

Helpful Aids For Bible Study

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We frequently speak of the importance of individual Bible study. Sermons and group Bible classes ought to be seen as supplements to personal study, not substitutes for it. And remember the difference between casual reading and study. Reading alone will benefit you, but study can open doors that casual reading leaves closed.

Obviously, Bible study requires that you have a Bible to study! Obtain one with a font size that makes it easy to read. Center column or side column cross references can be helpful, but be advised that just because a cross reference takes you to a certain passage, that passage isn't necessarily talking about the same thing. You have to study and think! In that same vein, be extremely cautious with "study Bibles." Most have some good material, but also contain abundant false teaching. Here again, study and think!

I recommend studying from multiple English translations. Not every translation is reliable, but often something can be gained even by reading a translation that may not be the best and shouldn't be your "go to" Bible. For example, I don't recommend the NIV as one's primary Bible, but on occasion it does a respectable job of clearing up the meaning of a passage. My personal practice is to read a passage from my primary version (NKJV), but also from the KJV, ASV, NASB, ESV, and NIV.

A good concordance can make Bible study easier. A concordance is a listing of words (such as "faith" or "baptism") showing the passages where those words are used. I prefer Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, but some like Young's Analytical Concordance or some other. If you are computer or internet savvy, many concordances are available online or in computer programs. Once more, just because two passages use the same word doesn't necessarily mean they deal with the same thing. Study and think!

(More next week.)

The Cost Of Caring

"For one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7-8).

Leo Ryan, a US Representative, knew there was something terribly wrong in Guyana. He resolved to find out for himself what it was and do his best to help bring back those he suspected to be prisoners to their worried loved ones. In his attempt, Leo Ryan was assassinated during the Jonestown massacre in 1978.

The world admires one such as Leo Ryan who took the risk to save others at his own life's expense. In a way, Ryan typifies the greatest self-sacrifice ever made. Jesus Christ died a criminal's death to deliver humanity from the tyrant and master of sin.

When people start following man instead of God, tragedy always follows. But Jesus came to truly show us the heavenly Father and His way that reinforces the true values of life.

Jesus said, *"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13). Jesus wants us all to be His friends. Friends take care of each other, and Jesus died to give us life, eternal life, and a better life here.

When someone takes a bullet that was intended for another, there springs an eternal gratitude. Shouldn't we manifest our gratitude to our Savior by our changed lives reflected in our behavior, our words, our thoughts, and our choices for what He has done for us?

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)

Teaching children to count is less important than teaching them what counts.

Veiled Religion

The ongoing controversy over accommodating Muslim women wearing various head coverings is more a debate over religious statements than demonstrating true spirituality. As many Islamic scholars have pointed out, veils are optional and those who choose to wear them do so as a witness of their faith and modesty.

Of course, this symbol merely witnesses these things but doesn't actually prove them. The fact that the wearing of veils and coverings in western society draws attention and causes debate actually defeats their stated goal of modest behavior. True modesty deflects attention and lessens interest in oneself. Perhaps in a society where this type of dress has become the norm, the veil can be used without controversy; but in western culture it creates the exact opposite effect and negates the statement the wearer desires to make.

As Christians we believe that true spirituality doesn't require special symbols or clothing to be sincere. The epistle of James states it succinctly when it says, *"This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world"* (James 1:27).

The witness that James describes here blesses others and proves one's sincerity in religion without drawing attention to self. In addition to this, it does so in such a way that even non-believers can approve and applaud.

In the end, true religion is proven by actions, not statements.

--Mike Mazzalongo (<https://bibletalk.tv>) via Krum, TX

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All classes of people were aboard the Titanic: wealthy people, famous people, highly educated people, illiterate people, poor folks down in the steerage.

But a short while later, when they posted the list in the Cunard office in New York, there were only two categories: LOST and SAVED.

That is how God sees humanity.

So should we.