

HOW TO
STUDY

ADVANCED
**BIBLE
STUDY
SERIES**

David W. Cloud

Teacher/Self-Study Edition

How to Study the Bible

*A Guide to Studying and
Interpreting the Holy Scriptures*

Teacher/Self-Study Edition

By David Cloud

*This book is one of the titles in the
Way of Life Literature Advanced Bible Studies Series*

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P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061
866-295-4143 (toll free) • fbns@wayoflife.org (e-mail)
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Canada:

Bethel Baptist Church,
4212 Campbell St. N., London, Ont. N6P 1A6
• 519-652-2619 (voice) • 519-652-0056 (fax) • info@bethelbaptist.ca

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A lot of time and effort has gone into the creation of the review questions and tests, which are carefully designed to draw the student's attention to the most important points and to help him remember these points long after the course is finished. There are no fluff questions and no mere busy work that wastes the student's time with things of no consequence. Each question is important and deals with things that the Bible student needs to keep in mind beyond the life of the course. The SECTIONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS go over all of the important points in the lessons, thus pointing the student's attention to the most significant material and preparing him for the sectional tests. The SECTIONAL TESTS are drawn from the most important of the review questions. And the FINAL TEST draws from the most important of the sectional tests. Thus each test focuses the student's attention in more closely on the things that he should take away from

the course and helps him remember these things by repeating them throughout the review and testing process.

If you take the courses by yourself, don't skip over the review questions and tests. Get the test books (and don't cheat yourself by looking at the answers) and find someone who will test you on the material. It is a very important part of the learning process.

(The previous description doesn't apply to some of the earlier courses such as The Four Gospels.)

THE AUTHOR'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BIBLE

I have delighted in the Bible for 35 years, but for the first 23 years of my life I did not care anything about it, in spite of the fact that my parents faithfully took me to church when I was a boy. They lovingly bought me Bibles as I was growing up, but as far as I can remember I had no interest in them. I cannot recall even one time when I opened my Bible to read and study it for myself. I knew the well-known Bible stories by heart, and I knew the books of the Bible, and I even won Bible sword drills by being the first to find a certain passage; but I did not understand the meaning of the Bible and I saw no personal benefit in it for my daily life. The reason was that I had never repented toward God and received Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior (Acts 20:21). I was baptized when I was about 10 years old and joined the church, but it was an empty thing.

The Bible says, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Cor. 5:21). True salvation makes a powerful change in one's life, but there was no change in me. Though I was in church, my heart was in the world, and I sought the things of the world. When I went to church, my thoughts were not on the Bible and the things of Christ; my thoughts were on foolishness and on my worldly friends. Titus 1:16 describes my sad condition perfectly: *"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."*

My relationship with the Bible in those days was all "head knowledge." There was no heart relationship with Christ, and when that is the case, the Bible is a closed book. As soon as I was old enough, I quit going to church. I was about 16 years old at the time, and I did not go back to church or have anything further to do with the Bible for several dark years.

One glorious day in late summer 1973, though, the Lord had mercy upon a prodigal son and He sent a Christian man named Ron Walker to help me find my way back to the Bible. This man loved the Word of God so much that he had memorized large portions by heart and he could show you exactly what the

Bible said about practically anything you were thinking. He was a walking Bible concordance! By the grace of God and through the prayers of my mom and dad and my godly maternal grandmother, my path crossed with Ron's. He spent about four days with me, showing me what the Bible says about all of the foolish things I believed at the time.

I was a voracious reader even when I was not saved, and through foolish books and the influence of various people I met in my worldly travels, I had gotten involved in Hinduism and New Age and various other vain philosophies. I had spent a year and a half in Vietnam with the U.S. Army, and I spent a lot of time reading and discussing philosophy with unsaved buddies. After I returned to the States I became infatuated with Hinduism and joined the Self-Realization Fellowship Society.

Ron didn't know anything about the philosophies and religions that I was involved with, but he did know the Bible. We traveled together from near Miami, Florida, to Mexico via Brownsville, Texas, and then back to Daytona Beach, Florida. All along the way, I was trying to impress Ron with my philosophical views and attempting to convince him of the glories of New Ageism, but for his part he simply quoted the Bible.

At first, I was very impressed with his knowledge of the Scriptures and very interested in what he was saying, but after a couple of days I became frustrated, and I said to him, "Don't you have any thoughts of your own? All you do is quote from the Bible!" He replied something to the effect that his thoughts were not important but the Bible is the very Word of God.

I said, "I trust my heart."

He replied, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" (Jer. 17:9).

I said, "I must go the way that seems right to me."

He replied, "*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*" (Prov. 14:12).

I said, "How can a man know if the Bible is true?"

He replied, "*If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself*" (Jn. 7:17).

I said, "There are many religions that lead to God."

