

Ten Ways to Study Your Bible



Dr. Bruce Lackey

TEN WAYS TO STUDY YOUR BIBLE

By

BRUCE P. LACKEY

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INTRODUCTION

These materials have been gleaned from much interest and research regarding the various methods of Bible study, beginning with a college course which the author took many years ago and continuing through years of teaching and pastoring. Many books on the subject have been read, and while none of them has been copied, it would have been impossible not to have been influenced by them.

This book is the result of, not only those many books, but also actual techniques hammered out on the anvil of personal study for Bible classes and preaching services. They are tried and proven. Also, many students have testified to the profit of learning and using these methods.

May the Spirit of God, who moved men to write the holy scriptures, use these chapters to the edifying of God's people everywhere.

CHAPTER 1

BASIC TOOLS FOR BIBLE STUDY

1. A good, complete concordance which gives the meaning of the words in Hebrew and Greek, such as:

- a. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, by James Strong (various publishers)
- b. Young's Analytical Concordance, by Robert Young (Eerdmans)

2. The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, with introduction by R.A. Torrey, published by Fleming H. Revell Company. This book gives parallel references to every verse in the Bible, with a total of approximately five hundred thousand.

3. A Bible with references on each page and any of the following: footnotes, chain references, topical indexes, introductions to the books of the Bible. Examples are the Scofield Reference Bible and Thompson Chain Reference Bible.

4. A Bible handbook (such as Unger's or Halley's) or a one-volume commentary (preferably one which uses many authors. Wycliffe, published by Moody Press, is a good one).

5. A Bible dictionary or a Bible encyclopedia.

For The Student Who Knows Greek

1. *Greek New Testament*. This author recommends the Textus Receptus, from which the King James Version was translated. It may be obtained from the Trinitarian Bible Society, 26 Gracey Blvd., 6 Weston, Ontario, Canada, M9R 1Z9. The Stephens text of 1550 is substantially the same. It is published by Zondervan in an interlinear form.
2. *The Englishman 's Greek Concordance*, various publishers. Some are number-keyed to Strong's Concordance.
3. An analytical Greek lexicon.
4. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*, by Joseph Henry Thayer, various publishers.
5. *Synonyms of the New Testament*, R. C. Trench, Eerdmans.
6. *The Vocabulary Of The Greek Testament*, by Moulton and Milligan, Eerdmans. Helpful in showing the meaning of the words of the New Testament as they were used in the secular literature of the day .
7. *A Manual Grammar Of The Greek New Testament*, by Dana and Mantey, MacMillan.

CHAPTER 2

THE SPIRITUAL REQUIREMENTS FOR BIBLE STUDY

The requirements for learning the Bible are primarily spiritual, not intellectual. Therefore, it is not a lack of formal education or intellectual accomplishment that hinders our knowledge of God's Word, but the lack of one or more of the following:

The **first** requirement is that one must be saved. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, (I Cor. 2:14). The natural man is one who has had only a natural birth; he has not had the supernatural birth which the Lord Jesus required in John 3:7, when He said, *Ye must be born again*. The word *natural* is used in I Corinthians 15:44 and 46 to describe the physical body, in contrast to the spiritual body. This usage gives us a further insight to the natural man: he is governed by his natural body. Many people think that a human being is nothing more than a body; they think that the mind is the brain, so that if the brain is physically altered, the mind is affected. Such is the reasoning of *the natural man*. Ephesians 2:3 teaches that, before we

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are saved, we live to satisfy the desires of this body. Living such a life hinders one from knowing God's Word, because it is spiritually discerned.

Even though the natural man might learn some verses from scripture, he can not know by experience what it means to be fed by the Word, or strengthened by the Spirit, or be assured of salvation, since not a single one of these things is experienced through the body.

If a person is having trouble understanding the Bible, the first thing he should do is examine his heart in the light of the Bible to see whether he is saved. Some of the evidences of salvation are:

- (1) Obedience to scripture (I Jn 2:3-5)
- (2) Love for God's children (I Jn. 3:14)
- (3) Overcoming the world (I Jn. 5:4)
- (4) Becoming a new creature, with old things passing away and all things becoming new (II Cor. 5:17)
- (5) Hearing the voice of Christ and following Him (Jn. 10:27)

If one finds that he does not have these

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Biblical evidences, he should repent of his rebellion against God, believe that Christ died for his sins and rose again, and receive the Lord Jesus as his personal Savior. Scriptures which teach the way of salvation are:

- (1) Isaiah 53:6, All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
- (2) I Corinthians 15:3-4, Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.
- (3) John 1:12, But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

Once that issue is settled, he can go on to the other spiritual qualifications.

The **second** requirement is that one must not be carnal, because the carnal Christian *is not able to bear* the meat of the Word (I Cor. 3:1-4). These *babes in Christ* have the characteristics of a baby: selfishness, idleness, and unconcern for cleanliness. As a result, they envy others, stir up strife, and

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cause divisions among believers, and must have milk rather than meat.

God's use of these two kinds of food as symbols of His truth is very enlightening. Since both milk and meat could come from the same animal, they would be essentially the same, nutritionally. The difference is that milk is pre-digested, and is suitable for babies whose digestive systems have not fully developed. The carnal Christian can not digest the Word himself because he is so occupied with himself and his envy of others, with the resultant strife and divisions, that he has no time or desire for the study, prayer, and obedience that are necessary for growing and digesting the scriptures. Thus, someone must do it for him and spoon-feed him the milk of the Word. Carnal Christians must remedy the selfishness problem with Luke 9:23 and the envy- strife-divisions problem with Luke 12:15 and Romans 12:10. Then, they will be able not only to *bear* the meat of the scripture, but enjoy it as well.

