

Read the Book

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Read the Book

The Bible is worth all the other books
which have ever been printed.
~ Patrick Henry ~

The Bible is the most important, and valuable, set of documents ever written. Recorded by a minimum of 40 authors, and spanning thousands of years, this magnificent volume carries a unity of ethics and moral thought that proves one majestic mind inspired its contents. The Bible transports the reader back in time to events that occurred prior to the existence of man. It also propels the mind forward—boldly foretelling humanity’s ultimate destiny. The Bible offers mankind both practical fact and spiritual wisdom that reaches beyond the physical realm.

Because it was inspired by God, there is a vast difference between the Bible and other books. Various religious writers may produce works explaining their personal views of God, or their interpretations of His will, but this book states without apology that it is God’s Word, and as such, it stands alone as the absolute moral authority for all mankind.

The Bible is like a window that enables us to peer into the very mind of God. By studying it we can understand the way He thinks, what His values are, and what ours *should* be. God’s Word literally empowers us with His wisdom. Filled with His perfect law, the history of His people, and the personal

examples of the saints, the Bible provides us with the answers to most of life's questions.

Like most people, you probably have had questions about this life, about the supernatural or about life after death. There may have even been times when you wished you could interview God and get the answers to your questions. What would God say if He spoke directly to you? The astounding truth is He has! God has spoken to all of us through the pages of His book. Those times when we desired to know the keys to success in the workplace, the way to peaceably handle a potential conflict or the road to personal happiness, the answers were always there. They were waiting for us in His book!

The Bible supplies the answers to every question regarding how we should live, but it provides us with much more than that. It reveals the mystery of why man was created, and why the physical universe exists. For example, have you ever wondered: why is this beautiful blue and green planet teeming with so many different varieties of life, and what is man's place among them? Why were we born, and what is our ultimate destiny?

The answer to these questions and many more can be found in the Bible. Every one of us can benefit from the valuable wisdom and lessons taught throughout its pages. We all need to read the book!

Living in a World of Paradox

Today, we find ourselves at a unique time in all of human history. Mankind has erected magnificent cities, constructed amazing roadways and built spacecraft to explore the heavens. We have created the computer to do much of our work, and the internet enables us to send or retrieve information from anywhere in the world in mere seconds.

Scientists have unraveled many of the mysteries of DNA and have created genetically modified plants, fish, and insects. They are even attempting to modify the traits of unborn children. It seems as though man has reached the pinnacle of civilization, but with a paradoxical twist. While we live in the

midst of this advanced technology, we also exist in a time of unparalleled trouble.

The threat of world war and nuclear holocaust continues to haunt us with visions of a future in which all life would be erased from the planet. There is poverty, squalor and starvation in half of the world's population. Our rivers, lakes, and oceans are heavily polluted. The air we breathe is befouled with harmful contaminants. Depletion in the ozone layer now allows the sun to shine rays that contribute to millions of cases of skin cancer worldwide. We hear reports that global warming is responsible for abnormal weather patterns which pummel the earth with natural disasters. Our soil is being depleted of its God-given nutrients, and in some countries, malnutrition is destroying young lives. New strains of flu and disease seem to be emerging more rapidly and threatening man with their devastating effects.

Rape, murder and other violent crimes are running rampant in the cities we have built. Racial problems and strife continue to plague our societies. We continue to find that our political, business and religious leaders are corrupt. There is a continuing disintegration of the family and loss of wholesome values. We live in an age when children give birth to children. Many become addicted to drugs at an early age, and violence has escalated to the point where children are now bringing guns to school and killing one another!

A World Filled with Knowledge and Suffering

This is the paradox of our time: we live in a world with the greatest storehouse of knowledge mankind has ever known, and yet it is a world that continues to generate problems with few solutions. God said to Daniel:

But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book
until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro,
and knowledge shall increase (Daniel 12:4).

Over the last 500 years knowledge has increased at a phenomenal rate. Aided by the invention of the printing press,

vast amounts of literature suddenly became available in the 1500s. By 1900 over more than 35,000 books were in existence. Today more than 400,000 books are published every year, and the number of e-books (electronic books) is well over 300,000.

