



Nutshell Summary: Conclusion: Denominations Do Not Emphasize Bible Study; Spiritual Growth Is Commanded, Jn 14:15, 21; 15:10; 2 John 2:4-5

CONCLUSION:

Let me address those who find our approach to the Scripture to be quite different from that practiced by mainline denominations and traditional churches:

There are indeed many ways to teach the Bible as is evidenced by the multiplicity of denominations, most of which have splintered off into two or more schisms everyone of which occurred following a disagreement over an interpretation of an essential doctrine of the faith.

These divisions occurred following serious disagreements over interpretations of Scripture that address what is considered an "essential doctrine." Since the Bible is the inerrant and infallible Word of God then one or both of the groups in conflict may be wrong but they cannot both be right for God is not the author of confusion.

Further, if we believe that the Bible is God's divine guidance for life and practice then we must seek to discover someone who does the best job he can to extract from the Scripture the most accurate interpretation possible. Such a person would need to subscribe to a system that enables him to efficiently translate the Bible in a way that brings order to one's spiritual growth, resolves "problem" passages, and amplifies the harmony of Scripture. Over the history of the Church Age such a system has been hashed out after centuries of biblical research. Seminaries have been founded for the express purpose of teaching this system to budding pastors. The main objective of this system is to develop a clear and precise translation into the English (for us) of the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts that make up the Old and New Testaments.

We cannot go into them all but a few of the essentials that would define this system include, for example, Systematic Theology. There are eleven major subjects addressed in the Bible: Theology (the study of God), Bibliology (the study of the Bible or Canonicity), Angelology (the study of elect angels), Satanology (the study of Satan and fallen angels), Anthropology (the study of man: body, soul, and spirit), Soteriology (the study of salvation), Ecclesiology (the study of the church), Eschatology (the study of prophecy), Christology (the study of the Person of Christ), Hamartiology (the study of sin and the sinful nature), and Pneumatology (the study of the Holy Spirit). Every passage contains one or more of these categories and the pastor must be able to identify these since they have very definite impact on the interpretation of a passage.

Secondly, he must understand the context of the passage under scrutiny which requires him to apply hermeneutics, the science of interpreting ancient manuscripts. I subscribe to the literal interpretation of Scripture. This approach assumes the passage is to be taken literally unless the context or exegesis reveals it to be a metaphor, allegory, parable, etc. There are systematic ways of deciding these things. Much of the confusion about the Bible today has to do with how it is interpreted. Some assume that all is fable, myth, allegory, or metaphor designed to teach concepts or principles but that no one should consider taking its content literally. Well, I have a problem with this. If we take this approach then the Gospel is distorted into some story about how a man must "stand up for what he believes in," or "give his life up for others," or some such. If the Bible is the Word of God then it must be taken literally unless God indicates it is to be taken otherwise, indicated by the way it is constructed grammatically, contextually, and syntactically.

Finally, the passage must be analyzed in a systematic way. First is isagogics: what is the historical context in which the events in question take place? The Bible must be interpreted in the time in which it was written. Second is categories: What does the entire Scripture have to say about the subject? This requires an examination of the entire Bible's revelation on the topic and developing it into a doctrine. Third is exegesis: what is the translation of the passage under consideration? This requires a grammatical analysis of the passage taking into consideration each word, its part of speech, the sentence structure, idiom, and the parsing of verbs. It might be noted for example that in Greek the words that appear first in the sentence reveal the emphasis of the writer. This is quite different from English which depends on word order for emphasis.



The methods described above lead to Bible classes considered to be boring to those who prefer to be entertained. However, by staying with the system, members of the congregation, if they are willing to follow along, are able to fully understand the meaning, application, and purpose of the passage. The idea is to acquire *epignōsis* understanding of God's message.

Other less involved approaches to the Scripture do pick up a few principles and offer the people an axiom or two but such a superficial approach provides no real understanding of context, divine intent, or means of application. God took a great deal of time--over a millennium--to assemble His Word for our benefit and it should be studied seriously.

Taking the Word seriously requires academic discipline. Emotion is an appropriate response when one comes to understand a principle, a doctrine, or their applications. But no one can learn through emotion for emotion is something that emanates from the limbic system and contains no thought. Emotion can only respond or react to thought. Emotion in its rightful place is wonderful. I am often pleased by the emotional responses I get from people after they pull several concepts together that contribute to their spiritual growth. They express a lot of emotion over their spiritual advance and good for them.

Also emotion is legitimate in the application of doctrine. When backed into a corner, you may decide to apply doctrine to a problem and leave the details in God's hands. When you then see doctrine work through God's grace you get legitimately emotional. This is in fact a form of reciprocity for it is recognition that God backs His Word and that you are not only in His plan but also the plan is working for you.

