

Bible 101 - What We Believe About the Bible

William E. Johnson

Bible 101 - What We Believe About the Bible
by William E. Johnson

Copyright © 2002 by

This series of sermons was preached in 2002 at New Testament Baptist Church in the auditorium
Sunday School class.

Table of Contents

1. What is the Bible?	1
Introduction:	1
I. The righteous person (i.e. the saved) DOES NOT BELIEVE LIKE the ungodly.....	1
A.The world can be expected to push their belief system on us.	1
B.How ridiculous, though, that we as believers are so often influenced by it	1
C.The righteous person believes what God says in His Word, not what the lost world says.	2
II. The righteous person (i.e. the saved) DOES NOT BEHAVE LIKE the ungodly	2
A.This is a survey course, so we won't go indepth into this, but just as the church's BELIEF SYSTEMS are influenced by the world, so too are its BEHAVIORS.	2
B.We are too often guilty of behaving like the world, rather than behaving as scripture teaches us.....	2
III. The righteous person (i.e. the saved) DOES NOT BELONG TO the ungodly. 2	2
A.We don't talk much about associations anymore, but the Bible teaches that, to a certain extent, we are who we associate with.....	2
B.We are to fellowship with one another.....	2
C.We are to love one another.....	2
D.We are to associate with one another.....	2
E.Our associations with the lost world are to be evangelistic in nature. We are to win them, not live like them!.....	2
IV. The righteous person (I.e. the saved) person's life is totally and always guided by God's Word.	2
A. He / She DELIGHTS in it	3
B. He / she MEDITATES in it	3
C. It consumes him / her DAY AND NIGHT.....	3
V. Therefore, we need to understand something of the structure of the Bible if we are going to live this verse.	4
A.Let's start with a quiz. What do we know about the Bible?	4
B.Let's finish with some simple facts about this book.	5
Conclusion:.....	7
2. Major Themes and Topics of the Bible	9
Introduction:	9
I. Casual reading alone is not enough	9
A. God wants you to STUDY.	9
B. Study of the Bible is what PLEASES God.....	10
C. Study of the Bible is work.....	10
D. Study of the Bible protects from shame.	10
E. Study of the Bible involves recognizing it as God's Word.	10
F. Study of the Bible involves recognizing it as absolute truth	10
G. Study of the Bible involves "cutting it straight," rightly DIVIDING the Word of truth.	10
II. As we study the Bible, we need to learn its major STRUCTURAL divisions: 11	11
A. Old Testament	11
B. New Testament	11
C. Bible is not truly chronological.	12
III. As we study the Bible we need to understand its DOCTRINAL divisions.12	12
A. BIBLIOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about itself.	12
B. THEOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about God.	14
C. CHRISTOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about Jesus Christ.	16
D. PNEUMATOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about the Holy Spirit.	16
E. ANTHROPOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about man.	16

F. HAMARTOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about sin.	16
G. SOTERIOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about salvation.	16
H. ANGELOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about angels.....	16
I. ECCLESIOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about the Church.	16
J. ESCHATOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about the future.....	16
Conclusion:.....	16
3. Is The Bible Sufficient?.....	19
Introduction:	19
I. The Question - Do we need to add anything to the Bible? Is it deficient in any way as a guide for our daily Christian lives?	19
II. In various places, the Bible claims to be sufficient for our every need.....	20
A. It teaches that our sufficiency comes from God.	20
B. It teaches that ALL THINGS come from Him.....	20
C. It teaches that He has given us everything we need.	21
D. It teaches that the all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ, the author of our Bible.....	22
E. It teaches that the Bible goes beyond human writings in its level of sufficiency.	22
F. It teaches that the Bible provides enough information to make the believer PERFECT and COMPLETE.	23
G. It teaches that God is not going to provide anything else. If you won't hear the Bible, there is no other source of information coming your way.	23
III. There is one special place where I think the truth about the Bible's sufficiency is summed up - Psalm 19.....	24
Conclusion:.....	24
4. Is The Bible Sufficient? (Part 2).....	25
Introduction:	25
I. The Bible is All We Need	26
A. "The law of the LORD [is] perfect, converting the soul.".....	27
B. "The testimony of the LORD [is] sure, making wise the simple."	28
C. "The statutes of the LORD [are] right, rejoicing the heart"	29
D. "The commandment of the LORD [is] pure, enlightening the eyes."	30
E. "The fear of the LORD [is] clean, enduring for ever"	31
F. "The judgments of the LORD [are] true [and] righteous altogether."	32
II. The Bible is All We Could Ever Want	33
A. There is no greater wealth.	33
B. There is no greater pleasure.....	33
C. There is no greater profit.....	34
III. The Bible provokes an attitude of commitment.	34
A. We recognize our tendency to sin goes deep. Secret sins. (vs. 12).....	34
B. We admit our tendency to sin presumptuously, even in the light of God's truth. (vs. 13)	34
C. We fall back on God's mercy, and ask for His cleansing of our hearts and minds? bringing them into conformance with His revealed Word.....	35
Conclusion:.....	35
5. How To Understand The Bible.....	37
Introduction:	37
I. Practical Considerations	37
A. You need to make time.	37
B. You need to have tools.....	38
C. You need to think.	40
II. Spiritual Considerations.....	41
A. You need to be saved.....	41
B. You need the illumination of the Holy Spirit.	41
C. You must pray.....	41
D. You must apply what you read.	41

Conclusion:.....41

Chapter 1. What is the Bible?

Read: *Psalm 1*

Text: *Psalms 1:2 "But his delight [is] in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."*

Theme: - God wants us to DELIGHT IN and MEDITATE ON the Bible. We need to understand it's structure and format in order to do that.

Introduction:

Here is the beginning of a new series, in which we will attempt to provide a high-level overview of the Bible.

In this series I will attempt to discuss the:

1. Structure of the Bible
2. History of the Bible
3. Canonicity of the Bible (I.e. why some books are included in the Bible and some, such as the apocryphical books, are not)
4. Unity of the Bible
5. Format of the Bible
6. Themes of the Bible

In this series I will attempt to remind myself, and hopefully also remind you, of why we as believers need to be in love with this book.

Our theme text for the series will be Psalm 1, so please turn there now. We will concentrate on the first 4 verses.

Our text contrasts the RIGHTEOUS PERSON with the UNGODLY PERSON. Or, to put it more bluntly, it contrasts the SAVED with the LOST.

Note what it teaches us:

I. The righteous person (i.e. the saved) DOES NOT BELIEVE LIKE the ungodly.

Psalms 1:1 "Blessed [is] the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly?."

A.The world can be expected to push their belief system on us.

B.How ridiculous, though, that we as believers are so often influenced by it.

EXAMPLE - The false theory of evolution. Christians believe it! It is a lie!

EXAMPLE - Political correctness of the day. Christians and churches have been taken in by it, and have tempered the message of Christ (which Paul called "the offense of the cross") as a result. This is tragic and ridiculous.

EXAMPLE - Homosexuality is a "lifestyle" which people are predisposed toward. The only way to reconcile this lie with scripture is to cut out whole passages of the Bible. The history Sodom and Gomorrah has to be completely discounted. Paul's teaching in Romans 1-3 cannot be read. Homosexuality is described PLAINLY in scripture as gross sin, and yet the church is taken in by the lies of the day and has even gone so far as to ordain homosexuals to the ministry! God help us!

C.The righteous person believes what God says in His Word, not what the lost world says.

Psalms 1:1 "Blessed [is] the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly?."

II. The righteous person (i.e. the saved) DOES NOT BEHAVE LIKE the ungodly

Psalms 1:1 "? nor standeth in the way of sinners...."

A.This is a survey course, so we won't go indepth into this, but just as the church's BELIEF SYSTEMS are influenced by the world, so too are its BEHAVIORS.

B.We are too often guilty of behaving like the world, rather than behaving as scripture teaches us.

III. The righteous person (i.e. the saved) DOES NOT BELONG TO the ungodly.

Psalms 1:1 "... nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

A.We don't talk much about associations anymore, but the Bible teaches that, to a certain extent, we are who we associate with.

1 Corinthians 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

B.We are to fellowship with one another.

C.We are to love one another.

D.We are to associate with one another

E.Our associations with the lost world are to be evangelistic in nature. We are to win them, not live like them!

SUMMATION - There is a distinct dividing line between the belief system, the behavior, and the associations of the saved and the lost.

IV. The righteous person (i.e. the saved) person's life is totally and always guided by God's Word.

Psalms 1:2 "But his delight [is] in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

A. He / She DELIGHTS in it.

B. He / she MEDITATES in it

C. It consumes him / her DAY AND NIGHT.

1. This is the thing that determines SUCCESS in the Christian life.

Joshua 1:8 "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

2. This is the thing that separates the Godly from the ungodly

3. In this class, we are seeking the level of commitment to scripture described in this text

It is not enough for us as believers to say that the Bible is the Word of God.

We need to be immersed in it.

We need to love it.

We need to crave it.

We need to desperately seek to know it.

We need to read it, study it, meditate in it, and learn it inside and out.

It is a life-changing, mind-shattering, soul-enhancing book that is alive and brilliant and wonderful and thought-provoking and awe-inspiring and spectacular.

