

STUDY TO BE A WORKMAN (010)

PART 1. HIS TOOLS – THE BIBLE

8. STUDYING THE WORD

We study the Word so that we can live in obedience to the exhortations given in it for our benefit.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” (Col.3.16)

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (2Tim.2.15)

NOTE: Section 8 forms part of the module 011 HOMILETICS: THE ART OF PREACHING by C.G. Bristow and F. Goveia, and is therefore an introduction to the full course modules.

A. TEN POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. Time

To study without interference and interruption is *essential*. This is not easy amidst, people to see, work to do, a family to look after and many other things that demand our time and energy. In the midst of busy schedules we must make time and if seemingly impossible rely on the grace of God to do the best we can. Jesus made time for the things that were important.

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed” (Mk.1:35).

2. Place

A place where one can be alone with God and seek His face and study is as *essential* as having time available. A definite place to study is a great advantage in busy households. We all need a place of retreat where we can have time and space.

3. Study Bible

A study Bible with good references and useful aids is an *asset*, especially one in which notes can be made in margins or marked with different colours to pick out themes and texts of importance. Although fairly costly the investment in a study Bible will repay itself in the service of God.

4. Note book and pen

Unless one has total recall memory recording notes in an orderly fashion is a great benefit for recording thoughts, devotional ideas and especially those things given to us by revelation from the Spirit of God. Many nowadays use computers whereas once the filofax system or just plain note pad was used. Many items recorded would be lost if we relied entirely on memory.

5. Bible dictionary

A good Bible dictionary is worth its weight in gold. It is a veritable minefield of invaluable information. Its use is very much under-rated generally speaking by Bible students. They are costly but very much worthwhile to own.

6. Bible handbook

Again Bible handbooks are most usually a forgotten source of information and help. Probably due to the fact that for a long time many of them had an undeniably liberal slant in their presentation of material. Today this is not the case as there are a number of evangelical Bible handbooks on the scene and very ably written.

7. One volume Bible commentary

There are a number of good evangelical commentaries on the market today. Although they are unable to go into great depth in any exegesis (interpretation) of the text, nevertheless they do open up an overall view of the Bible books.

8. Concordance

This is an indispensable tool for the Bible student. Themes, word studies are all to hand for the student to investigate with a concordance.

9. Individual commentaries

Where the student has sufficient funds to invest in good commentaries on individual books of the Bible let there be an investment. Many series have now been published and there is no shortage of choice for those who are able to browse in Christian bookshops and investigate what is available on the market.

10. Old Testament and New Testament surveys and atlases

Every student should have an idea of the geography of the ancient world, where the ancient peoples were located in relation to each other, and their customs and culture. Also a knowledge and background of most of the books of the Bible enables the Biblical text to be preached and to be expounded in its context.

B. FIVE WAYS OF STUDYING THE BIBLE

1. The devotional meditation way

A passage of Scripture is chosen, read carefully and considered, praying until the Holy Spirit has impressed you with insights plus the way to apply the truth to your own life. Very often the passage chosen can be used in prayer itself as you commune with the Lord. For instance this would be quite easy if one were meditating on Ps.23.

2. Reading a book chapter by chapter

This way has 3 phases

- i. Summarising the chapter after careful study
- ii. Analysing in depth each verse of the chapter
- iii. Use the above 2 methods to produce an outline and a commentary on the book chosen.

3. The biographical method

Here a Bible personality is studied in order to assess their strengths and weaknesses as well as produce an outline of their life story. From this we can learn what attitudes and errors to avoid and what principles to apply to our own lives.

4. Studying a word or a theme

The easiest way to do this is to use a concordance and list the references in connection with your chosen topic and then read carefully each verse, recording your

thoughts. This material can then be arranged in an outline defining the various items your chosen study covers.

5. The question and answer method

This method is borrowed from the Scripture Union way of reading the Bible. Basically you apply the following 5 points to the passage read

1. Is there an EXAMPLE to be FOLLOWED?
2. Is there a LESSON to be LEARNT?
3. Is there an ERROR to be AVOIDED?
4. Is there a PROMISE to be CLAIMED?
5. Is there a COMMAND to be OBEYED?