He replied, "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12).

It went like that for about four days.

At the end of those days, we got a motel room in Daytona Beach and decided we would split up the next day and go our separate ways. Because of the books I had read about gurus in the Himalayas, I was thinking that I needed to find some mountains and I would discover God there, but by the grace of our blessed God, my heart was opened that night like Lydia's long ago (Acts 16:14). I became strangely calm and my fretful compulsion to dispute the Bible left me, and for the first time in my life I started really listening to the Scriptures. That night I repented of my wicked sin before God and I had confidence that Jesus had died for me and I put my faith in Him. And that very night I became a fundamentalist Bible believer, meaning one who believes and has a zeal for every word in the Bible! I have never doubted one word of the Scriptures since that day, and how I thank God for it.

The next day we had breakfast together, and Ron started off in another direction to find another needy soul (I have never seen him again), while I headed back home to make things right with my parents and to start my new Christian life. I had an intense desire to learn everything I could about the Bible. I read it through probably three times that first year, and I not only read it, I studied it diligently, for hours a day. And there was nothing tedious about it; it was pure joy! How my heart thrilled that I had the very Word of God in my hands and that I could literally know the thoughts of God and His will for my life. I had Christ's promise that I could know the truth and it would set me free (John 8:31-32). I had wasted many years, but now I didn't want to waste another day.

I memorized hundreds of verses during those first few years, plus many individual chapters and the book of Colossians. Ron had given me a *Strong's Concordance* and had shown me how to use it, so from the very first day of my new Christian life I understood the value of this amazing tool. That first year alone I looked up hundreds of words to find their definitions and to commit them to memory.

Before I went off to Bible School about a year after I was saved, I made my own

thick topical study book filled with the studies that I had mined from the Scriptures. By the time I took a formal course in Bible doctrine, I already had a firm foundation in what the Bible said about the major subjects because I had studied them on my own.

Even though I was not saved when I was a boy, all of the Scriptures that I had learned came back to me and it gave me a good start in my Christian life. It is never in a waste of time to teach children the Bible!

When I was about six months old in the Lord, I wrote my first booklet. It was about the dangers of rock music, because that had been my lifestyle for many years. Within that first year, I wrote many other booklets; and by the time I was four years old in the Lord, I had written my first major book. It was titled “Avoiding the Snare of Seventh-day Adventism.” It was published by Challenge Press in Little Rock, Arkansas, and is still in print today. I did the research for and wrote most of it when I was still in Bible School. I was learning how to discern sound Christian teaching from heresy.

I developed a filing system that consisted of hand-written quotes on index cards that I gleaned from my constant reading. By the time I graduated from Bible School, this index system consisted of thousands of cards.

From that day to this, I have loved the Bible and I have never ceased to study it diligently; but let me hasten to say that it is not my doing. I don’t want anyone to think that I am tooting my own horn. Far from it; I stand in amazement at what the Lord has done for and through me. At my best I am an unworthy servant of the Lord. Before I was saved, I was the epitome of inconsistency and foolishness. I got involved in every sort of wickedness, and there was zero stability in my life. The only thing I completed during those dark years was a term in the Army. Somehow I finished my three years in the military and received an honorable discharge, but even at that, I made no effort to excel. Before and after the Army, I merely jumped from job to job, from place to place, and from philosophy to philosophy. Thus, my steadfastness in the Bible and in the things of Christ for these past 34 years is certainly not my own doing. It is purely and simply the grace of God, and how I thank Him for it.

The Bible is the greatest treasure in this sin-cursed world. It is far more valuable than the wisest Christian even begins to understand.

My earnest prayer to God is that He will use this course [“How to Study the

Bible”] to bring the joy of effectual Bible study to many people, and that it may help many of God’s people to be excited about the Bible in these dark days and to help protect them from the wiles of the Devil and the machinations of false teachers.

In the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

David Cloud

November 3, 2007

WHAT WILL THIS COURSE DO FOR YOU?

This course on *How to Study the Bible* can provide the student with a valuable, eight-fold benefit, as follows:

1. It will help you learn how to understand the Bible. We are convinced that if a believer will apply the lessons of this course, the Bible will become a new book to him. It will open up the meaning of the Bible as a whole, of the individual books of the Bible, and of individual passages, verses, and Bible words.

2. It will teach you how to use the best Bible tools effectively, such as a concordance, a topical study guide, cross-references, a study Bible, a Bible dictionary, and a Bible commentary.

3. It will help you learn how to study the Bible fruitfully, so that you will be excited about your Bible study and you can apply it to your life and grow spiritually.

4. It will help you learn how to be persistent in your Bible study even when you become discouraged or bored or distracted. Every Bible student goes through periods of dryness, periods during which Bible study is not very exciting, when the mind wanders aimlessly. This course gives a wealth of practical tips for how to get through these periods.