It contains the very mind of God

ILLUS - Did you know that many muslims memorize the entire Koran? (My copy has 114 chapters and is 336 pages of very tiny text.)

ILLUS - Did you know that many Mormons dedicate at least 2 years of their lives to missionary endeavors?

ILLUS - Did you know that Jewish scribes of the 8th century, when copying the Torah, revered the Word of God and the name of God so much, that they invented all kinds of amazing rituals and rules to ensure it was copied perfectly and exactly, and that due respect was given it?

QUOTE - "The Sefer Torah which we read from in synagogue must be written by a professional scribe, called a sofer. This person, besides being an artist, is expected to master a vast amount of ritual law regulating the writing of sacred scrolls, to be of good character, and to lead an exemplary Jewish life. The Torah is written on parchment made from kosher animal skins (called k'laf). No base metals, of the kind used to make weapons may be utilized to write or repair these texts. Almost every sofer writes with a quill made from a turkey feather, which is sturdy and durable, cutting the point of the feather to give it the flat surface necessary for forming the unique

calligraphy of the Torah. The Torah can only be written in this special square script called K'tav Ashuri. Although Hebrew is read from right to left, the scribe writes each individual letter from left to right, checking each word from a guide called a Tikkun, singing each word, each letter, out loud. Mistakes, if made, are excised by scraping the letters off, but not with any metal tool. A mistake in the writing of any of God's Names cannot be corrected, since the Name of God cannot be erased in the tradition, and that parchment must be discarded."

QUOTE - "The Masoretes, the 8th-century AD Jewish scholars who copied the Hebrew Bible, carried this same deep respect for the name "Jehovah." Before a scribe would copy it, he would go to his chambers, bathe, and put on a clean robe. In some chapters, such as Deuteronomy 28, he would have to go through this cleansing ritual 40 times! "

ILLUS - I knew a man who could quote the dialog from the original Star Wars movie verbatim. He could even do the voice impressions. It was amazing that anyone could so immerse themselves in a silly movie as to memorize it all!

And yet, many Christians:

Don't carry their Bibles to church.
Don't read their Bibles.
Don't know what is in their Bibles.
Never memorize scripture.

QUOTE - "I was never out of my Bible. " John Bunyan (author of Pilgrim's Progress, and other Christian classics)

QUOTE - "I am a man of one Book." John Wesley.

V. Therefore, we need to understand something of the structure of the Bible if we are going to live this verse.

Psalms 1:2 "But his delight [is] in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

A. Let's start with a quiz. What do we know about the Bible?

(These are very elementary questions, which you may already know, but they will serve as a starting point for discussion.)

QUESTION - What does the word "Bible" mean?

ANSWER - The English word "Bible" came originally from the name of the papyrus or BYBLOS reed used extensively in antiquity for making scrolls and books. Byblos (city, called Gebal in Old Testament) was so named because in that Phoenician seaport, trade and manufacture in papyrus writing material was carried on. The word 'Bible' comes from the Old French through the Latin 'biblia,' from the Greek. By the 2nd century A.D. Greek Christians called their sacred scriptures 'ta Biblia' 'the Books.' This eventually became our English word BIBLE." -- Unger's Bible Dictionary

QUESTION - Who wrote the Bible?

ANSWER - Humanly speaking - approximately 40 different men wrote the books of the Bible during a 1500 year time span. The Bible makes it clear, however, that they were all "moved by the Holy Ghost," (2 Peter 1:21) making God the true author of the Bible.

QUESTION - How many books are there in the Bible?

ANSWER - 66

QUESTION - What are the main divisions in the Bible?

ANSWER - Old Testament and New Testament

QUESTION - What does the word "testament" mean?

ANSWER - Covenant or agreement. QUOTE - "The Old Testament is the covenant God made with people about their salvation before Christ came. The New Testament is the agreement God made with people about their salvation after Christ came."
(What the Bible is All About, Henrietta Mears)

QUESTION - What is the theme of the Old Testament?

ANSWER - Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, the Savior, the Messiah.

QUESTION - What is the theme of the New Testament?

ANSWER - Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, the Savior, the Messiah.

QUESTION - How many languages was the Bible written in?

ANSWER - 3 - Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek (The passages written in Aramaic include *Daniel 2:4-7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26; Jeremiah 10:11*)

QUESTION - Which of the following aren't in the Bible?

Cleanliness is next to godliness
God helps those who help themselves
Confession is good for the soul
We are as prone to sin as sparks fly upward
Money is the root of all evil
Honesty is the best policy

ANSWER - None of them are!

B.Let's finish with some simple facts about this book.

(Remember that this is a survey course, so we will not go into detail about these things? just mention them. Please let me know if there are areas where you would like further discussion in future lessons.)

The bible is a single book that is inspired by God.

There are 2 key passages of scripture dealing with the inspiration of the Bible. You should write them down and memorize them. They are:

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

2 Peter 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake [as they were] moved by the Holy Ghost.

QUESTION - What does "inspired by God" mean?

ANSWER - Charles Ryrie, in his study Bible, defines it thus, "It (biblical inspiration) is God's superintendence of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs."

The bible is a single book which is actually a library of 66 books which were written by approximately 40 authors over a period of approximately 1600 years.

The 66 books of the Bible are divided into 2 major divisions, the Old Testament and the New Testament, which together proclaim the truth of God's salvation in Jesus Christ.

The 66 books of the Bible have a common theme which runs like a scarlet thread from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 - the redemption of fallen man that is provided by a loving God in His Son Jesus Christ.

Chapter 1. What is the Bible?

The 66 books of the Bible were written in 3 different languages - Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

The Bible is a perfect book - without error of any kind.

Psalms 12:6-7 "The words of the LORD [are] pure words: [as] silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever."

It is popular in the world to say the Bible is filled with error. This is patently false and has never, in the amazingly long history of the book, been demonstrated. For some it's just easier to deny the truth of the Bible than to admit it's claims upon their lives. As one person said, "Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them."

ILLUS - "In a poll of 10,000 U.S.A. clergymen (of whom 74% replied) by sociologist Jeffery Hadden in 1987 clearly reveals the effects of this significant change of belief through the passage of time. When asked if they believed that the Scriptures are the inspired and inerrant Word of God in faith, history, and secular matters:

95% of Episcopalians said "No."

87% of Methodists said "No."

82% of Presbyterians said "No."

77% of American Lutherans said "No."

67% of American Baptists said "No."

There are no errors in this book.

The Bible is a preserved book, having the promise that God will preserve it forever, as well as the evidence that it has stood up under the onslaughts of Satan and the world.

2 Samuel 22:31 "[As for] God, his way [is] perfect; the word of the LORD [is] tried: he [is] a buckler to all them that trust in him."

The Bible is a sufficient book, providing EVERYTHING we need to know. NOTHING ELSE IS REQUIRED!

Psalms 119:9 "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed [thereto] according to thy word."

Psalms 119:50 "This [is] my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me."

Ephesians 6:17 "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"

QUOTE - "Within the covers of one single book, the Bible, are all the answers to all the problems that face us today--if only we would read and believe. " -- Ronald Reagan.

The Bible is a saving book.

ILLUS - One of the most dramatic examples of the Bible's divine ability to transform men and women involved the famous mutiny on the "Bounty." Following their rebellion against the notorious Captain Bligh, nine mutineers, along with the Tahitian men and women who accompanied them, found their way to Pitcairn Island, a tiny dot in the South Pacific only two miles long and a mile wide. Ten years later, drink and fighting had left only one man alive--John Adams. Eleven women and 23 children made up the rest of the Island's population. So far this is the familiar story made famous in the book and motion picture. But the rest of the story is even more remarkable. About this time, Adams came across the "Bounty's" Bible in the bottom of an old chest. He began to read it, and the divine power of God's Word reached into the heart of that hardened murderer on a tiny volcanic speck in the vast Pacific Ocean--and changed his life forever. The peace and love that Adams found in the Bible entirely replaced the old life of quarreling, brawling, and liquor. He began to teach the children from the Bible until every person on the island had experienced the same amazing change that he had found. Today, with a population of slightly less than 100, nearly every person on Pitcairn Island is a Christian. "

The Bible is a neglected book.

ILLUS - The new minister was asked to teach a boys' class in the absence of the regular teacher. He decided to see what they knew, so he asked who knocked down the walls of Jericho. All the boys denied having done it, and the preacher was appalled by their ignorance. At the next deacons' meeting he told about the experience. "Not one of them knows who knocked down the walls of Jericho," he lamented. The group was silent until finally one seasoned veteran of disputes spoke up. "Preacher, this appears to be bothering you a lot. But I've known all those boys since they were born and they're good boys. If they said they didn't know, I believe them. Let's just take some money out of the repair and maintenance fund, fix the walls, and let it go at that."

That might be funnier if it weren't so close to the truth.