The **third** requirement is to use what we learn, as shown by Hebrews 5:14, *But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even to those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.* The word use means a habitual use. We must practice what we learn from

scripture, if we would discern the meat of the Word. Thus, the Bible speaks of repeated times of prayer (Ps. 55:17); regular worship (Lk. 4:16); weekly giving (I Cor. 16:2). As we practice, we grow; spiritual obedience is spiritual exercise, enabling us to discern between good and evil interpretations of scripture.

The **fourth** requirement is to have faith. Hebrews 11:3 enunciates the principle when it says, *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.* Creation is a definite teaching of scripture and must be understood by faith, since it cannot be proved by scientific observation. This principle would apply to every truth of God's Word: first we must believe it; then we will be able to understand it. We use this principle many times in everyday life: we believe the power of electricity and enjoy the benefits of it, but most of us do not understand how it works. The same is true of our use of doctors, pharmacists, automobiles, etc. Likewise, and even more so, we must believe God's Word about the clear doctrines of the trinity, inspiration, etc., even though we do not understand how it all happened. The same would be true of problem passages, such as the numerical differences in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, as well as other difficult verses. God's first requirement is that we

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believe Him and that necessarily includes believing His Word. If there is unquestioning faith, we may expect understanding to follow, in God's good time, as we obey Him.

The **fifth** requirement is discipline and stability. II Peter 3:16 speaks of a common problem when it tells of those who are unlearned and unstable wresting the scriptures to their own destruction. The word *unlearned* means to be undisciplined, having no regularity or self-control. And this type of person is also unstable, that is, unreliable and inconsistent. Proverbs 24:21-22 warns us to *meddle not with them that are given to change: for their calamity shall rise suddenly*. If we would avoid twisting the scriptures to our own destruction, we must learn self-discipline and stability. A review of the remarks made in the third requirement (Heb. 5:14) and obedience to them would go a long way in establishing these characteristics in the Christian's life.

John 7:17 gives the **sixth** requirement: we must do God's will, if we would know His doctrine. When Christ said, *If any man will...* He was emphasizing that the person must have the desire. Doing God's will is not automatic; hence, Colossians 3:1-2 teaches us to *set our affection on ... seek things which are above*. We must determine to do these

things. Of course, God knows whether the desire is genuine or not; if it is, it will produce the actual thing. Therefore, as we apply this verse to Bible study, we must approach scripture with this attitude: "Lord, I want to study your Word so that I can obey you. I desire to know this book so that I can do what you want me to do." When God sees such an attitude of heart, He will certainly teach us His truth. On the other hand, if we want to study the Bible merely to satisfy some idle curiosity, or to win an argument, or to establish a reputation, we will succeed only in wrongly interpreting it. God's book was not given for any of these reasons.

Requirement number **seven** is implied in Romans 11:33, that is, we must recognize human limitations. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* And it is wise to remember that this statement was made at the end of a three-chapter discussion of the doctrine of election. Some of the truths of God are so large in scope that we can not comprehend them fully because we are incapable of doing so. We must not be discouraged by the fact that some biblical truths will always be just beyond our reach, intellectually. Such doctrines as election, the trinity, and the incarnation of Christ have

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caused much controversy through the centuries, mainly because we refuse to admit that we can not fully explain them. Just as one can not pour the ocean into a quart jar, so we cannot comprehend God in our finite minds. We must believe the Word, understand what we are capable of, and then realize our human limitations.

I John 2:27 reveals the eighth requirement: that of being taught by the Holy Spirit. Luke 4:18 and Acts 10:38 both speak of Christ as being anointed with the Spirit of God. Then, I John 3:24 and 4:13 teach that all believers have the Holy Spirit; thus we conclude that the anointing is the Spirit. This verse does not teach that we have no need of human teachers, since Ephesians 4:12 and I Corinthians 12:28 show that God has given some people the ability to teach in the church.

The meaning, according to the context, is that they did not need to subject themselves to those teachers who were outside the church, having left the believers (:19).

Since all believers are priests (I Pet. 2:9), we do not have to become slavish disciples to any man or group of men. We are to listen to teachers who teach God's Word and test what they say by scripture. This is the obvious meaning of I

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Thessalonians 5:20-21, *Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.* The Holy Spirit will use men to teach us, but it will always be through words which He has given in scripture (I Cor. 2:13). This will be seen by putting I John 2:27 together with verse 24. Verse 27 says that if the anointing teaches us, we shall abide in Christ. Verse 24 says that if that which we have heard from the beginning remains in us, we shall continue in the Son. Therefore, the Holy Spirit teaches us through the Word, which we heard at the beginning.

As we listen to Bible teachers, read their books, and consider the scriptures, let us have the attitude of dependence on the Spirit of God to enlighten us and open the eyes of our understanding (Eph. 1:17-18).

The **last** requirement is found in Hosea 6:3, *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.* To *follow on* is to be persistent. If we persist in the foregoing requirements, we can confidently expect to know God's Word. God's choicest servants have learned the value of persistence. Shortly before she was killed by an opium addict, Lillian Hamer, a missionary in Thailand, penned these words:

My hand is on the plow, my faltering hand;
But all in front of me is untilled land.