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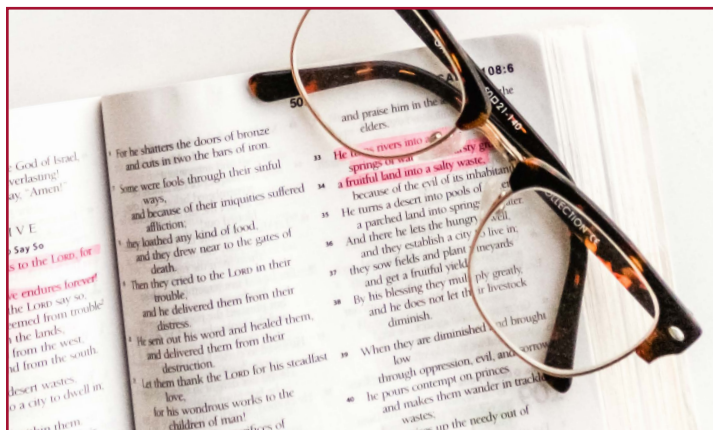
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# Is Studying the Bible All That Important?



In my years of ministry in D.C. and before that in the California State Capitol, I have often heard the following excuses surface regarding Bible study:

“Some people worship the Bible rather than Jesus.”

“Right now in my life, fellowship is more important to me than studying the Bible.”

“Studying doctrine can be divisive, so I’d rather just love Jesus.”

Do any of the following thoughts come to mind as you ponder this subject? Notice I didn’t include “I just don’t have the time.” Elected leaders are all too smart to suggest this because both they and I know that time is a function of priorities—so to say that is to admit Bible study is not a priority.

So, in this week’s study I will attempt to address each of these three excuses hoping to stir your mind in this regard. I will also explore some practical benefits from a habitual lifetime of study. As a result, you will gain a greater conviction to diligently study the Word of God and develop a habit for a lifetime!

Read on, my friend!

Ralph Drollinger

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

- Former Cabinet Members/White House Senior Staff: Wednesdays 7am, Zoom.
- Senate Members: Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served.
- House Members: Thursdays 8am, The Capitol Hill Club, hot breakfast served.

The views expressed in each Bible study are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study Sponsor.



## CA Ministry Leader Takes Bible Studies Outside

While most of the nation was struggling with ice and snow storms in February and March, northern California experienced beautiful weather and this enabled Mike Shreve to share his Bible studies and prayer with staff and legislators on the California Capitol's beautiful grounds.



As has happened in many states, COVID-19 restrictions shut down the California State Capitol which was closed to the public, which includes Pastor Shreve. Access to legislators and staff was also greatly restricted, only one staff member per office was allowed inside.

The restrictions greatly hampered Pastor Shreve's efforts to minister to members of the CA legislature and staff which he has faithfully done for six years.

Like many other CapMin ministry leaders, Pastor Shreve continued his ministry via Facebook, email messages, phone calls, remotely by internet, and any other way he could think of to impart the Word of God to those

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## Is Studying the Bible All That Important?

### I. INTRODUCTION

In keeping with our occasional studies from the Old Testament (OT) book of Proverbs, this week I would like you to take notice of all that Solomon has to say about the importance of God's Word.

Each of the aforementioned excuses is sometimes used as a "spiritual" reason why someone refrains from involvement in serious Bible study.

Before addressing each one of these individually, notice what Jesus said in the Great Commission (the last words of instruction spoken by Him to His followers prior to His ascension into heaven) in Matthew 28:19-20:

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ... teaching them to observe all that I commanded you ..."*

One of many implications of this passage is God's expectation that we will know His book, i.e., *teaching them* combined with the word *all*. This point is further underscored by the Apostle Paul in the Book of Acts (20:27): Luke records Paul's interaction with the visiting Ephesian elders, where Paul said to them:

*"For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God."*

From these two passages we get the powerful message that God expects His followers to know His Book—in *all* and in *whole*!

**Beloved, it stands to reason that you cannot live by God's precepts if you don't know them.**

On the other hand, if you choose to obey only a portion of them—you deem yourself the final authority and not *the* Lord whom you claim to serve!