QUOTE - "A recent Barna Research Group poll ? demonstrated that many Americans have a woeful knowledge of the Bible. Among Christians in the survey, 22% thought there actually is a Book of Thomas in the Bible, and 13% said they did not know whether Thomas is a book of the Bible or not. 61% knew that Jonah is a book of the Bible, while 27% said it is not, and 12% had no idea. Three quarters of the Christians surveyed knew that the Book of Isaiah is located in the O.T., while 11% thought it is in the N.T., and 13% did not know where Isaiah could be found. Seven out of 10 Christians (knew Jesus' birthplace was Bethlehem), while 16% named Jerusalem as Jesus' birthplace, 8% said it was Nazareth, and 6% did not hazard a guess. The question that gave the most people trouble was "Is the expression 'God helps those who help themselves' in the Bible?" Only 38% of all Christians correctly stated that that phrase cannot be found anywhere in the Scriptures. Forty-two percent thought that this was a Biblical quotation, and 20% had no idea.

Why is there so much ignorance about the Bible? Most likely, it comes from a lack of Bible readership. Half of all Americans do not read the Bible. The majority of all born-again Christians read the Bible once or twice a week, or not at all. The survey found that only 18% of all Christians said they read the Word every day, while another 18% read the Bible between three and six days a week, 37% read it once or twice a week, and 23% said they do not read the Bible at all. Our research has shown that 93% of all Americans own at least one Bible, and most own more than one."

Conclusion:

Psalms 1:1-2 "Blessed [is] the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight [is] in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

We have learned that the believer does not believe like, behave like, or belong to the world. On the contrary the saved are completely different in that they DELIGHT THEMSELVES in the Word of God, and MEDITATE ON the Word of God DAY AND NIGHT.

May God help us to do the same.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS:

If you don't already have a reading schedule for personal Bible reading, find one and begin to use it, starting today. The pastor has reading schedules that he provides, and they are good. Use them. If you want others, see me after class.

I supposed I knew my Bible,
Reading peacemeal, hit or miss,
Now a bit of John or Matthew,
Now a snatch of Genesis,
Certain chapters of Isaiah,
Certain Psalms (the twenty-third),
Twelfth of Romans, first of Proverbs --

Chapter 1. What is the Bible?

Yes, I thought I knew the Word!
But I found that thorough reading
Was a different thing to do,
And the way was unfamiliar
When I read the Bible through.
You who like to play at Bible,
Dip and dabble, here and there,
Just before you kneel, weary,
And yawn through a hurried prayer;
You who treat the Crown of Writings
As you treat no other book,
Just a paragraph, disjointed,
Just a crude, impatient look,
Try a worthier procedure,
Try a broad and steady view;
You will kneel in very rapture
When you read the Bible through.

(Paul Borthwick, *Leading the Way* by
Navpress, 1989, p. 139.)

Next week's lesson will be on the major themes and doctrines of the Bible. Look them up and answer this question - What are the major themes and doctrines of the Bible?

Chapter 2. Major Themes and Topics of the Bible

Text - 2 Timothy 2:15 *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth".*

Theme - We cannot understand the Bible until we understand it's "divisions" - both structural divisions and doctrinal divisions.

Introduction:

Review of last week's lesson:

We learned that the believer should DELIGHT IN and MEDITATE ON the Word of God.

Psalms 1:1-2" Blessed [is] the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight [is] in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

Last week we discussed the importance of reading the Bible, and today we want to expand on that. As one man said:

I supposed I knew my Bible,
Reading peacemeal, hit or miss,
Now a bit of John or Matthew,
Now a snatch of Genesis,
Certain chapters of Isaiah,
Certain Psalms (the twenty-third),
Twelfth of Romans, first of Proverbs --
Yes, I thought I knew the Word!
But I found that thorough reading
Was a different thing to do,
And the way was unfamiliar
When I read the Bible through.
You who like to play at Bible,
Dip and dabble, here and there,
Just before you kneel, weary,
And yawn through a hurried prayer;
You who treat the Crown of Writings
As you treat no other book,
Just a paragraph, disjointed,
Just a crude, impatient look,
Try a worthier procedure,
Try a broad and steady view;
You will kneel in very rapture
When you read the Bible through.
(Paul Borthwick, *Leading the Way* by
Navpress, 1989, p. 139.)

This morning, let's think deeper. Let's learn about the importance of not only READING the Bible, but of STUDYING it.

I. Casual reading alone is not enough

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

A. God wants you to STUDY.

Although Timothy is one of the 3 pastoral epistles, and is thus directly addressed to pastors, its truth is applicable to all of us. God wants all of us, not just pastors, to be students of His word.

Acts 17:11 "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."

B. Study of the Bible is what PLEASES God.

DEFINITION - "approved" = DOKIMOV "Accepted, pleasing, or acceptable"

C. Study of the Bible is work.

QUOTE - (Charles Whitfield) "Men, preaching is WORK!" (He wasn't referring to the DELIVERY part of sermonizing, but to the PREPARATION / STUDY part.)

D. Study of the Bible protects from shame.

QUESTION - If we are ignorant of the Bible, before whom might we be ashamed?

ANSWER -

1. Before God, at the Judgement Seat of Christ, when we stand before Him having given less than our best.
2. Before men, who so often strive to discredit Christianity.

E. Study of the Bible involves recognizing it as God's Word.

ILLUS - We do not approach this Book like we approach Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. THIS IS THE WORD OF GOD!!!!

F. Study of the Bible involves recognizing it as absolute truth

We live in a day of relativism. Truth is NOT absolute to the majority of people with whom we have to do. They believe truth changes according to the tides, the day of the month, the environment, their personal biases and feelings, etc. UNTRUE - The Bible is absolute truth, and believing this is imperative if we are to approach it correctly.

ILLUS - Jesus, in His great high priestly prayer - *John 17:17 "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."*

G. Study of the Bible involves "cutting it straight," rightly DIVIDING the Word of truth.

DEFINITION - "Rightly dividing" = ORYOTOMEW - "To cut straight, to proceed on straight paths, hold a straight course, to make straight and smooth, to handle aright, to teach the truth directly and correctly" - Strongs

ILLUS - When I was building my house, I needed a lot of tools. One of the tools I purchased was a 4 foot level. You cannot build a house without a good level, so I spared no expense. I found a beautiful 4 foot wooden level that seemed to fit my needs, and when I saw that the brand name was Johnson, I knew it was perfect. I

bought it. However, I hadn't used it long before I found out that it was not level. It was pretty, but useless, because it was NOT STRAIGHT.

THE POINT? - If you are going to CUT IT STRAIGHT with regards to the scriptures, then you need to know what straight is! As believers, we are presented with a myriad of Bible study tools. We need to be discerning about what is good and what is not.

ILLUS - Have you been to a Bible bookstore lately? You'll find books there that teach that you are saved by grace through faith. Hallelujah. You'll also find books that teach that you need to be baptised in order to be saved. You'll find books that teach you cannot lose your salvation, and you'll find books that teach that you can. You'll find books that teach that the gift of tongues is not for today, and you'll find books that teach that you must speak in tongues in order to demonstrate you are filled with the Spirit.

QUESTION - When a believer matures in Christ, one of the things that he / she achieves is a certain level of discernment about such things. You know the Bible well enough to wade through and pick the right materials and sources. However, the new believer, or the young believer, doesn't have such knowledge and discernment. How can a young Christian know what's good amongst the plethora of materials that are available? How can a young Christian pick materials that will help him / her "cut it straight?"

In thinking about "rightly dividing the Word of truth," let's spend the remainder of our time this morning thinking about the DIVISIONS of the Bible.

II. As we study the Bible, we need to learn its major STRUCTURAL divisions:

QUESTION - Last week we asked "What are the major divisions of the Bible, and the answer came back "Old Testament and New Testament." But, what are the major divisions of the Old Testament? New Testament?

A. Old Testament

1. Pentateuch (i.e. the 5 books of Moses)

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

2. Historical Books (some lists include the Pentateuch in this division)

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuels, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

3. Poetical Books

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song

4. Major Prophets

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel

5. Minor Prophets

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk

B. New Testament

1. Gospels

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

2. History

Acts

3. Epistles

Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, Peter, John, Jude

4. Prophecy

Revelation

C. Bible is not truly chronological.

1. Oldest book from standpoint of when it was written is Job. Youngest is Revelation.

2. Oldest book from standpoint of subject matter is Genesis, and youngest is Revelation.

QUESTION - Any questions about the structural divisions of the Bible?

QUESTION - When reading or studying the Bible, why is it important to understand the structural divisions / layout of the book?

III. As we study the Bible we need to understand its DOCTRINAL divisions.

(NOTE - When teaching, go through the major doctrines first, discussing and asking class for what they think the definition of each is. Then, go back through and discuss each doctrine in more detail.)

A. BIBLIOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about itself.

QUESTION - Last week we mentioned 2 key verses related to the subject of INSPIRATION. What were they?

QUESTION - In last week's class, we briefly touched on the topic of the INSPIRATION of the Bible. How would you define inspiration?

