

STUDENTS OF THE SCRIPTURE

Supplemental Studies

Study Outline

The Danger of Lonely Knowledge

I. THREE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF SCRIPTURE

A. The Scriptures Are the Very Words of God

1. *2 Timothy 3:16-17* = All the words of the Scripture have been breathed out by God. They have their origin within His incomparably and infinitely vast mind, and flow into the world as the very Word of God carried on the breath of His Spirit (breath/spirit = *pneuma*, same word means both) into the hearts of any who have spiritual ears to receive them. As such, they are by their very nature **profitable**. This profit, this benefit, is manifested especially in four realms (more on these in a moment):
 - a. *Teaching* = This is why we teach the Bible. These words are *profitable* when they are taught. When you sit under the teaching of the Bible, the very words and thoughts of God enter into your mind. Once they are there, the Spirit can begin to use them for your benefit.
 - b. *Reproof* = The words of the Bible are useful for reproof as well. This is the first half of an equation that is completed in the next word, *correction*. The idea is that the words of the Bible are useful in showing you where you are wrong, where you are in error. This error can be in your thoughts or mindset; in your assumptions about the nature of things or people; in your behavior; in your speech; in the way you process information or make decisions; or even in the way you emotive or respond internally to things.
 - c. *Correction* = Not only can the Bible show you where you are in error...it can show you the way *out* of error. It shows not just where you are wrong, but what is *right*, and how you can attain it.
 - d. *Training in Righteousness* = The word is *discipline*; not necessarily corrective discipline, so much as developmental discipline. It can train you to be a thoroughly disciplined, consistently righteous person.

What's more, this profit is for a specific person, and for a specific purpose. The teaching, the discovery and correction of error in every manifestation, and the daily discipline of consistent righteousness, is only for the *man of God*. Unbelievers will accrue no benefit, no profit, from the Words of God. Instead, unyielding exposure to equally unyielding hearts produces guilt and judgment. For the *man of God*, though, this profit accomplishes *adequacy*, promising and delivering the equipping necessary for *every good work*. As the man of God is taught, reproofed, corrected and disciplined, he becomes increasingly capable of accomplishing each good work that presents itself before him, in the same manner as our Lord Christ did (though He did it flawlessly, and we do not).

B. God's People Must Cultivate a Deep Hunger for These Words

1. *1 Peter 2:2* = We are to cultivate in our spirits a deep appetite, a primal and irresistible hunger for these Words of God. We are to long for them the way a baby longs for pure mother's milk. His hunger knows no reason, tolerates no barrier or delay, brooks no argument, attains satisfaction in no other source. It is a single-minded, desperate pursuit for intimate contact, and the consequent nourishment. Yet again, though, the passage reminds us that this intimate nourishment is only for a specific person: the one who has tasted the kindness of the Lord.

C. These Words Must Be Handled Accurately

1. *2 Timothy 2:15* = If we accept that these words are, in fact, the very thoughts of God expressed by His Words on the breath of His Spirit, it follows logically that we must be careful to understand and articulate them accurately and in their entirety. We ought to be ashamed to even consider anything less. But this careful accuracy and thoroughness requires us to be *diligent*. It is hard work, and requires discipline and consistency. Still, no matter the effort required, the workman who undertakes it is not burdened by it. He has cultivated a deep need and hunger for it, and it is nourishment to him. What's

more, he is able to present himself approved to God, a reward well worth any effort! To this end, the eager student will devote himself to serious STUDY, and will be thankful for the opportunity!

II. THE INHERENT DANGER OF SERIOUS STUDY = LONELY KNOWLEDGE

A. “Lonely Knowledge” Produces Arrogance and Pride

1. *1 Corinthians 8:1-3* = The general principle is that increasing your knowledge, for the sake of *anything* other than submissive obedience, leads to arrogance. In other words “lonely knowledge,” knowledge divorced from faith or action, is a worthless, arrogant pursuit.
 - a. *Matthew 23:1-12* = The religious leaders of Jesus’ day had “seated themselves in the chair of Moses.” That is, they put themselves in his place, as his spokesmen. And they certainly had the knowledge of Moses’ words necessary for the position! But it was lonely knowledge. And it made them proud and arrogant, to the extent that they crucified the very Messiah promised by Moses!
 - i. *Matthew 12:3* = “Have you not read?” Jesus asks the Pharisees, and then quotes *1 Samuel 21:6*. Had the Pharisees read Samuel? Yes, they had!
 - ii. *Matthew 12:5* = “Have you not read?” He asks them again, and then quotes a principle derived from the Law. Had the Pharisees read the Law? Yes, they had!
 - iii. *Matthew 19:4* = “Have you not read?” Jesus again asks the Pharisees, and then quotes *Genesis 1:27* and *Genesis 2:24*. Had the Pharisees read Genesis? Yes, they had!
 - iv. *Matthew 21:16* = “Have you never read?” Jesus asks the chief priests and the scribes, and then quotes *Psalms 8:2*. Had the chief priests and scribes read Psalms? Yes, they had!
 - v. *Matthew 22:31* = “Have you not read?” Jesus asked the Sadducees, and then quotes *Exodus 3:6*. Had the Sadducees read Exodus? Yes, they had!

