

The Devotion To The Word

Introduction. One of the blessings as well as an important responsibility for the Christian is the practice of assembling regularly with other Christians. We have an example of Christians assembling in Acts 20:7 and we have an explicit command not to forsake our assembling together in Hebrews 10:25.

The purpose of our assembling is threefold: (1) to express praise and devotion to God and Christ; (2) to exhort and encourage our brethren to greater service; and, (3) to receive such encouragement ourselves.

An important element involved in our growth is Bible study. But some new Christians find difficulty getting started in this area. However, this is an important duty, one which the Bible emphasizes. In fact, how we listen to the proclamation of God's word is an indication of our devotion to God. We should be quick to hear what God's word has to say and should have a proper attitude of meekness and willingness to receive it (James 1:18-19, 21). We should be careful how we hear and what we hear (Luke 8:18; Mark 4:24). Let's look at several ways wherein we can be better devoted to God's word.

I. ***Why Bible Study Is Important***

- A. Because the Bible possesses the power of "sanctification."
 - 1. "Sanctification" means "to set apart;" as used in the Bible, to set apart for God's purpose.
 - 2. The word of God is the means by which God does this:
 - a) As praised by David in his psalm (Psalm 19:7-11).
 - b) As mentioned in the prayer of Jesus (John 17:17).
 - 3. If we are going to be useful to God, then we need to study His word.
- B. Because the Bible possesses the power of "preservation."
 - 1. A lack of knowledge has always destroyed the people of God (Hosea 4:6).
 - 2. But the young can keep their ways pure by the word of God (Psalm 119:9).
 - 3. And the elders were exhorted to keep the church by the word (Acts 20:28-32).
 - 4. One of the first steps toward backsliding is to neglect God's word.
- C. Because the Bible possesses the power of "salvation" and "condemnation."
 - 1. Received properly, it can save our souls (James 1:21).
 - 2. It will be the standard by which we will be judged (John 12:48).

II. **Why Bible Study Is Often Neglected**

- A. Some people just "take the preacher's word."
 - 1. For this reason, they do not study for themselves
 - 2. Most preachers are good men, but they can still be wrong (Acts 18:24-26).
 - 3. It is our responsibility to "test the spirits," and to be able to identify "false apostles" (1 John 4:1-2; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15).
- B. Some people say "they cannot get anything out of the Bible."
 - 1. This may be because they read it so little, or because they do not know how to go about studying it.
 - 2. Unfortunately, most have simply made little effort to understand it.
 - 3. Yet Paul assumed that people could understand it if they read it (Ephesians 3:3-4).
- C. Some people say "they do not have the time."
 - 1. People who do study are busy too, but they leave off things that are less important.
 - 2. As Jesus commanded, we must put the things of the kingdom of God first (Matthew 6:33).

III. **Methods Of Bible Study**

- A. The "planned-lesson" method.
 - 1. This method utilizes someone preparing a lesson on a subject, then it is studied in a class or at home.
 - 2. This is a good way to study, but one's study should not be limited to this method.
- B. The "subject" method.
 - 1. This involves selecting some subject (e.g., baptism), then collecting and studying each passage in the Bible on the subject.
 - 2. This method has its advantages, but it can be easy to take things out of context and draw the wrong conclusion.
- C. The "book" method.
 - 1. This consists of an intensive study of a single book of the Bible.
 - 2. Since the Bible was written a book at a time, this is probably the best way to study.
 - 3. Daily Bible reading programs can very easily utilize this approach to the scriptures:
 - a) E.g., following a program to read through the entire Bible each year.
 - b) E.g., taking a chapter each week to read and study daily, and covering the New Testament in depth over a five year period.
 - 4. Doing both of these will give a person an overall understanding of the Bible and an in-depth understanding of the New Testament.

IV. ***Some Suggestions For Bible Study***

- A. Set a regular time.
 - 1. Regularity is a key to success, so set aside some regular time for study (Acts 2:42).
 - a) For some, the best time may be late at night, after the children are in bed.
 - b) For others, early morning before the children arise might be better.
 - 2. Family study is a good practice, but each person needs also to have a regular time in which he or she can come face to face with the Bible alone.
- B. Pray as you study.
 - 1. Begin your study with prayer (Psalm 119:18).
 - 2. As you study, ask God for the wisdom and strength to understand and obey His word (Psalm 119:5-6).
 - 3. End your study with prayer (Psalm 119:10-11).
- C. Come prepared and follow along with the sermon. Take notes, ask questions, and learn from Bible class lessons.
 - 1. Teaching or preaching the word of God was part of public worship in the early church (Acts 20:7).
 - 2. It is by the word of God that we grow (1 Peter 2:2). Therefore, public worship services and private Bible study time become invaluable to our growth.
- D. Utilize various helps such as translations, dictionaries, concordances, encyclopedias, and commentaries. Good, faithful reference materials will almost always help your understanding of the scriptures.

Conclusion. As with singing and praying, the more we study the word in private, the more we get out of it in the public assemblies. How long do you study the Bible daily? If you are not doing so now, are you willing to spend 15-30 minutes daily in Bible study? Such aids can be a great help, but make sure that the conclusions you draw are based upon your own careful study of God's word! What is most important is that we are engaged in some sort of consistent, systematic study of the Bible so that we are ever being blessed by the word of God.

In order to benefit from our assemblies, one must first keep in mind who is present. First, our brethren in Christ are present. They are people like you, who appreciate the presence and encouragement of other Christians. So take the time to visit with them before and after the assembly. Second, visitors are frequently present. They draw conclusions about the congregation during their visit. So take the time to visit with them. Third, our Lord is present. Do we act as we would if He were bodily present?

You get out of the assembly what you put into it. Praying about what you are going to do and planning what you can do (such as welcoming and visiting) can make a truly edifying assembly. Come to serve, not to be served and you will be blessed in return. The more you attend and the more interest you show, the more you will grow. "How often do I have to come?" is indicative of grave spiritual immaturity. It displays a lack of true love for Christ and it shows that one is selfishly concerned with how little they can do to save themselves.