

# A PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

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## INTRODUCTION:

**A. When in school the teacher would occasionally give what they called “Pop Quizzes” – These were not good because I was rarely ready to take one... Yet this morning I want to give you a pop quiz!**

1. Questions to ask the assembly – Don’t answer, don’t raise hands, just be honest with yourself!
  - a. How many of you can name all 68 books of the Bible? - Note: Actually there’s only 66!
  - b. How many promises did God make to Abraham? What were those promises? Who were the other two patriarchs besides Abraham? (I say three because of including Josph)
  - c. How many of you can name the twelve apostles? How about the 12 sons of Jacob?
  - d. Who were the three kings of the United Kingdom? Why did it split? Who were the two kings that took over each portion? What were the two new kingdom’s called?
  - e. Which of the apostles were part of the inner circle? Which two apostles came to the empty tomb first? Which apostles are called “The Sons Of Thunder”?
2. Well... how have you done? How much do you really know about God’s word?

**B. People used to refer to God’s people as “People Of The Book” – sometimes even trying to make comments of derision calling them “Walking Bibles!” – Can they say that about us today?**

## I. THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING GOD’S WORD

**A. The children of Israel teach a valuable lesson on the importance of knowing God’s words**

1. As the children of Israel were preparing to enter Canaan one of the main things God wanted them to focus on knowing God and His commands! (**Deut 6:4-9**)
2. God even gave them special reminders to prevent them from forgetting (**Deut 27:1-3; Josh 4:4-7**)
3. In time a generation arose who was ignorant of God and His will (**Judges 2:7-10**)
  - a. What went so terribly wrong here? How you have a group of people just one or two generations removed from Egypt & Sinai who did KNOW God? What a failure!
  - b. Don’t be too shocked! Among God’s people across this country are missing generations... Almost entire generations have arisen that don’t know Him! A serious problem!
  - b. It’s safe to assume in time the trips to these stones waned... Eventually they became neglected, likely overgrown with weeds & bushes, and no trails of footprints visible!
4. A lack of knowledge is illustrated well by Hilkiah’s discovery of the law (**2 Kings 22:8, 10-11**)
  - a. Now if they “found the Book of the Law” what does that mean – IT WAS LOST! God’s law had evidently been lost for many years and was found among rubble at the temple
  - b. Notice what Shaphan calls the law of God – He just says, “The priest has given me a book.”  
→ He doesn’t seem to recognize what it is, its holiness, or the importance of the find
5. It was a failure to know God’s words that resulted in their captivity: (**Isaiah 5:13**)
  - a. We typically think about their idolatry and intermarriages being the problems that brought on their captivities... These were really symptoms of a more fundamental problem!
  - b. The heart of the problem was that His word was not written on their hearts and failed to live with a knowledge of Him (His presence, a desire to please Him, & love for Him)

**B. So as we come to the New Covenant we find that things have not changed! God’s faithful remnant are still a people who know His word!**

1. The early Christians understood the importance of knowing the scriptures (**Acts 2:42; 17:11**)
  - a. What an exciting time this must have been! They are learning more clearly what the Old Testament scriptures were really saying and about Christ! And they are truly hungry!
  - b. Notice they continued STEADFASTLY – This denotes earnestness, perseverance, to be constantly diligent, to adhere closely to → Bible study wasn’t just something they did once or twice a week... They devoted themselves to learning the will of God!
  - c. They didn’t just accept whatever they heard though – They listened to the apostles preach

- and then went home & compared what they taught to the Old Testament scriptures
2. When Paul wrote to Timothy He admonished him to be a man of the book! **(1 Tim 3:13-16)**
    - a. If someone wants to tell me I study too much I take that as a compliment! Sure, you can study to the neglect of other things... But a major focus of my work has to be study!
    - b. He had to know it to be able to teach others, battle false teachers, and even to be able to save his own soul! These are important for all people, not just young preachers!
    - c. Notice the words Paul used to describe Timothy's study – Giving attention, meditate on them, give yourself entirely, & take heed to them → Dedication, time, & effort!
  3. Paul later wrote to Timothy emphasizing the importance of the scriptures **(2 Tim 3:14-17)**
    - a. If one asked Timothy, "When did you first learn the scriptures?" – How would he reply? Maybe, "There's not a time they haven't been before me!" **(Illust: Bible in crib)**
    - b. It is through the scriptures that we gain the knowledge of the truth, learn to change our lives, & learn how to be righteous → If not people of the book, how can we do this?
    - c. Note – Achieving this end personally won't come if our only Bible study occurs at services!
  4. As we pursue spirituality our standard is not our society or our religious friends! **(2 Cor 10:12, 18)**
    - a. You can always find someone out there who will make you feel good about the amount of knowledge that you have! Some may make you seem like a regular Bible scholar!
    - b. We live in a society that is becoming more and more Biblically ignorant! When once a basic knowledge of God's word was common it is now scarce thing in our society
    - c. An increasingly number of people are classified as "unchurched" and the "churched" have very little knowledge of God's word... If they're our standard we'll remain ignorant!