5. It will give you many fresh ideas for studying the Bible. You will find literally hundreds of ideas to make your own Bible study more exciting and beneficial.

6. It will help you understand the difficult things in the Bible, including parables, Old Testament types, perceived contradictions, and difficult doctrinal passages. Not only will you be shown the solution to many of the difficulties, but you will also learn how to solve Bible difficulties for yourself.

7. It will help you to teach the Bible to others. Hebrews 5:12 says that every believer should be a teacher. This does not mean that every Christian is to be a preacher or that he or she should have his own Bible class. It means that every believer should be able to help family, friends, and acquaintances better understand the things of God. This is a very dark and needy world. Most people

do not know the truth of God's Word. It is incumbent upon every child of God to do everything he can to help others come to the light. To do that requires knowledge of God's Word. When Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch in the desert, the eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53. Philip asked him if he understood what he read, and the eunuch replied candidly and wisely, "*How can I, except some man should guide me?*" Philip was so knowledgeable of his Bible, that he was able to begin at that very passage and teach the man about Christ (Acts 8:30-35). This should be the goal of every believer, and this course will help you to accomplish this task.

8. It will protect you from being confused by false doctrine. The world is literally full of false teachers. The Bible warns of this danger repeatedly. Jesus warned about false teachers (Matt. 7:15; 24:4, 5, 11, 24). The apostles warned about false teachers (2 Cor. 11:4; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 4). The New Testament warns that spiritual deception will grow worse and worse as the church age progresses and the coming of Christ draws nearer (2 Tim. 3:13). The child of God is often confronted with false teachings soon after he is saved, if not before. When I was a brand new Christian, I was almost immediately confronted with a wide variety of heresies, such as Seventh-day Adventism, the Worldwide Church of God, and Mormonism. I encountered Seventh-day Adventism through a book I found in a public library. I found the Worldwide Church of God on the radio, and I encountered Mormonism through an old friend. As time has passed I have been confronted with many other false teachings. The only way to overcome them is through a strong knowledge of God's Word. This course will help you learn how to do this.

TWO KEY BIBLE PASSAGES ON STUDY

HOW TO BE A NOBLE CHRISTIAN

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

The Greek word for “noble,” *eugenes*, is also translated “nobleman.” Thus, in God’s eyes the true nobleman is the humble believer who diligently searches the Scriptures every day. His nobility might not be evident in this world. He might not be able to walk into the palaces of the high and mighty in this present dispensation, and he may never travel through a city in a motorcade of chauffeur-driven limousines preceded by a police escort. But one of these days, and it is not that far away, the faithful believer’s nobility will be very evident. He will hear “*well done, thy good and faithful servant*” from the lips of the King of kings, and he will receive a crown of authority to rule and reign with Christ.

The very foundation for the kind of Christian life that pleases the Lord is an intimate relationship with the Scriptures after the fashion of the noble Bereans of old. Note the characteristics of their zeal for the truth:

1. They received the Word of God with all readiness of mind. Their hearts were fixed to know the truth and to obey it whatever the cost. They did not try to shape God’s Word to their own thinking. They believed that God had spoken and they wanted to know what He was saying. Their minds were not closed; they were ready to receive.

2. They searched the Scriptures daily. The Greek word for “search,” *anakrino*, is elsewhere translated “ask,” “question,” “discern,” “examine,” and “judge.” This does not describe a half-hearted, haphazard reading of a few verses from time to time. It refers to a very vigorous regime of systematic study.

3. They tested everything by the Scriptures. This is not popular in these end times. The Christian is expected to be tolerant of other people’s opinions. Even if he does not agree with something, he is supposed to keep quiet and allow others the freedom to think and act differently. But that is not what we see in the Bereans. They refused to accept anything unless it was confirmed by the

Scriptures. They were “sticklers” for the truth. It is certain that they would not have been popular in this ecumenical age.

My friends, let us be Bereans in our relationship with the Holy Bible, so that at the end of this earthly pilgrimage we will receive God’s commendation. There is no need to envy the nobility of this present world. Their wealth and high station will soon pass away. The believer, though, has the privilege of being noble before God both in this world and in the next.

GOD’S COMMAND TO STUDY THE SCRIPTURES

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

In this important verse we have a direct command from God for Christians to study His Word. Note some of the lessons:

1. We are to labor in the study of God’s Word. Two words in this verse remind us of the zeal and diligence that is to be applied to the study of the Scriptures. One word is “workman,” describing a person who labors at some endeavor. The other word is the word “study.” It is from the Greek word *spoudazo*, which means “to use speed, i.e. to make effort, to prompt or earnest.” It is elsewhere translated “be diligent” (2 Tim. 4:9, 21), “give diligence” (2 Pet. 1:10), “endeavour” (Eph. 4:3; 2 Pet. 1:15), and “labour” (Heb. 4:11).