If one inch represents the amount of knowledge from the beginning of man to 1845; from 1845 to 1945 our accumulated knowledge expanded by three inches. From 1945 to today, it grew higher than the Washington monument—over 6,670 inches! The truth is, with more than 2,000 pages of new information being printed in the world every minute; we have become an information society. John Naisbitt wrote in his book about the modern age:

In the information society, we have systematized the production of knowledge and amplified our brainpower. To use an industrial metaphor, we now mass-produce knowledge and this knowledge is the driving force of our economy...

Now, more than 100 years after the creation of the first data communication devices, we stand at the threshold of a mammoth communication revolution. The combined technologies of the telephone, computer, and television have merged into an integrated information and communication system that transmits data and permits instantaneous interactions between persons and computers...

We have for the first time an economy based on a key resource that's not only renewable, but also self-generating. Running out of it is not the problem, but drowning in it is (*Megatrends*, pp. 16, 23-24).

Naisbitt illustrates this by explaining that in 1982 approximately 7,000 scientific articles were written every day. At this rate, scientific and technical information increased 13% per year and doubled every 5½ years. Today the world's total fund of technical knowledge doubles every 20 months! This is absolutely astonishing! We have more information today than at any other time in history. Yet, notice what God Almighty says about our time:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge
(Hosea 4:6).

Our society is being destroyed morally as well as physically. It is crumbling right before our eyes. The reason for our decline is a lack of wisdom, and yet we have more knowledge than ever before. What a startling paradox! How can this be? Haven't we always been told that if we were given enough knowledge, we could solve all our problems? But we find that more knowledge has only created more complex problems. Notice Naisbitt's conclusion about this paradox:

This level of information is clearly impossible to handle by present means. Uncontrolled and unorganized, information is no longer a resource in an information society. Instead, it becomes the enemy of the information worker. Scientists who are overwhelmed with technical data complain of information pollution, and charge that it takes less time to do an experiment than to find out whether or not it has already been done (*Megatrends*, p. 17).

More knowledge has helped man solve some of his problems, but the overwhelming amount of information has also caused many more difficulties. Not only has our world become cluttered with information, many have sought knowledge for the wrong reasons. Misguided by greed, vanity, and lust for power, man has frequently misused the information he acquires.

Consequently, while the explosion of knowledge in our age offers us vast potential for good, we now live in a world that threatens us with more devastating disease, more pollution, larger natural disasters, and greater and more powerful tools of destruction than ever before. The fact is that man has climbed the mountain of technical ignorance by increasing his knowledge of the physical to a point where he now has the ability to destroy himself, and the planet he lives on, many times over.

A World Without God

This is the paradox of our age: at a time when mankind has more information than ever—more than he can effectively manage—he still lacks the knowledge that would enable him to solve his problems. Why? The answer is that it is not quantity of information, but quality of information that man is lacking!

Man has mostly rejected the knowledge given by God, and gone about seeking information pertaining to the physical. For this reason, the more knowledge man gains, the more sorrow he brings upon himself. Without God, man cannot learn how to correctly use the powerful knowledge he acquires. It is a vicious cycle bound for failure. As the preacher learned:

I communed with my heart, saying, "Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge." And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. For in much wisdom *is* much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow (Ecclesiastes 1:17-18).

Man has rejected God's rule in his life, and therefore he lacks divine wisdom. From the time the first man and woman chose to take to themselves the right to decide what is good and what is evil, the majority of people have followed the same path, deciding for themselves what is right and what is wrong. The patriarch Job described the general mindset of humanity when he said of them:

Yet they say to God, "Depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways" (Job 21:14).

Man yearns for the knowledge that can solve his difficulties. In a world of unparalleled technological advances, why do we have vast insoluble problems? Why so much knowledge and so little quality of life? How can we possess so

much understanding of the physical and yet we cannot overcome war, famine, and disease?

Part of the problem lies in our modern educational system which is heavily influenced by materialism. Educators have widely rejected God and teach evolution. They portray a creation without the Creator and ignore the Biblical truths about man's existence on the earth and the real cause of all our problems. Thus, some of the most highly educated people are often the most ignorant about what is truly important in life.

In many cases, people are willingly ignorant. They do not sincerely want to know God's instruction. They do not want God governing their business dealings or their personal lives. Speaking of a society that sounds very much like ours today, the Apostle Paul wrote:

And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting (Romans 1:28).

A debased mind means a mind that is without any guiding moral principles. Those who reject God and His way of life are guided primarily by the desire to satisfy only their own physical needs and wants. This natural human frame of mind finds fault with God's way and is antagonistic toward Him; as Paul wrote:

For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. The carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be (Romans 8:6-7).

