

MEDITATION ON BIBLE STUDY

2 Tim. 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

It occurs to me that the regular, disciplined habit of Bible study is much like the putting together of a jigsaw puzzle. The first step is the desire to do it. We can look at all those many random pieces, having so many shapes and colors and sizes, making no sense to us at all, and say, "I can't do this." So, the desire fades, the pieces remain unassembled, and we walk away from the Lord's command.

Should however, the desire remain strong and we commit ourselves to the task, we must believe that we have in our possession, all the pieces. Just so, to correctly study the Bible we must believe in plenary inspiration. The Bible is complete as it stands; God will never add to His word. We have all the pieces.

As we begin, we observe that there are basically two kinds of puzzle pieces; straight-edged and without edge. As we put the straight edged together, we have an outline; a frame. Any serious Bible study should begin with an outline as well, for we must have a framework upon which to hang the details. This frame would consist of a timeline; a basic knowledge of the Biblical historical sequence.

Next, we observe colors. We tend to gather 'like colors' together, believing that they will form an image. We study the books of the Bible this way, each book separate in itself but somehow fitting into the big picture. Imagine gathering, for instance, all the red pieces together and forming them into the image of a big, red barn. Already we know something of the big picture (for it certainly is not an image of our galaxy, for example). But where and how exactly does that barn fit in? Deliberately we assemble other like colors and soon we can see a picture emerging. This is the exciting phase and we have a hunger and thirst to see the completed image. We begin to realize that no piece is without purpose and even that seemingly foreign piece has its place. As we proceed, nondistinctive transition areas (such as genealogies) become very important to our comprehension of the whole and we begin to delight in the details. It becomes easier to fit the pieces together as an image emerges and suddenly we realize that our quest is soon to be over. What then? When we put in that very last piece, and the puzzle is fully assembled, there is nothing left to do but break it apart and put it away. Our excitement and delight and sense of accomplishment have been fleeting and transitory. We are finished.

God however, in His wisdom, has chosen not to reveal His mystery fully and completely to us, so we will never be finished. We will never have to put our Bibles away having completed the puzzle. We will never put in the last piece because its layers of truth are infinite, and it is a living book, unlike any other.

As we study to shew ourselves approved, the book reveals the image of Jesus. From cover to cover, it is His story. We see his essence on every page, His presence in every passage, His purpose in every word. Our satisfaction is complete; not in fitting in the last piece, but in knowing, we have only just begun