In each case, the people Jesus addressed *had*, of course, read the references. In fact, they probably had them memorized. Didn’t Jesus know that? Of course He did. Why, then, did He ask? Because they were behaving, speaking, and making assumptions like people who were biblically illiterate. They were not acting, speaking or thinking as though they’d read it. How is it possible that they had such knowledge, but were still so ignorant in their conduct? It was because they had failed to put that knowledge anywhere useful. It had entered in at the ears and eyes, took hold in the head, and nested there, stubbornly refusing to migrate south into the heart and hands.

B. “Lonely Knowledge” Produces Dead Faith without Profit

1. *Hebrews 4:2* = In the case of the Israelites coming out of Egypt, they had good news preached to them, just as we do. But it did not “profit” them, because it was not attached to their consciences and conduct by the glue of faith. Without that faith, the *profitable*, God-breathed Word of *2 Timothy* is, in fact, of no profit whatsoever. What’s more, the desirable *faith* is an active one, not merely an unattached belief that a thing is true or possible (cf. *James 2:14, 17, 20, 26*).
 - a. *Romans 6:3* = (See also, *Romans 6:16, 7:1, 11:2; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 5:6, 6:2, 6:3, 6:9, 6:15, 6:16, 6:19, 9:13, 9:24*). In each case, Paul asks the question, “Do you not know?” and then explains something they *do* know, but which has failed to inform their lives. These believers knew the truth, and had been exposed to sound, solid teaching...and yet they were behaving as though they were ignorant of these thing

III. YOUR CALL TO ARMS

- A. *Colossians 1:9-10* = The principle alluded to here is that a worthy walk *does* depend upon increasing knowledge (cf. *Philemon 6*). The fact that “lonely knowledge” is dangerous does *not* mean we should neglect increasing our knowledge! How can I live rightly if I don’t know how to do that? But it *does* mean that we should be properly motivated when we intake the Word.
 1. *James 1:19-25* = The principle of *implantation* must be central. The Word I intake must be glued to the fiber of my being by the adhesive of *faith* that makes it impossible for me to forget or neglect what I

intake. It forces itself to the front of my mind, and I meditate on it and ponder it over and over until I recognize the necessary changes and yield to the Spirit's prerogative in making them. This is the discipline that causes godliness in my character. It is through this process that I am conformed to the image of Christ.

IV. AND FINALLY...

- A. *2 Timothy 3: 16* = And so, having come full circle, we return to the place we began. The very Word of God is practical...**EMINENTLY SO!** But I must carry my acquisition of its truth through to its proper conclusion:
1. **First, be taught.** The God-breathed Word is first profitable for teaching. Learn it. Acquire it. Intake it. Saturate yourself with it. Know it!
 2. **Second, be reproved.** Allow these powerful, profitable Words of God to show you your error: in your thoughts or mindsets; in your assumptions about the nature of things or people; in your behavior; in your speech; in the way you process information or make decisions; or even in the way you emote or respond internally to things. Being reproved involves humility and admitting that you are not right in the affected area. It is allowing the Great Physician to re-break a bone so that it can be set properly. This takes self-reflection. So you took an hour to listen to a sermon! Well done! Now, take at *least* another hour, a quiet hour alone with God and without distractions (i.e., turn off your TV, shut the door behind you, and *turn off your phone!*), to compare the truths you've just taken in with your own, individual life and circumstances.
 3. **Third, be corrected.** Once I've allowed the Physician to break the affected bone, I must allow Him to reset it. Otherwise, I will be in constant pain, and unable to function properly. In other words, once the Word has shown me the error, I must submit myself, and commit myself, to making the necessary adjustments. This involves submission, practice and *patience*. It takes time and repetition to get a thing right consistently, and the Holy Spirit is the consummate teacher!
 4. **Fourth, be trained.** This process (I am taught, I am reproved, I am corrected), when repeated diligently and consistently, leads to a spiritually disciplined life, a life of reliable and cohesive righteousness. This is the model that Christ gave us, and conformity to His character demands it, because there is no other way to attain to that conformity.

V. TWO OPPORTUNITIES AND TWO TESTS

- A. **Your response to this study.** If you've never done this before, your response to this study will be your first great opportunity...and your first real test. You've acquired knowledge here. So, is it "lonely knowledge?" What will you do when you leave here? Will you drive home, agreeing in theory that this is a good idea, and then turn the TV on, or go right back to the business of your life? You might. But how do you ever hope to conform to the godliness of Christ's character if you are lazy or recalcitrant that way? Or will you separate yourself from your busy life for long enough to really ponder these truths and make the necessary changes? What is your desire, anyway? Do you want to be conformed to the image of the Pharisees, or conformed to the image of Christ? Your choice, beloved.
- B. **Your life following the next book study.** We are about to launch into Ephesians. This is the perfect...the *perfect*...opportunity to relearn the habit of correctly intaking the Word! There is no book better for it! If you intend to intake the truth of Ephesians as an intellectual exercise, you will be wasting a tremendous opportunity, and wasting my time as well as your own. Ephesians will take us roughly a year. Take a mental snapshot of your life at the beginning of our study, and compare it to your life at the end. Will it be the same? It doesn't have to be! But if it is, it will not be because the Word has stopped being profitable. You merely stunted your growth by stopping the process before it was done.

VI. PRAYER