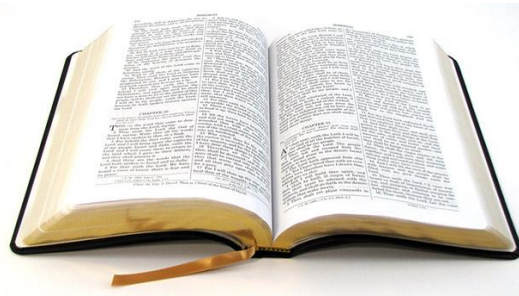


Some Observations On Bible Study How To Go About It - And An Attitude That Can Be A Stumbling Block



Introduction

I have noticed over the years that there are some Christians who claim to not read any commentaries or books or other writings of Christian Bible teachers and scholars in their study of the Bible. They say they don't want to look at anything but the Bible. That sounds nice, right? Especially when the person says that they don't want to be unduly influenced by others, others who may not be trustworthy. Well this attitude may sound commendable but it is quite problematic. Here are some reasons why:

The Concern Of Outside Influences

No Christian is ever free from outside influence. We listen to other Christians all the time, getting ideas about Bible doctrines, possibly without even realizing it. Those other Christians include friends, our local pastors or elders, radio messages, TV messages, Internet videos, Internet audio blogs, gospel tracts, evangelism classes, discipleship literature and elsewhere. These outside influences (and influencers) may give us the impression that a certain doctrine is correct because everyone we know is of the same opinion on it, yet all those people could be wrong. Many Christians, including pastors, teachers and preachers, are wrong about many doctrines. We know someone **MUST** be wrong when there are two or more opposing views on a particular doctrine. There is **MUCH** disagreement among Christians regard several **MAJOR** issues including, but certainly not limited to:

predestination

the rapture of the Church

bible versions

Outside Influences That May Subtly Affect Us

If a Christian attends any local evangelical church, it won't be long before they will be exposed to the "salvation formula" and various doctrinal biases of that particular church and/or denomination, which they may not know the accuracy of if they are new Christians. And that was the case for me at one time. I was attending several different churches for close to 9 years before I was exposed to clear teaching on election and predestination, and that

exposure was NOT from any of the churches I had attended for those 9 years. It was from friends at a home bible study and from a particular Christian radio station that still held to a more biblical view of many Bible doctrines. The initial churches I had attended were: 1. Assembly of God, 2. Non-Denominational and 3. PCA or PCUSA Presbyterian (not Orthodox Presbyterian).

Missed Opportunities To Learn And Be Challenged

By purposely avoiding Bible commentaries, we are avoiding an opportunity to learn, learn by analyzing the interpretations of others and learn by observing the tools and methods used to interpret difficult Bible passages. Two very reliable Bible commentaries that have stood the test of time include the John Gill Commentary and the Matthew Henry Commentary. By utilizing reliable commentaries we can learn how trusted Bible scholars used Biblical means of interpretation (i.e. comparing Scripture with Scripture) and how they used common linguistic tools to assist with understanding Scripture. Those tools include Greek and Hebrew concordances such as Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of The Bible and Young's Analytical Concordance Of The Bible. Interlinear Bibles can also help us in our search for better understanding of Bible passages.

Biblical Basis For My Opinions In This Article

I believe there are many passages that validate my conclusions in this brief discussion about Bible study. One passage is found in Proverbs 11:14 -

"Where no counsel is, the people fall: but *in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.*"

If I gave you an instruction manual for an airplane and then gave you the ignition keys and said "Go for it! You've got the instruction manual, that's all you need!" would you just go at it on your own from there? I sure hope not! I would hope that you find the best trainer around (asking people you trust for recommendations) and then work with that trainer AND the instruction manual, until you are confident that you understand everything you need to understand about flying that plane.

Another relevant passage to this discussion is Acts 17:10-11 -

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

Did Paul tell the Bereans not to talk to each other while researching his

teachings to avoid influencing each other?

And we see in 2 of Paul's epistles, that he mentioned the role of teachers in the Church of God, as shown here:

"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly **teachers**, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." 1 Corinthians 12:28

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and **teachers**;" Ephesians 4:11

Do all teachers need to be living? No. God has given His Church many teachers throughout the centuries and some of them have left us their teachings in written form. In fact, many of those teaching materials have been heavily scrutinized by many other teachers and Bible scholars helping us to determine which deceased teachers are most trustworthy.

Summary

So am I saying that you should never do a Bible study using the Bible ALONE? No, but a point is soon reached in the life of a Christian when they embark upon a statement in the Bible that seems to contradict another statement in the Bible, at which point, it really becomes necessary to dig deeper, into definitions of words, especially since many words can have multiple meanings. Without a concordance to guide us in understanding word meanings in the original languages, we can reach wrong conclusions or not reach any conclusions about the meaning of a passage. Also, consulting reliable Bible teachers (directly or by way of commentaries) who have already wrestled with doctrinal issues that are unclear to us, can help us in our search for proper understanding of Biblical texts. And let's not forget that God has given us His Spirit and His Word to help us identify reliable teachers. — *RM Kane*