Man desires the knowledge that can solve his problems and yet he searches in the wrong places. Instead of pursuing God's way, man seeks to satisfy material desires referred to as being "carnally minded." This is why he destroys himself for lack of knowledge while information is so abundant. By primarily striving to satisfy only physical needs and wants, we never really learn how to properly use the knowledge we

acquire. Without our obedience and submission to God we will never be able to achieve true and lasting happiness.

Man needs to comprehend why he lives in this world of enormous paradox. He needs to know why he was born, what his purpose is and what his future holds. He needs to understand what God is, who He is, and how He lives. Only then can man really know how he should live! But widespread abandonment of God coupled with an explosion in knowledge is the sign of our time. Paul aptly described this future society:

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! (2Timothy 3:1-5).

Doesn't this description sound familiar? These verses describe our world today! We live in a corrupt culture, one obsessed with self-oriented thinking—one merely giving lip service to God. We dwell in a world that thinks highly of itself and its achievements, yet we are a generation that has little natural affection for our fellow man. In an interview discussing his book *Captains of Consciousness*, historian Stuart Ewen made an interesting observation:

People are caring less and less about each other and more and more about themselves. Our culture encourages that (*Stay Free*, issue 14).

Ewen's statement is an explanation of how mass advertising has affected our society. Individuals care more and more about themselves, and as they strive to get more for themselves without regard for others, vast numbers suffer from anger, depression, and a sense of isolation. They have anxiety about a future that is unknown and despair about a present that

is becoming harder to live in. In the next verse Paul tells us why there is so much suffering. He said it is because we are “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2Tim. 3:7).

Man is still eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He is seeking knowledge of the material world and making ethical and moral decisions on his own without the revelation of Almighty God. As a result, we bask in a sea of information, but are profoundly unfulfilled. We often find ourselves bewildered by the fast-paced changes in technology which makes us all the more anxious about the future. This uncomfortable feeling often unconsciously leads to other behavioral disorders such as violence, strife, drug abuse, withdrawal and seclusion.

People no longer have a clear sense of their roles in the world. There is an alienation from one another. That alienation drives us to consult strangers. More people are now relying on drugs and advisors. Where we once turned to the Church, to relatives or friends for advice, we now go to doctors, psychologists and psychics. The advice industry is a reflection of the explosion of choice and the complexity of the environment. The more accelerated the changes in society, the greater the complexity. We have proliferated consultants, gurus, self-help groups, and vast data bases.

Unfortunately, the advice industry is full of charlatans, phonies and frauds. For example, unscrupulous financial advisors bilk Americans for 30 million dollars every year. This is only possible because of our greed. Ours is a culture that is based on greed, and we feel that we must keep up with the Joneses. As a result, we compete for jobs, we compete for promotions and we work ourselves into an early grave. Notice what the elder James wrote:

Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires* for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You

ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures (James 4:1-3).

We compete with each other, and within ourselves, in search of fulfilling our physical pleasures. We ask for help with our troubles, but we seek the assistance of men and not the wisdom of the great God. Driven to invest our money to make more and more, we seek out strangers, and pay them for advice often knowing that some of it may be false. Strangely, as people seek solutions to their problems few consider the infallible advice of Almighty God. It is foolish to disregard the only One who can help us with any difficulty we may encounter. Jeremiah quoted God when he wrote:

For My people *are* foolish, they have not known Me. They *are* silly children, and they have no understanding. They *are* wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge (Jeremiah 4:22).

Instead, in today's culture the focus of people's attention is their career, money and material possessions. Most people's main objective seems to be "what's in it for me?" The Apostle John revealed what truly motivates man:

For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world (1John 2:16).

The way of the world is a way of "get for the self." It is a selfish attitude that is not of the Father. As the Prophet Daniel said about the end time, "knowledge shall be increased" (Dan. 12:4). People are searching for knowledge everywhere. They are striving to obtain more and more and they are constantly studying to get ahead, but most remain unfulfilled. It is because they do not seek that which is holy. Their search is in vain because they do not go to the source of truth. They overlook the real purpose of life because they do not consult the advice of the Almighty God found in the pages of the holy Bible.

