

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

January 24, 2016

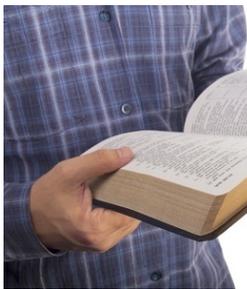
Motives in Bible Study

by Frank Himmel

Not all Bible study is necessarily profitable. Paul described some as "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). The problem may be in our methodology. It may, however, be even more fundamental than that; it may be in our attitude, our motives.

Poor Motives

Some people open the Bible only to find fault with it. They are looking for contradictions or statements they can use to dismiss its relevance.



It is unlikely they will learn much.

Some go to the Bible in search of "evidence" to reinforce their preconceived ideas. That approach is dangerous: it results in selective reading, arbitrary interpretation, and, worst of all, a fraudulent self-satisfaction (see John 5:39-47; Mark 7:5-13).

Some spend their Bible study time trying to unlock hidden messages. A book like *The Secret Code* fuels the notion that somehow the Bible reveals the future in some cryptic fashion. It makes readers look right past the straightforward meaning of the text.

The Right Motive

The Bible is God's word. He inspired its writers (2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:16). God has spoken; we had better listen (Hebrews 2:1-4; 12:25)!

The purpose of Bible study is to learn the truth that results in salvation. "The sacred writings... are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). That must be our motive, then: to learn and obey the truth.

Jesus acknowledged the essentiality of a hearer having the right attitude when He said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone is willing to do His will, He will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself" (John 7:16b-17).

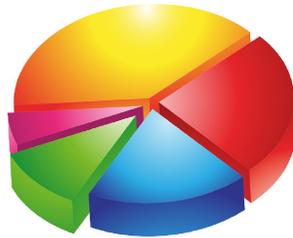
We need the heart of Eli, who taught Samuel to say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:9). We need the heart of David, who prayed, "Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name" (Psalm 86:11). We need the heart of Cornelius, who told Peter, "Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord" (Acts 10:33b).

With this disposition, we will approach Bible study with anticipation. We will do it regularly. We will be receptive. We will not be disposed to argue with God's requirements. We will "in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21). Then, we will "be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (v. 22).

Denominationalism in the First Century?

by Frank Himmel

Denominationalism is the concept that the church in the overall sense is made up of many different kinds of churches. These churches each believe and practice different (often contradictory) things, yet each is considered equally valid and acceptable to God. It's like a single pie consisting of a chocolate slice, an apple slice, a cherry slice, a coconut cream slice, etc.



Commenting on the expression *the churches of Judea which were in Christ* (Galatians 1:22), Alan Cole rightly observed, “Our use of ‘churches’ to express ‘denominations’ finds no warrant in Scripture” (*Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*). He then adds, however, “Nor is it true to say that what we call ‘denominations’ did not as yet exist, for certainly great differences of usage (and perhaps church government) existed between the Jewish-Christian churches (as of Jerusalem) and the newer Gentile churches (as for example of Corinth).” In other words, while the New Testament does not use the word *churches* of denominations, they nonetheless existed in the first century.

No, they did not. Mr. Cole’s evidence is non-existent.

First, while there were some differences in practice between Christians from Jewish and Gentile backgrounds, these did not divide them into different churches. Both at Rome (Romans 14) and at Corinth (1 Corinthians 8), brethren differed about eating meats. In both places, however, these brethren were members of the same congregation, not different denominations! Paul’s instructions were how they could remain united, not divide. Note also that the practice in question was one God neither required nor prohibited. That hardly characterizes the questions about which modern denominations are divided!

Second, nowhere is there even a hint of any difference in government among churches. The churches of Judea, predominantly Jewish in background, were overseen by elders (Acts 11:30; 15:6) and served by deacons (Acts 6:1-6). The churches outside Judea, which often had a majority Gentile background, had the same arrangement: “elders in every church” (Acts 14:23; cf. Titus 1:5). The book of Philippians is addressed to the saints, “including the overseers and deacons” (1:1). Timothy, while preaching at Ephesus, received instructions about the qualifications of overseers [elders] and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

Denominationalism is no part of God’s plan. “Now I exhort you brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Brian Wilson	Paul Richmond	David Gray
SONG LEADER	Bruce Williams	Clifton Lefort	William Lefort
OPENING PRAYER	Gary Hagler	TBA	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Steven Turner	Steven Turner	
CUP	Jason Chandler	Jason Chandler	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	David Gray		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Carlos Garcia
CLOSING PRAYER	William Lefort	TBA	Rawland Daniel