In my own mind I usually ask an additional question

6. Is there a PRINCIPLE to be APPLIED?

Often you will find that there are a number of examples or lessons to be learnt and if there are we need to heed the counsel of JESUS "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (Jn.13:17).

C. HELPFUL HINTS TO READING AND STUDYING THE BIBLE

Reading the Bible is GOOD, *studying* the Bible is BETTER but *meditating* is BEST. Some of the following thoughts have been borrowed and adapted for our course.

In order to grow in God we need a daily diet of rations from the Word of God. Learning to meditate is learning to digest so that the Word of God becomes part of you. The Word of God needs to become flesh in us.

A plan of campaign

1. Carefully read it through

i. Carefully. Most examination papers have a note warning us to read the paper carefully. This we must do with the Scriptures just as we would the small print of a guarantee or other legal document.

ii. Imaginatively. Picture yourself present as if the story is just happening to you, or being spoken directly to you, if the context of the passage is teaching.

iii. Believe God by his Spirit wants to speak to you.

2. Thoroughly think it over

i. Carefully

ii. Ask questions and seek to answer them

iii. View the passage from different angles

iv. Use different versions of the Bible if available

TRUTH is like a precious gem with many facets catching the light and reflecting different colours : you can see different aspects of the truth as the light shines and catches the facets.

3. Clearly write it down

i. This reinforces your thought

ii. Clarifies your own thinking

iii. Helps you to remember

iv. Supplies a record which can be referred to at a later stage

4. Fervently pray it in

i. Ask the Holy Spirit to highlight truth in a practical way

- ii. Builds faith and vision (and we trust strategy)
- iii. Makes warriors for God
- iv. Brings blessing

5. Diligently live it out

- i. Be doers of the Word not hearers only
- ii. We teach by example, and by living out God's precepts we firmly establish them in our lives

6. Lovingly pass it on

We need to pass on what we have received. Only what we sow is reaped.

NB. Do not forget the questions of the Question and Answer method of reading the Bible.

Before we pass on there are 2 further points to make

1. Find the best method of reading and studying the Bible and stick with it (this does not mean that you never use other methods).
2. Always have a pen and notebook handy to jot down thoughts that come to you.

GROUP DISCUSSION

If you are part of a group of students meeting together, then you may find some of the following topics useful in your discussion. Read the module **before** meeting together, and answer questions from the Test Paper **after** meeting.

1. What difficulties do you find in studying the Bible? Discuss how you think some of these difficulties might be overcome. Spend some time praying for the Holy Spirit's help.
2. When the Holy Spirit speaks to you through the Bible, in what ways can you pass on what He has said? Discuss how you might increase these ways.

FURTHER READING

Diploma students are recommended to read appropriate background material from texts selected from the Bibliography, or other books approved by the local tutor. They should then spend a minimum of two hours answering a selection of questions from the test paper (Diploma).

Certificate students should complete the attached test paper (Certificate).

010 TEST PAPER 8 (DIPLOMA)

1.
 - a. Read Mk.11.12-25.
 - b. What are the main points relating to prayer in this chapter?
 - c. How would you relate the teaching in part b in a practical way to the Christian life?
2. From the Book of Ephesians write notes on one of Paul's prayers. In what ways does it differ from our own ways of praying? Are we able to learn something from these differences?
3. Outline the main points of Phil.4.4-6 in regard to prayer and praise.
4. Write notes on the Lord's Prayer as it is commonly called from Mt.6.9-13.
5. Using Mt.6.5-15 what other principles regarding prayer can you find?
6. Go through the Book of Nehemiah and list the passages where you find this godly man praying. What conclusions can draw from this man of God?

010 TEST PAPER 8 (CERTIFICATE)

1.

Read the parable of the sower (Lk.8.1-15). Is there,

a) an example to be followed?

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b) a lesson to be learnt?

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c) an error to be avoided?

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d) a promise to be claimed?

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e) a command to be obeyed?

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2.

In studying the Bible do you,

yes *no*

a) make a regular time available?

b) have a place where you can be quiet?

c) have a Bible for study use?

d) make notes of what you discover?

e) use a set of notes to help you study?

i) notes from this course

ii) other notes

f) have any other books to help you study?