

GETTING TO KNOW GOD

Despite all the bad news, the negative attitudes of the world, our nation, our families, and neighbors, there's a positive solution to all mankind's problems IF, and it's a big IF; IF we get and stay close to God. First we have to get to know Him. He promises to protect us, supply our needs, love us and give us eternal life. However, there is a catch - He demands our love in return. How can we love Him if we don't know Him? Many do not know HOW to get to know him. Many people who think of themselves as Christians know little about God and even less about His plan. Most Americans say they believe in God, but to believe in God means you believe what He says, accepting the Bible as His word. We have to believe Jn. 1:1-5. Do you believe Jn. 1:1-5? After finding it read it out loud to yourself, then tell yourself, in your own words what you just read. Do you believe the Bible is a road map to God? Some people refuse to accept the Bible as God's word because they say it has too many contradictions and mistakes. There are ways to prove that the Bible is the very word or message from God. When God communicated His word to man there were no mistakes made. God doesn't make mistakes. However, any time humans become involved they are prone to make errors. The O.T. was originally recorded in Hebrew and later translated into other languages. The N.T. was recorded in Greek, later translated into other languages. Last of all the Bibles we have were translated into English. This has been done by imperfect men. God has miraculously preserved the Bible in spite of men's efforts to destroy it. Man has lost some of it, but there is still enough preserved for us to find our way to God through its pages.

Some believe the Bible is a combination of many different talented authors who wrote about events and experiences of their time, based on their own view points. Some minor mistakes have been made in translations; they can and have been corrected by reputable sources. One popular source is Strong's Complete Concordance which is a complete dictionary of the Hebrew and Greek words found in the King James Bible. If one simply reads the Bible without understanding that some words may be mistranslated it can cause confusion. For example the word "world" can also be correctly translated from the same word as "time, age, and generation". In 2Thes. 2:7 Paul used a word translators gave as "leteth and let" which sounds as if something is being allowed. But actually when we check Strong's Conc. we find the original Greek word means to "restrain" or "prevent".

The word "hell", in the original Greek simply means "sheol, grave, pit, no return" The word "Easter" in Acts 12:4 was translated incorrectly. Again look up the word in Strong's Concordance. You will find the original word is "Passover".

It is good for a first time student to read the whole bible from front to back once or twice to get introduced to it before beginning serious studies, even if it doesn't make a lot of sense to the reader. It will become more interesting as the reader progresses.

A student who simply begins studying the Bible for personal knowledge only, without a desire to know God and to follow His instructions, will never achieve the knowledge that will develop into a close relationship with Him. Many brilliant minds have studied the scriptures (1Cor.2:8-11) without understanding God's word because their purpose wasn't to have a relationship with, or to please, Him. 2Cor.4: 3-4 This writer assumes that the reader has already accepted that the Bible is the preserved word of God and

that Jesus is the son of God. This is essential to understanding God and His plan. A person can think to accept Christ, but still not believe Him enough to practice His teachings. A person can claim to believe the Bible is the word of God but still not know what it teaches. Most religious people don't know exactly what they do believe or why they believe what they say, or think, they believe. Most people's beliefs come from tradition or what they've been taught by others. To follow God's word many people would have to abandon tradition and their preconceived ideas, totally change their way of thinking and their whole life style, even to going against many of his loved ones. One of the most common mistakes people make is going to other people whom they think is biblically knowledgeable, not checking the scriptures for themselves. If the person they put their confidence in is teaching error, they may accept error and be led astray (2Cor.11:11-13). Many people accept other people's version of scriptures because they are unwilling to check it out for themselves. Some are just not interested enough. Others are too involved in their own physical activities to take the time. Many are "turned off" because of the hypocrisy of religious organizations, and decide against getting involved with religion altogether. There are many "religions" that are mere organizations for profit. The point is one cannot rely on another person, group, or organization for their salvation, and truth without going to God's word and proving it for themselves. God knows our thoughts, He reads our attitudes. If we have the attitude to study to know what He requires of us and to do it, then He will respond to us, opening our minds to His plans. Along with studying we must spend time communicating with God in prayer and fasting. We will realize that God may not answer our prayers right away; He may want to test us, or give us time to learn some necessary lessons. If after considerable study of the scriptures one decides he understands enough basic principals to be satisfied, and goes no further; his spiritual knowledge and spiritual growth will stagnate. If a person finds changes God requires of him and refuses to make them his growth and understanding will pause. If one lingers too long he will eventually lose interest and lose the knowledge he has been given. God, knowing his attitude will leave him to his own interests; spiritual growth stops.

