten notes lead to better conceptual understanding than typed ones, that task-switching causes performance to suffer...”

**The rules of Bible interpretation are based on the Bible’s purpose.**

God gave the Bible to reveal truth, not to hide truth. It is intended to be revelation, not a puzzle. It is intended to be a revelation to all men, all nations, all languages. Therefore, God used ordinary human language and incorporated the normal rules of human language.

## **1. THE BIBLE MUST BE INTERPRETED BY THE RULE OF CONTEXT.**

Nothing is more important than context; it is the first rule of sound Bible interpretation!

The Bible is a self-interpreting Book if we interpret its words according to context.

New and untaught Christians often misinterpret the Bible because they don't interpret by context. For example, consider 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." For a long time I thought that this referred to things in heaven and future things that we don't yet see, but in the context it is clear that it refers to things that cannot be known by man's natural senses, but which are revealed in Scripture. The very next verse says, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Co. 2:10).

You can make the Bible teach anything if context is ignored. "There was a woman who had her devotions by closing her eyes and opening the Bible at random, thus taking the first verse her eyes fell upon as the 'light' for that day. That first time she opened it, her eyes fell upon the verse, 'And Judas went out and hanged himself.' She didn't like that one, so she closed her Bible and opened it again, and this time her eyes fell upon this verse, 'Go, and do thou likewise.' Whew! She certainly didn't like that, so she tried once more, and her eyes fell upon this verse: 'That thou doest, do it quickly'" (Mark Cambron, *Mastering the Bible*, p. 66).

False teachers, on the other hand, twist verses out of their context and force pre-determined meanings upon them. For example, there are Korean false teachers in Nepal who are aggressive in having home Bible studies, but they don't let the

# Bible Study Tools

Effectual Bible study requires being a “workman” (2 Ti. 2:15). Obtaining wisdom is likened to digging for silver, a very strenuous, demanding work (Pr. 2:1-5).

You will get out of your Bible study what you put into it.

“Most great truths do not lie on the surface. They must be brought up into the light by patient toil” (Frank Thompson).

In our estimation, the following are the most fundamental Bible study tools: (1) A good reference Bible, (2) Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, (3) Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, (4) a good Bible dictionary (*Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible, Believer’s Bible Dictionary*), (5) some well-chosen Bible commentaries (6) a good Bible atlas.

You must obtain your own individual study tools. And you must have them at hand during your Bible study time. Otherwise, you won’t use them.

## REFERENCE BIBLES

A reference Bible contains cross references, notes, concordance, maps and other helps in addition to the Bible text.

At the very least, it is extremely helpful to have a study Bible with cross-references and a concordance.

We recommend the Old Scofield Reference Bible, Thompson Chain Reference Bible, and the King James Study Bible.

For more information on this see “Reference Bibles” at the Way of Life web site.

## STRONG'S EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE

We believe the *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* is the most important single Bible study tool ever published.

The editor was James Strong (1822-1916). He was a conservative Methodist who was proficient in biblical Greek and Hebrew as well as some other ancient languages. As a professor at two Bible colleges, he defended biblical inspiration against the onslaught of theological modernism. He spent a lifetime studying Bible words and their meaning from the context.

Beginning in 1855, he spent 35 years compiling his concordance, which was first published in 1890. Before this there was no exhaustive concordance of the Bible in any language. He had help from more than 100 other men. It lists every word in the King James Bible and defines more than 8,000 Hebrew words and 5,000 Greek words.

This project was accomplished in the midst of a spiritual revival: the Bible conference movement, Bible Institute movement, the formulation of dispensational theology, the fundamentalist movement, the separation of conservatives from liberal denominations, great evangelistic meetings (e.g., D.L. Moody, R.A. Torrey, Gipsy Smith, J. Wilbur Chapman, Sam Jones, Hyman Appelman, Billy Sunday, Mordecai Ham, William B. Riley, J. Frank Norris), a great world missionary outreach (the Cambridge Seven), and an explosion of godly hymn writing (Ira Sankey, Fanny Cosby, Philip Bliss, Francis Havergal).

James Strong should not be confused with Augustus H. Strong, 1836-1921, who taught at Rochester Theological Seminary and was tainted with theological liberalism, including "theistic evolution, a low view of the Bible's inspiration, and pantheistic ideas, and who brought Walter

Rauschenbusch, the father of the Social Gospel, to Rochester in 1902.

James Strong worked on the English Revised Version translation committee with Westcott and Hort and others, both conservative and liberal. Some King James Bible defenders refuse to use Strong's because of his association with textual criticism.

For our part, we don't reject Strong. There is nothing that can take its place that doesn't have some of the same problems, and in our estimation the benefits far outweigh the problems. At the same time, the student needs protection from any errors that have crept into dictionaries and lexicons through unsound modern scholarship, and that comes by two means. First, the student must be aware of the dangers of modern textual criticism. An introduction to this can be found in *Why We Hold to the King James Bible* and *Faith vs. the Modern Bible Versions*, which are available from Way of Life Literature. Second, the student must not blindly follow Strong's definitions. This is true for any dictionary. Ultimately, Bible words must be interpreted by their own context, not by a pre-designated dictionary meaning. The Strong's concordance enables the student to examine the context of the words in the King James Bible, so that the Bible itself defines the words. This ability alone is an invaluable resource even without the definitions in Strong's Greek and Hebrew dictionaries.

