

Lesson 13 – How Can I Understand the Bible?

The Bible says, "you shall not steal" (Romans 13:9). Colossians 3:20 says, "Children, obey your parents." (Ask the student if they understand these two scriptures.) Of course they do! So, you already understand some of the Bible.

The Bible contains many things from the simplest to the most complicated. It contains beautiful stories that a child can appreciate; but it also contains depths that scholars have not been able to comprehend. (Read Hebrews 5:12-14.) (Ask the student, What are the two types of spiritual food in the Bible, and for whom is each type?) "Milk" is for beginners in Bible study. "Solid food" is for those who have more knowledge of the Word.

The Hard Things

The apostle Peter realized, regarding the apostle Paul, that "in all of his letters... there are some things that are hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:15-16). (Ask the student if the help of another person is necessary to understand the Bible.) Sometimes. (Read Acts 8:26-39.) (Ask the student, Why didn't the Ethiopian understand what he was reading?) The Ethiopian was reading a very difficult text; it was a prophecy. We need access to historical data to know the fulfillment of a prediction. Also, with any subject, the one who knows more can help the one who knows less. All of us frequently need to go to sources of information to understand things in the Bible. However, there are many things that we can understand through our own study of the Bible.

Basic Principles to Have a Fruitful Bible Study

Begin with the Simplest Things

Some people want to start their Bible study with something like "666." Sure, it's a fascinating subject; however, this would be like trying to learn trigonometry without having learned addition and subtraction. To learn anything, common sense tells us to start with the simplest and then progress step by step to the more difficult. This is also true when it comes to studying the Bible.

Don't Start with the Book of Genesis

When you read a book of fiction, you always start reading from the first page. But the Bible is not a fictional book. It is rather a collection of books, 66 in all, that fall into two main groups. (Ask the student if they know the two major divisions of the Bible.) Without now going into important texts that talk about the differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament, common sense tells us that what is "New" must be more important to us. We are not saying that the Old Testament can be ignored; you have to study it, too. The point is that it is better to start your study with the New Testament.

Start with the Gospels

Since it applies most directly to us today, it's best to start reading with the New Testament. But which book? Well, the first four books tell us about the life of Jesus in this world. (Ask the student if they know the names of the four Gospels.) Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. (Ask the student if they have ever read through one of these books before.) The best place to start reading the Bible on your own at home each day is in one of the four Gospels. Of the four, the shortest and easiest to understand is Mark. However, any of the four books would be good for starting to read and study the Bible.

After that, it makes sense to continue reading with the book of the Acts of the Apostles, since it narrates the events after the ascension of Jesus. This book gives us the history of the early years of the church and details what the people did to become followers of Jesus Christ. After reading the book of Acts, a good recommendation is to read the letter of James, which is one of the easiest to understand and one of the most practical for daily life.

Not Just Read. You have to Study and Search

But just reading the Bible is not enough. It must be scrutinized: that is, it must be examined and studied in detail. (Read Acts 17:11.) The Bereans searched the scriptures to see if what Paul had taught them was true. They did not want to be deceived by some false teacher. Did you notice that it says "daily"?

Put into Practice What You Learn

The text in Hebrews that contrasted "milk" with "solid food," adds, "solid food is for those who are full grown, who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). "By reason of use." We have to open the Word and open our hearts so that the Word changes our lives. We need to study it, meditate on it, open our hearts to it, and apply it to our lives. Then, little by little, we will be able to make better decisions of good and evil in daily life. (Read James 1:22.) We cannot approach the Bible as if it were an intellectual exercise like a student experiences in a college literature class. Rather, we have to know it so you can put it into practice.

Questions

1. Do you have your own Bible? (_____) (If not, help the student choose and get one.)
2. Do you read the Bible every day? (_____) If not, do you plan to start doing it? (_____) Which book do you plan to start with? (_____) (In all these questions, try to encourage the student.)
3. Is it possible to understand the Bible? (Some parts even a child can understand. Start with the simplest and gradually progress to the more difficult.)
4. Do we need the help of others to understand the Bible? (In any subject, one who knows more can help one who knows less. However, each person needs to study on their own for their own benefit and not to be deceived by false teachers.)