(Note - the following is all from Ryrie's Study Bible, pp. 1825-1826)

1. There are 2 key verses that teach that the scriptures are ALL inspired by God.
READ - 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 Peter 1:21
2. Definition of inspiration - QUOTE (Charles Ryrie) - "Biblical inspiration is God's superintendence of the human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs."
3. There are various theories about how this was done.
 - a. NATURAL theory - There was no supernatural element involved. The Bible was written by men of great genius.
 - b. MYSTICAL or ILLUMINATION theory - Writers of Scripture were Spirit-filled just as Christians today can be.
 - c. DICTATION or MECHANICAL theory - Writers of Scripture were passive instruments in God's hand, like typewriters on which He wrote. (Admittedly, parts of the Bible were dictated (e.g. Ten Commandments).
 - d. PARTIAL theory - Only the unknowable parts of the Bible were inspired (e.g. creation, spiritual concepts).
 - e. CONCEPTUAL theory - Concepts but not words were inspired.
 - f. FALLIBLE theory - a relatively modern theory that states the Bible is inspired but is not without error.
 - g. VERBAL, PLENARY theory - This is the TRUE DOCTRINE and means that the very words (verbal) and all of them (plenary) were inspired in the sense of the definition given earlier.
4. Proofs of Verbal, Plenary inspiration:
 - a. 2 Timothy 3:16 - THEOPHNEUSTOS - God-breathed - Affirms that God is author of Scripture and that Scripture is the product of His creative breath.
 - b. 2 Peter 1:21 - The "HOW" of inspiration - men were "born along" by the Spirit.
 - c. Specific commands to write the word of the Lord.

Exodus 17:14 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this [for] a memorial in a book, and rehearse [it] in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

Jeremiah 30:2 "Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book."

Revelation 1:19 "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;"
 - d. The use of quotations

Matthew 15:4 "For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death."

Acts 28:25 "And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,"
 - e. Jesus' use of Scripture

Matthew 5:17 "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

John 10:35 "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;"

f. The New Testament asserts that other parts of the New Testament are Scripture.

1 Timothy 5:18 "For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer [is] worthy of his reward."

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."

g. Writers were conscious of writing God's word

1 Corinthians 2:13 "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

1 Peter 1:11-12 "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

There are many other things that the Bible teaches about itself, but we'll save them for another time.

QUESTION - Any questions about BIBLIOLOGY?

B. THEOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about God.

(Note - the following is all from Ryrie's Study Bible, pp. 1827-1828)

1. It teaches us that God exists.

a. In some places His existence is simply stated / assumed:

Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

b. In some places His existence is explained / argued:

ILLUS - Paul on Mars Hill - Acts 17:23 "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."

2. It teaches us that God has certain characteristics, or attributes.

QUESTION - What are some of the characteristics or attributes of God?

a. Infinite and Eternal - He exists without beginning or end. He is forever. He exists outside of time.

ILLUS - When Solomon prayed at the dedication of his temple, he said of God - *1 Kings 8:27 "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?"*

Genesis 21:33 "And [Abraham] planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God."

Psalms 90:2 "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou [art] God."

b. Immutable - He is unchanging and unchangeable. God never changes.

James 1:17 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

c. Omnipresent - God is everywhere.

READ *Psalms 139:7-12*

d. Omniscience - God knows everything. He knows all actual and possible things. He knows the past and the present and the future. Everything.

Proverbs 15:3 "The eyes of the LORD [are] in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

e. Omnipotent - God is all powerful.

Revelation 19:6 "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

f. Righteous and just - God shows no respect of persons.

Acts 17:31 "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by [that] man whom he hath ordained; [whereof] he hath given assurance unto all [men], in that he hath raised him from the dead."

ILLUS - When considering the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham knew this was an attribute of God and pondered, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" - *Genesis 18:25*

g. Good -

ILLUS - When one came to Christ, and called Him "good master," which Christ replied in *Mark 10:18 "And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? [there is] none good but one, [that is], God."*

h. Truth -

John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

i. Holy - God is absolutely separate from and exalted above all His creatures, and He is equally separate from all moral evil and sin.

QUOTE - (Thiessen) "Holiness occupies the foremost rank among the attributes of God. It is the attribute by which God wanted to be especially known in the Old Testament times.

Leviticus 11:44 "For I [am] the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I [am] holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

ILLUS - God's holiness is demonstrated by the bounds set around Mt. Sinai when God came down upon it. READ *Exodus 19:12-25*.

QUESTION - How is this relevant to us as believers? What does it matter that God has these attributes? How does it impact our lives? (Review list of attributes with these questions in mind.)

3. It teaches us that God has certain names.

Just a couple of examples to show that God's names teach us about Him. Each name reveals something different about God:

a. Jehovah (YHWH) - The Self-existent One.

This is a name of relationship between the true God and His people. It emphasizes His holiness, hatred of sin, and love of sinners.

This is the most holy name of God to the Jews. This is the name that the scribes could only write after returning to their chambers, removing their clothes, bathing, and donning a clean set of clothes - each time they wrote this name when copying the scriptures.

From *Exodus 3:14* "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

b. Adonai - Lord. Indicates the master-servant relationship between God and His people.

c. El-Shaddai - Almighty God.

d. El-Olam - Everlasting God.

e. El-Roi - The strong one who sees.

QUESTION - As we study the scriptures and come across the names of God, do they have relevance to us today? How? Why is it important for us to think about their meanings?

C. CHRISTOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about Jesus Christ.

D. PNEUMATOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about the Holy Spirit.

E. ANTHROPOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about man.

F. HAMARTOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about sin.

G. SOTERIOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about salvation.

H. ANGELOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about angels.

I. ECCLESIOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about the Church.

J. ESCHATOLOGY - The Bible teaches us about the future

Conclusion:

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

If we are going to truly understand the Bible, we need to do more than just read it, we need to study it.

If we are going to study the Bible, we need to first learn it's structure and it's major divisions.

We've learned today that the Bible has both a physical and a logical, or doctrinal structure.

Knowledge of both are needed to understand its message for us today.

Homework assignment:

1. Read the 3 key verses mentioned today every day this week, and strive to memorize them. (i.e. *1 Tim 2:15*, *2 Tim 3:16*, *2 Peter 1:21*)
2. Think about this question - CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

Chapter 2. Major Themes and Topics of the Bible

Chapter 3. Is The Bible Sufficient?

Text - Various, and *Psalm 19:7-11*

Theme - The Bible provides all we need for our Christian life. Nothing needs added.

Introduction:

We are talking about the Bible, the most precious of all books, as well as the most neglected.

ILLUS - "In the days of Edward I, who ruled England in the thirteenth century, the price of a fairly well written Bible was 37 pounds, or approximately \$184. The hire of a laborer was a penny and a half a day. The purchase of a copy of the Bible would have taken such a person 4,800 days, or thirteen years and fifty-five days, of continuous labor. Excluding Sabbaths, something more than fifteen years and three months of constant labor would have been required to compass the price."

... and yet in the American church, the Bible is available in quantity to all, and yet unknown. We are trying to reverse that trend.

The theme for our lesson this morning is:

"The Bible provides all we need for our Christian life. Nothing needs added."

I want you to think about that topic as we progress through our study this morning. It is a truth that we believers need to get back to.

I. The Question - Do we need to add anything to the Bible? Is it deficient in any way as a guide for our daily Christian lives?

QUESTION - Are there areas of life today where people think the Bible is out of touch? Areas where the world would say we need to add something to the teaching of the Bible?

ANSWER - A few to consider:

A. Science

QUOTE - (Curtis Hutson) "The Bible is not a science book, but it is scientifically correct. And when science contradicts the Bible, it is sooner or later found out not to be true science."

B. Psychology

C. Political correctness

D. Child-rearing

QUESTION - Does the church ever buy into this thought pattern? Do we sometimes find ourselves believing, like the world, that we need to add something to what the Bible teaches in order to find what we need in life?

QUESTION - Are there areas of church life, itself, where we sometimes feel the need to add to the plain teaching of the Bible? Areas where we consider the Bible insufficient for the needs of today's church?

ANSWER - A few to consider:

A. Need for entertainment, rather than simple PRAYER, PRAISE, PREACHING formula the Bible gives.

B. Need for constant changes in methodology, as each successive generation demands something new, rather than the simple teaching of God's Word.

In all of these areas, we as believers need to guard against falling into this thought pattern that says the Bible is not enough... that we need to add to it... that there is

some additional knowledge that 21st century humanity has that should be taken into account.

Again, I believe that the Bible covers everything. It is totally sufficient. NOTHING NEEDS TO BE ADDED.

II. In various places, the Bible claims to be sufficient for our every need.

(Let's examine a few of these verses.)

A. It teaches that our sufficiency comes from God.

2 Corinthians 3:5 "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency [is] of God."

Let that sink into your brain. Repeat it after me, "our sufficiency [is] of God."

DEFINITION - Sufficiency = "ability or competency to do a thing"

This wonderful, GENERAL STATEMENT from scripture tells us that our sufficient God provides all that we need.

QUESTION - If "our sufficiency is of God," and God gave us the Bible, is it logical to conclude that the Bible would be any less than sufficient for our needs?

ANSWER - No, of course not. If God, the author of the Bible, is all sufficient, then His words are also sufficient. We need nothing else but what our sufficient God has provided.

They cannot shell His Temple
Nor dynamite His throne;
They cannot bomb His city,
Nor rob Him of His own.

They cannot take Him captive,
Nor strike Him dead and blind,
Nor starve Him to surrender,
Nor make Him change His mind.

They cannot cause Him panic,
Nor cut off His supplies;
They cannot take His kingdom,
Nor hurt Him with their lies.