It is important to test dictionary definitions by the Bible itself. The Bible is a self-interpreting book. Good dictionaries are *very* useful, but they are not infallible and must be tested by the Bible itself. Consider "mystery" (Ro. 16:25). This is the Greek *mysterion*. Strong defines it as "a secret or mystery (through the idea of silence imposed by initiation into religious rites." That is the basic meaning of the Greek word as it was used in Greek society, but the Bible defines *mystery*

as revelation that was hidden in the Old Testament era and revealed in the New. That is its consistent meaning in Scripture (Ro. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:3-4; Col. 1:26-27). Consider the word “beareth” (1 Co. 13:7). This is the Greek *stego*, which according to Strong’s means “to cover, to cover over in silence, to conceal, to hide the faults of others.” Strong’s gives as a secondary meaning, “to hold out, forbear, bear with, endure.” But *stego* always has the meaning of bearing with or enduring in Scripture and never has the meaning of covering faults. It is translated “forbear” (1 Th. 3:1, 5) and “suffer,” meaning to endure (1 Co. 9:12).

If nothing else, Strong provided an immeasurable benefit for Bible students by producing a numbering system for every Hebrew and Greek word so that those who cannot use Hebrew and Greek lexicons directly can still study the words at a basic level. This numbering system became the basis for a wealth of other Bible study tools (*Vine’s Dictionary of Bible Words*, *Englishman’s Hebrew and Greek Lexicons*, *Theological Dictionary of the Old and New Testament*, *New Analytical Greek Lexicon*, *Complete Word Study Dictionary*). This was an invaluable tool for the Bible institute movement that began in the late 1800s and spread quickly in the 20th. The Institutes were based on the English Bible and produced countless preachers and Christian workers who were zealous Bible students but were not well trained in the Biblical languages.

Being able to see the Hebrew and Greek is invaluable. For example, in John 21:15-17 Jesus commissioned Peter to feed the sheep. By using Strong’s we learn that the word “love” is two different Greek words in this passage. In verses 15 and 16, Jesus used *agapao*, which is godly love, the highest love, unselfish love, giving love, John 3:16 love. It is the word used for the first and second commandment--love of God and love of neighbor (Mr. 12:30-31). But Peter used *phileo*, which is love of a friend, fondness, affection, to delight in something, something that is dear. In verse 17, Jesus uses *phileo*. Both

## Aim to Obtain Extensive Knowledge of the Bible

Understanding the Bible requires aiming to gain extensive knowledge of the Bible itself and of everything pertaining to a right understanding of the Bible. It requires a passion to pursue this business.

An equivalent of a Bible Institute education is *the bare beginning* of being an effectual Bible student.

Being an effectual Bible student is a lifelong process. If there isn't progress, there is backsliding (2 Pe. 1:5-9). Note that adding "knowledge" is a necessary part of Christian growth. If you aren't going forward in knowledge, you are going backwards. We note here, too, that unless knowledge is an integral part of all aspects of progress in virtue, it isn't godly knowledge.

### **The effectual Bible student studies Bible geography.**

The Bible is an historical book that describes events in the land of Israel and surrounding territory, so the study of geography is essential to its proper understanding. The geography of the Bible extends west to western Europe, east to the border of India (the eastern border of the Persian Empire), north to Gog and Magog (Russia), and south to Africa. That encompasses a major part of the world.

As we describe in the chapter "Beginning Bible Study Projects," the first step is to get a basic introduction to Bible geography.

The student needs to obtain at least one good Bible atlas. We recommend *Rose Then and Now Bible Map Atlas* and the *Satellite Bible Atlas*.

We cannot say enough about the importance of studying Bible geography and paying close attention to geography in the biblical text. If you don't, you overlook a great amount of information. Consider Genesis 15:2 ("this Eliezer of Damascus") and Genesis 16:1 ("an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar"). Abraham's governor, Eliezer, was of Damascus. It is easy to skip over the word "Damascus." I skipped over it for decades. Then one day I stopped and thought about it, and realized that Abraham probably found this faithful man on the way down to Canaan from Haran. And Hagar being an Egyptian leads the perceptive student's mind directly to the land of Egypt and tells him a great deal about her. She was probably obtained when Abraham and Sarah were backsliding in Egypt (Ge. 12:10-20), and she was an Egyptian in character. She went right back to Egypt when she left Abraham and Sarah (Ge. 21:21).

The study of Bible geography should be a lifelong process. We cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of a personal visit to the Bible lands, especially Israel itself, but also Turkey, Greece, Egypt, and Jordan.

*Introduction to Bible Geography*, [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).

### **The effectual Bible student studies the Bible as a whole.**

It is essential to get a good overview of the Bible and a basic understanding of the individual sections and books.

"It is not enough that we be familiar with great verses, or great texts, or great chapters, or great individual books. We must know the Bible as a whole, and should be familiar with the parts which make up the whole; for here is a Divine progressive revelation, in which every part is organically related to every other part; and, consequently, only by knowing the whole Bible can we worthily appreciate its greatness and experience its power. ... the synthetic method in Bible study demands that we get a mental grasp of the Bible as a whole ... In the Bible, as in biology, the whole is more than