2. We will give account for our Bible study. Professing Christians often neglect the Bible in their daily lives, but the Word of God tells us that the believer will either be approved or ashamed before God depending on how he handled the Scriptures.

3. The Bible is God’s Word, not man’s, thus it cannot be treated like any other book. Yet professing Christians in these end times treat the Bible in such a careless fashion. They are not afraid to change it. They are not afraid to say there are errors in it. They are not afraid to claim that God has not preserved it. My friends, we must not be deceived by this careless attitude. The Bible is not merely another book; it is God’s Book, and it must be handled in a very fearful, reverential manner.

4. God will enable the believer to rightly understand the Bible. The ecumenical mindset today claims that every type of interpretation is legitimate, that we

cannot be sure whether or not we have the right doctrine, and we should therefore not be dogmatic in our approach to doctrine. Because of my writings and the very public nature of my ministry, I have received countless letters and e-mails charging me with narrow-mindedness in my position on the Bible. They say, “Who do you think you are to believe that you can know the truth and that others who differ with you do not?” Though I am well aware of my limitations as a puny and sinful man, at the same time, *why would God command me to rightly divide His Word if He were not going to give me the ability to do that?* It makes no sense.

5. The Bible must be rightly interpreted. The phrase “rightly divide” is from the Greek word *orthotomeo*, meaning “to make a straight cut, i.e. (figuratively) to dissect (expound) correctly the divine message.” This tells us that there are also wrong ways to interpret the Bible. Even in the beginning of the church age men were already mishandling the truth. Peter reminds us of this in 2 Peter 3:16 – “*As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*” False teachers misuse the Scriptures. First, they wrest things out of context. Second, they put false meanings upon Bible words. Third, they read their false doctrine into verses instead of allowing the Scripture to speak naturally according to its own context. If this was happening among professing Christians 2,000 years ago, how much more is it happening today! Paul warned that “*evil men and seducers shall wax WORSE AND WORSE, deceiving, and being deceived*” (2 Tim. 3:13). We must be very careful in our handling of the Scriptures, and we must be on guard continually for false teachers who would lead us astray.

6. The Bible is “the word of truth.” If there is any admixture of error in the Scripture, this description is a lie. Either the Bible is wholly true, or it is wholly a lie. There is no middle ground here. I, for one, have cast my lot with those who believe it is wholly truth. Do not allow anyone to take away your confidence in the Scripture. Casting doubt upon any portion of the Scripture is the work of the Devil, regardless of whether the one promoting the doubt is a modernist, an evangelical, or a fundamentalist.

Our desire in this course is to help the child of God rightly divide the word of truth that we might have the joy of knowing the truth in this life and that we might hear the approval of the Lord in the next.

STUDYING THE RIGHT BIBLE

At the very outset of these studies, we must say something about THE DEPENDABILITY OF THE ENGLISH AUTHORIZED VERSION, THE KING JAMES BIBLE. As we will note later on, if one is going to study the Bible effectively it must be studied as the holy, inspired, authoritative Word of God. To be most effective in his work, the Bible student must have complete confidence in his Bible. That means that in the midst of the confusion of a multiplicity of Bibles today one must know where to find the right Bible. There are dozens of different versions available in English. As one wise preacher has said, “Things that are different are not the same.” We do not believe that God inspired or preserved a plethora of Bibles.

God has promised to preserve His Word, and we are convinced that we have the preserved Word of God in the English language in the King James Bible. There are several ways that it is superior to other English versions: Its underlying text is superior to the modern critical text. Its language is simple and powerful. Its translational techniques produced an accurate rendering of the Greek and Hebrew text. Furthermore, it underwent a process of purification that has never been equaled, beginning with Tyndale’s masterful English translation in 1524, proceeding through a number of scholarly revisions, culminating in the Authorized Version of 1611. The new versions, with their textual corruptions and linguistic innovations, create far more problems than they solve. The difficulty of understanding the slight antiquation of the King James Bible can be overcome by a little study and by the judicious use of a few good tools, as we will demonstrate in this course.

Following are two serious errors that pertain to the modern Bible versions:

(This is a subject that needs to be understood properly, and for that we recommend the *Advanced Bible Studies Series* course “The Bible Version Issue.”)

Problem Number One: Modern versions are based on the wrong Greek New Testament.

FACTS EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE BIBLE’S HISTORY:

(1) *The Bible was completed by the apostles and received by the early churches* (John 16:13; Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19; 1 Thess. 2:13). The giving and reception of the New Testament Scriptures was not the haphazard thing that most works on the history of the Bible presume. The Holy Spirit gave the words of the inspired books, and He further enabled the early churches to discern between inspired and uninspired writings. The church at Thessalonica, for example, knew that it was receiving the Word of God and not merely the words of men (1 Thess. 2:13). We understand these things by faith (Heb. 11:6).

