

“WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?”

2 Timothy 3:16,17

INTRODUCTION

1. Could I ask you the same question? *“Do you read the Bible? Do you make it a practice of your life to study the Scriptures?”*

Every week when we come to this room, there are three different audiences.

1) Some people are just checking out Christianity. Some of you are seekers in this room. You’ve come with lots of questions about the Bible and God and Jesus. If you’ve read the Bible at all, it’s still probably a big mystery to you.

2) And then, we have some stumblers in this room. You know how you should be living, but you’ve got a whole bunch of problems. You just keep stumbling over the same problems in your life. Maybe you’ve read the Bible a bit, but frankly, it’s been hit and miss for you.

3) And then, there are some who are sold out. You’ve stepped across the line spiritually to follow Jesus Christ. You’ve said, *“I want my life to be fully committed to Him. I’ve received His forgiveness and I want Him to direct my life.”* If you’re in that third group, you may already study the Bible for yourself on a daily basis. Maybe you’re involved in a Bible reading plan or a Bible study.

2. Well, our study today speaks to all three audiences. If you’re just here to check this out, then this is

a good message for you because it answers the question, *“Why even spend time studying the Bible?”* If you’re stumbling in your life, you’ll discover some reasons why the Bible is so critical to your spiritual health. And, if you’re sold out in your relationship with God, you’ll be reminded how important it is to make your study of the Scriptures a centerpiece of your life.

3. If you have a Bible with you this morning, please turn with me to the Book of 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy, chapter 3.

You need to be here next Sunday- Remix

This summer, we’ve been involved in a series called, *“Developing Habits That Will Change Your Life.”* We’ve talked about the importance of spending time with God, small groups, memorizing the Bible and involvement in a local church, giving/tithing.

4. Now, when you think about the word, *“Habit,”* most of us think about bad habits. Some of you are trying to break a bad habit that has controlled your life. But there are some good habits that we can develop. In fact, Aristotle said years ago:

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act, but it’s a habit.”

This morning, I want to talk about the habit of studying Scripture. I want to emphasize six reasons why studying the Bible should be a regular habit of our lives. First of all, I should study the Bible...

1. **BECAUSE IT PUTS ME IN TOUCH WITH THE GREATEST LITERATURE ON EARTH**

Every year, the Bible simply is the bestselling book in the world. Did you know that? The Bible sells more copies than any other book on the planet. If you’re one of those people that like to keep up with the books on the New York Times Best Sellers List – remember, the Bible would always be at the top of the list – if you included all the copies that were sold.

You and I should read the Bible because there is no other book like it. If you’re looking for poetry, the Bible contains some of the greatest poetic literature ever written. David wrote words like:

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me besides still waters. He restores my soul.”

The Bible contains parables which are stories that make you think about truth. One of those parables is the “Parable of the Prodigal Son.” Rudyard Kipling once called the Parable of the Prodigal Son the “greatest short story ever written.”

The Bible really is the greatest piece of literature of all time. In fact, one author said it like this:

“To be culturally literate is to possess the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world”
(E. D. Hirsch).

In other words, knowing what the Bible says is important to everyone’s basic knowledge base. Where do we get the phrase, “Good Samaritan?” It comes from the Bible. Where do we get the phrase, “Do unto others as you would

have them do unto you?” It comes from the Bible. How about “going the extra mile?” It comes from the Bible.

One author said it like this:

- *“If you really tore the Bible out of all English literature, the literature would fall apart.”*

Again and again, literature contains references to the Bible. So,, if you want to be an intelligent, well-informed person in our society, you ought to read the Bible.

A poet laureate named, Andrew Motion, said recently that children should be taught the Bible throughout their public education because it’s, in his words...

“an essential piece of cultural luggage without which they will struggle to fully understand literature.”

Just a few years ago

Eg. Time Magazine featured a cover story entitled, “Why We Should Teach the Bible in Public Schools.”

“In that article, the author said, “Knowledge of the Bible is essential to being a full-fledged, well-rounded citizen.”

But there are even more important reasons to study the Bible than just to discover the greatest piece of literature. In fact, Paul said it like this in 2 Timothy 3...look at these words:

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be

thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17)

In other words, knowing what God says in His Word is critical for all of life.

Eg. It’s no wonder that polls still show that nearly 2/3 of Americans believe the Bible holds the answers to *“all or most of life’s basic questions.”*

I should study the Bible because it puts me in touch with the greatest piece of literature on earth. I should also read it...

2. BECAUSE IT PROVIDES ME WITH PERFECT INSIGHT ABOUT HUMANITY

Look at these next words from Proverbs 30 on your outline:

“Every word of God is flawless; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him” (Proverbs 30:5).

Truth is, , the Bible will not lead us astray. It will not lead us in error. It leads us to truth. It is flawless.