## **II. OUR PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE IS WITH A PURPOSE!**

### **A. Our pursuit of knowledge should be with the goal of truly knowing God!**

1. We see this failure in the Jewish leaders – They studied the scriptures and knew them quite well; however, they failed to come to see and know God through them! **(John 5:37-42)**
  - a. Jesus is dealing with some of the Jewish leaders – Likely the scribes and Pharisees whom He had so many run ins with → These were people who knew God's word well!
  - b. The scribes copied the scriptures which meant they had to know the scriptures well! The Pharisees were the religious teachers so they would have known them well too!
  - c. They searched the scriptures; but, God's word did not abide in them! His words had not found a home in their hearts! The words had lost all power to save & change them!
  - d. Although they knew the instructions of God well, they never came to truly know God!
2. Paul's ultimate goal in life was to know Jesus Christ **(Phil 3:10)**
  - a. To know Christ means to be in fellowship with Him – It means to know about Him academically but to know Him as a friend and as our elder brother!
  - b. This means to become like Christ – It's to experience the power of His resurrection in our lives, to experience similar sufferings, & be made like Him in His death (baptism)
  - c. Paul would have never gone through the sufferings and persecutions if it was just about gaining knowledge – It was about a relationship with Christ & becoming like Him!
3. Our goal as we study is not just to know the Bible, but to know the God of the Bible!
  - a. There's many people who I believe know the Bible pretty well as far as the facts and figures can go... But it is apparent by their attitude & actions they don't know God!
  - b. You can quote the scriptures from cover to cover and it will do you know good unless it brings you into a relationship with Him and makes you like Jesus Christ!

### **B. We aren't just seeking to gain knowledge but to grow in spiritual wisdom!**

1. There is a difference between gaining knowledge and gaining wisdom **(Prov 1:1-7)**
  - a. **Illustration:** My sister got better grades than me, won school awards, & got scholarships ...I was okay with this since I knew she got the book smarts & I got the street smarts!
  - b. Knowledge can refer to just knowing the information – "Having an awareness of" ...the facts & figures in the Bible and knowing what God's commands and instructions are

- c. Wisdom deals more with understanding knowledge and the proper application of it
  - 1) “Wisdom... may be defined as a realistic approach to the problems of life”
  - 2) Homer Hailey: “Insight into the underlying causes and significance or consequence of things, which insight enables one to apply to the best end the knowledge which he has”
- 2. Knowing God’s word is important, but discernment and use are the goal! **(Heb 5:13-14)**
  - a. We typically use this passage to show that we must be growing in our knowledge and that is correct → But we may fail to see the application of the passage is APPLICATION!
  - b.
  - c.
- 3. It is a mark of spiritual wisdom when we learn to apply the principles to regulate our lives!
  - a. God has not spelled out every single thing that is right and wrong for us to do... If He did the Bible would be overwhelming & wouldn’t make sense to people who are from different times and places (i.e. internet sins) – Instead he’s given many principles
  - b. It’s the spiritually immature person & the person who lacks wisdom who says, “Well, God didn’t say I couldn’t...” → Failure to apply the principles of godliness! **(Gal 5:19-23)**
- 4. As we gain greater spiritual wisdom God’s word will become a more powerful tool in our lives in our battles against temptation and sin: **(Matthew 4:1ff, vs. 11; Psalm 119:9-16)**
  - a. Since Jesus is said to have been tempted in all points as we are, the manner in which he handled temptation becomes a model for us – What was it that He battled Satan with? Scriptures! Every time Jesus answered the temptation with the scriptures!
  - b. God’s word being hidden in our hearts guards us against sin!

**C. Our pursuit of knowledge should be directed at strengthening our faith!**

- 1. There is only one way in which we can ever grow in our faith – Through study! **(Rom 10:17)**
  - a. You can certainly look at nature and be convinced that there is a God and learn certain things about His nature and power... But that has a limited power in building faith!
  - b. Some talk about what they “believe” and “know” based upon their feelings and their hearts – But our feelings and our heart can easily be wrong! That doesn’t build faith!
- 2. Faith is founded up, built by, and strengthened by the word of God! This means that if we are not people of the book then we will not be people of faith! **(Rom 1:16-17)**
- 3. As knowledge increases our faith it increasing our endurance as well: **(1 Pet 1:18; James 1:2-3)**
  - a. The idea of endurance and knowledge are inseparable in the scriptures – A key phrase that consistently appears is “Knowing that” → Christians live by what we know!
  - b. We face persecution, disappointment, suffering, despair and temptation in life with perseverance due to our knowledge of Heaven, God, Christ’s sacrifice, grace, etc!

**D. Knowledge alone does us no good, we’ve got to apply the commands, lessons, and principles we learn!**

- 1. James emphasizes that it is the one who hears and does God’s word who is blessed! **(Jas 1:22-25)**
- 2. Consider some typical attitudes we encounter in ourselves & others demonstrating this problem:
  - a. A person who comes to services and listens to the sermons and participates in Bible study & learns a lot... But, when they leave they don’t live any different from the world!
  - b. Another learns a great amount but they always feel like its talking about someone else!
  - c. Others carefully learn the scriptures since they are supposed to do; but, the scriptures do not change them, motivate them, and draw them closer to Christ... Its habitual!
- 3. It is with this idea that Jesus ended the Sermon On The Mount → **(Matthew 7:24-27)**
  - a. We often emphasize from this passage that our lives, homes, and local churches must be built upon Jesus Christ, the rock which is our foundation, and that is certainly true
  - b. But notice what Jesus is emphasizing here – It’s on HEARING the words of Jesus and DOING the words of Jesus... That’s how we build our lives upon Him!