

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

GREAT BIBLE LESSONS **“A Passion for Bible Study”**

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

Oh, how we need to have a passion for studying the Scriptures! As we look at the Bible, one of the things we find is men and women who were passionate about the Word of God. I am reminded of Jeremiah, the weeping prophet of Anathoth, who was found at times in the dungeon, yet who exclaimed, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart” (Jer. 15:16). I also think of people like Hilkiyah, Shaphan the scribe, and young Josiah the king. For a long time Israel had not been following the Word of God. Yet Hilkiyah and Shaphan said to King Josiah, “We have found the book of the law of the Lord” (2 Chr. 34:15). We can almost hear the passion in their voices. The king and all his subjects repented and changed their ways. Job is another prime example of a man who, in the midst of great suffering, had a passion for God and His Word. Look at Job 23:12. Talk about a man who was passionate about Scripture. Job said in the midst of great struggles, trials, and troubles, “I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” Now **that** is passion! Are you planning on skipping any meals over the next few days (like a lunch or supper) so you can study God’s Word? Job said that God’s Word is more important than even our necessary food. Job also said, “Though He slay me, still will I trust Him” (Job 13:15). Another prime example of someone who was passionate about the Word of God, even at a young age, is Jesus Christ. On one occasion his parents were unable to find Him. Finally they found Him in the temple, and when questioned about His absence, He said, “Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Lk. 2:49). But what is so amazing is that Christ was in the temple with the teachers of the law (the scribes and the Pharisees), and the Bible says in Luke 2:47 that “all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.” At a young age, Jesus was very passionate about the Word of God. Today, I hope to light a passion in each of us in regard to studying the Scriptures and truly devoting our lives to being men and women of The Book.

Why do we need to have a passion for Bible study? Why do we need to be good students of the Scriptures? There are several reasons, but probably one of the most important reasons that we need to be students of the Scriptures is so that we can be approved by God. How is it that we, on the Day of Judgment, will be approved in the sight of God? The Scriptures teach us that in order to be approved by God we must be good students of the Word. Did you know that you cannot be approved in God’s sight without being a student of The Book? The text of 2 Timothy 2:15 teaches us clearly that in order to be approved of God, and to be righteous and godly in the Lord’s sight, we must study the Scriptures. Paul said to Timothy, “Be diligent [KJV—study] to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” How is it that we will stand justified, pure, and holy? It is when we study The Book and live our lives by it. Thus, we need to study to ensure that we are approved in God’s sight. Peter said in 1 Peter 2:2 that we are no longer to be babes in Christ. We are to no longer be “a baby on the bottle,” as it were. Instead, we are to “desire the pure milk of the word, that

you may grow thereby.” Too many people are still “on the bottle.” We need to move away from being an infant, and from concentrating on elementary things, and concentrate instead on the Word of God and its meaning. Peter later said in 2 Peter 3:18, “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” How can we grow—and move on to more mature things? We do that by having a real passion for studying the Scriptures. We cannot really please the Lord without knowing His Word. Notice what Jesus said in John 14:15—“If you love Me, keep My commandments.” How can we keep His commandments if we do not know them? Jesus said, “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (Jn. 15:14). We need to be approved by God so that we will not stand condemned. One way to do that is through a study of the Scriptures. We find a sad commentary in Hosea 4:6, where Hosea said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

We today need to be good students of the Scriptures because there is so much confusion in the religious world. The world in which we live is so confused in regard to God, Jesus, the Bible, and salvation. How can we make our way through all of this confusion and make a clear path? The only way is through the Scriptures. Ephesians 5:17 says, “Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” God does not want us to be ignorant. He does not want anyone to be unaware of His Word and the principles it contains. How can we know? Paul said, “Do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” The Bible was given to us so that we can read it and know God’s will. Ephesians 3:4 says, “When you read, you can understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.” We **can** know God’s will. But we must read and study in order to make our way through the confusion that surrounds us. Think about the words of Jesus in John 8:32 where the Lord said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” There is only one way to be free—and that is by knowledge of the truth. From what can we be free? We can be free from sin, free from the confusion in the world today, and free from all the chaos around us. Studying the Word of God is the only way to free ourselves. We must look to The Book. An evil king asked an important question in Jeremiah 37:17. Zedekiah the king asked, “Is there any word from the Lord?” Paul repeated that same sentiment in Romans 4:3 when he asked, “What does the Scripture say?” In a world where there is so much confusion, we need to be the kind of people who ask, “Is there any word from the Lord?” What do the Scriptures say about a matter? When we hear of something, we must not automatically say, “Well, that must be the truth since so-and-so said it, and he is a religious leader.” Instead, we need to be asking, “What does **God** have to say on this matter? Can a particular teaching be supported by The Book?” There is so much confusion in the religious world today because people simply will not look to The Book to see what is right.