Further, in the Great Commission passage God calls us to be His *disciples*. It is important to know what exactly the word *disciple* means. *Disciple* is the Greek word *mathetes*, which means, "a learner." Better, *math* (the root of the English word "mathematics") means, "thought accompanied by endeavor." Perhaps you can see where I am going with this:

**Believers who are intent on spiritual growth must by definition be in a state of continual biblical thought accompanied by endeavor.**

Better perhaps, I like to think of the Greek word *mathetes* in terms of someone who can calculate: A *disciple* is someone who can calculate the world in which he lives through the lens of Scripture. That is what it means to be a *disciple*, and lest you think you might have to go it alone, God has given believers pastor-teachers to equip them in and with the Word of God in order for them to become wise at calculating all matters in life through Scripture. Ephesians 4:11-12 states this:

*"And He gave some ... as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ."*

In Scripture *mathetes* is often juxtaposed with *didaskalos*, meaning "teacher."

A *disciple* then, is biblically defined as an endeavoring biblical, calculating



thinker who is sitting under at least one God-given *pastor-teacher*. Summarily, it is biblically incongruous to posture oneself as a maturing believer while failing in one's dedication to regular Bible study. And to the other side of the equation, it is important to add here that unfortunately today, the vast majority of American churches serve up sermons devoid of much in the way of serious Bible study. All that to say, I realize it is not that easy to be a *disciple*—and it is impossible if you rationalize away serious Bible study per any one of the three aforementioned excuses.

## II. YOU MUST NOT RATIONALIZE AWAY THE WORD OF GOD

Regarding the three common myths as stated in the introduction about Bible Study, let us take them on one at a time:

### A. “SOME PEOPLE WORSHIP THE BIBLE RATHER THAN JESUS.”

In negation of this spiritualized excuse, notice the inseparability of God from His Word in the following two passages: Psalms 138:2 states:

*“I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”* (KJV)

God and His Word are inseparable in this Psalm. Additionally, the connection between Jesus and the Word and how they are used interchangeably in the first chapter of John's gospel is evidenced by the interchangeability of verses 1 and 14 respectively:

*“In the beginning was the Word, and*

*the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*

*“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

As if those two passages were not convincing enough, Psalm 33:6 credits the Word of God with creation; God literally spoke the universe into existence:

*“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host.”*

But in addition, Colossians 1:16 credits Jesus with creation:

*“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.”*

Many similar passages and deductions could be cited, but suffice it to say that trying to separate Jesus from the Bible and the Bible from Jesus is an attempt to build a false dichotomy relative to worship—a ludicrous and naïve position. To worship Jesus is to worship His Bible and to worship His Bible is to worship Jesus. Second Timothy 3:16 cements the point:

*“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.”*

The Greek word for *Scripture* is *graphe* and the Greek word for *inspired* is *theopneustos*. The first word means “written” and the second means “the essence of God.” In this passage, Paul is saying

## Matthew 28:19–20

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ... teaching them to observe all that I commanded you ...”*

## Acts 20:27

*“For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.”*



From these two passages we get the powerful message that God expects His followers to know His Book—in all and in whole!





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eager to hear it until face-to-face meetings are again permitted. The good weather brought another solution. “You’ve heard the old saying if the front door is locked, walk around the building to find an open window,” Pastor Shreve said. “And I found such an opening. The outer capitol grounds are open to the public. I have been able to meet with folks outdoors.” He calls it his “outdoor chapel.” To comply with distancing recommendations, Pastor Shreve has been making appointments with legislators and staff and meeting one-on-one or in very small groups. This includes Pastor Shreve’s group of legislators he calls “the Five Stones,” Senators Jim Nielson and Brian Dahle, and Assembly Members Megan Dahle and James Gallagher. The fifth member of the group is former Senator Mike Morrell who retired last year due to term limits.

“Walking while conversing is nothing new to these folks,” Pastor Shreve said. “As we discussed the weekly Bible study, Senator Nielson and Assemblyman Gallagher and I stopped at a park bench to pray for the future of our nation and our state. These men are dedicated prayer warriors who have not grown weary of well doing, (Galatians 6:9). They are committed to their calling as public servants and to their constituents.”

