

Lesson Two
INCREASING IN THE KNOWLEDGE
OF GOD

We are living in a age unlike that of any before us - an age of "knowledge explosion." In the past ten years man has more than doubled his accumulation of knowledge. One of the contributing factors has been man's emphasis upon education. But true education is more than the gathering of facts and accumulation of secular knowledge. It is also the training of the heart and soul of man. Or, as someone said, "The soul of education should be the education of the soul." It is good for man to learn and to know - to increase his knowledge of the world about him. But it is good for man to remember that there is another kind of knowledge other than secular - and even more important - and that is spiritual knowledge. The wise man, Solomon, summed it up with these words: "that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good The fear of the Lord is the essence of knowledge." (Prov. 19:2; 1-7).

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Col. 1:9,10)

Thus, the purpose of this recording. It is to aid you in increasing in the knowledge of God, and his will for your life, through the reading and study of his word the Bible.

THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD

Let us begin by thinking a moment about the great power that is in God's Word. It is the most powerful force in the universe. God created the world we live in by his word. The record reads:

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." "And God said.... and it was so."

Now look at the Bible. That is God's written word. And contained in it is the power to create in you a new being. As one man said, after reading the New Testament, "I thought it was just a book - but it was a new life!" Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly and you will become a new person - old things will pass away.

Often, when the pleading of friends and love ones have failed to bring a person out of sin, the simple powerful gospel is heard, believed, and obeyed - and a soul is brought from death to life.

Paul, who had witnessed this great power of God's word in his own life and in the lives of countless others, wrote to the Romans, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation." (Romans 1:16)

No, men are not ashamed to be associated with power. We often pride ourselves upon being associated even in a small way with someone who is in a position of power of God's Word. And all who realize this fact are not ashamed of the gospel, but love and cherish it.

You have experienced the power that is in God's Word as it led you from the darkness of sin into the light of righteousness. Now that power will become an even greater force in your life through further understanding and proper use of the Bible. To this end there are three simple keys for you to use.

THREE KEYS FOR BIBLE STUDY

The first key is the RIGHT ATTITUDE:

The right attitude toward God's Word is one of love and submission. Here are two practical suggestions that have helped others keep this attitude throughout their life of studying the Bible. Use them and they will do the same for you.

1. Somewhere in your Bible write down the following verses and before you begin your study read them to yourself. Do this without fail each time you read and study.

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (1 Peter 2:2) But his delight is in the law of the Lord: and in his law doth he meditate day and night." (Psalms 1:2)

"O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day." (Psalms. 119:97)

2. Next, picture yourself as a servant coming into the room where your Master is. You have come to find out what the Master's will is so you may serve and please him. Say within your heart, "Speak Lord, thy servant heareth. Command and I will obey."

If you will do this faithfully each time your study you will put within your mind the same attitude manifested by Christ. Christ took upon himself the form of a servant to do his Father's will. (see Phil. 2:5-7)

The second key is the RIGHT HABIT.

Suppose you had the habit of not eating any meals during the week, but on Sunday you tried to eat seven times as much as a person who eats three normal meals each day! Which is the right habit - to eat smaller amounts each day or to stuff yourself one day a week? The same is true with feeding on the word of God. The right habit of Bible study is a DAILY HABIT...as the Bereans who "searched the scriptures daily." (Acts 17:11)

There is no substitute for a consistent study of the scriptures. Each child of God must set up a daily appointment with the FATHER and never miss nor call it off. It is imperative to do this. Set aside a specific time each day and do it. Do not wait for favorable conditions to study because favorable conditions never come - you must make them. Therefore, do not commit your study schedule to the future - tomorrow - next week - but begin now, today.

Remember: becoming a disciple of Christ has placed new (and better) demands upon your daily life and daily Bible study is one of them.

The third key is a PLAN OF STUDY.

Much of the effort spent in the study of the Bible is not profitable because it is not studied with any system or plan. Although there is no one rule or method there must be some system to our study. We cannot study the Bible at random and expect to understand it.

METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY

Your first plan of study is to become acquainted with your Bible. In the front of your Bible you will probably find a list of the books that it contains. The Bible is a book made up of many books - sixty-six in all. As you look at the list you will notice one is marked "Old Testament," and under the heading are the names of thirty-nine books. Under the second heading, "New Testament," you will find a list of twenty-seven books. The Old Testament was written before Christ and the New Testament after Christ. The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language and the New Testament was written in Greek.

Some have failed to understand this division of the Bible, and to realize that the Old Testament is no longer binding on anyone as a system of religion. It is necessary that we recognize the fact that God has had three separate dispensations, or ages, in which he has dealt with man.

1. First, was the PATRIARCHAL AGE.

This began with Adam and continued to Moses, a period of more than 2500 years. During this time there was no written law. God spoke directly to the patriarchs (or heads of families) through dreams, visions, and by special messengers.

2. Second, was the MOSAIC AGE.

This began with Moses and continued until the death of Christ, a period of some 1500 years. In this era a written law was given, and a rigid system of religion. The Ten Commandments, given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, were the heart of the Old law.

3. Finally, there is the CHRISTIAN AGE.

This began when Christ died on the cross. We are still in this age, which has lasted for some 1900 years and will continue until the end of time. It was when this age began that the law of Christ (New Testament) replaced the law of Moses (Old Testament) (Read: Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:15; Heb. 8:5-13)

A knowledge of these three ages make it possible for us to study the Bible with the proper understanding of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. We read the Old Testament in order to understand many things in the New Testament, and we find profit in the Old Testament examples. Paul said: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning""Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ"

The essential starting point in becoming acquainted with your Bible is to begin reading it.

Here is a suggested list of certain books from the Old Testament with which you should start. Read them in the order that they are listed and begin in the New Testament.