I also want to suggest that we need to study the Scriptures to ensure that we are right with God. This goes hand in hand with “being approved by God,” but places a little different emphasis on it. Yes, we should want to be approved in God’s sight, but we need to make sure that we are right with God to begin with. How do we do that? We do it by studying the Scriptures—just as 2 Timothy 2:15 says. We must “be diligent to present ourselves approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Let me direct your attention to the beautiful passage found in Acts 17:11. Here we find illustrated the need for us to study the Scriptures to make sure that we are right with God. Paul said that the Bereans were “more fair minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” Imagine the setting. You live in Berea, and someone comes and knocks on your door. It is the apostle Paul, who says, “I have a message from God. I want to tell you about it.” So you say, “Come on in Paul. We are ready to hear what you have to say. We have a ready mind, and we want to hear what you have to say.” But when the people of Berea heard the message, they did not believe it immediately. They

listened to what Paul had to say, and then they opened the Word of God. They “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” When you hear someone talking about salvation, and giving ideas that they suggest are correct, search the Scriptures to make sure. There is only one way to make sure that we are right. God has given us His ultimate will. We **can** know the truth. And we **can** be free. But every person has a responsibility to search the Scriptures for himself or herself.

We also need to study the Bible in order to be able to answer skeptics and to teach the law of God. There are so many skeptical people in the world. One of the ways we can deal with them is by being fluent in the Word of God. We need to be able to converse with them through Scripture. One passage that sheds some light on this idea is found in 1 Peter 3:15 where Peter said, “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” Suppose someone wants to know about Jesus, or there is a critic who really does not think that something in the Scriptures is true. We need to be ready to present a well-reasoned apology (a scriptural defense) regarding what we believe. It is said of elders in Titus 1:9-11 that they are to be men who so conversant with the Scriptures that they can “stop the mouths of the gainsayers” via the Word of God. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Jesus is the One Who has the authority today, and we must look to His Word to teach the law and to reach the skeptic or critic.

But we also need to study the Scriptures in order to avoid sin in our lives. What can we do on a daily basis to prevent sin from getting into our lives? What did **Jesus** do to defend Himself against sin? What did Jesus do to prevent the devil from getting a toehold in His life? In Matthew 4 Jesus was tempted by the devil through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. The devil said, “If You are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread. If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from the temple. If you are the Son of God, worship me.” In verses 4, 7, and 10 Jesus said, “It is written...,” “It is written...,” “It is written...” Jesus overcame the temptations presented by the devil by looking to the Scriptures. He used them as a tool to avoid sinning. The Scriptures teach that this is a valid principle. In Psalm 119:11 the psalmist said, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” That is a powerful passage about how we can avoid having sin in our lives. If the Word of God is truly within our hearts (and by “heart,” I am not talking about the organ in your chest that pumps blood, but the mind), then as we study the Scriptures and make its principles practical and relevant to our lives, we can avoid sin. If we will hide God’s Word in our hearts, it will help keep us from sinning. We need to do that—because there are so many people who are giving in to sin. In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus described two roads that we can take. One of them is wide, broad way that is easy to follow—and most people go down that road, which leads to destruction. On the other hand, there is a narrow, restricted road—one that few people choose to take, even though it leads to eternal life. How can we make sure that we are among “the few”? We can do that by putting the Word of God to work in our lives every day. Genesis 4:7 says of Cain, “Sin’s desire is for you, but you should rule over it.” How do we master sin? The first thing we must do is give our hearts to the Word of God. Proverbs 13:15 says, “The way of the transgressor is hard.” Living a life of sin is a hard life indeed. To overcome that, a person must have the Word of God in his heart. These, then, are some reasons why we need to be good students of the Bible.