After meeting with the legislators, Pastor Shreve met with a group of staff members at the World War II Memorial for a sit-down Bible study. “My first outdoor meetings were a breath of fresh air to all involved,” he said.

the graphic Word of God is the very essence of God. Therefore, it just doesn’t make sense to say one can love Jesus while ignoring the Bible.

### **To disregard or discount the Word is to disregard or discount Jesus.**

#### **B. “RIGHT NOW IN MY LIFE, I THINK FELLOWSHIP SHOULD BE MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN SERIOUS STUDY OF THE BIBLE.”**

I have heard this statement bantered about in the capital quite a lot over the years and I sometimes wonder who is propagating it. The convolution of the statement begs the question of what is true Christian *fellowship*? Without elaborating in a lengthy citing of passages, Philemon 1:6 states:

*“And I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ’s sake.”*

Paul is instructing Philemon that true *fellowship* (one believer with another) is directly related to one’s *knowledge* of his own identity in Christ—which *knowledge*, and the basis of its genuineness—can only be gained via diligent study of the Word of God. First John 1:7 states in this regard:

*“But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another.”*

To the degree that we are illuminated by His Word is the degree to which we can achieve genuine *fellowship* with one another. And lastly, Scripture is clear that true *fellowship* can only be achieved

between true believers. Note 2 Corinthians 6:14:

*“What fellowship has light with darkness?”*

It follows then that *fellowship* groups devoid of authoritative Bible study accomplish little in terms of spiritual maturity in the life of individuals. They can be directly likened to folks who say they want to get in shape, but who go to the coffee house rather than the gym.

#### **C. “STUDYING DOCTRINE CAN BE DIVISIVE, SO I’D RATHER JUST LOVE JESUS.”**

This statement is an oxymoron (a combination of contradictory or incongruous words). Why? Because whenever one mentions the name of Jesus he is representing some kind of doctrine! Who exactly *is* the one you are mentioning and say you love? Is He God incarnate? Is He the LORD of the universe? Does He call people to repentance? Is Jesus the only way to God? Notice what Jesus Himself said about divisiveness in Matthew 10:34:

*“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”*

Later on, in the same passage (verse 37) and in the same context, Jesus talked about how following Him may even cause division in one’s earthly family:

*“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”*

For those who are intent on following Christ, the objective is to proclaim who



He is—not to represent Him in such a way that you can garner the greatest personal acceptance. Therefore, to reason that the believer should avoid Bible study because he might hear doctrine with which others might disagree is simply biblically uninformed rationalization. The Jesus of the Bible did not come to teach us about some fuzzy, New Age, humanistic idea of “love.” To the contrary:

**The Jesus of the Scriptures calls men and women to redemption in himself via repentance from sin; and such confrontation of man’s depravity will inevitably create divisions among people.**

That doesn’t mean we shouldn’t be loving in our proclamation of Jesus, it is only to say that in proclaiming Jesus others might be offended. As a matter of fact, Jesus actually said in Matthew 10:22 regarding this subject:

*“You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.”*

Like doctrine, Jesus too calls people to make decisions about what they believe, which inevitably leads to divided opinions about Him.

These are just three of many “spiritualized” excuses people come up with for avoiding serious Bible study. Rather than spend any more time examining how some people rationalize away the prominence, priority, and authority of the Word of God, let’s examine what God Himself—in the book of Proverbs—states about the Word of God. In other words, and context, what did

Solomon point out to a future political leader (his son, Rehoboam, to whom most of Proverbs is written) regarding the Word of God? I think you will find it to be quite fascinating!

### III. YOU MUST REGARD HIGHLY THE WORD OF GOD

*“He who gives attention to the word will find good, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD”* (Proverbs 16:20).

In contrast to those who rationalize away the Word, notice the term *gives attention* (*sakal*) meaning “to be prudent.” *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines the English equivalents this way, “to concern oneself with or take notice of something: have regard or pay attention.” The leader who highly regards *the Word will find good*. Many additional Proverbs underscore and elaborate on this principle:

*“He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, but he who is careless of conduct will die”* (Proverbs 19:16).

