

## 11.30.20 - Suggestions on Bible Study Part 1

We recently had to deal with a pastor who wrote, "I would like to get some information on beliefs you have concerning "naturism" and such like ideas". We could tell by the tone of his email that he didn't really want to learn anything, but instead that he was looking for a chance to give his views on the subject and act as judge. The exchanges that followed show many weaknesses in his handling of the Bible. We are going to give some suggestions on how to study your Bible and become a workman that needs not to be ashamed. We will assume that you pray for guidance when you start your search for "what does the Bible say" on a subject and that you ask for wisdom when you find a contradiction either with your belief when you started your study or any apparent contradiction between verses. We will then use some of the exchange with the pastor to show what can happen if you are deceived by pride regarding "textilism". This is by no means to be considered an attack on the pastor, but rather an explanation of the sometimes futile attempt to have a rational discussion on a sensitive subject. This will be a two-part article.

Studying the Bible will lead you to the truth...sometimes the truth can be very controversial and when dealing with the subject of naturism we have found that it often is. This means that you may find that you have a lot of friends who do not want to know the truth and will try to get you back to your old way of believing or at least to not share what you learned with them. It seems like when you learn the truth, the warning lights come on in Satan's command center and he sends your peers to restore his deceit.

The following paragraphs contain some suggestions regarding your Bible study.

Suggestion #1.

Start your study with a blank slate, knowing nothing. We all think we know it all. Oh yes, we are taught to say that we have a lot to learn, but we do not act like we believe it. Find where the Bible supports what you believed before you started your study. Watch for passages that do not agree with what you believed before your study. Look up all the verses on the topic you are studying. Many deceptions are supported by picking only the verses that you agree with or that can be misinterpreted to agree with your preconceived ideas. If the verses seem to contradict each other it is imperative that you look up the key words in a concordance. Look how the original words were translated in other verses that used the same original words. Read the definition of the original word for all key

words. We have found that the word “Love” has several meanings in the original languages, but all of the meanings have been translated as “Love”. You must learn the original meanings to get the proper interpretation of the verse or lesson. For instance, one of the original words for love is Agape, one is Phileo and the another is Eros...the meanings are God’s Love, Brotherly Love and Romantic Love. It is vitally important to know which meaning you’re dealing with to get the proper context of the verse or lesson. The same can be said for the original definitions for the word “naked”. Sometimes God is referring to the condition one was born in, other times it means exposed or open with nothing hidden and other times there is a sexual component to the definition such as in Leviticus 18 or Noah’s situation. Again, it is vitally important to know which definition you’re working with to get the proper context or lesson from the passage. We wrote a few articles previously breaking down each of the meanings and where they are mentioned including context. Feel free to go back to those articles for reference.

#### Suggestion #2.

Please do not assume that the “authorities” in your life are always right. This includes pastors, Bible school professors, Sunday School teachers and commentaries. I believe that from time to time we all have some doctrines wrong. We were surprised by what we found about naturism, the history of the ten northern tribes after the fall of the Northern Kingdom, and the teaching of how far Grace extends to forgive sin. Mathew Henry's comments on Isaiah 20 shows how far a scholar will go to force the Bible to agree with his error. In this example it is about nakedness. Sometimes we worship our beliefs and that prevents us from seeing the truth. The belief that nakedness is a sin led certain commentators to change the scriptures so that God did not command Isaiah to be completely naked even if the Hebrew word that is used in Isaiah chapter 20 is the Hebrew word for the condition of a newborn baby and Adam and Eve’s condition at creation.

#### Suggestion #3.

If you are a spiritual leader such as a pastor or related position, you will need to put finding the Truth above gaining, impressing or keeping followers. This is a good objective and deserving of your time and effort in study, but when faced with a Truth that can intimidate members sometimes it can seem easier to force the Bible to say what you think they want to hear rather than pursuing the Truth. Your objective should be to find the truth and report it to your followers. Naturism isn’t

the only area of study that fits this suggestion...tithing, soulwinning and sex outside of marriage are just a couple of other areas that can make members uncomfortable and yet your people will benefit from hearing the Truth.

#### Suggestion #4.

When you study to learn what the Bible says on a topic, you need to forget (not take into account) what your friends believe. As suggested above, you should almost expect them to tell you that you are wrong. This is a good thing if you are misinterpreting verses and bad if you are right and they are deceived. Basically, finish your study and then ask yourself if you have learned the truth or deceived yourself. Remember to allow your friends to be wrong. A big weakness of Christianity today is being so sure we are right that we have no idea how to be good Bereans and **searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.** We were taught to give people freedom under grace...in other words, allow people to believe different than you do and still love them and remain friends. It is not our job to "fix" the rest of the world, that's God's job, our job is to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

#### Suggestion #5.

As you go through life, you will often be confronted with the question, "What will people think?" Until recently I would have followed that with "What does God think? That is more important." If we live (abide) in Jesus and He lives (abides) in us we know what God thinks of us. The same as He thinks of His Son. The Bible is not the place to learn what your friends think, because most of them do not understand **Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.** Their thinking will not be represented by the scriptures so now I don't ask myself "what will people think", I just go straight to "what does God think".

#### Suggestion #6.

As you study, be spiritually and intellectually honest. God has written His laws in your heart, but you need to use what is written to program (renew) the mind. The mind without the spirit will have you agreeing with King Solomon that all is

vanity. We need the spirit to communicate with God. Feelings are not the test for Truth. They are influenced by many factors besides truth. Conscience can also be wrong because it can be programmed incorrectly. There is no fool proof test for truth so be open for misunderstanding but use what you discover to be the truth. Experience will show if it works or not. If you are deceived the Holy Spirit will give you a warning, but if you tell Him to keep quiet, He will. God does not force us to obey because we have a free will.

#### Suggestion #7.

In your study you should make use of study tools. You need access to a concordance to check the meanings of the original words. This does not mean you distrust the translators. They had to choose how to say what was in the original passage in English. For example, there are 9 Hebrew words and 10 Greek words that are translated love. The Greek word agape is translated into 5 different English words. Often you need a knowledge of secular history to fully understand some events. A knowledge of Roman and Parthian relations and Parthian history are needed to understand the story of the wise men. You need a knowledge of the economy to understand why poor people were naked all the time.

In conclusion, the key to Bible study is a thorough and honest study. Finding out what the church says or what my pastor teaches is not Bible study. Studying just long enough to “prove” your point is not Bible study. Truly digging into the scriptures to find what God’s Word actually says is Bible study. When we first looked at the subject of naturism it was to get enough ammo to talk a family out of being nudists. The mistake that we made is that we did a serious, thorough and honest study of the scriptures and found that our preconceived ideas were wrong. Since then we have found a lot of folks with the same preconceived ideas that we had, but we have not found many who are willing to study the Word of God properly. We have instead found a lot of people who are only willing to look as deep as it takes to “prove” their preconceived ideas. They’ve been willing to go so far as to knowingly mis-define words and willfully misinterpret scripture just to not have to take a serious look. After all, if I find out I’m wrong I might have to change...and no one likes change.