Though all the world be shattered,
His truth remains the same;
His righteous laws still potent,
And Father still His name.

Though we face war and struggle,
And feel their goad and rod,
We know above confusion,
There always will be God!
-- H. C. Ede

B. It teaches that ALL THINGS come from Him.

2 Corinthians 9:8 "And God [is] able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all [things], may abound to every good work:"

Let's just tear this verse apart for a minute:

1. "And God is able..."

Last week we touched on the fact that one of the primary themes of the Bible is God, Himself. The Bible teaches us about God. Had we had time, we would have learned that the Bible teaches us about God's attributes, or characteristics, and that these attributes include:

OMNISCIENCE - He knows everything.

OMNIPRESENCE - He is everywhere present at once.

OMNIPOTENCE - He has all power.

This is the One who the Bible reminds us IS ABLE! Amen!

If we stopped there, it would be a great statement of His sufficiency, wouldn't it?

2. But notice how many times the words ALL and EVERY are used:

"... to make ALL grace

"... ABOUND toward you..."

"... that ye, ALWAYS having..."

"... ALL sufficiency..."

"... in ALL things..."

"... may ABOUND..."

"... to EVERY good work."

Here is a wonderful passage that tells us that EVERYTHING WE NEED comes from God.

QUESTION - If "God [is] able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all [things], may abound to every good work," and God gave us the Bible, is it logical to conclude that the Bible would be any less than sufficient for our needs?

ANSWER - No, of course not. If God, the author of the Bible, is ABLE TO PROVIDE EVERYTHING WE NEED, then it is logical to conclude that the Book He provided would be up to that task. We need nothing else but what our ABLE God has provided.

C. It teaches that He has given us everything we need.

2 Peter 1:3 "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that [pertain] unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:"

QUESTION - If God "hath given unto us all things that [pertain] unto life and godliness," and God gave us the Bible, is it logical to conclude that the Bible would be any less than sufficient for our needs?

ANSWER - No, of course not.

ILLUS - A story is told about William Randolph Hearst, the late newspaper publisher. Hearst invested a fortune in collecting great works of art. One day he read about some valuable pieces of art and decided that he must add them to his collection. He sent his agent abroad to locate and purchase them. Months went by before the agent returned and reported to Hearst that the items had at last been found—they were stored in his own warehouse. Hearst had purchased them years before." (From "Our Sufficiency in Christ" by John MacArthur, Jr.)

QUOTE - (The great Scottish Bible expositor Alexander MacLaren) "We may have as much of God as we will. Christ puts the key of the treasure-chamber into our hand, and bids us take all that we want. If a man is admitted into the bullion vault of a

bank and told to help himself, and comes out with one cent, whose fault is it that he is poor?"

D. It teaches that the all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ, the author of our Bible.

Colossians 2:2-3 "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

QUESTION - If Christ has ALL WISDOM, what wisdom doesn't He have? What is missing from His supply of wisdom?

QUESTION - If Christ has ALL KNOWLEDGE, what doesn't He know about?

QUESTION - If Christ has ALL WISDOM, what new wisdom can our arrogant 21st century thinkers add?

QUESTION - If Christ has ALL KNOWLEDGE, what have we learned in the 21st century that Christ doesn't already know? How much of it is new to Him?

QUESTION - If "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" are with God, and God gave us the Bible, is it logical to conclude that the Bible would be any less than sufficient for our needs? Is it reasonable that there is wisdom somewhere else that needs to be added?

ANSWER - No, of course not.

E. It teaches that the Bible goes beyond human writings in its level of sufficiency.

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. "

This passage tells us that:

1. The Bible is unlike normal books, for the Bible is ALIVE!

DEFINITION - (Strong's) - "to live, breathe, be among the living (not lifeless, not dead)"

2. The Bible is POWERFUL!

DEFINITION - (Strong's) - "effective, powerful, ENERGIZED"

ILLUS - Energizer bunny - it keeps going and going and going - it never runs out of power.

3. The Bible is SHARP!

ILLUS - Cuts through ANYTHING, kind of like Ginsu knives!

3. The Bible DIVIDES the indivisible

(Soul and spirit)

(Joints and marrow)

4. The Bible DISCERNs the indiscernable

(Thoughts and intents of the heart.)

QUESTION - If the Bible is all these things - ALIVE, POWERFUL, SHARP, able to DIVIDE the indivisible and DISCERN the indiscernable, is it logical to conclude that we need something else for our Christian lives?

ANSWER - No, of course not.

ILLUS - "When evangelist John Wesley (1703-1791) was returning home from a service one night, he was robbed. The thief, however, found his victim to have only a little money and some Christian literature. As the bandit was leaving, Wesley called out, "Stop! I have something more to give you." The surprised robber paused. "My friend," said Wesley, "you may live to regret this sort of life. If you ever do, here is something to remember: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin!" The thief hurried away, and Wesley prayed that his words might bear fruit. Years later, Wesley was greeting people after a Sunday service when he was approached by a stranger. What a surprise to learn that this visitor, now a believer in Christ as a successful businessman, was the one who had robbed him years before! "I owe it all to you," said the transformed man. "Oh no, my friend," Wesley exclaimed, "not to me, but to the precious blood of Christ that cleanses us from all sin!"

(NOTE that Wesley only quoted a small portion of a verse - 1 John 1:7 - yet it was all that was needed!)

F. It teaches that the Bible provides enough information to make the believer PERFECT and COMPLETE.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

1. It has everything you need for wisdom

2. It has everything you need for salvation.

3. It has everything you need for life - it makes you PERFECT.

DEFINITION (Strong's) - "fitted, complete, perfect"

4. It has everything you need for ALL good works

QUOTE (Dr. Donald Hubbard) - "1. Doctrine Keeps us from Error, 2. Reproof Keeps us from Sin, 3. Correction Keeps us from Failure, 4. Training in Righteousness Keeps us from Foolishness

G. It teaches that God is not going to provide anything else. If you won't hear the Bible, there is no other source of information coming your way.

READ - *Luke 16:19-31*

Note especially vs. 31 - *"And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."*

There is no further revelation to be expected. You need to accept the truth of this Book... its complete and total sufficiency. It contains EVERYTHING you need.

ILLUS - When the preacher's car broke down on a country road, he walked to a nearby roadhouse to use the phone. After calling for a tow truck, he spotted his old friend, Frank, drunk and shabbily dressed at the bar. "What happened to you, Frank?"

asked the good reverend. "You used to be rich." Frank told a sad tale of bad investments that had led to his downfall. "Go home," the preacher said. "Open your Bible at random, stick your finger on the page and there will be God's answer." Some time later, the preacher bumped into Frank, who was wearing a Gucci suit, sporting a Rolex watch and had just stepped out of a Mercedes. "Frank," said the preacher, "I am glad to see things really turned around for you." "Yes, preacher, and I owe it all to you," said Frank. "I opened my Bible, put my finger down on the page and there was the answer - "Chapter 11."

We might laugh at that, but it illustrates this simple truth - Whatever your need, you will find the answer in the pages of this book.

III. There is one special place where I think the truth about the Bible's sufficiency is summed up - Psalm 19.

We'll get to this next week, which brings me to your homework assignment:

1. READ *Psalm 19* everyday.
2. Think about this question as you read it - What does this psalm teach me about the Bible?
3. Think about what topics you would like to see in the next series of lessons.

Conclusion:

The world asks the same question today that has been asked for thousands of years, "Is the Bible sufficient?"

And we Christians answer with a resounding YES! The Bible provides all we need for our Christian life. Nothing needs added.

As one anonymous author wrote:

"This Book is the mind of God, the state of man,
the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of be-
lievers.
Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding;
its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable.
Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy.
It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.
It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass,
the soldier's sword, and the Christian's character.
Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell dis-
closed.
Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end.
It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet.
Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully.
It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure.
Follow its precepts and it will lead you to Calvary,
to the empty tomb, to a resurrected life in Christ;
yes, to glory itself, for eternity."

Chapter 4. Is The Bible Sufficient? (Part 2)

Read - *Psalm 19*

Text - *Psalm 19:7-9 "The law of the LORD [is] perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD [is] sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD [are] right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD [is] pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD [is] clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD [are] true [and] righteous altogether."*

Theme - The Bible provides all we need for our Christian life. Nothing needs added.

Introduction:

Last week we asked the question:

Is the Bible a sufficient source of information on which to base our lives? Or, is it out of touch, unscientific, and unsophisticated to the point where we need to seek guidance outside of scripture?

We laid some groundwork with a variety of verses from the Bible that loudly proclaim its perfection and sufficiency. Verses like:

2 Corinthians 3:5 "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency [is] of God."

2 Corinthians 9:8 "And God [is] able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all [things], may abound to every good work:"

2 Peter 1:3 "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that [pertain] unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:"

Colossians 2:2-3 "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. "

2 Timothy 3:15-17 "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

The theme for last week's lesson was:

"The Bible provides all we need for our Christian life. Nothing needs added."

