

It Is Written

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Biblical Illiteracy:

(Ignorance of God's will - a terrible poison)

By Randy Blackaby

Americans revere the Bible, but by and large they don't read it. And so, most Americans are biblically illiterate. How bad is it? Fewer than half of Americans can name the four gospels or list even five of the Ten Commandments. In one survey, over half of high school seniors thought Sodom and Gomorrah were a husband and wife.

That last one might strike you as humorous, but, biblical illiteracy isn't funny. It's pure poison. Years ago, the prophet Hosea said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Through ignorance, people make the wrong choices, sin, and have to live with terrible consequences. Biblical ignorance not only affects individuals, but also the nation and the world.

Churches also suffer. Often, there are not enough teachers to staff classes because too few have enough Bible knowledge. You can't teach what you don't know. This isn't a new problem. The Hebrew writer said, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food." (5:12) Also, when members don't know their Bibles, churches may be easily led away by false teachers (2 Peter 2:1-3).

The poisonous impact is most easily seen in moral culture, where good is called evil and evil is called good (Isaiah 5:20), where we slaughter innocent infants and spare the lives of murderers, where we look lightly upon adultery and declare homosexuality to be an alternate, acceptable lifestyle. All the while, families are destroyed and sexual deviancy expands.

What's the cure?

Biblical illiteracy isn't some sort of incurable disease. It's a plague, no doubt, but there is an antidote. The starting point is obvious and simple. Just begin reading the Bible in private. Create a system for daily prayer and Bible reading. Pray for guidance; read a portion of Scripture and then meditate on its meaning and application to life.

But don't stop there. Mutual edification is also very important. Church Bible classes are one means, but home studies with brethren and friends, or studies in other venues, such as our Early Risers Bible Study at the Melodee restaurant, can help achieve the same result. You benefit from other people's knowledge, and they benefit from your questions and knowledge.

Parents need to remember that God has given them responsibility for teaching their children about the Bible (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:4). See that your children read the Bible text behind their Sunday and Wednesday lessons. Be sure they answer any questions and do the work assignments in their class books. Quiz them before they go to class.

Some of our class teachers have reported to the elders that presently, this isn't being done very well. Students come to class without their books, and without answers to questions. In many cases, when the teacher asks even a simple question, these students just shrug their shoulders. Will these children become the next generation of Christians--or victims of biblical illiteracy?

The Lord's church usually expends the greatest amount of money to provide a preacher for the congregation. He is expected to preach a balanced diet of biblical messages. If he does so and doesn't

replace preaching with popular psychology, theatrics, and comic entertainment, most Christians can grow in Bible knowledge by listening carefully to such preaching. Taking notes can often help with memory retention.

Preachers become frustrated though, when after they've preached exhaustively on a subject, someone who was present asks them to preach a lesson on that subject, as though they had never addressed it. This suggests that we need to pay closer attention to the preaching; otherwise, its value is diminished.

Well-Meaning Diversions

It is important that congregations and brethren be loving and close-knit. But well-meaning people sometimes encourage extensive social gatherings and entertainment as a means to creating and sustaining this goal. And that is a mistake, if it diverts from the certainty of Bible study and preaching.

The thing that church members have in common is our faith. We learn the most about brotherly love from the Bible. We are mutually commissioned to teach the message contained in the Scriptures.

And while there is nothing wrong with getting together for social meals and outings, such will not increase our spirituality or really draw us closer to one another and God.

Do we need to spend more time with other Christians? Certainly! But, let's make at least some of these gatherings opportunities to grow spiritually. Let's discuss our problems, but always in the context of what God's word teaches us to do about them.

Everything we need for life here and beyond is found within the pages of God's word. The Apostle Peter wrote: "As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue ... (2 Peter 1:3)

Biblical illiteracy is a terrible thing. And to adapt an old NAACP slogan, "A soul is a terrible thing to waste."

Prejudiced Against the Bible

By Bob Buchanon

While serving as our ambassador to France, Benjamin Franklin joined a literary society. Such societies were common and numerous in France, but they were filled with infidels. Urged on by his quaint sense of humor, Mr. Franklin joined the most prominent of these societies. It was the custom of this group to have each member write an original story to be read to the society and then have the members criticize the story. Mr. Franklin copied by hand the French translation of the entire book of Ruth from the Bible.

He met with the society at the appointed time and anxiously awaited the time for him to read his story. In warm and sympathetic tones he read this great love story.

For a few minutes there was absolute silence, as the audience sat under the spell of the beautiful love story. Then some member began to applaud. When the chairman of the meeting said that it was the only perfect love story the world had ever heard, the society requested permission to print it.

Mr. Franklin then said: "This story has already been printed and given to the world. You will find it in the Bible: the book you profess to despise, but about whose contents you apparently know so little."