(2) *There was a great attack upon the pure Scripture in the centuries following the death of the apostles.* Bible scholar Frederick Scrivener said that “the worst corruptions to which the New Testament has ever been subject, originated within a hundred years after it was composed” (*A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, 1894, pp. 264-65). The second, third, and fourth centuries witnessed the rise of Gnosticism, Adoptionism, Sabellianism, Arianism, and many other heresies. False gospels such as the Gospel of Nicodemus, the Gospel of Thomas, and the Gospel of Barnabas were brazenly written. And an influential heretical school arose in Alexandria, Egypt, a hotbed of theological error. Heretics such as Origin and Eusebius, who were associated with this school, made changes to some of the biblical manuscripts. Frederick Nolan warned that “in some instances the genuine text had been wholly superseded by the spurious editions” (Nolan, *Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate*, 1815, pp. 469). It is thus very suspicious that the Greek text favored by modern textual critics and the text that underlies the modern Bible versions is called the “Egyptian” or “Alexandrian” text because it is based on manuscripts recently discovered from that part of the world and dating to the third and fourth centuries!

(3) *The Bible went through the Dark Ages during which the Roman Catholic Church tried to keep the Bible out of the hands of the people.* Countless copies of the Scriptures were burned, and multitudes of believers were put to death for possessing them. It was illegal to translate the Bible without special permission from the Catholic authorities, and that permission was almost never granted. Many translators were burned at the stake, including William Tyndale and John Rogers, who were two of the fathers of our English Bible. Most of the biblical record from the Dark Ages was destroyed, but we know by faith that God preserved the Scriptures during this period. Jesus said, “... one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Mat. 5:18).

(4) *In the 1500s the Bible emerged out of the Dark Ages and the first Greek New Testament was printed in 1516.* It was called “the received text,” because Protestant and Baptist Christians of those days believed it was the one God had preserved. It was translated into the major languages of the world. From the 1500s to the 1800s God’s people had confidence that their Bibles were preserved by God.

“The Old Testament in Hebrew . . . and the New Testament in Greek . . . being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; so as in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them” (Westminster Confession of Faith, **1648**; also London Baptist Confession of **1677** and the Baptist Philadelphia Confession of **1742**)

(5) *The Received Greek New Testament was challenged in 1881 with the publication of the Westcott-Hort Greek New Testament in England.* This was the product of “modern textual criticism,” which treated the Bible like any other book. The English Revised Version of 1881 was based on the Westcott-Hort critical text. Since then, there have been two competing Greek New Testaments. Most of the modern versions have been based on the new Greek text, and this includes the Revised Standard Version, the American Standard Version, the New American Standard Version, and the New International Version.

Among other problems that could be mentioned, the new Greek text contains many doctrinal corruptions and these have been carried along into the modern Bible versions. No doctrine is removed entirely by these corruptions, but doctrine is weakened, which is a serious matter. Consider the following example:

Doctrinal Corruptions Pertaining to the Deity of Jesus Christ

John 1:14; 1:18; 3:16; 3:18 — The NI and most other modern versions omit “begotten,” thereby removing an important witness to the uniqueness of Christ as the only begotten Son of God. Christ is not the only son of God. Adam is called the son of God (Lk. 3:38); angels are called sons of God (Job 1:6); Christians are called sons of God (Phil. 2:15). Christ IS the “only begotten son of God,” though, just as the KJV correctly affirms.

John 1:27 — The phrase “*is preferred before me*” is omitted. Evangelist Chuck

Salliby notes: “Each little expression such as ‘is preferred before me,’ like so many pieces in a puzzle, was designed to make its own contribution to the completed picture of Christ on the Bible page--His Person, works, character, incomparableness, etc. Yet, they are systematically left out wherever possible in the NIV. This is indeed a strange practice. While a secular book generally exaggerates the depiction of its main character, the NIV depreciates that of its own” (Salliby, *If the Foundations Be Destroyed*, p. 21).

John 3:13 — The modern versions delete “which is in heaven,” thus removing this powerful witness to Christ’s divine omnipresence. One of the traditional evidences that Jesus is God is that He has the characteristics of God, and when the passages demonstrating those characteristics are corrupted, the evidence for Christ’s Deity is weakened.

Acts 8:37 — The entire verse is omitted in most modern versions, and this removes a powerful witness to Christ’s deity.

Acts 20:28 — The phrase “*the church of God*” is changed in most modern versions to “the church of the Lord.” This change is significant because ancient heretics such as Arians and modern heretics such as Unitarians and Jehovah’s Witnesses make a distinction between Jesus as “the Lord” and Jesus as “God.” If it was “God” that purchased the church with His own blood, then the Jesus that died on the cross is clearly God and there is no room for heretical depravation; but if it were a more ambiguous “Lord” that purchased the church, then there is more room for the doctrine of ancient and modern heretics that while Jesus is Lord he is not the same as God.

