

## Practical Ways to Learn the Bible

### Guidelines VI

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~ Welcome back to the Spiritual Safari. This report begins a series of three that are entitled "Practical Ways to Learn the Bible." We hear a lot of talk about the Mosaic System of Levitical Law today; but most self-professing believers know little to absolutely nothing about the entire system – that is, they know a few of the Ten Commandments - and perhaps one or two of the myriad ordinances and precepts associated with them. I recognize most people estimate themselves to be experts on the Bible – but they aren't – mainly because they never study it in any meaningful manner. Well, in order to understand God's Law properly, correctly and completely, we are going to have to broaden our thinking to include all 66 books of the Bible so that we can all say, "...open thou mine eyes, oh, Lord, that I may behold wondrous things out of *the Bible*"! With that thought in our minds we can begin to consider seven sub guidelines in this series of Spiritual Safari Guideline reports on studying the Bible.

There are certain principles each of us must follow to receive the maximum benefit from studying the Word of God. These can be added to - but I am going to deal only with the basics so we can move into the Scriptures after just two more reports. I believe the ones I have selected for our consideration are the primary seven. I am going to make you a promise, my beloved readers – and you can write it down: if you follow these safari guidelines then all spiritual blessings in the Heavens will come to your heart; blessings such as most men and women never realize nor understand.

The simplest of products, medicines - and even the most basic toys today - all come with instructions. Even a bottle of shampoo has instructions printed on it. Well, I consider it my business to write the instructional draft for the Bible – I feel that I have been called to do this. As a secondary objective, it's what the so called Spiritual Safari is all about. I do not know if it will ever be the final draft but I do believe it is the first draft of its kind.

So, let me mention those seven practical ways to learn the Bible now – and then we will look at each one of them individually, of course: (1) Begin with Prayer (2) Read the Bible (3) Study the Bible (4) Meditate on the Bible (5) Read What Other People Write and Listen to What They Say about the Bible (6) Obey the Biblical commandments (7) Pass the Bible On to Other People. The Bible: know it in your head, stow it your heart, show it in your life and sow it in the world.

The Bible is entirely different from any other book found in mankind's library of literature. I have tried to emphasize that fact all through our first few reports. You cannot grasp this book with simple mental acumen. You must come to it in humility. That is when you can permit the Spirit of God to teach you; and it is absolutely critical to begin with prayer – a prayer that begins with a detailed confession of our sins. There was a time that I felt I could understand any printed matter that man had crafted. I didn't care if the field was neurological cosmetics or bioinformatics or quantum astrophysics – I believed that if man wrote it – I could understand it. I am confident many men today also have or had that viewpoint. Of course, it is only healthy to realize that we cannot understand all things. Someone once so wisely said, "...we're all ignorant; just about different things."

Once we comprehend and accept that premise of truthful and reasonable understanding, then we can begin to recognize that the Bible is different in terms of understanding it - and the process that enables comprehension of Scripture excludes ANY abilities formulated by man for man's learning. We have already said the Bible is a closed book; therefore, only the Spirit of God can open it, teach us and make us understand it – by making it real to our hearts. I recognize that I am helpless without the Spirit of God to guide my thoughts into all truth. There is so much I want to say that my brain is like a dam filled to the brim. That dammed up water has a lot of power and it takes some divine engineering to control it; otherwise, I might as well just write the word "blah" four and a half million times - because these reports are absolutely beyond my capacity. Do I mean that? – You bet I do. I have no earthly idea how these make any sense at all except that the Spirit of God opened my eyes one day and, when I was done writing – there it was!

When Sir Walter Scott was dying he said to his secretary, "...bring me the Book." His secretary looked at the myriad shelves full of books and wondered which book he could possibly want. So, he finally asked, "...which book?" To which Walter Scott replied, "The Bible. There's only one book for a dying man." I believe that to be true, friends. It's the book for all men – living, dying - and otherwise; because it is a *LIVING* book. I'm afraid that not very many get interested in the Bible until they are incapacitated, lying upon their deathbed or in some tragic difficulty; and that includes most self-professing believers. It is wonderful to be able to pull down a book like this at a time like that; and it is wonderful to see people turn to Him at any point in their life. It is a book that can give you a joyous vigor in your everyday, ordinary, prosperous, healthy – life; something special that, again, many people just do not ever come to know.