But I also want to suggest some attitudes that will help promote good Bible study. Let’s say that we have come to see the value of studying the Scriptures. What steps, then, must we take to develop an attitude that will promote good Bible study? What do we need to

understand about the Scriptures and about God that will make His Word relevant to our lives? First I would suggest that we need to have a firm belief that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. When God said, "Let there be light," that statement on His part is no different than the written record of it that we find in Genesis 1:3. The fact that God said, "Let there be light," and light came into existence, is a strong commentary on how the Word of God today is still God's Word, and is still just as powerful as the written record of God's oral statement. Look at Psalm 119:160. When we talk about the Bible being "inspired," what do we mean? The psalmist said, "The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever." From Genesis 1:1 to the very last verse in the Book of Revelation, the Bible is God's Word, and is the absolute truth on all matters. You will not find any religious truths outside of the Bible. The only truth that will get us to Heaven is found within the Bible. Paul wrote about inspiration in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 when he said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." The words, "inspiration of God," literally mean "God breathed." All Scripture is "breathed by God." That is the idea behind inspiration. The Bible is not ideas of men that have been written down through the centuries. Although God did use human scribes, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:37, "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." What Paul, John, Moses, and Luke wrote were not **their** words. Rather they were **God's** words. In 2 Peter 1:20-21 we read, "No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." God inspired men through the power of the Holy Spirit to write what they wrote. Those men wrote down the Scriptures that we have today. The end product is not the words of men, but the Word of God. David said in 2 Samuel 23:2, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue." When we read the Bible, although men may have written it, the words they penned were not theirs, but God's. Jesus promised His disciples in John 16:13, "When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth." From that point until the Scriptures were completed, men were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the Word of God. Thus, to really make the matter practical in our lives, and to truly have a passion for Scripture, we must realize that the Bible is not a dead book that was written thousands of years ago. Rather, it is the Word of God. It is God speaking to us today. That is the way to make Bible study practical. We must not approach the Bible as if it was something that God said thousands of years ago, but is not relevant to us today. We must approach the Bible with the attitude that it is God speaking to us **today**. That, then, will create a proper attitude for Bible study.

A second attitude that will promote good Bible study is a belief in the absolute authority in the Scriptures. If we can come to the realization that the Bible and the Bible alone is the only book that is to be our authority in all matters of religion, think how much that would improve our attitude toward studying the Bible. For many years people have not placed enough emphasis on the Scriptures because there have been other writings or people to whom they could look. But the Bible says that there is only one book that we should obey. In John 2:5, Mary the mother of Jesus made a wonderful statement. At a wedding in Cana, the host had run out of wine. Mary asked Jesus to perform His first miracle, and Jesus agreed to do so. Mary then said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." Could you possibly find a better motto by which to live your life? You cannot find the words of Christ outside the Bible. Colossians 3:17 teaches us, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Of paramount importance when it comes to Bible authority is the passage found in 1 Corinthi-

ans 4:6, where Paul said that the Christians in Corinth should “learn not to go beyond what is written.” Talk about a principle for studying Scriptures—that is it! We must “learn not to go beyond what is written.” If we could convince ourselves that everything we need to know about how to get to Heaven, about God, and about how to live the best life is found in the Bible, that would instill in us a passion to study the Scriptures. It is said in Revelation 22: 18-19 that we are not to add to or take anything away from God’s Word, lest the condemnation of God be upon us. If we are not to add to the Bible or take anything away from it, that implies that everything for which we are accountable can be found within the pages of Scripture. The Bible is our only authority. It alone has all the answers to all the questions about religious matters.

Third, I want to suggest that another attitude that will promote Bible study is for us to have a humble and submissive nature. If we expect to get anything out of the Scriptures, we must approach them with the right attitude—the attitude that was exhibited by Samuel in 1 Samuel 3:10 when he said, “Speak, for Your servant hears.” That is the attitude we need to have if we hope to get anything out of the Scriptures. If we are going to have a good attitude about Bible study, then when we open the Bible to study it we need to be like Samuel and say, “Speak Lord, for Your servant hears.” We must want to do what God wants us to do. Moses was that way. God spoke, and Moses was ready to go do His will. In Luke 14:11 Jesus said, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” We need to remove pride from our hearts. Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Whoever exalts himself, God will humble. Thus, if we hope to get anything at all out of Bible study, we must approach it through humility, realizing that God is talking to us. If we are going to obey Him, we must have the right attitude.