Romans 14:10 — In this verse “the judgment seat of Christ” is changed to “the judgment seat of God.” When we compare Isaiah 45:23, the “judgment seat of Christ” identifies Jesus Christ directly as Jehovah God, whereas the “judgment seat of God” does not. Thus, this change significantly weakens the Bible’s overall testimony to Christ’s deity.

1 Corinthians 15:47 — The modern versions, following the critical Greek text, omit “the Lord,” thus removing this powerful and important witness to Christ’s deity.

Ephesians 3:9 — By omitting the crucial phrase “*by Jesus Christ*,” the modern versions destroy this verse’s powerful witness that Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things. This verse as it stands in the Greek Received Text and the KJV and

other Reformation Bibles also teaches us that Jesus was not created, since “ALL things” were created by him.

1 Timothy 3:16 — The modern versions omit the word “God.” The NIV, for example reads, “Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.” Terance Brown, former secretary of the Trinitarian Bible Society, makes this comment: “Countless millions of the Lord’s people, from the dawn of the Christian era to the present day, have read these words in their Bibles precisely as they appear in our Authorised Version, but now this powerful testimony to the Godhead of our Saviour is to be swept out of the Scriptures and to disappear without trace.”

Problem Number Two: Most modern versions use an undependable method of translation called dynamic equivalency.

This translation method has become popular among Bible translators during the past 40 years. It is also called Idea translation, Impact translation, Functional Equivalence translation (as opposed to old tried and true Formal Equivalence method), and Common Language translation. The popular New International Version uses this methodology, as does the Today’s English Version, the Living Bible, the Contemporary English Version, and many others. This methodology is used almost exclusively by Wycliffe Bible Translators and the United Bible Societies. Consider some examples of how modern Bible translators change the Word of God through this undependable, subjective methodology:

- ◆ Isaiah 1:18—“Snow” (KJV) = “Coconut” (United Bible Societies translation)
- ◆ Matt. 8:20—“foxes” was translated “coyotes” in the Mazahua language of Mexico
- ◆ Mark 4:21—“on a candlestick” was translated “on a grain bin” in the Korku language of India
- ◆ In another Wycliffe translation “fig tree” was replaced with “banana tree”
- ◆ Rom. 3:25—“blood” (KJV) = “death” (TEV)

If the Bible student uses a dynamic equivalency Bible, he can never know which of the words are God’s and which are man’s. Serious Bible study becomes impossible.

We do not believe that men have the authority to change God’s Word. The

translator's job is not to modify the Bible; his job is to translate it accurately. It is then the job of the preacher and teacher to explain the Bible. When we study the Bible, we need an accurate Bible so that we know we are studying the words of God and not merely the words of man.

For more about the dependability of the King James Bible and its underlying Hebrew and Greek texts, we recommend the *Advanced Bible Studies Series* course "The Bible Version Issue."

Review Questions on First Two Sections

- 1-3. What three things did the Bereans of Acts 17:11 do that made them noble?
- 4-5. What two words in 2 Timothy 2:15 tell us that Bible study requires labor?
- 6-7. What are two ways that the word “study” in 2 Timothy 2:15 is translated in other passages?
8. According to 2 Timothy 2:15, what will happen if the believer does not study the Bible properly?
- 9-11. What are three ways that false teachers misuse the Scripture?
12. In what verse did Peter warn about false teachers who wrested the Scripture?
13. What verse warns that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived”?
14. How can the problem of the antiquation of the King James Bible be overcome?
- 15-16. What are two serious errors pertaining to the modern versions?
17. In what verse does the New Testament say that one of the churches received Paul’s writings as the word of God?
18. Frederick Scrivener said that “the worst corruptions to which the New Testament has ever been subject, originated within a _____ years after it was composed.”
19. What was the location of an influential heretical school that arose after the apostles died?
- 20-21. Who were two heretics associated with this school?
22. What did these heretics do to some of the biblical manuscripts?
23. Frederick Nolan warned that “in some instances the genuine text had been wholly _____ by the spurious editions.”
- 24-25. What are two names for the modern critical Greek text?
26. How do we know that the Scriptures were preserved through the Dark Ages?

27. Why was the printed Greek text of the Reformation era called “the received text”?

28-32. The old confessions of faith said: “The Old Testament in Hebrew . . . and the New Testament in Greek . . . being immediately _____ by God, and by his singular _____ and _____ kept _____ in all ages, are therefore _____; so as in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them.”