I love Psalm 18:

“As for God, His way is perfect; Every word of God is flawless; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him” (Psalm 18:30).

In other words, the Bible can be trusted. It can be trusted when it speaks about humanity. God has written this book to tell us about where we came from and where we’re going. It’s authoritative.

Have you ever wondered about why we’re in such a mess in this world? Have you ever wondered why human beings just seem on the verge of destroying each other? The Bible deals with that. The Bible describes it as the problem of sin.

Everybody wants peace in our world. I don’t know of one person who doesn’t want peace. But somebody discovered that we’ve not had wars in less than 50 years of all recorded history. If everybody wants peace so much, why don’t we have it? The Bible deals with that.

Romans 5:1 says, *“We have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

You can read all kinds of books about life, philosophy, history and sociology...but you’re not going to get the complete truth. You won’t find satisfying answers for the issues we face in this world.

Eg. Several days ago, my wife and I visited with my brother and the rest of our family at his place in Alaska. My 16-year old nephew took us out on their little boat fishing for halibut.

On the first day, we went fishing for these halibut that cost about \$30 per pound at the grocery store. Do you know what we caught on that first day? We caught a bunch of junk. In fact, several times we hooked into a skate. Do you know what a skate is? It’s a big ray, three, four, five feet across.

When you first hook a skate, you think you’ve got a big halibut on the line. It pulls and fights. In fact, it’s a real pain to get it to the surface when you’re fishing in 80 or 90

feet of water. But, as you pull it up toward the boat, at first you think you have a giant halibut on the line, then you realize it's only a skate. It has no value. You can't eat them. You don't want to keep it.

Some of you in this room have done a lot of study that's like catching a skate. You've hooked your mind into writers who were popular, intellectual or creative, but they've not provided real insight about life for you. Remember, God says His Word is flawless. If you really want to understand what's going on in this world, turn to the Scriptures.

The Bible not only tells me about the mess we're in, it tells me how I can have a relationship with God Himself. When I read this Book and understand what it teaches, I understand how to know God Himself. This Book provides insight for my life right now, and it promises eternal life in the age to come.

There is a third reason to study the Bible and that's...

3. **BECAUSE IT PORTRAYS GOD'S LOVE FOR ME**

I love this next verse on your outline. Jesus is speaking and He said:

“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” (Matthew 6:26).

Do you understand that the Bible is all about God's love for you and me? It's His love letter to us.

Eg. This may surprise some of you, but there was a day when cell phones didn't exist. There was no such thing as Skype, Text Messages, Instant messaging, Facebook or Twitter.

In those days, we used to write something called, “let-ters.” How many of you know what a letter is? Before Roxanne and I were married, we used to write letters to each other when we weren't together. Now, I have to tell you, I would look for a letter from her every day. I would go to the mailbox and see if there was a letter from her. I would take that thing and smell it to see if she put her favorite perfume on the envelope. (No perfume on skype or Facebook)

Then I'd open the letter and read it real fast to see what the basic idea was. Then I'd go back through and read it slowly to see what she was feeling and thinking. Do you know why I did that? Because it was a love letter. It was written from someone I loved to someone she loved.

The Bible is the same thing for you and me. It is God's love letter to us. It is where He communicates on page after page how much He loves us. It's amazing how many stories of the Bible communicate His infinite love. When I read the Bible, I discover in a whole new way the love of God. I also should read the Bible...(Jer. 31:3 “Everlasting Love”)

4. **BECAUSE IT PRESENTS GOD'S CHARACTER TO ME**

Have you ever heard someone say, “Well, God would never do that because He's not like that?” Or, “God just wants me to be happy.” How do we know what God is like? The answer is, Scripture reveals to us what He's like.

From cover to cover in the Bible, God says, *“Don’t just guess who I am. You can know. I reveal Myself in this Book.”* In fact, God provided a detailed description for us in the person of Jesus Christ.

Look at this verse in John 5:39:

“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me” (John 5:39).

The climax in the story of the Bible is the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Regardless of what you think about Jesus, He cannot be ignored. When you read the Bible, you learn about Jesus.

Now, Jesus said, “If you want to know what God is like, look at Me.” Look at these words in John 1:18:

“No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made Him known” (John 1:18).

On another occasion, He had a conversation with His disciples and He said it like this:

“Don’t you know Me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9a).

When I read the Bible, it points me to Jesus. If you haven’t met Him yet, you’ve missed the point! I should read the Bible because it presents God’s character to me, it portrays God’s love to me, it provides me with perfect insight about our world and it puts me in touch with the

greatest literature on earth. There’s a 5th reason I should read the Bible...

5. BECAUSE IT PROMISES A SUCCESSFUL LIFE TO ME.

Now, look at this verse in Joshua 1:8:

“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Joshua 1:8).

