**Building Confidence in Studying God’s Word**,

April 18, 2018

Why Was the Bible Written?

* God’s love letter to us. But more than that.
* Manufacturer’s Handbook. Yes, how to live but more than that.
* It is God’s Word: His message to us and for us, revealing Himself and how and why He created us, and His story from creation to the end of the world.
* It is written for “our instruction” (Romans 15:4, 1 Corinthians 10:11, 2 Tim. 3:16)

We read the Bible devotionally to draw close to God, to be inspired, to learn to live His way.

We also read it to learn and understand God and the world and His Kingdom in a larger way seeing the big picture and gaining a deeper understanding of the Word.

Three themes: Creation, Sin and Redemption.

Our study of Scripture should lead us to **love** and **obey** the Lord.

Linus Minsk will share how the Word personally inspires and speaks to him.

The Word is life and we should want to read it and know it and live it.

The Word Hand: Hear, Read, Study, Memorize, Meditate

Psalm 1 and Joshua 1:7-8

Put yourself in the setting, imagine being there and how it would impact you.

**Tools for Study**

Tool #1: A Bible with cross references; these direct you to other passages which use the same words or have the same meanings. It expands your knowledge and gives you the whole counsel of God’s word.

Tool #2: Have a notebook. Take notes writing down what speaks to you or questions that you have to research or lists of what the passage is about or key words and so on.

Tool #3: Halley’s Bible Handbook, an easy to read abbreviated commentary with archaeological discoveries and a section on how we got the Bible. It will enable you to figure out texts like the prophecies in Daniel. It is very helpful.

Tool #4: A study Bible. It will explain the history of the passage, the meanings of words, how to understand difficult texts and pertinent passages. Two of my pastor friends who attended seminary push them in their churches; “it’s cheaper than seminary”.

Tool #5 A Concordance, a reference book that lists all the words in the Bible with the original meanings in the Hebrew and Greek. This will expand your understanding.

Note: it does not make you an expert nor tell you “what it really means”.

Tool # 6 Learn a study technique like Inductive Bible Study. The essence is this:

Observation: What does the passage say?

Interpretation: What does the passage mean?

Application: What does it mean to me personally? See two handouts.

**Building Your Confidence in Studying the Word**

Tool #7 Read books on how to study and interpret the Bible. Some good ones include 30 Days to Understanding the Bible (Max Anders), Knowing Scripture (R.C. Sproul), How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth (Fee and Stuart)—this is the book that I used for much of the following teaching. Other scholars who have written and who are good include N.T. Wright, John Stott, D.A. Carson, and F.F. Bruce.

You must learn to think **exegetically**. **Exegesis** means what does the text say? What did the original authors mean to communicate? This is all important as otherwise you can just read into the passage any meaning you want making it totally subjective and having no real authority. So we must read Scripture with the mindset of determining the original meaning of the passage.

The example of a rich man and the camel being unable to go through the eye of a needle. The idea of a Needle’s Gate in Jerusalem that a camel could squeeze through on its knees originated in the 11th Century and negates Jesus whole point that it is impossible to love and trust riches and get into the Kingdom. This obtained his desired response of the disciples “who then can be saved?”. It takes a miracle—what is impossible for men is possible with God.

Tool #8 Read several translations of the Bible. Each translation has a different approach to translation and you benefit from reading various ones.

Tool #9 A Bible Dictionary, which gives you the definitions of words in the Bible. One good one is Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible (David Freedman).

Tool #10 Commentaries on the Bible; these are written by scholars who know the original languages and have researched the history, language and context of the texts and explain them. Good ones have a thorough discussion of difficult texts with the different possibilities of meaning along with supporting arguments (Fee and Stuart). There is a website, [studylight.org](http://studylight.org), which has dozens of commentaries for free reading.

Hermeneutics is learning to hear the Word in the here and now. What do the texts mean to us? “Most of the matters in the Epistles fit very nicely into this commonsense hermeneutics” (Fee and Stuart), that your common sense tells you that it means just what it says. It means the same for us as it did for them.

The text can never mean what it never could have meant to the author or readers.

We look for uniform witness throughout the Scriptures to help us understand and apply the text properly.

There are times where uniformity is lacking, which is why we end up with different doctrines and church practices.

You can see why a commentary is needful in these matters.