33. What is the name of the critical Greek text that was published in 1881 to challenge the Received Text?

34-37. What are four verses in which the doctrine of Christ’s deity is weakened in the modern Bible versions?

38-39. What are two other names for dynamic equivalency?

40-41. What are two Bible translation organizations that use dynamic equivalency?

42-43. If the Bible student uses a dynamic equivalency Bible, he can never know which of the words are _____ and which are _____.

44-45. The translator’s job is not to _____ the Bible; his job is to translate it accurately. It is then the job of the preacher and teacher to _____ the Bible.

SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY

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

Following are some of the things that are necessary to understand the Scriptures.

1. Effective Bible study requires SPIRITUAL LIFE (1 Cor. 2:14 - 3:3). The first and foremost requirement for fruitful Bible study is a godly life.

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 or unsaved person is spiritually dead and blind (Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Cor. 4:4). He cannot understand the things of God. “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*). When the heart turns to the Lord, though, and receives Jesus Christ, the blindness is lifted (2 Cor. 3:14-17).

The spiritual man (1 Cor. 2:15-16) and the carnal man (1 Cor. 3:1-4) refer to believers. 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 (Gal. 5:16-25). The carnal or worldly believer, because he is not walking in the Spirit, cannot understand the difficult things of Scripture. He can take milk but not meat. See also Hebrews 5:12-14. Thus, in Bible study spiritual life is more important than technical skills. “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” (R.A. Torrey).

Proverbs 17:16 contains a serious warning: *“Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?”* If a person’s heart is not right with God, he cannot obtain wisdom regardless of how much money he spends and regardless of how much education he obtains.

Dear friends, if we want to study the Bible fruitfully, we must make certain that we are born again and that we are walking in close fellowship with the Author of the Book. This is the first and foremost requirement.

Studying the Bible is something like tuning in to a radio channel. Heaven is far away, but God broadcasts His glorious message to earth on a clear and powerful station with the call letters BIBLE. If the believer is in fellowship with Christ, he has an open channel to Heaven through the Scriptures. The closer the fellowship with Christ, the sharper the reception and the more plainly the Bible speaks. If, on the other hand, a believer walks in carnality and in fellowship with the world, the reception becomes poor, because the Holy Spirit is grieved (Eph. 4:30). The static of the things of this world hinders the reception of a spiritual broadcast. Child of God, don’t let unconfessed sin and worldliness rob you of the blessing of being tuned in to Heaven’s glorious channel!

2. Effective Bible study requires FAITH (Heb. 11:1, 6). The one who benefits from the study of the Scriptures must approach this important business by faith. Bible faith means confidence in God and His promises, and there are many things of which the Bible student must be confident.

- a. He must be confident that the Bible is God’s inspired, preserved Word and that he can depend upon its every utterance (1 Thess. 2:13).
- b. He must be confident that God loves him and wants him to understand the Bible. God gave the Bible to reveal truth, not to hide it (Deut. 29:29).
- c. He must be confident that the Holy Spirit will help him understand the Bible (1 John 2:27).

3. Effective Bible study must have THE RIGHT GOALS. To properly understand the Bible, one must have the right motive and objective.

- a. There are many wrong motives for studying the Bible.
 - (1) Some read the Bible merely to learn something new and curious, like the Athenians of old to whom Paul preached (Acts 17:21).

- (2) Some want to be entertained and have no intention to obey God, like those who heard Ezekiel (Eze. 33:31-32).
 - (3) Some read God's word simply to find errors and to seek an excuse for their unbelief, as did the Pharisees and Sadducees, scribes and lawyers when they vainly and foolishly attempted to catch Christ in some mistake (Lk. 20:40-47).
 - (4) Some show interest in the Bible only in the hope of gaining worldly advantage, such as those in poorer countries who think that Christianity is a ticket to the West or a way to make money. This is similar to the motive of the Jews who heard Christ because they hoped He would provide them with food and clothing and protect them from their enemies (Jn. 6:14-15). When they learned that Christ was not a ticket to worldly prosperity, they turned away from the Word of God (Jn. 6:66).
- b. Thus, we must be very careful that we come to the Word of God with the right motives, some of which are as follows:
- (1) The first proper objective of Bible study is to know the Lord. An example of this is Mary sitting at Jesus' feet to hear His word (Lk. 10:39). Her desire was to know Christ himself. That is how we must approach the Bible. God did not give us the Scriptures to entertain us but that we might know Him, as Adam and Eve did when they walked with God in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8) and as Enoch did when he walked with God in an evil age (Gen. 5:24).
 - (2) Another proper goal and motive in Bible study is to know the Lord's will (Rom. 12), so that we might please Him in this life. The believer has the privilege of knowing the very mind of Christ for all aspects of his earthly walk.
 - (3) Another important objective of Bible study is to help others. According to Hebrews 5:12, it is God's will that every believer become a teacher of the Scriptures, not in the sense of leading a church but in the sense of helping others privately in our daily lives. Every Christian should be able to do what Philip did with the Ethiopian eunuch, when he started at Isaiah and preached Christ to him (Acts 8:30-35). The older women are to teach the younger ones (Titus 2:3-4), etc.

