

Open Bible, Open Minds (2)

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The art of effective Bible study can be broadly divided into two categories: attitude and mechanics. Generally speaking, faulty Bible knowledge is more a product of wayward attitudes than poor mechanics. If our attitude toward God's word is impure, then good mechanics are useless.

Last week we spoke of open-mindedness. This involves a willingness to consider new elements of truth and add them to one's understanding so as to enjoy constant growth and development of knowledge. Close-mindedness is deceptive; I have never heard a brother admit to it. The fact is that we sometimes confuse our attachment to friends, family, preachers, the "brotherhood" or the past with what we really understand the Bible to say. This is a tendency all must guard against.

A second attitude basic to Bible study is genuine interest in the subject, a hunger and thirst for knowledge that seeks out time for study and information to enlighten. If every moment spent in study is a drudgery, I dare say that we will learn little and enjoy it even less. Can we truly "amen" the psalmist? *"Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day"* (Ps 119:97).

Thirdly, we must have a humble and submissive attitude toward God's will. When we want something to be a certain way, it is hard to accept an opposing truth. Peter faced this obstacle when Jesus spoke of His coming death. Peter did not want to think about that prospect and rebuked the Lord. Jesus' response: *"You are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men"* (Mt 16:23). Likewise the Jews were more concerned about maintaining their status in the Roman Empire than in acknowledging the truth of Jesus' identity (Jn 11:48).

The Scriptures are the Creator's words (1 Cor 2:10-16). All our feelings, opinions, desires and wisdom must yield to the will of heaven.

One of the lesser considerations of effective Bible study is one that troubles many people: raw intellect. Many aspects of God's word are readily discernable by people of varying intellectual capability. Age, upbringing, lack of formal education or perceived weak memory can all be overcome by genuine interest and diligent effort in studying the Bible. If we are not careful these perceived shortcomings can hinder the hard work necessary to learning.

In future articles we will explore some sound mechanics of Bible study.