When we get to the epistle to the Hebrews we will see some amazing truths regarding this topic of privilege and the secret lives of believers and better promises made to them – and so much more. This is a book that we can face reality with today. The Bible, with prayer, is the only thing that assures your route from this world to the next – to Heaven. It is the only book that can cushion the shocks from the bumps in life's unpaved, rocky and all uphill road. It is the only medical technician on the scene of our emergencies. It is the only "how to" book that actually tells you "how to." It is the only genuine help for the problems and troubles that *ARE* going to happen in your life.

Moving on, we have not yet dealt with the phrase "Holy" in our safari reports concerning the studying of the Bible. The word Bible simply means, "book." A little town lay in ruins north of Beirut, Lebanon, which was called Byblos. The name Byblos, applied by the Greeks to papyrus, which they imported from Byblos, is the source of the word Bible. Gebal is the Biblical name for the city. It is where books were first produced. So, that is where and how the Bible got its name. In that early day, it was simply called, "The Book" – all other books were just "books." The Bible had the designation "The Book". Someone, somewhere along the line, and I can not trace it down, added with its name "Holy" and we now have the Holy Bible. I believe it is inspired from the first word in the first verse of Genesis to the

last word of the last verse of Revelation. Holy is exactly what it is. I think that maybe even the name is inspired.

The Psalmist said, "...open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy (Word) law.'" Paul, praying for the Ephesians, was praying for their spiritual discernment - that those people would come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. It all starts there and it all begins with prayer! Paul said, "...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints are" – Ephesians chapter one verses seventeen and eighteen. Those riches he refers to are of the glory – and it is an inheritance. Typically, an "inheritance" comes at some future date in our lives. What Christians will inherit is the truth. It becomes difficult to articulate how wisdom and glory from the Spirit of God are better than physical riches, but suffice it to say that God will never be in debt to you. You will always be in debt to Him! If you truly follow Christ, you will never be lacking in substance required for your existence. I promise you that.

The prayer that Paul prayed was that those in the church at Ephesus might have wisdom in the knowledge of God; that is, that the Spirit of God would be their Teacher in opening His Holy Word to their hearts and lives. I say most sincerely – and very candidly – I trust you will pray for the success of this so called Spiritual Safari in the hearts and lives of all that view or read my reports; and I hope you will write to me with feedback. The business of religion is abjectly down and dirty today, friends. So, I welcome donations, too. Will it fall on you to help guide others through our safari in the jungle of the Holy Word of God? I ask and state these things metaphorically - yet brutally frankly - because that's the way it is!

Pray that these reports that I have produced just for you have all been answers to the lifetimes of prayers regarding them and their content. Further, please pray that this collection will become special and meaningful in the lives of *every* earth creature. Wow, that's a prayer! Paul wanted the Ephesians to know the Word of God. That was his only objective. Paul only wanted them to be enlightened. He told them the eye hath not seen and

the ear hath not heard – therefore you have to be enlightened if you are going to see it and hear it and understand it comprehensively and cohesively. That enlightenment is my prayer for you.

I recognize that many people begin reading the Bible only to close it in disgust because they feel like it contains quackery nonsensical gibberish. Others find in it a great blessing and a comforting word. What's the difference? – Well, the difference isn't the text because it's all the same. The supernatural thing is – it's *both* a lucid and peaceful comfort and it is also quackery gibberish – the difference is prayer. To the man that says it is foolishness – it certainly is. None of this bothers me at all, though, friends, because Paul said, "... the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved - it is the power of God" – first Corinthians chapter one verse eighteen.

One person hears one thing and another person hears something entirely and altogether different through a message of sound doctrine. The Spirit of God is the one that does the teaching – and that makes all the difference in the world. That's why you should *always*, before you begin a study of the Word of God, pray that the Father will send the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation to open your eyes and make you see; and to open your ears so that you might hear. The only way to ask that of Him is in a prayer. See, God has heard us; and He will hear us again and again and again and again. He's waiting for you right now! He wants to hear an invitation from you and then He will indwell your heart. That is a promise – The Holy Promise – from God to you. Remember, a voice out of Heaven said, "this is my beloved Son." Those that were standing around – although some heard Him – most people probably said it was thunder or some other natural weather occurrence! Others very definitely heard the Spirit of God speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. A proper form of prayer makes all the difference in the world today. I simply cannot overemphasize that enough.

