

## THE PRIVILEGE OF BIBLE STUDY

by Tom Wacaster

With the New Year now just around the corner, I am doing my best to put into practice some of those things that I deem important and which, as per my new year resolutions, will make for a better year. I have always considered myself blessed in that I get to spend an abundance of time each week in a study of God's word. Words simply cannot express the appreciation I have for this opportunity. I was once asked how much time I would spend in study were I not preaching on a full time basis. Just over eight years ago I had just such an opportunity to experience a return to "secular" work and preach "on the side" as we are wont to say. So I can address that question from personal experience. Admittedly I did not have the same amount of time that was available in the capacity of supported local work, but I made every effort to keep up my studies during those months of secular work. I learned some important lessons during those months.

First, I learned that one has to make time for study. There are a lot of things that will crowd out your own personal study time if allowed to do so. Each child of God must determine that he will not allow this aspect of his spiritual life to go unattended. A hundred years from now it will not matter whether you let that lawn go un-mowed. You can catch up on your book keeping at a later hour. But once study is neglected you rob yourself of that daily dosage of spiritual nutrition that keeps you going for the next day. If you are going to study you must make the time for study. If study is not placed at the top of your list of daily activities, the chances are you will find your time with God's word crowded out by those things that may seem important at the moment, but which really pale in significance to your study of God's word.

Second, I came to appreciate the power of accumulative study. You don't need to conquer a book of the Bible in one evening, or even one week. A few months back someone asked me where I found the time to write and publish five books in less than three years. The fact is, I did not write those books in three years. I have been writing on those books for more than 20 years. A number of years ago I read of a seventh grader who was asked how he went about studying the Bible. He said, "I read ten chapters a night in the Bible and one chapter in the commentary." Most folks read 150 to 200 words per minute. If you spent thirty minutes a day you could easily read through the entire Bible twice in one year (with approximately 2 months to spare). Spend an additional three hours per week (half an hour each day for six days) in study and you could read approximately 1560 pages in good, sound commentaries and/or Bible helps. Over a period of time you will be somewhat astonished at the amount of material you have studied.

Third, I came to realize the importance of application of the word to my life. Secular work, by its very nature, puts the child of God into contact with non-Christians. Since Satan is described as a "roaring lion...seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8), it only makes sense that the application of the word to one's life is essential to the utilization of our study of the word.

Fourth, and closely akin to the previous, I learned that it is important to read and study for the right reason. Our aim in Bible study should be to come to a knowledge of the truth

and better our life here on earth and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. The following appeared in the 1919 Abilene College Lectures:

*'Tis one thing, friend, to read the Bible through;  
Another thing to read, to learn, to do.  
'Tis one thing, too, to read it with delight,  
And quite another thing to read it right.*

*Some read it with design to learn to read,  
But to the subject pay but little heed;  
Some read it as their duty once a week,  
But no instruction from the Bible seek.*

*Some read to bring themselves into repute  
By showing others how they can dispute;  
While others read because their neighbors do,  
To see how long 'twill take to read it through.*

*Some read the blessed Book, they know not why,  
It sometimes happens in the way to lie;  
While others read it with uncommon care;  
But all to find some contradiction there.*

*One reads with father's 'specs' upon his head,  
And sees the things just as his father did;  
Another reads through Campbell, Stone and Scott,  
And thinks it meant just what they thought.*

*Some read to prove a pre-adopted creed,  
Thus, understanding little what they read;  
And every passage in the Book they bend  
To make it suit that all-important end.*

*Some people read, as I have often thought,  
To teach the Book instead of being taught.  
How readest thou?*

Finally, I came to appreciate even more the privilege of study itself. During those months of secular work I would, more often than not, be the one who turned off the lights, locked up the doors, and secured the office until the next morning. I was then free to pursue my own desires. How grateful I was, and still am, that there were no laws that forbade my study of God's word. In our country the Bible is still the best seller. The religious section in book stores remains active. In our country, men can write, read, and teach anything they want when it comes to religion. But the man who does not take advantage of this wonderful privilege to pursue a knowledge of the truth is no better off than the atheist and agnostic who has no desire to read and study that Sacred Book of books. Attitude plays an important part in the development of behavior. Perhaps if we acquire a greater appreciation for the privilege of study our study habits themselves will improve dramatically. Let's make every year a year of thanksgiving for the privilege of study.