It might also be mentioned that some system of biblical analysis is taught in all seminaries. Today the various denominations have their own theological approaches but they all teach a system of some sort. Unfortunately, there is little or no stress on requiring the original languages and if these are taught most graduates do not employ this knowledge in the development of their sermons. This is in fact the tragic flaw of denominationalism since attracting a lot of customers is more important than teaching the few who are serious students of the Word of God.

Even though many mainline pastors have been taught some system of theology to a certain degree of proficiency they will not utilize these methods in their churches. And the major reason? Because it is BORING! And The People don't like it. They want their emotions stimulated.

So up on the rostrum are brass bands, choirs, and soloists, people giving testimonials, and everyone singing hymns, hymns, and more hymns all going on in a Disneyland environment. I think these are called "performance" churches in the current parlance. Everyone gets their blood up and they all have a grand time but I get the same response when I put on a Bluegrass CD. It's a lot of fun for me but there's no spiritual growth going on.

What these churches do is their business but my job is to teach the Bible, warn against blind emotionalism, and sharpen the differences between serious Bible study and using church as a social club in which to be entertained. Some respond to our approach and these are the ones that God intends for me to teach. For those who don't like it there are thousands of places for them to go. However, in my opinion they cannot advance to spiritual maturity as quickly under a system which doesn't stress the methods I have outlined in this review. This is not being judgmental. It is a factual analysis of what is true. I'm not saying one can't grow in grace in these churches. They can if the Bible is being taught accurately—once the pastor gets his twenty minutes to teach. I'm just saying that one's growth will be stunted. And if what is being taught is flawed due to ignorance of Scripture then The People perish for there can be no growth.

The believer should never stress his own personal desires but instead submit to what our heavenly Father instructs him to do which is to grow in grace. We should be motivated through reciprocity to accomplish this duty as quickly as possible.

Once we develop reciprocity we begin to place more emphasis on submitting to what **God commands us to do** in our worship of Him rather than what **we want to do** in our worship of Him.



This submission was clarified by our Lord when He said in John 14:15, 21; 15:10, and 1 John 2:4-5 (and I paraphrase), "If you love me, keep my commandments." You cannot keep what you do not know. And you cannot love God unless you know His Word.

Those who are simply not interested in an in-depth study of the Bible are into passive negative volition to the truth. They want the accouterments of having "fellowship with Christians" in the nonthreatening environment of a church but without the prerequisite of having "fellowship with God" under the discipline of His Word. Such individuals are drawn to churches where the hard work of spiritual growth is replaced by a less-demanding involvement in "Christian fellowship," "church programs," and debating the question, "What would Jesus do?" Jesus' intercessory prayer to the Father at Gethsemane provides the answer as to what He would have us do:

John 17:17 - "Sanctify them [set believers apart for special service] by means of Your truth. Your word is truth."

The Lord's prayer for us was for our experiential sanctification which can only be achieved through spiritual growth. It is by means of our willingness to learn the treasures of wisdom and knowledge contained in Scripture that enables us to perform special service for God in the Invisible War. We are privileged to be in training to become front-rankers in that conflict.

There's your nutshell. For those who might now be motivated by a hunger and thirst to know more, there are around 21 hours available on tape about this subject. These lessons are available at no charge to anyone who requests them. Simply write to:

**Grace Doctrine Church
Media Ministries
P.O. Box 6432
Chesterfield, MO 63006**

Request the series ***Systematic Bible Study***. Be sure to include your name and mailing address.

This study was inspired by a question posed to one of our members who is off at university: Why does your church go into so much detail in its Bible studies? Isn't there some middle ground between an academic emphasis and total emotionalism?

This series and its nutshell have been designed to answer these questions. Further, the assault on serious Bible study and the application of its principles to one's life is the present-day equivalent of the problem identified by Elijah during the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel over the Northern Kingdom between 874-853 B.C.:

1 Kings 19:14 -And Elijah said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

In a much less obvious way, we are experiencing such assaults in our society today. The forsaking of the Scripture, the defilement of the altars, and the "killing" of the communicators is far more sophisticated than in the ninth century B.C. but the results are potentially the same.

Failure to teach the Bible is to forsake the Word of God. Failure to use the pulpit of the local church to communicate the precise message of God to man is a defilement of that pulpit. To discredit those who make honest attempts to avoid both is a metaphorical killing of these pastors. If the pastor can be discredited then his message can be ignored.

Such is what is afoot in the land today and as a result the client nation staggers in unbelief while a precious few form the Pivot of believers who must stand fast as invisible heroes in the preservation of freedom.



If pastors who do submit to a biblically mandated system of teaching the Bible to their congregations cannot be silenced in the church then the freedom of their parishioners to repeat the principles he has taught them must be attempted.