

THE COMPLETENESS AND ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S REVELATION - THE BIBLE

Meditate on these Biblical statements about the Word of God:

- II Tim. 3:16-17 - All scripture is inspired (God breathed) and profitable to adequately equip us.
- II Pet. 1:21 - Holy men of God spoke when they were "driven" by the Holy Spirit.
- John 6:63 - Jesus said, "The words which I speak unto you are indeed spirit and life." (Heb. 4:12).
- I Pet. 4:11 - The Scriptures are the only authority.
- I Thes. 2:13 - There's an effectual working of it in your life (when you obey it).
- Eph. 6:17 - It's the sword - "belonging to" the Spirit.
- James 1:18 - It's the word of truth (absolute).
- James 1:21 - It's able in and of itself to deliver you from sin.
- I Cor. 2:10-14 - It's only understood by the Spirit's illumination.
- John 10:35 - The scripture is infallible and cannot be destroyed or broken.
- John 17:17 - It's the only truth that can sanctify us.
- John 8:32 - It's the only truth that can set us free.
- John 5:39 - It's the only source of the knowledge of Christ (Eph. 4:21).
- II Pet. 3:18 - It's the only source of spiritual growth (Acts 20:32; I Pe. 2:2).
- Rom. 10:17 - It's the only source of faith (John 20:31).
- Psalms 119:9,11 - It's the only thing that prevents sin in our lives.
- Eph. 6:16-17 - It's the only way to defeat Satan and overcome sin (Rom. 12:21; Mt. 4:1-11).
- I John 4:1-6 - It's the only way that tells us how to discern between truth and error.
- Rom. 1:16 - It's the power of God unto (resulting in) Salvation - (the Gospel).
- II Tim. 3:14-15 - It makes us wise unto salvation.
- II Tim. 3:16 - The authority on teaching us the truth, the standard for living (Titus 2:5).
 - Convicts us when we fail to meet God's standard.
 - Corrects us and shows us how to get "right" again.
 - Instructs us on how we are to be disciplined to stay consistent.
 - Which means that it alone can tell us how to overcome every problem, sin, trial, decision and temptation we ever face! (Eph. 4:21-32)
- II Cor. 3:5 - All sufficient! (II Cor. 9:8).
- Heb. 11:3 - The Word spoke creation into existence.
- Ps. 119:133,105 - It directs and guides us in life.
- Ps. 119:47,97 - It's our source of joy and peace (I Jn. 1:4; Jn. 16:33).
- Heb. 1:1-2 - The revelation process was completed with Christ (I Cor. 13:8-10; Rev. 22:18).
- Col. 2:9-10 - The believer is complete in Christ (you don't need man's ways, methods, counsels, systems, psychologies, insights, philosophies or religions (Ps. 1:1-4).
- II Pet. 1:3-4 - Through His word He's already provided everything you need for life and godliness. Study it and you'll find out (II Tim. 2:15; Col. 3:16; Josh. 1:8).
- Ps. 119 - Lists over 150 benefits of the Word of God (motivation!)
- Ps. 119:89 - The Word is unchangeable and settled forever in heaven.
- Isa. 40:8 - The Word shall stand forever.
- Matt. 5:18 - Everything the Bible predicts will be fulfilled exactly.
- Matt. 24:34-35 - All else will pass away except the Word of God.

They that turn to other "sources" for life and truth, when Christ, "the Word" (Jn. 1:1-3) is already and forever, that Life and Truth (Jn. 14:6) are either spiritually blind to what they have in Christ or extremely deceived. When a Christian is doing and obeying the revealed Word of God, he will have no need wasting his time with the "things" that will pass away. (II Pet. 3:11; I Jn. 2:15-17; James 1:22-25).

What Are the Basics of Bible Study?

Personal Bible study, in precept, is simple. I want to share with you five steps to Bible study that will give you a pattern to follow.

1 *Reading.* Read a passage of Scripture just like you would read a novel. Try to understand its theme. Isaiah said, "To whom would He teach knowledge? And to whom would He interpret the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just taken from the breast? For He says, 'Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there'" (28:9-10).

In all of your reading, continue to ask yourself this key question: "What does the Bible say?" You will be amazed how it all comes together to make a beautiful picture.

2 *Interpreting.* In Acts 8:30, Phillip asked the Ethiopian eunuch, "Do you understand what you are reading?" Or put another way, "What does the Bible mean by what it says?" As you interpret Scripture, several common errors should be avoided:

1. Do not make your point at the price of proper interpretation. That is, do not make the Bible say what you want it to say; rather let it say what God intended it to say.
2. Avoid superficial interpretation. You have heard people say, "To me, this passage means," or "I feel it is saying . . ." The books of the Bible were written many centuries ago. For us to understand today what God was communicating then, there are several gaps that need to be bridged: the linguistic gap, the cultural gap, the geographical gap, and the historical gap. We must understand the difference between our times and theirs. The Scriptures must be interpreted according to their original context. Proper interpretation, therefore, takes time and effort.

3. Do not spiritualize the passage. Interpret the passage the way you would any other piece of literature, according to its normal sense. I can remember one of the pastors at Grace Community Church sharing with me the problems of a recently married couple. When asked why they married, the husband responded that he had marched around his wife seven times, that her heart had fallen down, and by this they knew it was God's will for them to be married! Upon further questioning, it was learned that this young couple's previous pastor had preached a message which gave Israel's march around the walls of Jericho as the principle of knowing God's will in all circumstances. You can see how dangerous anything but a normal understanding of Scripture can be.

3 *Evaluating.* You have been reading and asking the question, "What does the Bible say?" Then you have interpreted, asking the question, "What does the Bible mean?" Now it is time to consult others to insure that you have the proper interpretation. Remember, the Bible will never contradict itself.

You can read various Bible introductions, commentaries, and background books, which will enrich your thinking with insights that God has given to other men.

In your evaluation, be a true seeker. Be one who accepts the truth of God's Word even through it may cause you to change what you always have believed, or cause you to alter your life-style.

4 *Applying.* In other words, how does God's truth penetrate and change our lives? Studying Scripture without allowing it to penetrate the depths of your soul would be like preparing a banquet but not eating it. The crucial question to

ask is, "How do the divine truths and principles contained in any passage apply to me in terms of my attitude and actions?"

Jesus made this promise to those who would carry their personal Bible study through to this point: "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them" (John 13:17).

5 *Correlating.* This last stage compares what you have learned in a particular passage or book with divine truths and principles taught elsewhere in the Bible. Always keep in mind that the Bible is one book in sixty-six parts. It always seeks to present Christ in all of His glory.

The Bible actually contains a small number of truths and principles, but it teaches them over and over again in a variety of ways. By correlating and cross-referencing, you will discover the many aspects of truth.

What Now?

The Psalmist said, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2).

It is not enough just to study the Bible. We must meditate upon it. In a very real sense we are giving our brain a bath: We are bathing it in the purifying solution of God's Word.

As you begin to think upon God's thoughts, you will begin to think like God. Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as a man thinks within himself, so he is." In a very real sense, you will become more like Jesus Christ. That is good because Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ." ■