

The Bible and Living for Christ

I. Introduction – What is the Bible?

- A. It is a **library of books** (see chart). It contains books of History and Biography, Law, Poetry, Wisdom, Prophecy and Revelation, Parables, and Epistles.
- B. These books can be heard and understood to the point that our emotions are touched and we are roused to action. (Neh. 8: 8-12)
- C. The Word of God is variously described by the inspired Bible writers as: “a fire to warm, a hammer to break, water to cleanse, milk to nourish, meat to invigorate, light to guide, a sword to fight, and a mirror to reveal.” It is all these things and more! It is a set of documents that works in believers by exhorting them, building them up, piercing their hearts and souls and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Eph. 6:17; Jms. 1:23-25; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12)

II. Discussion

- A. The Bible is **Pertinent** – The primary aim of the Bible then, is to do something in the life of its readers. Secondly the Bible provides the reader with a sense of history and opens the door to an understanding of the things of God. It was relevant when it was written and it is relevant now.
 - 1. It deals with the timeless elements of human nature. We can easily identify with the men and women of the Bible, because even the heroes are shown in the light of their failings as well as their triumphs.
 - 2. God’s nature does not change. We see through His interaction with the people of the testaments, just what He has in mind for us today. According to Paul the Apostle these things “were written down for our own instruction and learning,” and thus give us hope for the present and future. (1 Cor. 10:11; Rom. 15:4)

- B. The Bible is **Practical** – What are the practical purposes the Bible aims to achieve?
 - 1. It points people to Jesus by: (Jn. 5:39, 46; Lk. 24:27; Acts 10:43; Jms. 1:21; 2Tim. 3:15)
 - a. Providing enough information that we may believe on Christ (Jn. 20:30,31).
 - b. Showing that “someone is coming” (OT), “someone is here” (Gospels) and “someone is coming back” (Acts, the epistles, and Revelation).

- c. Teaching us that His death and resurrection is the basis for our sins to be forgiven.
 - d. Indicating its practical purpose – bringing us into a right relationship with Jesus and through Him, God the Father.
 - 2. It builds a relationship with God:
 - a. By helping us to grow in the Lord – (1 Pet. 1:23; 1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12-14)
 - b. By helping us to enjoy His companionship through the Word (Jer. 15:16; Ps. 19:10)
 - c. By helping us to love God by knowing and keeping His commandments; therefore making the Father’s love accessible to us. (Jn. 14:23,24)
 - 3. It equips Christ’s followers for battle:
 - a. By preparing us to spread and defend the gospel (Eph. 6:17).
 - b. By giving us the Word of God – a mighty weapon to influence men’s convictions and conduct.
 - c. By giving us the incentive to fill our minds with Bible doctrine and to make sure that the doctrine is taught to the next generation.
 - 4. It guides our conduct:
 - a. By laying right standards alongside right beliefs.
 - b. By demanding that we be doers of the word and not hearers only (Jms. 1:22).
 - c. By providing us with moral guidelines for reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16).
- C. The Bible is for **Plain People** – It was written that any might understand and obey; yet it provides its best students with a lifetime of mental exercise. However, the imperative qualifications of profitable Bible study are more spiritual than intellectual. These qualifications include (but are not limited to):
- 1. A will to obey – We can never master the Bible unless we let it be our Master.
 - 2. Concentration – We must search, meditate and examine the scriptures.
 - 3. Patience – We must persevere through faith to inherit the promises of God (Heb. 6:12).
 - 4. Persistence – We will receive more from our Bible study, only if we study more.
 - 5. Submission – Because “the scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God an fit him fully for all branches of his work.” (2 Tim. 3:16,17)

III. Conclusion – As we read and study our Bibles we must ask ourselves the question posed by Philip the Evangelist to the Ethiopian nobleman: “Do (I) understand what I am reading?” (Acts 8:30) Before we can answer that question we must ask ourselves at least three others:

- A. What does the passage actually say? That is, what is: its setting, purpose, context, and form of the passage? What words does it use?
- B. What did the passage mean to its original hearers? What is the main point? How does it compare to other (perhaps clearer) passages? Was it written to meet a particular time sensitive need?
- C. What does the passage mean (if anything) to us today? Can we put ourselves in an equivalent situation to that of the original hearers? Is there a specific teaching about God, Jesus, man or the church that applies to today? Is there an example to follow, a warning to heed, a promise to expect results from or an action to be taken? Does it lead us down the path to prayer or praise?

“Do you know a book that you are willing to put under your head for a pillow when you are dying? Very well; that is the book you want to study when you are living. There is only one such book in the world.” – Joseph Cook

[Adapted from *Eerdman's Handbook to the Bible*, pp. 48-59, David Field]