

Lesson 1 – How to Study the Bible
The Most Important Tool in Bible Study – A Pure Heart that is Seeking God
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Introduction: Why do so many people not see the Bible alike?

- A. Several books have been recently published among those associated with churches of Christ saying that we have failed in taking a proper approach to Bible Study (Hermeneutics).
 - 1. We should have a solid foundation for our faith that must be based upon the word of God. Challenges to our stand upon Jesus Christ are welcomed and should be considered. **(1 Peter 3:15)**
 - 2. Before we begin looking at the wisdom of men, we should look to what God has said about how anyone can come to the truth. Where does God put emphasis on how we can know His will?
- B. When Jesus responded to the debates over the meaning of God's word with the Pharisees, the most common problem with their approach to the Bible was their heart and not their hermeneutics! **(John 12:35-43)**
 - 1. In my experience as a teacher, it has rarely been an issue of proper Bible study skills that has resulted in a difference of understanding of the Bible.
 - 2. When relationships, emotions or worldly desires become the driving force of one's life then God will allow you to believe a lie. **(2 Thess 2:9-12)**

I. Why a Pure Heart is Essential to Knowing God's Will?

- A. A pure heart is a characteristic of the heart of a Christian. **(Mt 5:8)**

"Blessed *are* the pure in heart, For they shall see God." **(Mt 5:8)**

 - 1. A pure heart and a pure vision go together!
 - 2. Jesus knew that purity of heart, a single-minded pursuit of God's will result in one finding the truth! **(John 7:17)**
- B. The word "Pure" is from the Greek word *katharos*, used twenty-eight times in the New Testament. It is translated by such terms as "pure," "clean" and "clear."
 - 1. "Blessed are those whose motives are absolutely unmixed, whose minds are utterly sincere, who are completely and totally single-minded." - J.B. Phillips
 - 2. We must have a single focus in this life. When we have this everything will come from pure motives! **(Mt 6:22-24; 2 Cor 11:2)**
- C. The fruits of an impure heart.
 - 1. You will depend upon your own guile and "wisdom" rather than trust God. **(2 Cor 4:2)**
 - 2. You will lack the resolve and courage that comes by faith. **(Jas 1:7-8, 4:8)**
 - 3. "The true vision of God will not be granted to the shrewd and calculating who play dishonest games; or to the doubleminded who can never quite put both feet in the kingdom **(James 1:7-8)**, but to those who are absolutely honest and single of heart toward God." - Paul Earnhart
 - 4. Having the honesty that results in having an ear willing to hear is both a blessing and a "danger!" **(Isa 50:4-6)**

Class Discussion:

- 1. Why is a pure heart essential to knowing God's word?
- 2. Why are men easily given to self-deception?
- 3. How can you be sure that you are not deceiving yourself?
- 4. List some characteristics of how a pure hearted person would respond to one who has a different understanding of the Bible. **(Acts 17:11)**

II. Some common human loyalties that can be put ahead of God

A. Human Relationships (John 5:38-46)

1. How could a people who gave a significant time in searching the scriptures fail to understand what the scriptures teach?
2. Jesus knew their hearts and thus knew that they sought the favor of men above God!
3. With this kind of heart a person can “know” but will not admit they “know.”
(John 12:42-43; Lk 10:27-29)
4. Here is where people will say “it’s not a fellowship issue” or “it’s not really clear.”

B. Past Religious Ties and Beliefs

1. Why are religious traditions popular? **(Mt 15:8-9; John 7:48-49)**
2. How affect can being “raised in a church” have upon a person’s willingness to be honest in their Bible study? **(John 9:1, 20-23)**

C. Family Tradition and Relationships (1 Peter 1:18, Mt 10:21-22, 34-39)

1. Why might a parent be deeply hurt if a child left the church in which he was raised?
2. How might a worldly family react to a fundamental disagreement about the Bible?
How about a spiritually minded family?

III. Other ways Satan can destroy one’s ability to reason and see.

A. Anger and Bitterness (Heb 12:14-15)

1. The mind will shut down when anger takes over! **(Prov 18:19; Eph 4:25-26)**
2. Why does anger often block reason?

B. Fear of consequences (1 Peter 3:12-15)

1. Why does God allow us to face what appears to be terrible consequences?
2. Why did the rich young ruler not follow Jesus? **(Mt 19:21-22)**
3. What is the difference between God testing us and tempting us?
(Jer 17:10; 20:12)

C. Prejudice towards a doctrine or a man who teaches the doctrine.

1. Why did the Pharisees constantly misrepresent and attack the character of John the Baptist and Jesus? **(Lk 7:31-33)**
2. Satan is in the business of blocking the light from the hearts of men. Those who listen to gossip and slander and as a result turn away from a fair hearing of another are lost. **(2 Cor 4:1-4; Acts 25:16-17)**
3. How can labels like “liberal,” “Anti,” “progressive and traditional” hinder one from seeking the truth?
4. What is the proper way to use language to describe the beliefs of another?

Class Discussion:

1. Have you ever has a religious discussion with someone who really did not want to know the truth? How did you know this was so?
2. Have you ever heard a Christian discount a doctrine to the point that you were discouraged to even study the question? What was said to discourage your study?
3. When was the last time you seriously studied a doctrine that you have believed and honestly let another challenge it from the scriptures?
4. Can the unity that Christ expects of us be possible if we are unwilling to learn how to discuss a difference and then know how to study the Bible about that question?
(Jn 17:20-23)