ILLUS - "When the preacher's car broke down on a country road, he walked to a nearby roadhouse to use the phone. After calling for a tow truck, he spotted his old friend, Frank, drunk and shabbily dressed at the bar. "What happened to you, Frank?" asked the good reverend. "You used to be rich." Frank told a sad tale of bad investments that had led to his downfall. "Go home," the preacher said. "Open your Bible at random, stick your finger on the page and there will be God's answer." Some time later, the preacher bumped into Frank, who was wearing a Gucci suit, sporting a Rolex watch and had just stepped out of a Mercedes. "Frank." said the preacher, "I am glad to see things really turned around for you." "Yes, preacher, and I owe it all to you," said Frank. "I opened my Bible, put my finger down on the page and there was the answer - -Chapter 11.""

We may laugh at that, but it is, in a way, illustrative of a truth - EVERYTHING WE NEED FOR LIFE IS IN THIS BOOK!

Now, this morning, I want us to expand on that thought by looking at a specific passage in the Bible that, quite simply, NAILS the subject of the sufficiency of scripture. If you leave this study today thinking that there is anything missing from this Bible... anyplace where it is deficient... any area of our lives where it is less than the definitive guide... then I am not communicating well, or you are not listening, or you have a preconceived bias against the truth.

The fact is, and the theme for this week's lesson is:

"The Bible provides all we need for our Christian life. Nothing needs added."

READ - *Psalms 19*

Psalm 19 is about God's revelation to man. It describes His "general" revelation - vss. 1-6, as well as His "special" revelation - vss. 7-14.

In the first 6 verses, which are not the subject of our lesson today, we learn that God has revealed all that is needed about Himself in creation.

Psalms 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work."

The same truth can be found in the New Testament:

Romans 1:18-20 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed [it] unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

ILLUS - I was involved in a conversation at work recently. A young lady mentioned that she read about a new planetary discovery - a new planet in a nearby solar system that scientists believe is "life capable." The question naturally arose as to whether there is life on other planets. This young lady believes that it is ridiculous and arrogant to think that our planet is the only one with life, and that all that exists out there is just for us. And yet, I maintain as I always have, the heavens DO have a purpose, but it is not to harbor other life forms as described in Star Trek. It is to DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD. When we look at the stars, God speaks to us.

This thought is the opposite of arrogance. It is extremely humbling to look at the heavens with Psalm 19:1 in mind.

Today, though, we want to concentrate on what this Psalm teaches us about God's "special" revelation, the Word of God.

Notice:

I. The Bible is All We Need

(i.e. The Sufficiency of Scripture)

Psalms 19:7-9 "The law of the LORD [is] perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD [is] sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD [are] right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD [is] pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD [is] clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD [are] true [and] righteous altogether."

Note the structure of those verses:

6 descriptions of the Word of God

law
testimony
statutes
commandment
fear
judgments

6 characteristics of the Word of God

perfect
sure
right
pure
clean
true

6 results of the Word of God

converts the soul
makes wise the simple
rejoices the heart
enlightens the eyes
endures forever
righteous altogether

6 reiterations / reminders that the Bible is OF THE LORD!

... law OF THE LORD
... testimony OF THE LORD
... statutes OF THE LORD
... commandment OF THE LORD
... fear OF THE LORD
... judgments OF THE LORD

Another interesting point about the structure of these verses:

QUOTE (Henry Ainsworth, as referenced by Spurgeon) - "This verse, and the two next following, which treat of God's law, are in Hebrew, written each of them with ten words, according to the number of the ten commandments, which are called the ten words."

Let's break down these 6 statements about God's Word:

A. "The law of the LORD [is] perfect, converting the soul."

1. The name - LAW

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - TORAH - Hebrew word meaning "law, direction, instruction."

This word, when used to describe the Word of God, emphasizes the TEACHING or DIDACTIC nature of the Word

It emphasizes the fact that God is teaching man through His Word.

2. The characteristic - PERFECT

i.e. with respect to the teaching provided in the Word, IT IS PERFECT.

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - Hebrew word means "complete, whole, entire, sound"

3. The result - CONVERTS THE SOUL

IT IS THE WORD OF GOD THAT SAVES!

Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

1 Peter 1:23 *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."*

ILLUS - "He was one of the greatest rulers in African history and the creator of modern Ethiopia. Born in 1844, he was captured during an enemy raid and held prisoner for 10 years. Escaping, Menelik II declared himself head of the province of Shewa. He began conquering neighboring kingdoms and developed them into modern Ethiopia with himself as emperor. When Italy tried to take over Ethiopia Menekil's army met and crushed the Italians at the Battle of Aduwa. This victory, as well as his efforts to modernize Ethiopia (schools, telephones, railroads), make Menekil world-famous. The emperor had one little known eccentricity. Whenever he was feeling ill, he would eat a few pages of the Bible, insisting that this always restored his health. One day in December, 1913, recovering from a stroke and feeling extremely ill, he had the entire book of Kings torn from an Egyptian edition of the Bible, ate every page of it--and died." (Source Unknown)

In a way, he had the right idea. We cannot know salvation without the Word of God. (Don't EAT it, though, READ IT!)

QUOTE (Matthew Henry) - "The Holy Scripture is of much greater benefit to us than day or night, than the air we breathe, or the light of the sun. To recover man out of his fallen state, there is need of the word of God."

QUOTE (C. H. Spurgeon) - "It is God's Word rather than man's comment on God's Word which is made mighty with souls. Try men's depraved nature with philosophy and reasoning, and it laughs your efforts to scorn, but the Word of God soon works a transformation."

B. "The testimony of the LORD [is] sure, making wise the simple."

1. The name - TESTIMONY

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - Hebrew word meaning "testimony, witness"

This word, when used to describe the Word of God, does not present the Bible as DIVINE INSTRUCTION, but rather as DIVINE WITNESS.

It emphasizes the fact that the Bible is God giving testimony to Who He is, and what He requires.

2. The characteristic - SURE

i.e. When God is on the witness stand, His testimony is absolutely SURE

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - A few of the meanings of this Hebrew word include "believe, assurance, faithful, sure, established, trust, verified, steadfast, surely be, stand fast, trusty"

THERE IS NO SURER TESTIMONY THAN WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN US IN SCRIPTURE.

2 Peter 1:16-19 *"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:"*

In other words, the testimony that we have in scripture is as trustworthy as (actually more trustworthy than) the voice of God speaking directly from heaven!

ILLUS - To get an idea of the SURENESS of Scripture, picture God as a witness in a court of law. (We've all seen enough TV to draw an adequate mental picture from.) The prosecuting attorney asks question after question, but God's testimony is SURE - He does not falter, hesitate, or stumble over His words. The prosecutor attempts to trip Him up, make Him make a mistake, reverse His testimony, but He is SURE. After an eternity of attacks and cross-examination, God's testimony will be unchanged, undaunted, unscathed. IT IS SURE.

The Bible stands like a rock undaunted
'Mid the raging storms of time;
Its pages burn with the truth eternal,
And they glow with a light sublime.

The Bible stands like a mountain towering
Far above the works of men;
Its truth by none ever was refuted,
And destroy it they never can.

3.The result - MAKES WISE THE SIMPLE

When we have more questions than answers...

When we don't know what to do...

When our mind is bombarded by the contradictory claims of this world...

When we are told that our views are unsophisticated and uneducated and old fashioned and foolish...

When we vacillate between belief systems...

When we, like the father in *Mark 9*, cry out in despair, "*Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!*"

THEN we find God's testimony is SURE!

You may depend it... mark it down... take it to the bank... God's testimony is SURE!

C. "The statutes of the LORD [are] right, rejoicing the heart"

1. The name - STATUTES

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - Hebrew word meaning "precept, commandment, statute"

This word includes the meaning of the other 2 words. It has the idea of TEACHING, as in the LAW, and it also has the idea of TESTIMONY. However, the idea here is more on GUIDELINES, than on either witness or law. The Word of God contains divine guidelines to help us order our lives.

The scripture is full of guidelines for living from God. They show the path in which we should walk.

ILLUS - We live in the day of the "HOW TO" book. I performed a search for the words "HOW TO" on Amazon.com, and found that there are over 32,000 books in their collection that have something to do with "HOW TO." Some examples:

How to Win Friends and Influence People, by Dale Carnegie
How to Talk so Kids Will Listen, and Listen so Kids Will Talk, by Adele Faber

How to Be a Domestic Goddess: Baking and the Art of Comfort Cooking, by Nigella Lawson
The Pocket Guide to Making Successful Small Talk - How to Talk to Anyone
Anytime Anywhere About Anything, by Bernardo J. Carducci
How To Eat: The Pleasures and Principles of Good Food, by Nigella Lawson

The point is, we live in a day when people are looking everywhere for guidelines, and here they are... "The statutes of the LORD [are] right!"

2.The characteristic - RIGHT

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - Hebrew word meaning "straight, up-right, correct, right"

i.e. God's guidelines for living are ALWAYS RIGHT. His directions are ALWAYS CORRECT. His path is ALWAYS STRAIGHT.

3.The result - REJOICING THE HEART

God has given us guidelines for living. We many not always understand them... they certainly don't always agree with the world's way of doing things, but THEY ARE RIGHT and the ONLY SOURCE OF JOY for our lives.

QUOTE - "The man who walks with God always knows in what direction he is going."

