

# WHY DO WE STUDY THE BIBLE?

Preparing for the men's fall bible study, I meditated on the question of how to best attract/motivate men to study the bible together. Trying to answer this question, I also pondered the most elementary question of all, why do we study the bible? There are many reasons we might provide but here are a few that could be considered the most important, at least as it pertains to corporate bible study.

Via the scriptures, our Lord commands us to store up knowledge of Him and His Ways in our hearts and minds. How can we do that without studying His Word? Yet that very Scripture also tells us that man does not know, cannot know, God's Ways because His Ways are too marvelous for us to understand. Man is also separated from God by his sin as God is holy and cannot look upon sin. Think about it. God, who is perfect and without sin, desires a relationship with man who is sinful by his very nature. God, our holy and righteous creator, director of the universe and our very lives, desires that we draw close to Him but cannot be in our presence due to our sinful nature and His very own righteousness.

God, as we always discover, offers us a solution and that solution lies in His Son, Jesus Christ. John 1:1 summarizes this very well. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John chapter one goes on to identify the Word as Jesus, the solution to the chasm between man and God. But that solution requires action on the part of man. Namely, man's necessity to believe, accept, study and learn about the Son (the Word) that God gave for man providing fulfillment of God's relationship with man objective and man's deliverance from death for his sins.

Yet this doesn't explain the necessity or make the case for corporate study. But read John 17 beginning in verse 6. Jesus here is praying for His disciples, for their protection from Satan and for their unity. He confirms that the Word was given to them and the disciples both accepted it and believed. In verse 20, Jesus says, "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message that all of them may be one." Jesus was stating clearly that individual believers were NOT to be islands withdrawn from the world and unto themselves. In fact, He goes on in verse 23 stating, "I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

Through Jesus (the Word), man has an opportunity for a direct connection with his heavenly Father. He also has an opportunity to connect directly with

his brothers and sisters in Christ. But this latter connection is of little value without engagement, and unless the connection is strengthened, enlarged. Developing into the unified body of believers that Christ spoke of can only come about when man increases his knowledge in the Word, stores that knowledge in his heart, and shares that knowledge with his like-minded brothers and sisters. Our unity is all about the knowledge, worship, and study of God's Word, His Son Jesus Christ and sharing that with each other.

Let's also remember that scripture tells us not to forsake the gathering of the brethren. Why are we to gather? To study, to learn, to worship, to encourage, to build-up each other, Christ's church, in unity of spirit and mind. Potlucks and softball games certainly provide fellowship and joy for those of like-minds. But nothing provides the kind of joy, growth and fellowship that is received when men and women gather together to study God's Word. Unlike Sunday bible studies wherein 150 people at Calvary come together to worship and study corporately, smaller corporate groups that study together can be more focused with personal questions and more detailed discussion. Not only do we grow together but have the opportunity to get to know each other, and to love each other (John 13:34-35). In this knowledge, we have the distinct opportunity to encourage and support one another as well as provide accountability for our individual walks. True unity is accorded when the church, that's all believers, is firmly rooted in and focused on the Word.

Our church offers both men and women bible studies. These studies are grand opportunities for individual and collective growth and provide us with a blessed opportunity to support our brothers and sisters in our individual struggles. It's my prayer that more men and women of our church, our community, will take advantage of these opportunities and follow Jesus' directive to become unified in Him.