Help is Available

The world we live in is systematically degenerating in terms of morals and values. Behavior that was unheard of only 50 years ago is commonplace today. The unspeakable in the days of our forefathers is proclaimed every night on television. Images of intimate behavior that was once reserved for the marriage bed are now published for all to see. Evildoers are becoming more evil and that which was once deemed unacceptable is now embraced by millions. Paul addressed this issue in a letter to Timothy:

But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2Timothy 3:13-15).

Timothy was saved from the evil of his day because he followed the instructions found in the Scriptures. These same instructions are available to us today, but our world is being destroyed because we do not seek God's knowledge. There is no information that is more important and needed today than that which God provides; and He has made it available to us in the form of the Bible.

The Bible still stands as the greatest book in human history. It has been published in more than 2000 different languages and dialects. In fact, there are about 168,000 Bibles sold or given away every day in the U.S. So prevalent is the Bible that it literally pervades our country. But what is it used for? Certainly, we seldom read it, and less often do we live by it. Instead, people use God's book to record family dates for births, marriages and deaths. They decorate coffee tables, night stands and mantles with it. It sits in hotel and motel dresser drawers. In fact, in most homes today where a Bible exists, the residents likely have never read the first pages of the first book.

This is the great irony of our time. The solution to all our problems is found in the best-selling book of all time, but most do not read it. For many, the Bible is a book that looks nice on a shelf or on a coffee table where it rarely gets opened and serves them only as a collector of dust.

God gave us His instruction manual to show us the proper way to live. Every manufacturer, when shipping any type of machine or appliance, includes an instruction manual to cover the proper use and maintenance of its product. God's instruction manual is the Bible. He is our maker and He knows how we work. He knows what will work properly and what will fail. He knows how to troubleshoot and solve our problems. We need to read God's operating manual for life.

Timothy did not suffer from a lack of God-given knowledge. Neither do we have to bear such deficiency. If we would read the book, and do as it says, we too can be made "wise unto salvation."

Why People Do Not Read God's Book

One reason many do not read the Bible is that they honestly do not want to know what God says. They fear He might require them to change their life. They like their pleasures and enjoy their sins. They are not willing to give up the lusts of the eyes and the lusts of the flesh. As stated earlier, "the carnal mind *is* enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7).

Another reason people do not read the Bible is they think they cannot understand it on their own. Many of those who share this opinion trust in their religious leaders to read the Bible and explain it to them. This is a tragic mistake.

The supposed religious "experts" often value their own opinion over the straightforward words of the Bible. They place more importance on what other men have written about the Bible, rather than what is written in the Bible. As a result they sometimes conclude that the Bible means exactly the opposite of what it actually says. According to them much of the Bible is merely symbolic and it is not meant to be taken literally. In many cases these "authorities" have actually become critics of God's Word. They lead people to trust in them instead of God.

It is no wonder that most people believe that the Bible is a book that cannot be understood. They look to their religious leaders and to biblical scholars who in turn tell them that they cannot understand the Bible. Consider some statements made by popular scholars in current reference works many Bible students use today. Barclay wrote in the introduction to his commentary that the book of Revelation is “Notoriously difficult for a modern mind to understand. The result is that it has sometimes been abandoned as quite unintelligible and it has sometimes become the playground of religious eccentrics.”

The famous commentator Albert Barnes wrote something similar in his commentary about the book of Revelation. This Bible scholar said:

I read it, as I suppose most others do, from a sense of duty, yet admiring the beauty of its imagery, the sublimity of its descriptions, and its high poetic character; and though to me wholly unintelligible in the main, finding so many striking detached passages that were intelligible and practical in their nature... (*Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the Book of Revelation*, preface, iv).

Bible commentator Adam Clarke explained his view of Revelation in this way:

Among the interpreters of the Revelation, both in ancient and modern times, we find a vast diversity of opinions... various attempts have been made by learned men to fix the plan of this work; but in this, few agree (p. 962).

In the more modern *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, the situation of scholars has not changed:

The book of Revelation fascinates and also perplexes the modern reader. For the present generation, it is the most obscure and controversial book in the Bible (Vol. 12, p. 399).

Many scholars make the Bible appear difficult to understand. Their reaction to the Bible is as Isaiah described:

The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which *men* deliver to one who is literate, saying, “Read this, please.” And he says, “I cannot, for it *is* sealed” (Isaiah 29:11).

Skeptics openly teach that the Bible cannot be understood, but such a view is blatantly untrue. Notice what Christ says about the book of Revelation, a book which scholars declare is sealed from our understanding:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place (Revelation 1:1).

