

Food for thought...
Daily Bible Study Series

September 5 — October 2, 2016



What does
the Bible say
about the Bible?

Part 1

Changing the way
we think
about the Bible

by Doug Cameron

About the author ...

Doug grew up in a fairly traditional church environment. He was confirmed as a member of the church when he was 14 years old and in his first year of High School; but within 6 months he became an atheist. So, as he often says in jest, he was quite literally a confirmed atheist—that is, until two friends introduced him to Christ in his final year of High School.

He was ordained in 1985, and has served churches in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Ontario. Along the way, God blessed him with two daughters and one grandson, all of whom he loves very much.

Doug freely admits that his conversion was at first quite intellectual. The mind was converted; but the heart took a really long time to catch up. It has been said that the moment of our conversion begins the process of evangelizing the unbelieving parts of the believer's heart. Doug suggests that he is living proof that this process can take a long time, and he freely acknowledges that he still has a long way to go. He longs for the day when all the hardness in his heart is removed and all that remains is a pure and holy love for His Saviour and His Lord.

Doug longs to see the Christian Church truly come alive. He sees the extraordinary poverty that exists in most churches—not a poverty of finances; but a poverty of spirit. We so often do all the right things and miss the point of it all. And all too often, when God begins to show us deeper levels of faith, we become so excited about the newness of the life that we're experiencing in Christ that we stop searching and camp on the lower ranges of the mountains. But in fact God wants us to keep climbing in His strength and by His Spirit until we hit the peak.

Doug has a passion for inductive Bible Study. He has discovered the power of using ordinary observation skills to study the Bible, and he has discovered the depths of understanding that can emerge when one takes those ordinary, everyday observation skills and hones them under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit. It is this passion that he brings to these Daily Bible Studies. He invites you now to join him in discovering the hidden treasures that really aren't so hidden if one takes the time to uncover them. Along the way, he hopes that you yourself will grow in your ability to study the Bible for all it's worth!

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A word about this particular Bible Study series ...

I'm always interested in receiving feedback on these Bible Studies. What worked for you? What didn't? How could it be improved?

A very good friend of mine took me up on the offer some time back. She commented that some of the questions I ask feel very basic. I believe her exact words were "like Sunday School".

In light of her comment (and the high likelihood that others may feel the same way), I thought it would be helpful to include an explanation of why those "very basic" questions are so important.

First, let's talk about bricklayers.

If you want to build a brick wall, you have to begin at the bottom of the wall, and the care that you take on the very first layer of the wall will determine the quality of the whole wall. If you work hard to ensure that the first layer of bricks is dead level, and take the same care on every other layer, you'll end up with a really good wall. But if you're not careful with that first layer,—and every subsequent layer—you won't be able to fix the mistakes when you get to the last layer of bricks.



There are four layers involved in a careful, in-depth Bible study. Like a brick wall, the care you take on the first layer determines the quality of the final product of your Bible study.

That first layer is observation. Sometimes the things that are most obvious are really not that obvious. I'm a photographer. I notice the small details in my surroundings that others sometimes miss. I see the way the light plays on that clump of mushrooms over there. I see the shadows playing on the leaves, and the curious shapes made by fallen trees. I've often joked that photography is great exercise—especially when you're hiking with a group. You spend so much time looking at and photographing the little details that you're constantly running to catch up with the others!

Just as we can miss the small details on a hike through the forest, we can miss the small details that are incredibly meaningful when we're studying the Bible. And if we miss those small details, our interpretation and application will be lacking as well.



And of course, the same holds true for the second layer of bricks—the interpretation of what we've read. We need to think deeply about the real meaning of the passage before we can accurately and faithfully apply it.



The third layer begins the process of application. This is when we sit quietly in the presence of the Lord asking Him to show us where we need to apply the truths that we've just uncovered. You don't want to rush this process. If we take the time to listen to what the Lord is saying to us, He'll put His finger on some areas in our lives that we didn't even know existed. After all, He knows our hearts better than we do! That moment of discovery can be extraordinarily life-changing!



