

Practical Ways to Learn the Bible III

Guidelines VIII

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~ In this eighth and final Guideline report from our Spiritual Safari we will consider the fifth, sixth and seventh element of how to properly, effectively and fundamentally learn and study Scripture: and number five is to read what others have written about the Bible. This will be a very brief final Guideline report because I realize that reading what others have written about the Bible is a dangerous rule. We have to be extremely careful when selecting who and what to read and believe, not to mention support. However, we also have to be careful not to get into a vicious cycle of not considering what other fine men of God have had to say about Holy Writ; because we need the insight and guidance from other perspectives to shed new light on our studies and on certain passages of Scripture.

Someone who has made a good commentary on every book of the Bible is usually a good indicator of whom you can read and trust with spiritual matters. Certain literature, certain authors and certain topics are simply not good for your spirit. I would never attempt to identify what is bad for you, personally, but I will identify what I think is good – for all of us. See, you won't know what is bad unless you know what is good. It doesn't work the other way around - ever. False doctrines and some very much liberally approached theories are among the worst of the worst available – and they abound. You'll not find them profitable; I can assure you - that is, not if you truly seek to understand what the Word of God really has to say.

That brings us to the sixth element required for a profitable study of the Bible: obedience. Obedience to Christ's commands is essential; so, knowing what those commands are is equally as critical. This is actually number one on my list of all-importance concerning ways to learn the Bible, but we don't go by my lists in these reports, we go by His list – or, at least, what I think His list is. Now, you will recall in the life of Abraham where God called him to go to a land that He would show him. God did bring Abraham into

the land; but no sooner had Abraham gotten into that place a famine also came to the land. God appeared to Abraham in Ur, and Abraham had followed God; but Abraham took off from there as quick as he could when the famine came. Well, God never told Abraham to leave the place He had put him. That disobedience was a huge mistake.

Many people will think it was only sensible for Abraham to leave because everybody else was going to Egypt. After all, you would want to do something about hunger, right? – The point is, I think God would have performed a miracle if Abraham had just obeyed him – but no. Abraham had to go where the food was plenty; and there certainly was food-a-plenty in Egypt. Interestingly, God didn't appear to Abraham while he was in Egypt; because Abraham was out of God's will. Subsequently, it didn't take too long before Abraham felt the wrath of God; and that is the ultimate wrath – when God withdraws from us. Okay, there's no since being overly sensational, although this truth truly is frightening; Abraham knew and felt the emptiness of the absence of God from his life. God didn't appear to Abraham again until he went back to where he was supposed to be. Obedience is essential to an understanding of the Bible, friends.

Until Abraham obeyed what had already been revealed to him - God would reveal no more. God will never give you new truth when you are in disobedience of Him, either. However, the moment we obey - the Spirit of God comes upon us with light and love. When we obey – God opens up new truths for us. Even the Gospel, which is given to save our souls, is also given for the very definite purpose of obedience. The single greatest document ever written concerning the Gospel is the epistle to the Romans. It would seem the whole book of Romans could be put in quotation marks. I can almost see Paul with his fingers in the air making the quotation mark gesture as he was giving his messages; and they all had to do with obedience.

Romans 1: 5 ...by whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name ~

Romans 16: 26but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith ~

Obedience is exactly where Adam and Eve went wrong, also - doing their own thing. Eve not only listened to the enemy of God - she willfully *disobeyed* God. "Obedience of faith" opens the truth of the Bible and "obedience of faith" closes the book of Romans. Romans contains a great doctrinal section and a great practical section - with the last part being the DUTY of the true and genuine believer. The important thing to recognize and always remember is that God cannot and will not continue to reveal His truth to you if you are in disobedience of Him. Sin separates us from God and from the Bible. If we permit it in our lives it will eventually overtake and choke out the Word of God. You won't have both in your life. Either the Bible will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from the Bible. Disobedience is a terrible thing. If we are to profit from reading and studying, then we simply must obey. Paul says the Gospel was given for the "*obedience of faith.*"