Christ’s own words make it clear that the book of Revelation is not sealed from our understanding. The very first verse shows that this book is actually the *revealing* of Christ to His servants. It is the unveiling—to those who live by the Word of God—of what was previously unknown. Christ encourages each of us to read this prophetic book and obey it. In fact, God tells us that He will bless us if we read, understand and act on what it says! Christ continues saying:

Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near (Revelation 1:3).

If you have had trouble understanding this prophetic book in the past, don’t be discouraged. You certainly can grasp what it is saying. To help you we have published a free booklet—*Keys to Understanding Revelation*. It will help to clear many things up for you. But the average person ignores the Bible saying, “I’m not a scholar and therefore, I can’t be expected to understand it,” while the scholarly subject the Bible to “higher criticism” and attempt to interpret it for us.

Therefore, few want to read it and fewer expect to understand it. Isaiah described it perfectly:

Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, “Read this, please.” And he says, “I am not literate” (Isaiah 29:12).

God did not intend for us to ignore His book while we leave it to supposed experts to tell us what it means. He intended the Bible to be read by all of us. The Apostle Peter stated:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation (2Peter 1:20).

The Bible is not to be interpreted by any man, or by any class of men. The Bible interprets itself. In every case where the meaning of a verse is not clear, another verse or verses in the Bible explain the meaning. When the Bible uses symbolism, it defines the meaning of its own symbols. If we would simply believe what God says and let Him instruct us, we could all understand it.

This is another great irony. Most think that we should trust the “experts” and scholars to interpret the Bible for us, but the Bible says that it is not to be interpreted by men. Unfortunately, many believe what other men teach about the Bible instead of what God says. The Almighty points out this error through the prophet Isaiah, stating:

Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men (Isaiah 29:13).

Sadly, this is true about many people who think they know God. What the average person believes or thinks he knows about God are simply the ideas of men. Although these people sincerely believe that they are honoring God, the Eternal

says that their worship is actually in vain; it is for no good purpose. As Christ boldly stated:

In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men (Mark 7:7).

Millions have been taught a vain worship of Christ. They have been told that all they must do to be saved is simply profess a belief in the Savior. They have not realized that the kind of belief the Bible speaks of is the kind of belief that leads to obedience. Millions have been falsely taught that there is no longer any need to keep God's Ten Commandments; that all they must do is "believe on Jesus."

Tragically, such teachings of vain worship have gained popular acceptance because most people have not read the Bible. They have not looked in the Bible to prove that what they are being taught is really what God tells us in His Word.

Prove What God's Book Says

Oftentimes an individual who is in pursuit of spiritual knowledge is told by his minister that he must accept his church's teachings on faith. This is absolutely contrary to what God says! The Eternal tells us that without proof we are not to believe what men say or teach. The Apostle Paul wrote:

Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil (1Thessalonians 5:21-22).

Question what ministers preach. Prove what authors write—including what you read in this booklet! The many variations of Christianity are literally filled with meaningless traditions, myths and fairy tales which are accepted as fact because people do not prove their beliefs in the Bible. The result is that people claim to know God, but they do not obey what He says. Consider some of the more common examples.

Neither the word "Christmas," nor any suggestion of a Christmas celebration, is found anywhere in the Bible. Professing Christians have mixed sun worship with the worship

of Christ. All of the trappings of Christmas come from sun worship. At Christmas time people drag an evergreen—an ancient symbol of eternal life—into their home. Celebrants then decorate the tree with brightly colored balls, a symbol of the sun. They kneel down before the tree and place gifts under its branches as unto an idol. All of this is contrary to God’s Word and yet religious leaders tell people to do it in the name of Christ. Through the prophet, Jeremiah, God thunders a serious warning against this practice:

Thus says the LORD: “Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples *are* futile; for *one* cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers So that it will not topple” (Jeremiah 10:2-4).

Another example of an unbiblical celebration is Easter. This day of worship began hundreds of years before the birth of Christ and was dedicated to the pagan sex-goddess Ishtar or Ashtoreth. Today it is falsely applied to the resurrection of Christ. Colored eggs and chocolate bunnies do not represent true faith. They symbolize fertility and sexual reproduction and these symbols were never to be used as a reflection of worshipping God.

In a Biblical example, the Eternal took the ten tribes of Israel away from King Rehoboam for worshiping this very same goddess. Notice the account in the first book of Kings:

Because they have forsaken Me, and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways to do *what is* right in My eyes and *keep* My statutes and My judgments, as *did* his father David (1Kings 11:33).