And the fourth layer is the most critical—the moment of decision. What are we going to do with all that God has been teaching us today. The moment of decision finalizes the application of what you learned when you were so carefully observing and interpreting the Word of God.

Without those last two layers of application, the first two are pointless. It's possible to be steeped in the Bible—to know it inside out, upside down, and backwards and still be just an empty bag of wind. If we know it, and don't apply it, what good is it to us? That's like having a beautiful top of the line Rolls Royce and never driving it!

This is why some of those questions feel so basic. We're taking great care laying the foundational row of the bricks in order to ensure that our interpretation and application really are accurate and biblical.

God's Word isn't really that complicated. You don't have to be a scholar to understand it, and apply it. All you need is a close connection to the Spirit of God and a heart committed to following Him. As you draw near to God, He'll give understanding and show you how He intends you to apply what He caused to be written.

Observation, Interpretation and Application. It really is that simple!

A note about translations...

We are blessed with an extraordinary range of options when it comes to translations. I now have at least 20 different English translations of the Bible installed on my cell phone. And there are many more available. So what makes a good translation and how do you know which is the right one to use?

That depends on what you're wanting to do. Some translations are word-for-word (or as close as possible). Others are thought-for-thought (working hard to convey the meaning as a whole).

The problem with thought-for-thought translations (such as the NIV) is that there is always a significant amount of interpretation that goes into the final text. That works very well for most purposes; but that interpretation can get in the way when it comes to a careful inductive (observation-based) study of the Bible. That's why I prefer to use word-for-word translations when it comes to careful inductive Bible Studies.

There are several good word-for-word translations. The NASB, the NKJV, and the ESV (English Standard Version) are amongst the most completely word-for-word translations available today. My preference is the ESV, and for that reason, you'll find that unless otherwise indicated, all of the scriptures used, quoted or referred to in this Bible Study will be from the ESV. No translation is perfectly word-for-word. For that reason, I'll draw on others as is helpful in the course of this study. I'll be sure to let you know when I do this, and why I've done it.

May you be richly blessed as you dig deep into God's Word.

You may notice that I regularly capitalize all of my references to God. I developed this habit early on in my walk with the Lord, and I just can't seem to break it. (In fact, I don't want to break it.)

I recognize that I am very much in the minority in this, and I cast no aspersion on those who don't follow this particular convention. It's simply my quirky way of honouring the Lord in my writing.

I will, however, honour the conventions established by those whom I quote.

Before we begin . . .

About 25 years ago I had the privilege of working with a small group of people who felt a calling to plant a church in a nearby community. We spent a considerable amount of time developing our statement of faith in order to ensure that we were laying a solid doctrinal foundation for the church.

So I asked my friends, "What do you believe about the Bible?" And we began making a list of the things we believe: "We believe it's the inspired Word of God." "We believe it's the ultimate authority in our lives." . . . And so on.

And then I asked the most critical question: "What scriptures lend support to your beliefs about the Bible?" Nobody had an answer for that question.

Their beliefs about the Bible were absolutely on target. But their beliefs about the Bible weren't rooted in the Bible itself. In a sense their beliefs about the Bible were simply traditions that had been passed down to them—things they had been taught in Sunday School, or in a membership class, or by their parents, or some other source.

And so we began a detailed inductive Bible Study of what the Bible says about the Bible.

I don't think my friends were by any means unique. In fact, I would contend that the vast majority of Christians today are effectively Biblically illiterate. Most would agree that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Most would agree that it is the ultimate authority when it comes to life and faith. At least, that's what we would say we believe. But our actions say something very different. Our functional theology is radically different from our creedal theology.

What do I mean by "functional theology"? Simply this: Our creedal theology is defined by what we say we believe. Our functional theology is defined by the way we live our lives.

An example:

John and Mary have been married for more than 40 years. They were eating breakfast one day when Mary asked John the question that had been burning on her heart for years: "John, do you love me?" John didn't say a word. His face was buried in the sports section of the morning paper. So Mary repeated the question: "John, do you love me?" John ignored her and kept reading the paper. So she repeated the question again. And again. And again. Finally, with an edge of frustration in his voice, John replied, "Woman, I told you more than 40 years ago that I love you, and I'll let know if I ever change my mind!"

