

When You Read The Scriptures

Paul said, "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Ephesians 3:4). The Bible can be understood if we will learn how to study. A few simple rules will help us as we study.

Read the Bible knowing that it is inspired of God.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). The Scriptures are authoritative. Christ has all authority (Matthew 28:18).

When you read the Scriptures, ask, "Who is doing the speaking?"

In Genesis 3:4 we can read, "Ye shall not surely die." If I know the Devil said this, then I will have no trouble understanding that this is not a true statement.

We need to know to whom the message is spoken when we read the Scriptures.

Sometimes the Bible speaks to the Jews as under the Law of Moses, sometimes to the man, sometimes to the woman, sometimes to elders of the church, or the deacons. Some passages have their application in the life of the individual, like in the story of the Good Samaritan, and some to the church as a group.

One must love the truth when he reads the Scriptures.

Paul said that some "perished because they received not the love of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Truth cannot be handled carelessly. If one loves the truth, he will study and accept the truth as it is without trying to pervert it.

When you read the Scriptures, read the context.

This simply means read the passage before and after the one you are trying to understand.

Read all on a given subject.

You will not understand the truth unless you read all that God has said about a given topic. For example, when you study the subject of faith, you should read every passage on the subject of faith. No passage contradicts another, but all Scriptures harmonize one with another.

John said, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3).

- by Johnie Edwards

Which Ones Have You Encouraged?

The Lord's church is composed of both strong and weak members. Each one needs encouragement at times, but certainly the weaker brethren need a greater amount of special attention. Also, there are some members who are not necessarily weak, but who have special physical problems, causing them to need special attention. The apostle Paul taught that the responsibility of helping the weaker members rested upon the shoulders of those who were mature, full-grown Christians (Romans 15:1; Galatians 6:1-2). In the minds of some, this type of responsibility is the work of the elders, deacons, or preachers. Indeed it is; but the instruction is given to all Christians. Sometimes elders and preachers are negligent. Sometimes there is simply more work to be done than a limited number of men can accomplish. Which ones have you encouraged?

Some members are forsaking the assembling of the saints.

This sign of weakness is obvious to any mature Christian. It takes no special training or skills to make a phone call, write a note, or drop by for a short visit to say, "I've missed you." Would it be presumptuous to say almost all Christians could render service in this area?

Some members are attending without the support (perhaps with the hindrance) of their spouse.

A mother rises early on Sunday morning to prepare breakfast and dress the children to get them to Bible class; and they leave home with the father still in bed. Sometimes the fathers have

the same problem, leaving the mother at home. All recognize the special problems faced by such parents, admire their effort, and are encouraged by their faithful attendance under less than ideal circumstances. Are we not obliged to reciprocate some type of encouragement to these faithful parents?

Some members are presently experiencing family problems.

There are parents who are struggling with a rebellious child. There are married couples who are experiencing serious problems, perhaps resulting from an immature spiritual life. There are adults who have aging parents who are sick or confined, and demand much of their time and attention. In many cases, an encouraging word may be all that can be offered. Who offers it?

Some members are facing problems associated with aging.

The elderly and widows find it more and more difficult to do the basics, such as driving to services, shopping at the market, visiting with others, etc. Many live alone, without the encouragement or support of a faithful companion. Encouragement may be extended both verbally and actively.

This list could go on and on, but the initial question would remain the same, namely, "Which ones have you encouraged?" As the members of a congregation consider one another, the opportunities to serve are abundant. Christians may avoid the question for the present, but one day all will stand and give an answer. What will it be?

- by David Thomley

3rd in a series

Jesus' Law on Marriage

Beginning with this article, we will attempt to deal specifically with some of the false doctrines that are being taught concerning divorce and remarriage. We'll start with the two most extreme positions:

1) DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE IS ALLOWED FOR ANY CAUSE:

It is argued that being bound to one mate for life often stifles personal growth and happiness; sometimes leads to intolerable situations (incompatibility, abuse, etc.); and may cause harm to the family, especially the children. The truth is that true happiness does not come through the gratification of fleshly desires, but rather through obeying God's law (Eccl. 2:10,11; 12:13,14). And, even though some marriages exist under terrible circumstances (abuse, drunkenness, etc.), we must remember that man has no liberty to legislate laws in contradiction to God's clear instructions (only one allowed exception for divorce - namely fornication). Furthermore, it cannot be proved that children are helped in any way by broken homes. The right solution is not divorce, rather let husbands and wives act like God intends for them to act.

2) NO DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE FOR ANY CAUSE:

It is argued that some passages (like Mark 10:11,12) give no legitimate exception for divorce, and that some manuscripts omit the "except it be for fornication" phrase from Matt. 19:9. However, the exception clause is accepted by most scholars in Matt. 19:9, and is definitely found in Matt. 5:32. One occurrence is sufficient to establish it as being true.

Our study continues. . .

- by Greg Gwin