Who is this goddess Ashtoreth and what does she have to do with the celebration of Easter? *Unger's Encyclopedia* spells out the identity of this goddess, stating:

Ashtoreth, Astarte, a Canaanite goddess. The Babylonian Ishtar, the goddess of sensual love, maternity and fertility. Licentious worship was conducted in honor of her (p. 412).

The Babylonian goddess Ishtar goes by the English name "Easter" today. This name was developed from the Norse version of Ishtar called Eostre. Easter and Ashtoreth are one and the same; the same goddess God punished ancient Israel for worshipping. Again, the Apostle Paul expressed the opinion of God:

Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons (1Corinthians 10:20).

These modern versions of pagan holidays are condemned by God. They are an attempt to mix religion inspired by demons with devotion to the true God. God's Apostles and prophets strictly forbade such practice, saying:

Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, "How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise" (Deuteronomy 12:30).

Because people do not read God's Word and prove for themselves what is in it, they accept the teachings and traditions of men. They end up believing ridiculous errors, and acting contrary to God's actual commands. To understand more about Christmas, Easter, or Halloween, read our free booklets explaining the truth about these subjects in detail. You may find a list of some of this literature on the last page of this booklet.

Have you simply accepted the teachings and traditions of this world without proving their validity? Consider a few more common beliefs in professing Christianity which are in direct conflict with the teachings of the Bible.

Many believe Sunday is the Lord's Day and that Paul did away with the Sabbath. However, in Mark 2:28 Christ said that He is Lord of—not Sunday, but the Sabbath. In Acts 17:2 it says Paul's custom was to keep the Sabbath.

It is commonly taught that those who never had a chance to know of or even hear of Christ will burn for all eternity in a raging unquenchable fire. However, in Revelation 20:5, the Bible clearly says everyone who has not heard of Christ will be raised and be given a chance for salvation after the end of Christ's millennial reign on earth.

Many professing Christians have been taught that the soul is immortal while Ezekiel 18:20 says, "The soul who sins shall die." Many churches teach that a Christian will immediately go to heaven when they die, but John 3:13 says that, "no man has ascended to heaven."

The list of errors that people believe about the Bible goes on and on. Most people do not really know what the Bible says regarding some of their own cherished beliefs. Why? Because they simply have not read the book!

You Can Understand God's Word

Reading God's Word with the desire to be taught by God and to obey Him will bring spiritual understanding and blessings to the reader. The Bible teaches us not only how to be successful in this life, but also outlines a path that ultimately leads to salvation, the Kingdom of God and eternal life. It will open your eyes to see the deception that passes itself off as religion.

Few realize it, but this whole world has been deceived by the evil spirit being that the Bible calls Satan, the devil (Rev. 12:9). He has influenced beliefs and values in our world far more than most people realize.

As you read God's Word you will find Satan's deceptions begin to unravel piece by piece. You will come to see and understand who and what God is and the astounding

purpose He has for you. The Bible is the Creator's instruction book, and as Christ said, we should live by its every word:

It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

If we will strive to live by God's Word, He promises to give us blessings and understanding. Note the words of the Psalmist indicating that "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*" (Psa. 111:10).

This is a great key to understanding God's Word! If you will search the scriptures with a desire to be corrected, reproofed and instructed, God will open your mind to comprehend the meaning of His book. If you will live by the words found in its pages, the Eternal will reveal His truth to you, just as He has to the many thousands of great men and women of faith throughout mankind's history. As the proverb also states:

The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One *is* understanding (Proverbs 9:10).

Acknowledgment of and respect toward God is the beginning of the quest for understanding and wisdom. Reading and obeying His Word is the way to gain real understanding. But few venture to read the Bible in order to gain knowledge of the moral values God expects of us and how we are to live.

In today's jaded world many would argue whether or not there really is such a thing as "truth," contending that truth is relative. It was little different during the time of Christ. Upon hearing Christ say that He had come to testify of the truth, Pilate responded by saying, "What is truth?" (John 18:38).

Pilate had seen so much corruption in government and politics that he had become jaded. His world was not unlike that of many modern world leaders who conceive falsehoods in order to implement their agendas. They twist the truth to win

public opinion and think nothing of changing their position if it fits an immediate need.