With his lips he declared his love for his wife. But his actions screamed something very different. His creedal affirmation was that he loved his wife. His functional affirmation was something very different.

With our lips, we declare that we love God. With our lips we declare that we are deeply committed to Him. With our lips we declare our absolute conviction that He loves us deeply and profoundly. With our lips we declare our confidence that the Bible is His written Word to us. But our lives declare something very different.

Perhaps it's time we changed that reality!

And so, as they say, let us begin.

05-Sept-16

Amos 8:1-14

I recognize that this is a rather unusual place to begin a Bible Study with the theme, "What does the Bible say about the Bible?" Nevertheless, I think it is not only appropriate, but necessary. We're going to focus on verse 11-12; but before we go there, I want to encourage you to read the entire chapter of Amos 8 several times through in order to get the context of verses 11-12 firmly settled in your mind.



- An orange can be divided into sections. A play can be divided into acts and scenes. A poem can be divided into stanzas and typically letters are divided into paragraphs.

In the same way, everything that we read in the Bible can usually be divided into different parts. In your opinion, where would you put the dividing lines to mark a transition from one section to the next in Amos 8? Why?



- How would you characterize the message that Amos is delivering in chapter 8? According to the word God gave to Amos, what kind of future do the people have? Explain.



- Why has God pronounced this judgment on the people of Israel? (Amos 8:1-14)
- What kind of famine will God send on the land? (Amos 8:11)
- What will the people do when the famine strikes them? (Amos 8:12)



- Place yourself in the position of those who were hearing Amos' words. From their perspective, what would a famine "of hearing the words of the Lord" mean?

Spend some time pondering the following questions:



- Are we living in the midst of a famine "of hearing the words of the Lord"?
- If you answered yes to the above question, is that famine one of hearing God speak directly to us? Explain.
- Again, if you said that we are living in the midst of a famine "of hearing the words of the Lord", is that famine one of hearing and understanding the Bible? Explain.
- Again, if you said that we are living in the midst of a famine "of hearing the words of the Lord", ask God to show you why this famine has come our way? Make a note of anything that God shows you.



- Spend some time praying as and how God leads you to pray.



6-Sep-16 — 07-Sep-16

Amos 2:6-8

Why has the famine come?

The book of Amos is a worthy study in and of itself. We cannot do it justice in this particular Bible Study, but I encourage you to read it and study it yourself. In the future, perhaps we'll have the opportunity to study it together.

While we can't do a thorough study of the book of Amos, we absolutely must take a few moments to study it more carefully in order to understand the context of Amos 8:11-12. Specifically, it is worth asking why this famine "of hearing the words of the Lord" came upon the people of Israel.



- Read Amos 2:6-8
- Why was God angry with Israel?



- What does "they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals" mean? (Amos 2:6)



- Who is responsible for doing the things spoken of in verse 6? (Amos 2:7)



It is tempting to write off Amos' words as having no real meaning for us today. After all, we don't sell people! Slavery was abolished long ago. But let's look a little deeper.

Are we willing to turn a blind eye to those who suffer simply because we aren't willing to pay the price of justice? Is this what it means for us to "sell ... the needy for a pair of sandals"?

Do we choose to be silent when those who are truly righteous are being attacked? Do we do so simply because we're not willing to pay the price of inconvenience, or discomfort, or social disapproval that comes with taking a stand? Is this what it means for us to "sell the righteous for silver"?



- Ask God to show you how Amos 2:6-7a applies to you.



- In what way is God's name being profaned? (Amos 2:7)



- Ponder: how does this behaviour cause God's name to be profaned?

- Ask God to show you what you are doing that causes His name to be profaned? (Be prepared for a surprising and distressing answer to emerge within your spirit. God has a habit of exposing some pretty uncomfortable truths when we honestly and willingly ask Him to do so.)



- What does verse 8 mean?

The New Living Translation does a fantastic job of making verse 8 understandable to 21st century Christians:

"At their religious festivals, they lounge in clothing their debtors put up as security.