God wanted to communicate to us so He gave us this beautiful book. It will speak your language and meet your needs. It will speak directly to your heart as no other book possibly can. Have you read the best seller on the New York Times list this week? – if you have, then you know it can do nothing in comparison to the enlightenment you can receive from prayer

and study of the Holy Bible. Whether that best seller is fiction, non-fiction or educational type book, you will learn absolutely but a fraction of what one Spirit-filled study of the Bible – with prayer first – will teach you. If it is entertainment you seek, the thought provoking stories from the Bible have still not been matched by human authors. Man’s humanly created stories become strangely pathetic the more you read those from the Holy Bible. Pray that God will make them real to you – and He will!

*1 Corinthians 2: 11....for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man, which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit, which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” ~*

That passage should make succinct and discernable to you why the Spirit of God must be our Teacher. You see, you and I understand each other, for the most part, but we have zero understanding of God in our own natural capacity. Only the Spirit of God can reveal the things of God to either of us. I always thought the notion of the “generation gap” was perfect nonsense and it seems to have been closed somehow between young and old today, to some extent. The “gap” has little to do with youngsters and old-timers in a contemporary culture. It all has to do with a wholesale abandonment of the Word of God. There is no reason we can’t understand each other – we shut each other out and say we can’t understand each other only because we want to do it our own way. Even the young man that says he can’t communicate with his parents knows what they are about – he just doesn’t like it! The point is that man CAN communicate with man - and there is no denying that - but, quite frankly, I do not understand God – unless it is revealed to me. I don’t know how God feels, for example. Jesus went to several funerals, and He always broke up a funeral, by the way; but at the funeral of Lazarus the Bible says Jesus wept. I would never know how He feels about some things except the Spirit of God has revealed them to me. If you understand, it’s because He revealed them to you, too.

A certain French skeptic once made a ferocious attack on the Word of God. I'll not mention the name of the man. Prior to becoming a skeptic he wrote a book on the life of Christ. That book is divided into two sections: first is the historical section; and in the second section he made an interpretation of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. As far as the first part is concerned, I feel it is still the most brilliant writing that can be found outside of the Bible on the history of Christ. However, his interpretation of Christ in the second section is positively absurd. My opinion is that a twelve-year-old Sunday school kid could have done better with a crayon. What's the explanation for that? – Well, the Spirit of God doesn't need to teach you history or waste time stating facts that you can dig up for yourself. A clever mind can find any historical fact it needs – trust me. That's exactly what this man had done. The interpretation, however, is something altogether different. The Spirit of God must do the interpreting or the interpreting will not be done. He, Alone, must be the Teacher that guides us into all truth and knowledge.

The great artist Holman Hunt, who was a Christian, had - at one time - a one-man art show. One of his best paintings was an abstract of a sunset. It was a brilliant and beautiful picture. Well, one day as he was in the south a lady came by that was a real country bumpkin. As she looked it over she couldn't understand why anyone would want to paint that way. So, she said sarcastically, "Whoever saw a sunset like that"? To which Hunt replied, "...lady, don't you wish you could see a sunset like that"? Many people are just like that today. They look at the Word of God and they may even read the Bible - but all they see is so much black and white. They don't wonder at the magnificent colors and the brilliant mixing thereof. They wonder how anyone could possibly be interested in it. Well, the Spirit of God will have to show them to you.

I had to buy a new Bible the other day and I went to a large and modern bookstore. The very young girl at the counter rolled her eyes when she saw what I was buying. You see, this is a closed book to that kind of attitude. In this case, it was shrink-wrapped, boxed and bagged type closed to that girl. Only because of her unbelief, though. Many people – even some members of my own church - won't waste their time coming to Bible study on a Wednesday night because they need to rest up so they can stay up late on

Thursday night to watch football! They won't come on Thursday night because there is always that mid week happy hour. For Bible study, they simply do not have any time at all. I should mention that many hours and days worth of Religion-ish type posts that are absolutely meaningless float around this forum on which I teach each day, though. Interestingly, they seem to have plenty of time for that – but I digress, sort of. I take the position that an interest in Bible study is the real test of a believer in regards to their attitude and relationship with Christ, too. One's propensity for Bible study actually tells me everything I need to know about a person – and it does the same thing for the Lord!

*John 16: 12 ....Jesus saith, "...I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father" ~*

There are many things that God wants to reveal and say to us in His Word. He wants us to ask Him to do so. When we ask, He will send the Holy Spirit of understanding to our hearts. Why don't you ask Him to come into your heart right now? After just two more safari Guideline reports we will begin in the first book of the Bible - Genesis. If you are going to learn anything it will not be the result of my having written these reports, though; it won't be because of any compelling research or theory I have come up with. It will only make sense to you when and if you allow the Spirit of God to indwell your heart.

*John 14: 26 ....but the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" ~*

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