One of the repetitive themes of Proverbs is the disciplined, prudent inner life. When you make a habit of *keeping* God’s *commandments* and living in reverence of Him, you will generally find a *good* life in this world. Often, if not always, those who lose their soul have a life-long history of aggressive or passive rebellion toward the precepts of God.

It is important to note from this Proverb (and all the others) that Solomon emphasizes to Rehoboam the need to give attention to and regard his inner life. Missing is any kind of parallel emphasis for him to stress governmental programs in his future state leadership.

*John Adams*



**“Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law book and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited ... What a Eutopia—what a Paradise would this region be!”**

— John Adams, second President of the United States, signer of the Declaration of Independence, judge, diplomat, one of two signers of the Bill of Rights.

John Adams, *Works*, Vol. II, pp. 6-7, diary entry for February 22, 1756.



Elias Boudinot



“For nearly half a century have I anxiously and critically studied that invaluable treasure [the Bible]; and I still scarcely ever take it up that I do not find something new—that I do not receive some valuable addition to my stock of knowledge or perceive some instructive fact never observed before. In short, were you to ask me to recommend the most valuable book in the world, I should fix on the Bible as the most instructive both to the wise and ignorant. Were you to ask me for one affording the most rational and pleasing entertainment to the inquiring mind, I should repeat, it is the Bible; and should you renew the inquiry for the best philosophy or the most interesting history, I should still urge you to look into your Bible. I would make it, in short, the Alpha and Omega of knowledge.”

— Elias Boudinot, President of Congress, signed the Peace Treaty to end the American Revolution, first attorney admitted to the U.S. Supreme Court Bar, framer of the Bill of Rights, director of the U.S. Mint.

Elias Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation, or the Age of Reason Shewn to be An Age of Infidelity* (Philadelphia: Asbury Dickins, 1801), p. xv, from his “Dedication: Letter to his daughter Susan Bradford.”

Such a prioritization should be true of you as well. This is how you keep from *dying* so to speak, while holding office with all its various pressures.

IV. YOU MUST RELY HIGHLY ON THE WORD OF GOD

“Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him” (Proverbs 30:5).

Again, in stark contrast to the elected leader who rationalizes away the prominence of the Word of God in his life, this passage is a tremendous confidence builder for the public servant who instead chooses to base his or her political ideology on the Word of God! Why? Because the Word of God is already *tested* (*tsaraph*) meaning “to smell, refine.” To the degree you properly understand it, you can rely on that to inform you as to how to vote. The Word of God can smell out an issue for you; it can refine and direct your thinking. This means you can argue for scriptural positions in public debate and later never find yourself in want for having taken the wrong position! God’s Word, in that it is previously *tested*, can be a wonderful *shield* to your political ideology if you will rely on it! There is peace and *refuge* in holding to biblical positions—unlike foolish members of Congress who cast biblically uninformed votes that can end up, and often do, severely harming themselves and the country! In a sense:

God has already done much of your thinking for you.

In support of the notion for leaders to hold to biblically explicit positions on policy matters, Psalm 119:2–4 and 46 contextually states powerfully and poignantly:

“Blessed are those who observe His testimonies ... You have ordained Your precepts, that we should keep them diligently ... I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be ashamed.”

Therein is the confidence Solomon and David had in holding to the tested Word of God in their public life as state leaders! As a result, they were never ashamed of a position they took! Today’s lawmakers can rest their heads at night when their positions are steeped in the precepts of God’s Holy Word. You can rely on the Word of God when you cast your vote and not be ashamed.

V. YOU MUST BE RESTRICTED BY THE WORD OF GOD

Do not add to His words or He will prove you, and you will be proved a liar” (Proverbs 30:6).