ILLUS - Have you ever taken a wrong turn on a one-way street? Did it bring about joy in your life? I once was driving in Pontiac, Michigan with my wife who was great with child. As I was peacefully navigating the streets of Pontiac, my lovely wife, in a way that only wives can, reached over and touched me on the arm and said those words that strike insanity into the heart of any man who has ever heard them. She said, "Honey, I think it's time." I looked at her with complete calm, and in total control. I said, "OK, we'll go to the hospital, then," and turned onto Wide Track Drive, which is a bypass around Pontiac... about 4 lanes wide... one-way. I was going the wrong way.

There is no joy when we're going the wrong way on the wrong road. We need God's guidelines. Only in following God's guidelines is there joy.

QUOTE (Abraham Lincoln) - "No man ever got lost on a straight road."

God's guidelines give us a straight road. We need to follow them.

D. "The commandment of the LORD [is] pure, enlightening the eyes."

1. The name - COMMANDMENT

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - MITSVAH - Hebrew word meaning "commandment, either of men, or of God."

This word, when used to describe the Word of God, emphasizes the fact that God's Word contains the DECREES of God. Not suggestions, but COMMANDMENTS.

This reminds us of the AUTHORITATIVE nature of scripture, its NON-OPTIONAL character.

READ - *Matthew 15:1-9* - Do we have a similar attitude today, discounting the COMMANDMENTS of God, in favor of the traditions of men? We need to get back to an understanding that the Word of God contains the unalterable, authoritative, and non-optional decrees of God!

QUOTE - "God said it, I believe it, that settles it." NO, should be, "God said it, and that settles it!"

QUOTE - (John MacArthur) "The Bible is not full of a lot of suggestions. It is commandments, binding authoritative commandments. This is what God requires and for those who respond, there is blessing. For those who do not, there is judgment."

2. The characteristic - PURE

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - Hebrew BAR - "pure, clear, sincere, clean"

God's commandments are CLEAR. They are not hard to understand. God has made it very plain what He expects. There is no mystery!

READ - 1 John 5:1-3 - Keeping His commandments is a sign of genuine salvation, but note how this scripture reminds us that God's commands are "not grievous." He has not made it hard to do what He commands.

ILLUS - In the days following September 11, the number 1 search request on internet search engines was Nostradamus. Why? Because some have said that he predicted the events of September 11. The writings of Nostradamus, however, are completely opposite of the commandments of God. Where God's commandments are CLEAR, Nostradamus' writings are ridiculously muddy and mysterious.

QUOTE (from book Nostradamus, Prophecies You Cannot Ignore, by Bernie Ward) - "Nostradamus... tossed in a baffling mix of word games, puns, number codes, allusions and mysterious anagrams. Then, to muddle things even more, Nostradamus deliberately scrambled the order of the verses to further disguise the chronology." He TRIED to make it difficult to understand, and that is exactly the opposite of God, whose COMMANDMENTS ARE CLEAR - EASY TO UNDERSTAND. By the way, the comments from Nostradamus that are supposed to prophecy September 11 are, for the most part, an internet hoax... a fabrication of words that he never actually wrote, but Nostradamus scholars seem to think that the following 2 verses prophesied the events of September 11:

"The year 1999 seven months
From the sky will come the great King of Terror.
To resuscitate the great king of the Mongols.
Before and after, Mars reigns by good luck."

"At forty-five degrees the sky will burn,
Fire to approach the great new city:
In an instant a great scattered flame will leap up,
When one will want to demand proof of the Normans."

Clear, huh?

3. The result - ENLIGHTENING THE EYES

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - Hebrew word meaning - "to be or become light, shine, to become bright, to be illuminated, to light up"

We do not stumble in the dark. Our Bible, and the Commandments of the Lord it contains, LIGHTEN OUR PATH, ILLUMINATE OUR WAY, ENLIGHTEN OUR EYES!

E. "The fear of the LORD [is] clean, enduring for ever"

1. The name - FEAR

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - YIRAH - Hebrew word meaning "fear, terror, fearing."

This word, when used to describe the Word of God, emphasizes the fact that the Scriptures are intended to draw us into a REVERENCE of God, or a FEAR of God.

It reminds us that God is worthy of our worship.

2. The characteristic - CLEAN

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - Hebrew TAHOWR - "pure, clean"

There is not a spec of evil or impurity in the Word of God.

3. The result - ENDURES FOREVER

F. "The judgments of the LORD [are] true [and] righteous altogether."

1. The name - JUDGEMENTS

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - MISHPAT - Note the following meanings from this lexicon:

"1) judgment, justice, ordinance

1a) judgment

1a1) act of deciding a case

1a2) place, court, seat of judgment

1a3) process, procedure, litigation (before judges)

1a4) case, cause (presented for judgment)

1a5) sentence, decision (of judgment)

1a6) execution (of judgment)

1a7) time (of judgment)

Earlier, we learned that the Bible is God on the witness stand ("the testimony of the Lord"), and now we see Him behind the bench. The Bible is God's VERDICT? His already rendered JUDGEMENT.

2. The characteristic - TRUE

i.e. with respect to the teaching provided in the Word, IT IS PERFECT.

DEFINITION (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) - Hebrew word means "firmness, faithfulness, truth"

Contrast this with earthly judges - changing, corruptible, unfaithful.

ILLUS - In America, we have an entire judicial system that has been designed to deal with the variableness of opinion between judges and courts, and with the fallibility of earthly judges. Hence the appeals courts, and the appeal process. THERE IS NO APPEAL WITH GOD, FOR HIS JUDGEMENT IS ALREADY PASSED! READ THE WORD TO SEE WHAT THAT JUDGEMENT IS!

3. The result - RIGHTEOUS ALTOGETHER

QUOTE (Edgar Howe) - "The average man's judgement is so poor, he runs a risk everytime he uses it."

In contrast to the judges of this world, who can be bought and sold and make a mockery of the word JUSTICE, God's judgements are RIGHTEOUS ALTOGETHER:

Every judgement is righteous - each individual one.

All judgements are righteous - the sum total is completely righteous.

II. The Bible is All We Could Ever Want

(i.e. the Value of Scripture)

A. There is no greater wealth.

"More to be desired are they than gold" - vs. 10a

READ - Psalm 119:72, 127, 162

ILLUS - When their son left for his freshman year at Duke University, his parents gave him a Bible, assuring him it would be a great help. Later, as he began sending them letters asking for money, they would write back telling him to read his Bible, citing chapter and verse. He would reply that he was reading the Bible--but he still needed money. When he came home for a semester break, his parents told him they knew he had not been reading his Bible. How? They had tucked \$10 and \$20 bills by the verses they had cited in their letters. (John T. Spach, in Reader's Digest.)

Here is a wealth that is eternal!

Isaiah 40:8 "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

Matthew 24:35 "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

Unlike the stock market...

Unlike 401K plans...

Unlike houses and lands...

Unlike cars and possessions...

Unlike any other form of wealth that we strive for on this earth!

B. There is no greater pleasure.

"sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" - vs. 10b

Psalms 119:47 "And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved."

Psalms 119:97 "O how love I thy law! it [is] my meditation all the day."

Jeremiah 15:16 "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts."

NOTE - In any endeavor, pleasures comes with a measure of work, which is not necessarily pleasurable in and of itself! Sometimes it feels like work to stay faithful to our Bible reading and study, but this work leads to the greatest pleasure there is.

ILLUS - Dr. Jack Hyles used to tell the story of how he came to love oca. As a child, his mother would serve oca, and he would hate it. She would force him to eat it. He ate it so many times, that in later life, he claimed that given the choice between a thick juicy steak and a bowl of oca, he would choose the oca.

ILLUS - Even our text contains an illustration of this truth. BEES STING - Honey is pleasurable, but there is a certain level of unpleasurable work that leads to that pleasurable experience.

SO, read it even when you don't feel like it, for it will become your greatest pleasure!

C. There is no greater profit.

"by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward." - vs. 11

Profit in this life

Profit in eternity

III. The Bible provokes an attitude of commitment.

(i.e. Our Commitment to Scripture)

In the blinding light of this perfect book, we are humbled and recognize how weak we really are.

We see God, and when we see Him we see ourselves as we truly are.

Job 42:5-6 "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor [myself], and repent in dust and ashes."

A. We recognize our tendency to sin goes deep. Secret sins. (vs. 12)

... and we seek God's help with secret sin in our lives.

ILLUS - In the Scottish highlands is an old bridge that spans a wild cataract. Its structure is so massive, and it rises so high above the gorge that it is known as "The High Bridge." But something happened that made it necessary for officials to condemn it. A tiny birch seed, caught by a gust of wind, dropped into a small crevice above the keystone. It lodged unnoticed in the lime, and before long it germinated. Soon it was a young sapling, but still nobody saw it. As it grew into a tree, its roots went deep into the mortar. Eventually it began to loosen and crack the masonry so that the arch was severely damaged. The bridge that had defied violent storms and supported the weight of marching armies finally had to be closed to traffic. It had succumbed to a small seed. So too in the Christian life, one little hidden sin can weaken the foundation of a person's character and be the cause of his downfall. I think David must have sensed this when he cried out, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." Such a prayer does not open the door to morbid introspection. Rather, it expresses a desire that the soul-searching work of God's convicting power will reveal to us our spiritual defects. To ask for less is to run the risk of allowing some evil, though it be ever so small, to take root in our hearts. Soon the seed becomes a sapling; and the sapling becomes a full-grown tree, dislodging the spiritual masonry of our lives. Recognizing that our iniquities and secret sins are all known by God (Ps. 90:8), let us daily seek His cleansing. -P.R.V.

