

Precautions and Proper Attitude for Study

“He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered” Proverbs 28:26

Before we formally engage in Bible study, it is vitally important that we approach it with the right attitude and with an awareness of what can hinder our study. For instance, if we were to approach a study strongly believing that musical instruments were acceptable in worship, there is a good chance that we would try to use the scriptures to prove what we already believe. This is known as a preconceived notion, which is simply an opinion that we form beforehand without adequate evidence. Another danger we must be conscious of, is allowing emotion to affect how we view the scriptures. In this lesson, we will consider precautions we should take and the proper attitude we should have when studying the Bible.

We have all probably heard the phrase “we should be open-minded.” What that means is we should be receptive to ideas or arguments. When we study the Bible, it is critical that we are open-minded. It is common for mankind to form opinions on a host of different things based on life experiences, thoughts expressed from others, or our intuition (“gut feeling”) about something. We must make sure that the opinions we have formed do not affect our objective study of the scriptures. Even if we believe something to be true, if we enter into Bible study with an open mind, we are more likely to accept what the scriptures teach and are more likely to change any opinions we had that may be proven false.

Another precaution we should take is to make sure that we do not let emotion affect our ability to study and accept the truth. Once common area where emotion has affected the Lord’s church over the past several years is in the area of divorce and remarriage. The scriptures clearly teach us that God’s pattern is for one man and one woman to be married for life and the only acceptable reason for divorce is adultery (Matthew 19:3-9). Yet, many will let their emotions influence them to the point where they start coming up with additional reasons for divorce. You may hear reasons such as “he abused her” or “he did not know the truth when he divorced his first wife so God will not hold him accountable to his law.” You will not find anywhere in the scriptures where these emotional arguments are proven to be true. As difficult as it may be for people that feel this way, especially if it means that they or a member of their family cannot divorce or be re-married, we must have enough respect for God’s law that we will put aside those emotions and do what is right. As Jesus taught in John 12:48: *“He who rejects me, and does not receive my words, has that which judges him,-the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”*

As Bible students we have an important responsibility to prove what is true in the scriptures (1 Thess. 5:21). Our attitude must be like those in Berea who *“received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so”* (Acts 17:11). Even if we have the utmost confidence in a preacher or another Christian, we still have the responsibility to verify if what they are teaching is consistent with the truth. This is one area, especially in the denominational world, that results in false doctrine. All too often, people will accept something that is taught or believe a convincing opinion from someone they respect without taking the time to see if it is consistent with scripture. This often leads to error and is one of the main reasons we need to study.

Questions

1. What is the proper attitude that the Bible student must have before engaging in Bible study?

2. Define the term “Preconceived Notion.” What is the danger in this with any given subject in the Bible?

3. What does it mean to be “open-minded” and why is that important when studying the Bible? _____

4. How can emotion affect our Bible study? What is the danger when emotion is involved? _____

5. Someone who was previously married and was not divorced because of adultery tells you that they feel it would be unfair if they could not marry again because they were not aware of God’s law when they divorced. How would you respond? What passages would you use to support your answer? _____

6. What responsibilities do we have as Christians when it comes to the truth? List passages to support your answer. _____

7. A woman feels strongly that she should be allowed to lead a worship service because she is “just as talented and scripturally sound as any man” and she cites as her authority 1 Corinthians 11:5. Is she right? Do you think emotions could affect her belief? How would you respond? _____

8. What kind of natural emotions do we learn about in Acts 2:37, 8:39 and 2 Corinthians 7:10? _____

9. What types of arguments do denominations make for using the Lord’s treasury to pay for basketball courts, church softball teams and other social programs? What Biblical principles might they incorrectly apply to justify what they do? What scriptures would you use to show the proper use of the treasury? _____

10. Why do some people continue to believe and practice error even when Bible study has proven to them that what they believe is false? Can you think of anyone we read about in the scriptures that had this problem?

11. What is something that you may have believed that through Bible study was proven to be false? _____
