

Why should we study the Bible?

We could just say that the Bible is God's 'instruction manual' to us on how to live our lives, so of course we should study it! But let's look at some more specific reasons.

God wants us to study His word, and gave us teachers to help us.

Teaching the word of God was a priority right from the start of the church.

Acts 11:25-26 Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul. When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching large crowds of people. (It was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.)

Four chapters later we see that Paul and Barnabas, two prominent apostles, were still teaching the Word in Antioch.

Acts 15:35 Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch. They and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord there.

The office of a 'teacher' of His word is one of the five-fold gifts that Jesus has given to the church, so that everyone can do His work, and to build it (all of us) up to become more like Him.

Ephesians 4:11 Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.

David determined to study God's word, as it had then been revealed.

Psalm 119:15 I will study your commandments and reflect on your ways. In the New Testament we read that God commended the people of Berea because they did not take Paul's teachings at face value, but studied the scriptures to ensure that what he was telling them was the truth and confirmed by the scriptures.

Acts 17:11 And the people of Berea were more open-minded (or noble) than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.

God wants us to become mature Christians, and the Bible is His primary means of instruction.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

God want us to grow in the grace and the knowledge of Him.

Grace means the unearned and undeserved favour of God, which includes His blessings, protection and gifts. It also includes His enabling power to serve Him.

2 Peter 3:18 Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. All glory to him, both now and forever! Amen.

1 Corinthians 15:10 But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favour on me - and not without results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace.

Knowing Jesus, as above in 'knowledge of our Lord' in 2 Peter 3:18 means more than just knowing about Jesus; it means actually knowing Him personally, through the intimacy gained by spending time in prayer and fellowship with Him.

Studying the Bible increases our faith.

John identifies Jesus as being the 'Word' and as having always been with God, and part of God.

This alone should be reason enough to study the Bible – the Word of God! The Bible is all about Jesus, and Paul in Romans tells us that our faith grows when we 'hear' about Jesus. In Biblical

times, the scriptures were generally read to the people, as few could afford to own their own hand-written copies. See for example Colossians 4:16 and 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

John 1:1 *In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

Romans 10:17 *So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.*

The Bible contains God's promises to us.

By studying the Bible we learn about all the great promises and gifts that God has for us who commit our lives to believing in and to following Him. Here are some of them:

Salvation

The Bible clearly tells us the way to salvation, and that Jesus is the only way.

John 14:6 *Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.*

Romans 10:9-10 *If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.*

John 20:30-31 *The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of His name.*

Protection

Jesus, when tempted by the Devil, replied by quoting the scriptures. (See Matthew 4:1-11). We can do the same. There have been so many testimonies of Christians who, when confronted by otherwise impossible situations, emergencies, or even catastrophes, have either trusted in Jesus or simply called out the name of Jesus and seen His miraculous intervention. Knowledge of God's word brings faith in God, who can protect us from all forms of demonic attack.

Psalms 119:133 *Guide my steps by your word, so I will not be overcome by evil.*

Gifts

God has given us numerous different types of gifts to help us to serve each other, and through this to serve Him, in different ways. From the following passages we learn about many of these gifts.

Romans 12:3-8 names 7 gifts; prophecy, serving, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership and mercy, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 27-30 lists 13 gifts: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, apostleship, teaching, healing and administration, and Ephesians 4:11 has 5 gifts; apostle, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. In each case we should use these gifts to the best of our abilities to serve others.

Romans 12:6 *In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you.*

Power and authority

Jesus was given all authority in heaven and on earth and He in turn has given us, as His disciples, authority to use His name to carry out His will.

Philippians 2:9-11 *Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honour and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Mark 16:17-18 *These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak in new languages. They will be able to handle snakes with safety, and if they drink anything poisonous, it won't hurt them. They will be able to place their hands on the sick, and they will be healed."*

Luke 10:19 *Look, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you.*

A sound knowledge of the Bible protects us from false doctrines.

Over the centuries, starting right from the earliest days of the church, there have been false teachers who have taught false doctrines, and the Bible warns us to be careful not to follow or to be deceived by them.

Romans 16:17 *And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them.*

2 Timothy 1:13 *Hold on to the pattern of wholesome teaching you learned from me - a pattern shaped by the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus.*

See 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 Paul warns us about false teachers in the end times, and that the 'man of lawlessness' will come to do the work of Satan and will use 'every kind of deception', and telling us to 'stand firm and keep a strong grip on the teaching we passed on to you'.

Satan relies on deception, as we see again in Revelation 13:14, and we need God's wisdom, through His word and His spirit, to help us guard against all Satan's deceptions, lies and attacks.

1 Timothy 4:1 *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.*

2 Peter 2:1-3 *But there were also false prophets in Israel, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will cleverly teach destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them. In this way, they will bring sudden destruction on themselves. Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered. In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money. But God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed.*

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 *This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction, because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them.*

We need to teach others the true word of God.

The Bible tells us to teach the Word, and that there will always be those who do not want to listen to sound doctrine.

John 17:17 *Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth.*

2 Timothy 4:3 *For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear.*

2 Timothy 2:2 *You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.*

Leaders and teachers

Leaders must hold fast to 'sound doctrine' and teach others what they have learned, and they are also warned that those who are teachers will be judged more strictly.

Titus 1:9 *He (a church leader) must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it where they are wrong.*

2 Timothy 2:15 (Paul's instructions to Timothy) *Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive His approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.*

James 3:1 *Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly.*

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