B. We admit our tendency to sin presumptuously, even in the light of God's truth. (vs. 13)

YOU ARE NOT IMMUNE from presumptuous sin in your life.

Woe to those who say in their hearts, "I would never do that."

ILLUS - Peter said that, and then denied Christ.

ILLUS - Perhaps David, the man after God's own heart - one of the godliest men in scripture, thought this way before falling into sin with Bathsheba.

1 Peter 5:8 "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"

QUOTE - "Satan loves a shining mark."

C. We fall back on God's mercy, and ask for His cleansing of our hearts and minds? bringing them into conformance with His revealed Word.

Psalms 19:14 "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."

Conclusion:

We have spent considerable time on this subject, but I hope you agree it is important. We as believers need to get back to loving our Bibles. We need to delight in them day and night. We need to meditate in them day and night. We need to base our lives upon them, and turn to them for the answers to all of life's questions.

ILLUS - "Legendary coach Vince Lombardi began the first practice of each season by holding up a football and saying, "This is a football Have we lost anybody?""

Just as there is no game of football without the football, so there is no Christianity without the Bible. It is just as central to our faith and belief system.

God help us to see the sufficiency of the Bible. God help us to pattern our lives after it. God help us to come to the place where our words and our thought patterns are completely and always shape by this book.

Chapter 4. Is The Bible Sufficient? (Part 2)

Chapter 5. How To Understand The Bible

Text - *Psalms 119:130 "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."*

Theme - You can understand the Bible, and when you begin to understand it, it will change your life.

Introduction:

We've been somewhat deep in the scriptures for the last couple of weeks, and so today I want to lighten up and take a more practical approach.

I want us to consider the fact that the Bible is not a hidden, mystical, unattainable book. It is a textbook provided by God to lead us into a deeper and more meaningful relationship with Him. He has not made it hard to understand. On the contrary, every Christian can understand the Bible, and when you begin to understand it, it will change your life.

This morning I want us to approach this subject of "How to understand the Bible" from 2 perspectives. Let's think about the PRACTICAL aspect of understanding scripture, and then the SPIRITUAL aspect of understanding scripture.

I. Practical Considerations

A. You need to make time.

1. It is important to set aside a time each day.

Some time needs to be devoted to READING.

1 Peter 2:2 "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"

Psalms 119:11 "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Deuteronomy 6:6 "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:"

Colossians 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Some time needs to be devoted to STUDY.

Isaiah 34:16 "Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them."

John 5:39 "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

Acts 17:11 "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."

Romans 15:4 "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

ILLUS - There are other areas of life where we have no trouble with this. Why is the Bible not given consideration in our daily scheduling, when we know it is so much more important than so many other things, such as:

Work
Eating
Television

Exercise
Recreation
Church

2.The Bible seems to indicate that the morning is the preferred time.

ILLUS - Job was a morning person - Job 1:5 *And it was so, when the days of [their] feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings [according] to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."*

ILLUS - So was Jesus - Mark 1:35 *"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."*

Psalms 57:8 "Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I [myself] will awake early."

Psalms 5:3 "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct [my prayer] unto thee, and will look up."

Psalms 119:147 "I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word."

To be fair, the Bible does mention other times of the day. It even mentions a few places that we should have devotions to God 3 times a day, so we can't be dogmatic about a time. Find the time that works best for you and become systematic with it. However, the Bible does seem to emphasize morning, so I encourage you to try that if you can.

3.It is important to set aside ENOUGH time.

How much time does it take to read a chapter? 10 minutes? While certainly not an acceptable level of devotion to the Word of God in the long run, it is a good start for the believer to say, "I will set aside 10 minutes every morning to read 1 chapter from God's word."

How much time does it take to read the Bible through in a year? I remember a booklet I used as a teenager. It was entitled "20 Minutes a Day with the Bible," and presented a plan that took you through the Bible once in a year.

How much time does it take to read the NT through in a year. My personal daily reading plan includes 3 chapters in the Old Testament and 2 chapters in the New Testament. I once figured that this would take me through the Old Testament once in a year and through the New Testament twice in a year. So, if we earlier surmised that we could read a chapter in about 10 minutes, then we can read through the New Testament in a year for an investment of only 10 minutes a day!

4.It is important that time be set aside for prayer, too, but that is the subject of another lesson.

B. You need to have tools.

1.You need a Bible

Thompson Chain

This is my favorite study Bible. If I could have only 1 Bible, it would without question be a Thompson Chain Reference Study Bible.

- Advantage - wonderful and comprehensive cross-reference system.
- Advantage - topical search capability

- Advantage - outlines of every book in the Bibles
- Advantage - character studies of major Bible characters
- Disadvantage (?) - very little commentary

Scofield

Standard Bible in the Fundamental Bible-Believing Baptist's toolkit.

- Advantage - You can feel like a fundamentalist! ;-)
- Advantage - Scofield's notes are good.
- Advantage - I've been told by others that they like the cross-referencing and can find things easily. I prefer Thompson's for this, but Scofield does have a usable system.

Ryrie

- Advantage - modern, up to date scholarship. Charles Ryrie was the chairman of the Department of Systematic Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary.
- Advantage - Easy to read, Biblically sound notes and commentary. Some of the best I've seen.
- Advantage - Great section on the major doctrines of the faith - I use it all the time!
- Disadvantage - Cross-references are not much.

2.You need a Pencil

You need to get used to marking in your Bible.

The PAGES are not sacred. The message is. Use your Bible as a TOOL.

ILLUS - Ever buy a used book in college? Nice how the previous owner was kind enough to highlight the key points for you, huh? The Bible is a TEXTBOOK - treat it as such.

3.You need a Concordance

Some recommended ones include, in order of recommendation:

- Strongs - EVERY WORD (every "the"), also good Greek and Hebrew lexicons.
- Youngs
- Crudens

4.You need a Dictionary

An English dictionary

A Bible dictionary - Ungers is my favorite, but there are many.

5.You might want to consider a commentary

Matthew Henry - devotional, but language is dated and very flowery. Also requires some discernment, as he doesn't take Biblical positions 100% of the time (but then who among us does?) For example, I believe he is weak on eternal security.

Bible Knowledge Commentary - modern, up-to-date scholarship which takes an evangelical, fundamental point of view. Excellent commentary. If you can have only 1, this is a good choice.

6.You might want to consider a Bible on CD

Some recommended ones include:

- Online Bible (free!)
- eSword (free!)
- QuickVerse

7.You might want to look into the tools available on the internet.

One interesting resource that I use often is the BlueLetter Bible:

<http://www.BlueLetterBible.org>

C. You need to think.

1. Think - what plan do I want to follow to allow me to systematically cover the scriptures?

2. Think - what is being taught in my local church right now?

Let your personal Bible reading and study complement that and prepare you for the weekly teaching from the pulpit. Review what you heard last week (Acts 17:11).

3. Think - what does this passage teach me about my Lord Jesus Christ? Remember that the theme of the Bible (Old and New Testaments) is Jesus Christ. Do you see Him in what you're reading? What do you learn about Him?

4. Think - what does this word mean? (do word studies)

(This is where some of the tools mentioned above, such as dictionaries, commentaries, concordances, and study Bibles, come in handy.)

ILLUS - Suppose you come across the verse "Repent and be baptised." Do you know what the word "repent" means? Using the tools we've mentioned, you can spend some rich and profitable time studying that word in scripture.

ILLUS - The KJV, while my favorite translation, and one of the best translations available, contains some interesting and archaic words. One example is REREWARD. (Isaiah 52:12 "For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel [will be] your rereward.") It is mentioned 6 times in our KJV. What does it mean? By taking the time to study it, we learn that it is not RE-REWARD, as I've heard some use it, but rather, the REAR GUARD, or REARWARD (as opposed to FOREWORD) guard. Other scriptures make it clear:

1 Samuel 29:2 "And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rereward with Achish."

Joshua 6:9 "And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rereward came after the ark, [the priests] going on, and blowing with the trumpets."

5. Think - how does this passage apply directly to me? right now? Today?

6. Think - does this passage encourage any changes in my life? what? When?

Psalms 55:19 seems to indicate that change is a demonstration of the reality of God's word: Psalms 55:19 "God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God."

Romans 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

2 Peter 3:18 "But grow in grace, and [in] the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him [be] glory both now and for ever. Amen."

QUOTE (John MacArthur) - "The secret to the spirit filled life is the word-controlled mind."

II. Spiritual Considerations

A. You need to be saved.

1 Corinthians 2:14 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.

B. You need the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:11-13 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

C. You must pray.

D. You must apply what you read.

John 13:17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

James 1:21-22 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

Thought - "We learn the Word as we live the Word, but we can only live the Word if we learn the Word." Paradox.

Conclusion:

Psalms 119:130 "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

You can understand the Bible, and when you begin to understand it, it will change your life.