4. Effective Bible study must have THE RIGHT PRIORITY. God requires first place in our lives (Mat. 6:33); and since He has magnified His Word above His very name (Psa. 138:2), it is evident that He intends that we should make the study of His Word the very highest priority. Following are some of the ways that we can do this:

- a. 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 and wise thing. For many years, I determined before the Lord that I would not read any other material until I had first read His 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 my time studying His Word. I believe such things please the Lord, because they demonstrate our zeal toward spiritual matters.
- b. 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.
- c. 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 never take the place of the Bible.

5. Effective Bible study requires HUNGER FOR GOD AND HIS TRUTH (Psa. 63:1). Job lived long ago and did not have all of the Scriptures as we do today, but he had a great hunger for God's words. He testified, "... *I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food*" (Job 23:12). Likewise, for a Christian to make Bible study the priority it must be, requires that he have a great hunger to know the Word of God. Be careful not to spoil your appetite! If you find that you have lost your appetite for the Bible and that it has become boring, you might be feeding on the wrong things in your life. The believer has both the flesh and the spirit, and if he feeds the flesh, he will be carnal and will lose his appetite for spiritual things (Gal. 5:16-25). It is like

eating candy and junk food and thus spoiling one's appetite for wholesome food. The solution to such a problem is to stop eating the junk and soon you regain a healthy appetite.

6. Effective Bible study requires CONCENTRATION

If you can't concentrate upon the Bible, your study time will not be very profitable. It is so easy for the mind to wander as you read the Bible, and we must do whatever is necessary to keep our thoughts on the Scriptures, to hold the words of God in our hearts so that they bring forth good fruit. Not only do we live in a weak, fleshly body (called the "*body of this death*" in Romans 7:24) that gets tired and sick, and not only do we dwell in a world full of cares and troubles, but we have an aggressive spiritual enemy that seeks to hinder our progress. His name is Satan, meaning *the adversary*, the one who stands before us to resist us. Bible study is spiritual warfare, and we must do everything necessary to win this war.

The Parable of the Sower teaches us that a man must make the effort to understand and apply the Scriptures, or the truth will be stolen away from his heart by the Devil (Mat. 13:19). We must capture the truth by meditating on it and finding out its meaning.

This is why MEMORIZATION of Scripture is so important. When Scriptures are memorized, the believer can then meditate upon them at any time. It is good to write Scripture verses down on cards and keep them with you so that you can spend time memorizing Scripture as you have opportunity, such as when you are waiting on someone or something. Redeem the time!

Following are some suggestions to help you concentrate upon the Word of God:

- a. A quiet, private place is required. I have seen Christians trying to study the Bible in a room where other people are talking and a radio is blaring, etc. That 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? On some occasions when I have visited people in their homes to talk to them about spiritual matters, they have kept the television on and have continued watching it. That was very disrespectful to the message that I was bringing from God's Word. There have been

occasions when I have gotten into my car and driven out to a country road or, if in a city, to the backside of the parking lot of a large shopping area in order to have a quiet and private place for Bible study.

- b. Ask the Lord to help you to keep your mind on His Word. If you find your mind frequently wandering during Bible study, lay the matter before the Lord. Tell Him that you desire to grow in knowledge of Him and His Word, explain your problem to Him, and beseech Him to help you concentrate.
- c. If you are particularly worried about some matter, cast it upon the Lord (1 Pet. 5:7) and trust Him to take care of it for you; then turn your full attention to His Word.
- d. Have pen in hand as you read. Just the action of picking up one's pen and being ready to write things down or to mark in one's Bible causes the mind to focus more on the reading.
- e. Remove things from your Bible study area that are distracting. I know a pastor who removed all of the bright colored covers from the books in his office, because they distracted him when he was trying to study the Bible.
- f. Be careful about using a computer during Bible reading time. I use my computer to study the Bible, because it is so efficient, but I do not use my computer when I have my daily devotional time in the Scriptures. It is too easy to get distracted with other things on the computer.
- g. Be careful about extraneous thoughts. When you are studying the Bible, it will often happen that thoughts about other things will rush in and you will be tempted to leave the study of the Bible and to rush off to take care of those things. For this reason, it is a good idea to have pen and paper handy and to jot down such thoughts so that you can take care of them later. This way, you can put them out of your mind for the time being and proceed with your study. If you get in the habit of allowing yourself to rush off and take care of other things, you will be crippled in your ability to study the Bible fruitfully.
- h. Go back and read the passage again. When you find that your mind