Would you underline those last 2 words: “*prosperous*” and “*successful.*” David said in Psalm 119:

“Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

Do you understand that God wants us to have direction in life? He doesn’t want us stumbling in the dark. He wants us to find His direction.

Eg. How many of you have a GPS system in your car? I don’t have one of those things, because it talks back to you! But every once in a while, I rent a car that has one. You’ll hear a little voice with a British accent that says, *“Turn left in 1/4th of a mile. Turn left in 1/10th of a mile. Turn left now.”*

Now, I want to ask you a question: “What happens if I don’t turn left when that little box says to turn left?” Do you know it says? *“Do you think I’m going to help you now? You’re an idiot. You wouldn’t do it my way, so find your own way.”* Is that what it says? Of course not! Do you know what that little box says if I don’t do what it says? It

says, “*Recalculating route. When safe to do so, execute a U-turn.*”

Now, listen to me. That’s exactly what God’s Word does for us. This Book says, “*Here’s the way home. Here’s the way to a successful life. Here’s the way to know God. When you’re ready to listen, when you’re ready to surrender, when you’re ready to repent, turn your life over to Him. Execute a U-turn. I’ll bring you home.*”

Having problems? Read instruction manual!

One more thing... I should study the Bible because it puts me in touch with the greatest literature on earth, it provides me with insight about humanity, it portrays God’s love for me, it presents God’s character to me, it promises a successful life to me. And, I should study the Bible...

6. BECAUSE IT PRODUCES CHANGE IN ME.

In other words, when I read the Bible, it changes who I am. I love these words in Hebrews:

“For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

I don’t know if you’ve ever heard this before, but years ago, I heard someone say,

“God loves you exactly the way you are, who you are, and where you are. But He loves you too much to let you stay there.”

That’s why He gave us the Bible. He wants us to become all He’s designed us to be. Look at these words in Psalm 19:

“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes” (Psalm 19:7,8).

Did you notice those words: “*the law... the statues... and the precepts... and the commands?” He’s talking about the Word of God. These verses tell me how God changes me when I study His Word. First of all, the Bible...Let’s unpack this a little...*

- Revives my soul.

It encourages me every day when I read it. When I get up in the morning, I want to spend time with God in His Word because it revives my soul. It’s like a cool drink of water on a hot day. Then David says the Bible...

- Strengthens my mind (“*making wise the simple*”)

If I read the Bible, it will give me wisdom about how life works. The Bible will also...

- Change my attitude (“*giving joy to the heart*”)

A lot of us in this room need an attitude adjustment because we are prone to complain. That’s not what God really wants for our lives. He wants us to know His joy. When I read the Bible, it produces strength for today and hope for tomorrow. All the way through, it brings joy to my life.

There’s a 4th way the Bible changes me. The Bible...

- Brightens my life

In other words, it helps me see things as they really are. I get a view of the big picture.

Eg. My wife and I landed at Seattle airport a few days ago. It was cloudy, rainy and just a dreary day. When we took off from the airport, however, we broke through the clouds, and do you know what we saw? We saw Mt Rainer and Mt St Helens and beautiful mountains. It gave us a whole different perspective. That’s what the Bible does for me. It gives me a different perspective. When my life feels dark and dreary, it helps me see life from God’s perspective.

Now, let me ask you a simple question: “Have you made the study of the Bible a priority for your life?” I love what it says in Ezra:

“For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10).

That’s what it takes if my soul is to be revived, my mind strengthened, my attitude changed and my life brightened!

CONCLUSION

James says it like this:

“But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting

what he has heard, but doing it - he will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:25).

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

If you’re questioning the things of Christianity, reading the Bible is a place to start. I’d encourage you to read in the little Gospel of John as you begin. If you’re stumbling through life, you desperately need the encouragement and hope the Bible will provide for you every day. And, if you’re sold out to God, the best way for you to develop your walk with God. is to study the Scriptures every day.

We have available for you today in the lobby, a number of different resources. If you don’t have a Study Bible, you should have one. We have a number of different kinds of Study Bibles available for you at the book table today. Perhaps you want to know how to study the Bible for yourself. We have a wonderful resource written by Rick Warren on this subject that’s available. If you don’t have a Bible at all, we’ll even give you a New Testament if you’ll just stop at the book table today.

I want to give you 3 action steps, very quickly, as we close.

- 1) Make the time for God’s Word.

All of us make time for the things that are most important. So, I’m going to challenge you to make time every day to spend time reading the Bible. It might be in the morning. It might be at noon. It might be in the evening.

- 2) Be consistent

Determine that you’re going to do this every day. If you miss a day, do it the next day. But, be consistent. And...

3) Ask for help.