Hamilcar Barca, Carthaginian general of the Punic wars, once said of his own son, Hannibal, that he would be the best of all his soldiers because he best knew how to obey. That statement certainly proved true. Hannibal's army was made up of paid mercenaries: African's, Spaniard's, Gaul's, Italians – you name it – he had them. Yet he retained their complete and utter confidence for sixteen hard years. Amazingly, through privation and extreme hardship, there never arose a single mutiny in the camp. What was his ability? - He was an extraordinary organizer and leader, to be sure, but that's not it. No, he trained these mixed bands into a most efficient power because he taught them to be obedient. The Lord Jesus said we would know sound doctrine if we will keep it. That means obedience to it. The Old Testament says to taste of the Lord and see if He is good. God tells us to just give obedience a try. That is our real test, by the way – the open book test.

More harm is being done to Christianity by church members than by any other group today. Those who are totally and completely ignorant of the

Bible cannot be obedient to God – because they don't know what it is that He wants them to obey. This is one reason we have so much rebellion against the establishment – it's rebellion against the church. The church is the establishment – not government. Responsibility has been erroneously transferred and assigned to government because we are becoming a vile, godless nation. Man needs someone to blame and since he denies the existence of God, well, the next thing in line is government. Many preachers are so busy trying to get on some bandwagon instead of trying to call men and women to salvation that they fall off themselves. There is a group in and of the church that have completely turned their backs on the Bible – and, as a result, on obedience to the Word of God.

A protest placard reads, “Jesus – Yes / Church - No”! Many enemies hide their denial of Christ today by incessantly criticizing the church; and they do it all in the name of free speech, of course. Well, there is no denying that the lives many people in the church are living turn others away from Christ – but that's just not our message. A Barrister was asked why he didn't become a Christian? He made this statement, “I, too, might have become a Christian if I had not met so many people who claim they are Christians.” That is an indictment from a grand jurist; and it is truly unfortunate – but it's also so true today.

We ALL need to examine our own lives in this connection. How well do you and I represent Christ? – The answer will be directly determined by the obedience we have to His Word. The world tells us the Word is not real – that the Bible is a pathetic, nonsensical, rambling and outdated plagiarized artifact in a language that is long gone. Man tells us continually that he can do much better with writing and even with speaking. Even so, people are searching for answers - and they measure Christianity by you, and by me, my beloved believer friend – by our obedience. It is so important to obey the Bible.

The final, seventh sub guideline within our Guidelines that I would like to pass on to you is to pass it on to others! Read the Bible, study the Bible, pray a sincere prayer for wisdom, meditate on the Bible and read what others have to say about the Bible – and then, if you are obeying the Bible,

you will pass it on to others. With that, we have reached a saturation point in our Guidelines study of the Bible itself. We are now like a sponge that can't hold any more water – unless we wring out what we have already absorbed. God won't let you withdraw yourself from society in some monastery as if to become some super-duper-encyclopedia Bibliatannica – or whatever = either, by the way. It's just not going to happen, friends. Those people think they find all the answers and the rest of us remain ignorant. Well, we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together in a solemn and sober assembly.

We are to exhort each other - and so much more - as we see that Day approaching. What verse is that? - What Day does He speak of? – You really do need to study the Bible, friends. The only reason God has blessed these reports as He has is because my honest intent is simply to pass the Bible on to other people. If you copy or read this report verbatim – and it is done in the name of God – then, frankly, I don't really care what is done with them. I'm not writing for my health - that's for sure. I'm not writing for my wealth, either. When I die this so called Spiritual Safari won't mean very much to me in regards to what has happened to it here on earth – that's Gods business, not mine. Pass your knowledge of Him on to others so it can be a blessing in their life as well as your own ~

In our next report we'll begin our examination of the Book of Genesis. Until then, may God fill you with His grace, peace and mercy ~

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