

## ***Attitudes in Bible Study***

The right motive is essential to profitable Bible study. We must desire to learn the truth that makes us free (John 8:31-32), to attain the wisdom that leads to salvation in Christ (2 Timothy 3:15).

The right motive is just one aspect of the right attitude in Bible study, however. Consider three other essential components.

### **Open Mind**

Jesus said of some students in His day, "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive" (Matthew 13:14, ESV). Their problem was closed minds which made them unteachable. We must not be afraid to admit that we are ignorant or to learn that what we have thought is wrong. We must be willing to accept the truth, along with the changes it requires us to make.

### **Willingness to Work**

Have you ever said about someone, "I wish I knew the Bible as well as he or she did"? Well, there was probably a time when that person said the same thing about someone else. Then, he started to work. The Bible contains 66 books, 1,189 chapters, over 31,000 verses, or about 800,000 words. Obviously, no one will master all that in a few sessions! It takes work — consistent effort over a long period of time. In fact, even the best Bible students are constantly learning throughout their lives.

The point is, you won't get much out of Bible study if you don't put much into it. A hit-and-miss approach yields little. (You can't learn much about history or science or mathematics or anything else that way, either.) To thoroughly learn the Bible you have to invest some time and effort. The noble-minded Bereans "received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11). The blessed man meditates on what he reads (Psalm 1:2).

### **Expectation of Success**

While learning the Bible might seem overwhelming at the beginning, when we break it down into segments and approach it in a systematic way, it is really not so difficult at all.

To be sure there are some challenging parts; the Bible says so (2 Peter 3:16). Nevertheless, it promises us that we can understand it (Ephesians 3:4). God commands us to know His will (Ephesians 5:17), and He does not require the impossible. You can learn! Why not get started today?

**- by Frank Himmel**

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## ***Bible Class Comments***

We always seek and encourage class participation in our Bible studies. Only on very rare occasions is a lecture type class preferable to a situation where students contribute their input to the discussion. Typically, we desire comments, questions, and observations from those in the class.

However, there are some reasonable guidelines that we think all students should keep in mind:

1) The teacher is in charge. He has been assigned the authority to direct the class; to keep everything moving in the right direction; and to insure a positive outcome for the study period. That being the case, students should respect his control and management of the class. If you have comments to make or questions to ask, wait to be acknowledged by the teacher. And, never begin a 'give and take' (maybe a better word would be 'argument') with another student in the class. All input should be directed through the teacher so he can maintain order and progress. Respect his judgment when he ends a particular line of discussion and indicates that it is time to move on.

2) Prepare in advance for the class. Too often this does not happen and students are tempted to make 'off the cuff' remarks. Such comments carry a high potential to be off target and are sometimes simply erroneous. The teacher is then obligated to say, "no, that's not correct".

This is embarrassing for the student and teacher alike. To avoid this, study the subject matter in advance. Our class topics are carefully planned and typically there are study aids available to assist in your preparation. Use them.

3) With the advent of electronic devices and smart-phones, we've seen a noticeable increase in people doing 'research' during the actual class – ignoring the discussion that is on-going while they stare intently at their miniature screen. When they find something their hand flies into the air to share their discovery with the class. This usually means they have quickly searched the Internet and found some link to an author of unknown background who is mistakenly viewed as an expert simply because he posted something online. As a general rule these references are not helpful to the class discussion. Again, preparing for the class in advance is far more productive than 'on the fly' smart-phone exploration.

4) Don't ask for the class to 'go back'. We have in mind a situation like this: the class has discussed a matter thoroughly and the teacher has led the class on to the next point. Now, heavily into the development of that point, someone will raise his hand and say, "I want to go back to what we were talking about a few minutes ago". NO, please, NO! There is no better way to side track the class than to do this. If you didn't get it said when the class was on that point, then your comment will simply have to be saved for a future time.

5) Tying Bible references and other scriptural accounts into the subject the class is currently discussing can be helpful, but it can also slow the class down and impede the positive progress. Here you need to use good judgment. Even though you might see some parallel to another event in the Bible or to another similar text, ask yourself if adding the comment will really help the discussion. Lots of things are related to one another in the Bible, but they don't all have to be included in every examination of a given subject.

6) Remember that there are usually visitors, new converts, weak Christians, etc., in any class. With this in mind, be careful about interjecting topics that may be controversial or might negatively impact those who are not well grounded in the Bible. You may think that a lively 'debate' of a vague concept is interesting, but the Bible class hour is not the best place for that. And, we are not in need of someone to 'play the Devil's advocate' in our Bible classes.

7) Be humble. Never imagine that your level of scholarship exceeds that of the teacher or other students. Unfortunately, comments are sometimes made that directly impugn the knowledge of others in the class – leaving the impression that the one making the comment has achieved a level of understanding that others have never attained. Not likely! Our classes are typically populated by very excellent Bible students. Keep that in mind, and adjust your comments accordingly.

We love our Bible classes! And we cherish the good discussions, the serious questions, and the thoughtful input from all students. But, use caution in making your comments in such a way that they are helpful and not hurtful. Think!

**- by Greg Gwin**