A fourth attitude that will promote good Bible study is a sincere desire to obey God and no one else. If we have the attitude that says, “All I want to do in this life is to please the Lord because I want to obey God and go to Heaven,” think of what that would do for our Bible study. Think about people like Daniel, who was told to either submit to the decree of the king and bow down to worship a graven image—or be thrown into the lions’ den. Daniel’s attitude was, “Get the lions ready!” Think about John the Baptizer. He stood in boldness and told an evil king, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” Why did he do that? Why did Daniel refuse to worship a graven image? It is because they had one desire in life—to obey God and no one else. Think about people like Micaiah. In the midst of an evil king and false prophets who were prophesying a smooth message, people came to Micaiah and said, “We’ve given the king a good message, so you do the same.” Micaiah said, “As the Lord lives, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak” (1 Kings 22:14). Think about people like Noah. God was ready to destroy the world because of its evil, and Noah began to build an ark because he wanted to obey God. Think about people like Jesus, Whose main desire was to please God. Think about Paul, who said in Galatians 1:10, “If I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.” Paul changed his life, and had just one Person to please: **God**. Too many times we allow what others think or what others want us to do to affect our Bible study. We think, “If I were to believe this or that, it might make so-and-so unhappy, or it might upset someone in my family.” But we ought to have the attitude, “If I am going to be a good student of Scripture, I need to be considering what **God** thinks!”

A fifth attitude that can help us please God and have a real passion for Bible study is to have an overriding desire to go to Heaven. If your main goal in life is to go to Heaven, then you are naturally going to be a good student of the Scriptures. Philippians 1:21 illustrates the attitude that we all ought to have. Paul said, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is

gain.” What a joy it was for Paul to live for Jesus—and to die for Him. That was actually a good thing! Do we today really have an overriding desire to go to Heaven and be with the Lord?

We also need to think about some of the benefits of Bible study. Yes, we need to have a passion for Bible study. And yes, we ought to develop a good habit of Bible study through proper attitudes. But what can motivate us to be good students of the Bible? May I suggest to you today that Bible study can bring great joy to our lives? A person can never be happier than when he is studying the Scriptures daily. Who is the happy man? Psalm 1: 1-2 says, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.” The psalmist said in Psalm 19:8, “The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” When we are living our lives in tune with the Word of God, and when God’s commandments and precepts are directing our lives each and every day, then we will have real joy. Paul said to the elders in Ephesus in Acts 20:32, “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

Another benefit of studying the Scriptures is that it helps us grow and mature as Christians. In Matthew 5:6 Jesus taught His disciples, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Look again at the words of 1 Peter 2:2, where we are told, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” I hope that today I have sparked a fire within you that will cause you to have a real passion for Bible study. Come to the Scriptures, and realize that they provide the only way to be saved. Without studying the Bible, and without doing what God says for you to do, you cannot be saved. But here is the good news. We are told in Scripture that God has given us “all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us” (2 Pet. 1:3). The Bible has everything we need to get to Heaven. So let me ask you. Are you on the road to Heaven? Have you obeyed the Gospel? Are you a child of God? If not you can become one today. In Acts 2:38 the people were told, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” If you have not done that, why not do it today? We are praying that you will have a real passion for studying the Scriptures.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “A PASSION FOR BIBLE STUDY”

1. What did the prophet Jeremiah say (in Jeremiah 15:16) about God's words?
2. According to Job 23:12, how did Job view God's words?
3. In Luke 2:49, what did young Jesus say to Mary and Joseph?
4. What does 2 Timothy 2:15 teach us?
5. What does 1 Peter 2:2 say in regard to our need for continual study of God's Word?
6. According to 2 Peter 3:18, what are Christians to do?
7. In John 14:15 Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Where are those commandments found?
8. What does Ephesians 5:17 command us to do?
9. According to Ephesians 3:4, what can we do when we read God's Word?
10. In Jeremiah 37:17, what important question did King Zedekiah ask?
11. What important question did the apostle Paul ask in Romans 4:3?
12. In Acts 17:11, why did the apostle Paul commend the people of Berea?
13. According to 1 Peter 3:15, what is each Christian supposed to be ready to do?
14. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” According to John 12:48, what will Jesus eventually do with that authority?
15. What happened to Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11?
16. How did Jesus respond to the events recorded in Matthew 4:1-11?
17. According to Psalm 119:160, what is the “entirety” of God's Word?
18. According to Psalm 119:11, what had the psalmist done with God's Word—and why?
19. What does the Bible tell us in Proverbs 13:15 about “the way of the transgressor”?
20. According to Deuteronomy 4:2 and Revelation 22:18-19, what are we **not** to do in regard to God's Word?
21. What important point does Colossians 3:17 teach us?
22. What important statement did Micaiah make in 1 Kings 22:14?
23. According to 2 Peter 1:3, what does God's Word give us?