In the house of their gods, they drink wine bought with unjust fines." (Amos 2:8 NLT)



- Why was this behaviour offensive to God? (Consider Exodus 22:25-26 as you answer this question.)



- What do you think was most offensive to God about this behaviour?



- What ungodly attitudes and/or actions are we bringing with us when we enter God's presence to worship Him? To put it another way, what offensive attitudes and/or actions are we carrying with us when we gather for worship or when we approach God individually to worship Him?

[Take some time to ponder this one. Our natural tendency will be to deny that there's anything offensive in us. But the truth is that we are all a work in progress. I don't know anyone who has attained such a level of perfection in their lives that they no longer cause any offense to the Lord.

So give Him time and your attention to allow Him to speak to you honestly.



Then confess whatever He's showing you, and ask Him what He wants you to do about it.

And ask Him what He wants you to allow Him to do about it.

(Those last two questions are very different!)]



- What impact would these things that the people of Israel were doing have on the famine "of hearing the words of the Lord"? Explain.



- What has been most challenging for you as you've studied God's Word today?
- What has convicted you the most as you've been studying this passage from God's Word?



- Spend some time talking with God about what you've been learning today. Ask Him what He wants you to do about what He's been showing you. Then, follow through on what He shows you to do.



8-Sep-16

Amos 2:9-12; Numbers 6:1-21; Ephesians 4:11-16

Why has the famine come?

-  • What three things did God do for the people of Israel? (Amos 2:9-11)
- What did the people of Israel do? (Amos 2:12)

Read Numbers 6:1-21 to understand what a Nazarite is.

-  • Why would it be wrong to force a Nazarite to drink wine?
-  • Who raised up and appointed the Nazarites and the prophets? (Amos 2:11)
-  • Who, then, were the people of Israel sinning against when they forced the Nazarites to drink wine and told the prophets to “shut up” (as the New Living Translation so aptly puts it)?
-  • What impact would these things have on the famine “of hearing the words of the Lord”? Explain.

A comment someone made quite a while ago has stayed with me. The person speaking observed that the greatest problem we face as a church today is the fact that we live in a democracy and we tend to think that the church should be run as a democracy. But the fact is that the church is not a democracy. It never was intended to be a democracy. The church is ultimately intended to be a theocracy with Jesus Christ being the head. We take our orders from Him and Him alone.

-  • What does Ephesians 4:11-16 tell us about how God intends for the leadership of the church to be appointed? [Pay very close attention to the exact wording of Ephesians 4:11.]
 -  • Prayerfully consider: what needs to change in your church if the famine “of hearing the words of the Lord” is to come to an end?
 -  • What needs to change in your heart to bring an end to the famine “of hearing the words of the Lord”?
 - Talk to God about these things.
-

9-Sep-16

Amos 4:6-11; 5:21-24

Why has the famine come?

Read Amos 4:6-11 carefully.



- What suffering did God bring on the people of Israel? [Note: in this prophecy, “cleanness of teeth” does not refer to sparkingly white ivories! Their teeth were clean because they didn’t have anything to eat.]
- Why did God do these things? (Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11)
- What impact did these things have on the people of Israel? (Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11)

Read Amos 5:21-24.



- How does God feel about their worship? (Amos 5:21, 23)
- Ponder: Didn’t God command them to hold the feasts? Didn’t He command them to offer burnt offerings, grain offerings and sacrifice of peace offerings? [The short answer is, “yes”.] Why then does he say that he hates them? (Amos 5:24)



I wonder how God feels about our worship services. I wonder if He is truly pleased with our worship. Or is it possible that He rejects our worship just as He rejected the worship of the people of Israel in Amos’ day?

I wonder what impact these things might have on the famine “of hearing the words of the Lord”.



- Ponder these things in the presence of the Lord and write down your thoughts. [As I’ve said before, be very careful of the natural tendency to be defensive. Be open to the Lord showing you difficult truths. Be open to making whatever changes you need to make as He shows you these truths about yourself.]
 - Talk to God about what He is showing you. Commit to dealing with anything that He reveals to you about yourself.
-

10-Sep-16 — 11-Sep-16

Weekend Review

Why has the famine come?