It is important to not read into the Word of God, attempting to justify life decisions or policy positions that are not biblically explicit. This is tantamount to *adding* to the Word of God. Where Scripture is dogmatic, one must be dogmatic, and where it is more of a compass than a road map, you should look to incorporate its principles in using it to support policy positions. Reason from Scripture versus reading into Scripture what you want it to say. Solomon echoes in this Proverb a directive that recurs throughout the Bible: God’s revelation is not an open matter. Scripture is no longer being written. Note Revelation 22:18–19 in support of this point and application:

“I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in



*this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.”*

The point of application is not to play loose with the Scripture in support of policy when Scripture speaks to the contrary or does not speak specifically to an issue. Often, if not explicit, Scripture will provide principles that may serve to support or else deny a policy. And if that is the case, those principles should be cited. But do not attempt to make Scripture state something that it does not. When members parachute in on passages—grossly out of context—while debating on the floor, I often think of this above passage from the book of Revelations: In essence, the presenter is *adding* to Scripture something that is not there. There should be—and there are—restrictions to one’s use of the Word. Don’t be flippant with it, lest God *reprove you* for mishandling His book (cf. James 3:1).

## VI. THE RESULTS OF OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD

*“The one who despises the word will be in debt to it, but the one who fears the commandment will be rewarded”* (Proverbs 13:13).

God *rewards* those who are students of His book! (At CapMin.org, see the Bible study, “Fifteen Benefits of Consistent Bible Study,” published February 22, 2021.) Ostensibly, in this Proverb Solomon is instructing every state leader with contrasting *truths*: destruction awaits those who *despise* God’s revelation versus *rewarding* one who *fears* the Bible. There are *rewards* from God

inuring to the life of the one who studies and obeys God’s *Word*. Duane A. Garrett aptly comments on the meaning of this Proverb:

Every person desires to see his or her longings fulfilled. In the wisdom of the world, the way to success is through diligent effort. There is truth in this ... Yet the Bible goes beyond the secular wisdom of relating success to hard work and more fundamentally ties it to the development of a mature, virtuous soul by submission to wise teachers. Diligence is thus the fruit of a soul that has cultivated goodness, and success follows naturally.

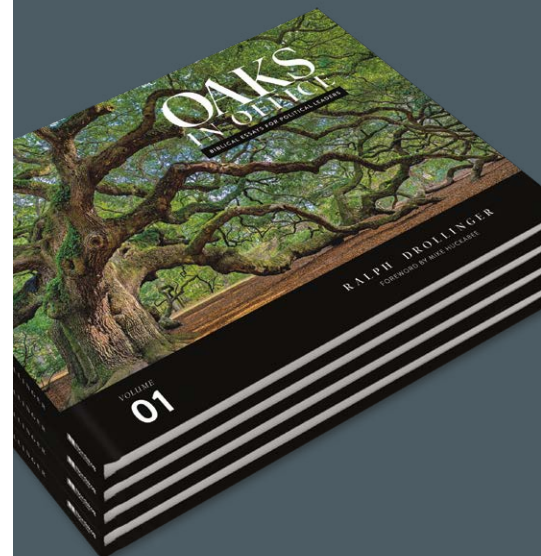
This is a wonderful summary of Proverbs’ formula for *success*. The Psalmist echoes these sentiments when he penned 119:11 and 97:

*“Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You ... O how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.”*

Surely there is *reward* for those who make the regular intake of the Word a priority—a priority that is difficult to keep apart from studying under good motivational, solid Bible *teachers* whom God has given to His people. God has placed them in the world to help you *meditate* on His Word! So, utilize them!

**Athletes reach not their potential apart from coaches, nor do believers apart from Bible teachers.**

Much can be gained from Solomon’s insights on this specific subject. In these passages from Proverbs, the wisest hu-



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man who ever lived is attempting to pass along his own awed and humble view of Scripture to his son who would become king. Given this close context to your life, don't rationalize or spiritualize away the prominent position Scripture must have continually in and throughout your life.

## VII. THE BIBLE IS REVELATION FROM GOD

The repeated internal testimony of the Bible is that it is the written revelation from God to mankind. This is the clear testimony of its writers. In 2 Timothy 3:16–17, 1 Thessalonians 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:20–21, therein Paul and Peter respectively state:

*“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.”*

*“For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.”*

*“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.”*

Thousands of other passages attest to the godly origin of the Bible. As simple as this truth is: The Bible Is Revelation From God, it is easy to overlook the profundity of what that should mean in terms of my response and allegiance to it. May the study of these Scriptures inspire you to a lifetime of reading and studying God's Word.

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