If on the other hand one realizes he needs a constant contact with God through His word and makes the changes as God shows him, God will continue molding him. God will gradually reveal more and more of His plan, opening up more understanding of exciting events to occur in future ages, but only if one studies in their pursuit of pleasing God; any other self-interest studies will fail. If we study from curiosity only, or for human knowledge, we put ourselves before God which becomes sin. Sin separates us from God (Is.59:1-2). He no longer hears our prayers.

When studying God's word one must NOT study to prove what they have already accepted as truth without finding scripture to back it. Many "ministers" will make statements as though, "the Bible says" but do not give the location where the Bible says it. God wants us to "prove" what we accept as truth (1Thes.5:21, Rom. 12:2). It is vital that one clears his mind of all preconceived ideas and dwell on God's word while studying. However, IF you continue searching God's word for a deeper relationship with Him, for spiritual growth and change you will also change the way you study. As you read each verse concentrate on each word and its meaning. If you have a problem with a word look up its meaning in its original language with a concordance such as "Strong's". Then re-read the verse replacing the English word with the original Hebrew

or Greek word. One may think this is too much trouble but God expects us to be persistent and seriously dig into the depths of His truth, proving all things. To get the most out of God's word is to read a verse and then tell yourself what you read in your own words. It is easy to read the words but overlook the depth of their meaning.

Another good way to study is "word study"; look up an important word and study every scripture in the Bible that deals with that word. You may be surprised how many different ways that word is translated and misused. For instance the word, "month". The original Hebrew word is "Chodesh" which also means, "new moon" and always refers to the first day of the month in God's calendar. There are many such translations that most readers overlook.

My favorite type of study is more complicated, but much more informative: It is to study by "subject". The deepest studies usually relate to prophecies. Most deeper studies start with unanswered or difficult questions. Some interesting ones are: "Who Fights during the Battle of Armageddon?", "Are there any People now in Heaven?", "How Many Ages are Allotted to Mankind?", "How do We Know When the 7th Day Sabbath is?", "When Will God's Temple be Built?", "Who are the Two Witnesses?", "What happens After Death?" "Where are we in Prophecy Today?" "How can we prove the Bible is God's word?", on and on it goes. God's word deals with and answers all important serious questions relating to mankind.

A wonderful and interesting way to study God's word is to study the many "types" referring to the future. This is a sure way to prove that the Bible is truly God's word. Three of the most apparent types of Christ are: Isaac, Joseph, and the sacrificial lamb. These types prove that no mere man could fabricate these types of Christ and see them materialize thousands of years later. "Types" are filled with hidden information and mysteries that only God would know about; many are dual, as well. But one must rely on God's Holy Spirit to reveal them.

There is no one place to find many answers in the Bible (Isa.28:9-10). Many subjects require long time studies. One must mull and contemplate over the subject, in privacy and prayer, when no interruptions are expected. One will often find that the Holy Spirit speaks to his mind and reveals many mysteries he has often wondered about. Sometimes sharing a topic with another person, of like mind, can be very helpful. But make sure both have the attitude of wanting to use their knowledge to please God. There is no better way to get to know and unite with God and His son than studying His word through prayer and meditation. The more we learn about God and His plan the closer we become to him and learn how we fit into His plan. Through study and submitting to God's word is a life time pursuit of joy and eternal happiness. The hardest efforts we will find along the path toward knowing God is striving against our own lusts, bad habits, and weaknesses (1Jn.2:15-17). Satan is the god of this world, always ready to prevent your spiritual growth, but if you resist him often enough he will finally lose his power over you. We can do all things through Christ who will strengthen us. He stands at the door waiting for you to knock. He wants you to know Him. To know Him is to love Him.