NEW TESTAMENT

1. MARK
2. MATTHEW
3. LUKE
4. JOHN
5. ACTS

OLD TESTAMENT

1. GENESIS
2. EXODUS
3. JOSHUA
4. JUDGES
5. RUTH
6. 1 & 2 SAMUEL
7. 1 & 2 KINGS
8. ESTHER
9. DANIEL
10. JONAH

Be sure to set aside a specific amount of time each day (preferably in the morning) and read not less than one chapter per day until you have completed the above list. Start today with the book of Mark.

Here are some basic questions that you will find helpful in understanding what you read. Take a notebook and write them down as you study each book, and write down the answers as you find them. This will help you retain what you read and will be available for easy review.

- >WHO WROTE this book or letter?
- >TO WHOM was it written?
- >WHY was it written? or WHAT was the purpose of the writing?
- >WHEN was it written?
- >WHAT STORY DOES IT TELL?
- >WHAT ARE SOME LESSONS I might gain from it?

After you have completed the above method of becoming acquainted with your Bible, you will want to continue your study with other methods. We will briefly suggest some of these now, but let us encourage you not to begin with them until after you have completed your reading as outlined above. Then, come back to these and choose the one you wish to continue with. Be sure to practice the doctrine of "Completed Work." Stay with it until you can say, "It is finished."

METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY

There are many different methods of Bible study, but we will mention only four:

I. The TOPICAL method. This method is simply selecting a certain topic, such as faith, and finding and studying all of the passages giving information of the topic. Some suggested topics would be: SIN, REPENTANCE, BAPTISM, LOVE, STEWARDSHIP, GOD, PRAYER, etc. Be sure to purchase a good concordance (we suggest Young's Analytical Concordance or Strong's Exhaustive Concordance) and a topical index book for your study.

II. The CHARACTER STUDY method. This involves the study of different characters in the Bible, such as Abraham. Again, you would find and study all the passages that dealt with the person. A suggested list would include: Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Peter, Paul. For women: Deborah, Ruth, Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary and Martha, woman of Samaria.

III. The SERMONS IN THE BOOK OF ACTS. In this method you will take the five preached by Peter, one by Stephen, and four by Paul and study them by context and content. This will give you a good understanding of how the Old Testament leads to the New as well as other pertinent points of salvation.

IV. The LIFE OF CHRIST. Christ is the KEY to the entire Bible and to study his life and teachings as well as the events before and after, is to understand the story of the Bible. Other Methods are: HISTORICAL PERIODS, CHAPTER AND VERSES, PARABLES, WORD STUDIES, JOURNEYS OF PAUL, etc.

REMEMBER, there is no one rule or method that is best. They all should be used to help you increase in the knowledge of God.

THE SAVING ACTS OF GOD

In the book of Acts there is an incident with which many of us as Bible students can sometime or other identify. It is the story of an Ethiopian eunuch who was returning from worship in Jerusalem to his home in northern Egypt. As he rode along in his chariot he was reading from the book of Isaiah.

"And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I except some man should guide me" (Acts 8:26-31).

This story is typical of the confusion that many experience when they try to read the Bible. Part of this confusion comes from the lack of understanding about the principal message of the Bible --- what the story of the Bible is. The Bible deals with many subjects, but its primary subject is "the saving acts of the Lord," or, in one word --- REDEMPTION.

The redemption of man was brought by Christ. Paul said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And in our story of the puzzled eunuch, when he asked the meaning of the passage he was reading, the Scriptures record:

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preaching unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35).

Therefore, as you read and study the Bible, always keep in mind that God, from the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden had a redemptive plan for man, and that the Bible not only shows us what that plan is but it reveals to us how God worked out this plan through his "SAVING ACTS" which He ultimately fulfilled by sending His only Son.

GOD'S WORD AND YOU

You have established a personal relationship with God. You have become a child of his --- born into his family by the new birth. Because of this personal relationship with God, the Bible --- His Word --- speaks to you as Father to child. Remember this each time you read it. Ask the Father to help you understand it. Ask him that you might "be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." You will not be disappointed.

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

"He that willeth to do his will shall know the teaching" (Luke 18:15).

THE GRACE OF CONTINUANCE

When Sir Francis Drake set out to in battle "to singe the beard of the Spanish King, he prayed this prayer:

"O Lord God, when thou givest to thy servants to endeavor any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning, but the continuing of the same until it be thoroughly finished that yieldeth the true glory. Through him that for the finished of thy work laid down his life, Amen.

Pray that God will give to you "the grace of continuance" to add to your faith . . . knowledge. Pray that God will give you "the grace of continuance" to study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the Word of Truth.

BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

Action Page for
INCREASING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

1. SCRIPTURE READING. Begin your reading of the list of books given in this lesson. The first will be the book of Mark.

2. PLAN OF STUDY SCHEDULE. I realize the importance of reading and studying my Bible daily. I intend to begin today --- following the schedule I have outlined for myself --- to keep this daily appointment with my heavenly Father.

DAYS	TIME	BOOK/CHAPTER/VERSE
1. SUNDAY		
2. MONDAY		
3. TUESDAY		
4. WEDNESDAY		
5. THURSDAY		
6. FRIDAY		
7. SATURDAY		
	ETC.	

3. BIBLE STUDY AIDS. Here is a list of books covering the essential areas of Bible knowledge needed by every Bible student:

1. Cruden's Concordance
2. Halley's Pocked Bible Handbook
3. Why We Believe The Bible by George DeHoff
4. Davis Bible Dictionary
5. W. E. Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words
6. Tenney's Old and New Testament Survey Studies

Many of these will be found in the Library either in your meetinghouse or public library.