The Bible's answer to Pilate or anyone else who would question the existence of truth is this. Christ is the truth (John 14:6). Christ is the Word. He is the inspiration behind Holy writ. The Bible is a reflection of His mind in print. The Savior said about God's Word, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). Christ further explained how we can know the truth, saying:

If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31-32).

God's Word is the truth and the truth can set us free from many pitfalls in life. The Bible offers us true freedom from the bondage of sin. It supplies the knowledge man lacks. It provides the solution to every problem we might face. The Bible contains wisdom that will endure, and will never be outdated. It is precious beyond price and can lead to eternal life.

Eight Steps for Studying the Bible

The Bible is not like any other book and therefore cannot be read like any other book. Other books may lend themselves to skimming or speed-reading—the Bible does not! God's Word requires careful analysis. As Paul instructed:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2Timothy 2:15).

Paul explained that rightly understanding the word of truth is a reflection of diligence. All scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in the way of righteousness (2Tim. 3:16). This means that we are to study God's Word and not lean to only casual or occasional reading.

Knowledge for knowledge's sake is of little value. The religious leaders of Christ's time read and re-read the scriptures, but still they did not understand. This is because they did not study God's Word with the desire to have it sink into their heart

and minds and effect a change in them. For this reason Christ continually found fault with their beliefs and practices. He repeatedly said, “Have you not read...,” or “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures” (Mat. 22:9-31).

If we are to be any different from those religious leaders who opposed Christ, we must study God’s book with the desire to be corrected by it. The Bible should be studied to bring about change in us. It is for a holy purpose and therefore we should treat Bible study as holy time. Set aside a regular time for study and find a comfortable area. Ask God in sincere prayer to help guide you in understanding. Spend careful and ample time in intimate contact with the Bible and then you will begin to see its light.

Step One - Read the Bible Through Like a Novel

There are professing Christians who have not yet read the entire Bible. This is where every student should begin. Start in Genesis and read all the way through to the end of the book of Revelation. Even if you are only able to read 15 minutes a day you can complete the entire Bible in one year. Doing this will give you an overall understanding of the stories in the Bible and its various doctrines.

As you read this way you will find that you have questions. Write these down and continue reading. You will find that many of your questions will be answered as you continue your journey.

Step Two - Study the scriptures by subject.

Pick a topic and look up all the places where that theme is discussed. People sometimes reach flawed conclusions, or have only a partial understanding of biblical themes because they do not compare all the verses where God speaks about a specific topic. To gain a complete understanding of many subjects, we must search the scriptures. Find all verses and put them together. The Apostle Paul explained:

Test all things; hold fast what is good (1Ths. 5:21).
Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a

worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2Tim. 2:15).

This means to properly consider the context of every verse and sort scriptures into its various parts putting pieces of the puzzle together. We must search the Bible line by line and assemble the related subjects so that we see God's intended meaning. The Bible is oftentimes like a puzzle where the picture can only be properly seen when all the pieces are put together. By studying this way, you will find that the Bible interprets itself. Each doctrine, statute or judgment has another scripture to either back it up, or define its true meaning (Deu. 19:15).

It is also helpful to use Bible references in this process. Bible software programs such as E-Sword or books such as *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, and *Nave's Topical Bible* can be of considerable help to help explain definitions of words, historical context, and all the verses on a specific topic. However, be aware that many sincere authors of commentaries are unaware of God's plan for humanity, and lean to a liberal view of God's law.

Step Three – Make Note of Key Verses and Important Points

One way to help remember what you read in God's Word is to write out certain scriptures or write a summary of important points as you study. When we read written material we retain only a portion. When we write down what we read it vastly increases our retention. For this reason God required the kings of Israel to write a copy of the law so that they, as leaders, would know what God desired of them and His people. Moses recorded God's words to the future kings of Israel, stating:

Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from *the one* before the priests, the Levites (Deuteronomy 17:18).

Those who follow Christ in this life are destined to be both kings and priests in the world to come (Rev. 5:10). Therefore, we should follow this principle.

Step Four – Seek Wisdom and Encouragement

There are occasions when life presents us with trials of various kinds. At such times, we need the wisdom God gave to Solomon to help lead us. These wise sayings in the book of Proverbs are a wonderful guide and have helped many people to know the principles that lead to happiness and success.

There are also times when we suffer some sort of loss. In these situations, it is helpful to read the Psalms. These words provide encouragement in the face of trials. Study of these books, which are filled with inspiration and instruction, can be a real benefit to anyone.