- Review your notes from your study this week.
 -  • Ponder: What can I do to prepare myself more effectively to worship God on Sunday?
 - What can I do to position myself more effectively to hear God's Word as I study it privately and as it is proclaimed from the pulpit on Sunday?
 - What can I do to position myself more effectively to be able to recognize the whispers of God's Spirit speaking into my spirit and my heart.
 -  • And the all important question: What will I do?
 - Talk to God about these things as you go about the business of living your life this weekend.
-

12-Sep-16 — 13-Sep-16

Amos 7:1-15

Why has the famine come?



- Amos describes three visions in chapter seven. What was the first vision that he saw? (Amos 7:1-2)
- How effective were these locusts? (Amos 7:2)



The ESV, along with several other translations, says that these locusts were being formed “when the latter growth was just beginning to sprout, and behold, it was the latter growth after the king’s mowings.”

A question quite naturally arises from this description: What are “the king’s mowings”?

The New Living Translation interprets this as happening “after the king’s share had been harvested from the fields and as the main crop was coming up.”

That seems like a fairly reasonable interpretation of this passage, although the truth is that with close to 3,000 years separating us from the original events that Amos was describing, there is definitely room for doubt about what this meant.

What is not in doubt is the impact that this plague of locusts would have had if God had followed through with the creation of this plague of locusts that He had shown Amos He was going to do in Israel. We see the seriousness of this plague in Amos’ response.



- What did Amos say to God when He saw the vision of the locusts? (Amos 7:2)
- How did God respond to Amos’ prayer? (Amos 7:3)
- What was the second vision that Amos saw? (Amos 7:4)
- How serious was this fire?
- What did Amos say to God when He saw the vision of the fire? (Amos 7:5)
- How did God respond to Amos’ prayer? (Amos 7:6)
- What was the third vision that Amos saw? (Amos 7:7)



Note: a plumb line consists of a weight on the end of a string. [See the illustration of a plumb line to the right.] The plumb line is used to ensure that a wall (or any other object it is measuring) is perfectly vertical. If it’s built true to the plumb line, the wall won’t lean either to the left or to the right.



- Was this wall built using a plumb line? (Amos 7:7)
- What was the Lord holding in His hand? (Amos 7:7)



- What do you think He was doing with this plumb line?



- What explanation did the Lord give Amos for this vision that He had shown him? (Amos 7:8-9)



- What is the connection between the picture of the Lord holding a plumb line and the explanation of the vision that the Lord gave Amos? How does the one illustrate the other?



- How does this vision of destruction compare with the previous two visions of destruction? [Pay attention to the details here. Compare the geographical extent of the judgment in all three visions, and compare the people affected by the judgment in all three visions. What do you notice about this vision compared to the previous two visions?]
- Do you see God’s mercy at work in this third vision of judgment and destruction? Explain.
-  • What action did Amaziah (the priest of Bethel) take when he heard Amos prophesying in this manner? (Amos 7:10-11)
-  • What do you think Amaziah was hoping Jeroboam would do?
-  • What did Amaziah tell Amos to do? (Amos 7:12-13)
- What answer did Amos give to Amaziah? (Amos 7:14-15)
- Pay very close attention to what Amos said to Amaziah. What authority did Amos claim for himself? According to Amos, who commanded him to speak out these words of prophecy against Israel and King Jeroboam?
- Pay very close attention to what Amaziah said to Amos. According to Amaziah who did the sanctuary belong to? Who did the temple belong to?
-  • What words of God’s judgment against the people of Israel did Amaziah demonstrate and prove by what he said to Amos? (see Amos 2:12)

You may be very tempted to criticize Amaziah at this point. How could Amaziah claim that the temple belonged to anyone other than God?

And yet, I wonder how many church members treat the church as if it was something that belonged to them. I wonder if there aren’t ways in which we begin to take ownership of “our” churches.

We may be very tempted to criticize Amaziah for telling Amos to stop prophesying in Israel. How dare he shut down the mouthpiece of the Lord?

