

## ***Open Bible, Open Minds (6)***

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**T**he Bible is, in short, a collection of literature. Granted, it is literature from God, but literature just the same. What this means is that our study must be on a literary basis.

First, there are historical books full of characters, dates, places and events which challenge our interest and retention. If we weakly dismiss this aspect of the Bible by saying, “I just don’t like history” or “I just can’t remember things,” then we have dismissed a significant portion of what God is saying to us.

There are many reference works which can assist us in this area of study. Every serious student of the Scriptures should invest in a good Bible dictionary or encyclopedia set. Such works are invaluable in researching all sorts of Biblical topics.

A good Bible atlas is also an important tool. Geography plays a vital role in the unfolding of the Bible story and maps help us visualize how events transpired.

Secondly, the Scriptures were given by the Holy Spirit according to the rules of language that existed at the time of revelation. What this means is that the Bible is not written in some sort of “heavenly lingo” different from other pieces of literature. Some attention must be given to sentence structure, definitions, verb tenses and other grammatical details in order to understand what is read.

For example, Jesus’ contemporaries failed to consider His use of figurative language and falsely accused Him of saying He would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days (Mt 26:61). Bible writers use repetition, exaggeration, similes and metaphors, rhetorical questions, parenthetical thoughts, metonymy, ellipses and numerous other linguistic tools to express themselves. Those who ignore this aspect of Bible study are liable to “*twist to their own destruction*” the Scriptures (2 Pet 3:16). One cannot accurately understand the Bible when contradicting the rules of language.

The notion exists among some that Bible study merely involves reading a passage and chasing down a few cross-references. Some also feel that Bible study should be effortless, that God has somehow spoken in a simple way which demands little more than casual reading. No, it doesn’t take a Ph.D to understand the Bible, but it does require genuine effort which uses the various tools available to deeply mine the word.

Can one tell from your Bible library that you are a serious student of God’s word? Is there a fire burning within you to know everything you can know about the Bible?