Step Five - Use the Bible to Overcome Sin

Sometimes it is beneficial to study the Bible with a focus on overcoming a specific problem we face in life. All of us have sins in our lives that we must repent of and change the behavior (Heb. 12:1). God's Word provides the only real way to remove sin from our lives.

God's Word is filled with the depths and riches of His wisdom, and the more we fill our minds with the thoughts of God, the more we will think like God and the less attractive sin will appear to us. Therefore, study the Bible with a desire to grow in Christian maturity and overcome the sins and character faults we all have. As David wrote:

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word (Psalms 119:9).

Step Six - Read the Examples of Biblical Heroes

Another important way to study is to read the stories of the biblical heroes. Noah obeyed God when no others would. Abraham was the friend of God. Moses was faithful in all things pertaining to God (Num. 12:7). Queen Esther's courage and humility saved her people. David was a man after God's own heart. The Apostle Paul was a courageous servant of God. The stories of these faithful men and women are just a few among many heroes in the Bible. Read and learn from their examples.

Step Seven - Commentaries and Reference Works

There is also a place for the study of the Bible using commentaries or internet search tools to better understand the historical context or cultural background of the scriptures. Commentaries can also be helpful to understand how various statements or phrases used during the time frame of the writers were understood.

Use these references with caution however. Commentaries should not be considered a source for doctrine. Only God's Word is our authority for this. In many cases, scholars fall into the category Isaiah mentioned whereby they strive to interpret the Bible rather than humbly submit to it. Those who try to interpret the Bible presumptuously put their own ideas above God's and in so doing, lead themselves and others into error. The Bible will interpret itself by giving the meaning of its symbols either in the context of the verse or in another place in the Bible.

Step Eight - Learn by Doing

There is a wealth of information and spiritual guidance to be found in God's Word. Its study will last an entire lifetime and beyond. The more we study God's Word, the more we will come to understand God's truth, and the greater will be our reverence for and appreciation of God's Word and His way of life. The more we reverence His Word, the more we will want to live by its every word and this is, in itself, another way we learn. John Holt wrote of how we "learn by doing." He stated:

Not many years ago I began to play the cello. Most people would say that what I am doing is 'learning to play' the cello. But these words carry into our minds the strange idea that there exist two very different processes: (1) learning to play the cello and (2) playing the cello. They imply that I will do the first until I have completed it, at which point I will stop the first process and begin the second. In short, I will go on 'learning to play' until I have 'learned to play' and then I will begin to play. Of course, this is nonsense. There are not two processes, but one. We

learn to do something by doing it. There is no other way (*Chicken Soup for the Soul*, p. 132).

The process of becoming a mature Christian is similar to learning the cello. We learn by doing. The Bible is our instrument. We practice it by our study of it and then we practice it by striving to put in to practice what we learn.

The study of God's book becomes a great adventure. Within its pages there is an amazing world of past history, and prophecies of future events. Reading it will open your mind to see truths that many great religious leaders and philosophers have not known or understood. It is the mind of God in print. Make it your constant companion and it will direct you to God's Kingdom and lead you to eternal life.

Read the book!

George Washington

“It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.”

Noah Webster

“All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery, and war proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.”

Queen Victoria

“That book accounts for the supremacy of England.”

Lord Tennyson

“Bible reading is an education in itself.”

Charles Dickens

“The New Testament is the very best book that ever was or ever will be known to the world.”

Horace Greely

“It is impossible to enslave mentally or socially a Bible reading people. The principles of the Bible are the ground work of human freedom.”

Abraham Lincoln

“I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book.”

Immanuel Kant

“The existence of the Bible, as a book for the people is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced.”

Goethe

“Let mental culture go on advancing, let the natural sciences progress in ever greater extent and depth, and the human mind widen itself as much as it desires; beyond the elevation and moral culture of Christianity, as it shines forth in the gospel, it will not go.”

The Eternal Church of God offers a variety of books, booklets, articles, audio, and video to help people better understand the Bible. Some of the printed material available includes:

The Truth about Heaven

The Ten Commandments Are Required Today

The Trinity – Fact of Fiction

This is Not the Only Time of Salvation

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

The Truth about Tithing

The Historical Jesus

The Truth about Christmas

What it Really Means to be Born Again

The Truth about Easter

The Shocking Truth about Valentine's Day

Sabbath Confessions

The Truth about the Cross

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