And yet, I wonder whether there aren’t some similar dynamics at work in the church today? Do we seek out pastors who will preach the kind of things we want to hear? Do we shut out pastors who preach a harder message? Do we seek a comforting word on Sunday mornings? Do we avoid preachers who make us squirm a little (or a lot)?

As pastors, are we tempted to avoid hard messages for fear that we might turn people off or turn them away? Are we tempted to cater to what we perceive to be the expectations of the people we serve? Or is it possible that we have stopped listening to the Lord altogether, and are simply declaring our own opinions in the sermons that we preach on Sunday mornings (or any other time for that matter).



- What has been most convicting for you as you've studied Amos 7:1-15 these past few days?



- What do you need to confess to the Lord?

- Tell Him.

- What commitment are you prepared to make to the Lord at this time?

- Tell Him.

14-Sep-16

Amos 8:4-6; 8:13-14

Why has the famine come?

Read Amos 8:4-6 several times through.

-  • Do you hear echoes in Amos 8:4-6 of things that you have already read in the book of the prophet Amos? Explain.
- What is wrong with saying,
 “When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain?
 And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale?” (Amos 8:5)
 [What does this kind of thinking expose in their hearts?]
-  • Ponder your own experience of worship. Does your mind wander when you're worshipping God? Do you sometimes wish that the worship service would be over so that you could get on with your day? What do you need to do in order to more fully enter into worshipping God from your heart?
-  • Talk to God about these things.
-  To understand Amos 8:14, one needs to define the meaning of three words or phrases:

The first is “The Guilt (or Shame in some translations) of Samaria”:

The nation of Israel was united under three kings: Saul, David and Solomon.

When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam inherited the throne. By that time, Jeroboam had risen to prominence as a sort of leader of the opposition in Israel. The long and the short of it is that very soon after Rehoboam took the throne, Jeroboam led a rebellion which saw ten of the tribes of Israel separate from the remaining two. Judah and Benjamin formed the nation of Judah, and the other ten tribes of Israel formed the nation of Israel.

But Jeroboam was concerned. He worried that the entire population of Israel still had to return to Jerusalem to worship the Lord at the temple. He did not want his people returning to Jerusalem (in the heart of the nation of Judah) for any reason whatsoever lest their loyalty should be drawn back to Rehoboam and his descendants.

So Jeroboam made two golden calves (does that sound familiar?) and established two different sanctuaries where his people could go to “worship God”. One sanctuary was in the community of Bethel, close to the border that Israel shared with the nation of Judah and as close as he could get to Jerusalem. The other sanctuary was as far north as he could possibly go in Israel—in the city of Dan (not to be confused with the tribal territory of Dan). [See 1 Kings 12:25-33]

One of the most common comments made in the books of Kings and Chronicles about king after king in Israel has to do with “the sin of Jeroboam” or “the sin of the house of Jeroboam”. King after king in Israel is either said to have “clung to the sin of Jeroboam” (2 Kings 3:3), or “followed the sins of Jeroboam” (2 Kings 13:2), or it is said that they did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam. In every case they are referring to the idolatry that Jeroboam established when he commanded his people to worship the golden calves in Bethel or Dan rather than to worship the Lord in Israel.

In my view, it is highly likely, then, that the “Guilt (or Shame) of Samaria” is a reference to the golden calves that Jeroboam made as idols for the people of Israel to worship.

The second and third terms are “Dan” and “Beersheba”:

Both Dan and Beersheba are communities in the nation of Israel, but they are at opposite ends of the nation. Dan is in the far north of Israel, and Beersheba is in the far south of Israel. [See the map on the right.] For that reason the phrase, “from Dan to Beersheba” was frequently used to describe the entire nation of Israel. [See Judges 20:1; 1 Samuel 3:20; 2 Samuel 3:10; 17:11; 24:2, 15; 1 Kings 4:25; 1 Chronicles 21:2; 2 Chronicles 30:5]

There’s an old Canadian song, “This Land is Your Land” with the following lyrics:

