

It Is Written

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Do You Want Bible Knowledge?

by Gary Smalley

I once heard an aged gospel preacher refer to a comment he received from a person who appreciated his sermons: "I wish I knew as much about the Bible as you." His reply was, "Lady, if you study the Bible for as many years as I have you would know as much or more!" Bible knowledge was prized, desired and gained in the diligence of study.

Today, it is very sad to realize that there are many people who have allowed themselves to be convinced that the Bible cannot be understood. Many others hold the view that the Bible is very difficult to understand and for that reason they do not investigate it for themselves. How dreadful and dishonorable it is for people to not know what God has spoken! The Apostle Paul said people could have the knowledge he had by reading what he had written (Eph. 3:4; cf. 5:17).

In many cases, people who do not study the Bible for themselves have come to rely upon preachers to provide answers to their questions. Many preachers are very happy to help as many people as possible in gaining an understanding of what God has said. It is the mission of those who preach and teach God's word to "make all men see" or "bring to light" the wisdom of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Eph. 3:1-ff). But we must heed the warning that Christ gave with regard to relying on men as a source of truth. Of the religious leaders of His day, He said, "...they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit." (Matt. 15:14). People should study the Bible for themselves. If they do not, they become so easily deceived. (1 John 4:1).

Studying the Bible is not nearly as difficult as some would lead you to believe. Being a worthy Bible student is simple if you will follow these three basic principles:

1. Recognize that the Bible is the word of God. This amazing book is unique; no other book compares to it. The writers were men, but they wrote what the ultimate author commanded: "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2 Pet. 1:20-21). This incredible one-of-a-kind book reveals where man came from, why he is here and where he is going. Paul said, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Jesus Christ respected the Scriptures and regarded them as the word of God (John 17:17). You are in good company when you so regard the Bible.

2. Hunger and thirst for righteousness. Following the Lord's directive in Matt. 5:6, if we have an intense desire to obtain "the righteousness of God" (2 Pet. 1:1; Rom. 3:22; 10:3), with the same fervor we seek food and drink when hungry, we will obtain it! When we develop an appetite for regular servings of spiritual food, we will indeed grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2). These are the ones who take advantage of every opportunity to discuss and learn from God's word.

3. Pay the price. Paul admonished, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." (2Tim. 2:15). Study is work. It is careful examination, analysis, seeking answers to questions with the specific purpose or intent to understand and learn. There is no "easy" button to push and no knowledge pill to take. This price is far more than most are willing to pay. The price of that filet mignon causes me to lose my desire for it and choose chicken. The price for knowing the Scriptures causes many to allow others to tell them about their religious views rather than going to the source of truth. Any who are unwilling to do what it takes to know the Scriptures will never know and understand them as they could or should.

Yes, friend, you can obtain a great deal of Bible knowledge, if you remember and apply these simple basic principles. If you have the proper respect for the Bible as the word of God, a burning desire for the

righteousness it contains and a willingness to pay the price for success, you can understand and know what God has spoken! And with that knowledge you can enjoy all the spiritual blessings that God has for man, which are found in Christ (Eph. 1:3). May we help you today?

When 900 Million People Are Watching

by Brent Petrillo

Ninety-percent of all people deal with some level of stage fright. How do you feel when all eyes are on you? Do your palms get cold and clammy? Do you become nervous and anxious? Do you blush, tremble, shake, or feel nauseated?

There is at least one stage where the vast majority of people feel no fright at all. This stage is Facebook. Facebook recently exceeded 900 million active users. Potentially, then, depending on your privacy settings, up to 900 million people are watching what you say and do. Many who would be very careful in front of a crowd may post on Facebook with reckless abandon.

God has called His people to be different (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Timothy 2:21). God has called us to be a light in the darkness (Matthew 5:14-16). The question for us is, do our Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest accounts reflect this? Here are several categories to consider:

1. What Do We Say and Post? Could someone look at our profiles and see bad language, gossip, slander, or crude and crass speech? (2 Corinthians 12:20; James 3).

2. What People and Activities Do We "Like" (Support)? Do we "Like" celebrities, athletes, artists, or others with trashy reputations? Do we support movies, music, TV shows, video games, or other things that are not Christ-like? (Romans 12:2).

3. What Pictures Are on Our Profiles? Do any pictures show us engaging in sin or less than godly behaviors? (Romans 13: 13-14). Do any show us hanging with people or in places a Christians should not be? (1 Corinthians 15 :33). Do any pictures on our profiles display immodesty or promote lust? (1 Timothy 2:9-10; Romans 13: 13; Matthew 5:28).

Remember, 900 million people are watching on earth, and One is watching in heaven.

WE NEED ENDURANCE

"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving." (Col. 2:6-7)

Several years ago a man reported his observations of the effects of a hurricane on a southeastern Gulf Coast town. As he walked up and down the ravaged streets, he observed that the palm trees had been uprooted and flung about. Once tall and majestic, their root systems were too shallow to withstand the hurricane force winds. But, as he proceeded, he came to a lone oak tree. The leaves had been blown away and some of the smaller branches ripped off, but the roots had gone deep, and the tree held its position. And, in due season it would again produce leaves. (From 1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching, p. 120)