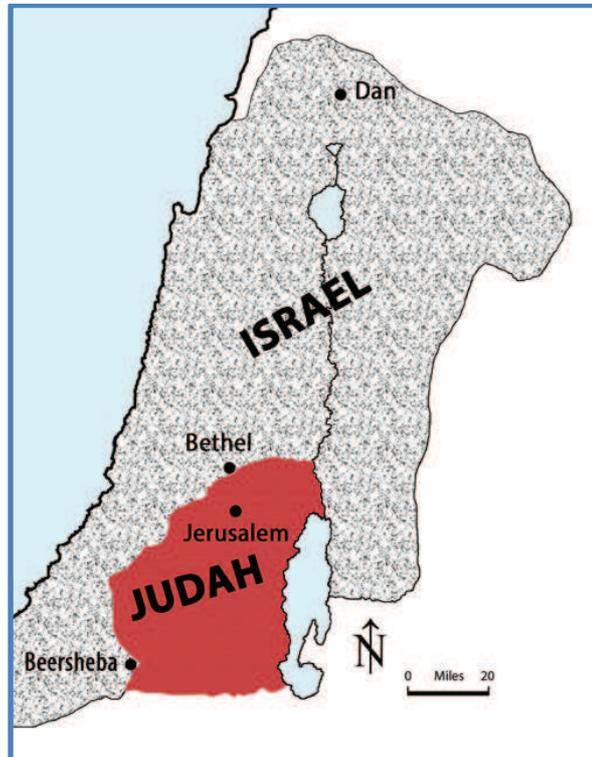
This land is your land,
This land is my land,
From Bonavista
To Vancouver Island,
From the Arctic Circle,
To the Great Lake waters,
This land was made for you and me.

The use of the phrase, “from Dan to Beersheba” carried the same kind of meaning with respect to the nation of Israel that the lyrics “From Bonavista to Vancouver Island, From the Arctic Circle to the Great Lake waters” carries for us. It encompassed the entire nation of Israel.

As far as I can tell, Amos 8:14 is the only place in the Bible where the two terms Dan and Beersheba are both used in the same verse without the use of the phrase “from Dan to Beersheba”. In my view, it is highly likely, then, that Amos’ reference to both of these cities in the context of the worship of idols is an indictment of the entire nation of Israel for its idolatry.

- Reread Amos 8:13-14 with these things in mind.
- Do these two verses add to your understanding of why God chose to bring a famine “of hearing the words of the Lord” on the people of Israel?

🌍 Sometimes idolatry is obvious. Golden calves are clearly idolatrous. But in our culture, idolatry is just as rampant, but not as obvious. In a nutshell, anything that you give preference to over your relationship with God is an idol.



Here are some questions to ponder throughout the day in order to test the level of your own idolatry. [As I've said before, beware of the automatic defensive reaction. We'll be tempted to absolve ourselves of idolatry, but the truth is that most of us are almost certainly guilty of it to one degree or another. So take your time as you ponder these questions. Let them sift through your consciousness and linger in the back of your mind as you go through the day. And be open to whatever God may show you as you ask yourself these questions.]

- What do you spend most of your free time doing?
- What do you give the best hours of your day to?
- What do you put most of your effort into?
- What do you prefer above God?
- What do you take comfort in before God?
- What do you take refuge in apart from God?
- What do you depend on other than God?



- Now sum it up: what has God been revealing to you as you've pondered these questions today?
- What are you going to do about it?
- Tell Him.



15-Sep-16 — 16-Sep-16

Amos 8:11-12

It all begins with repentance.



Many years ago, I had the privilege of vacationing for a week in Antigua with some other members of my family. We rented a time-share condominium from a friend for a week. On a couple of occasions we took brief tours of the island. Through the van's windows, we "saw" the land. We got an impression of how the Antiguan people lived. But it was all very superficial. To really understand Antigua, you'd have to live there for a while. You'd have to immerse yourself in the day-to-day life of the people.

We've just taken a very quick touristy excursion through the book of the prophet Amos. There is no way that we can claim to have fully understood this book in such a short period of time. Nevertheless, through the van windows, we've caught a glimpse of the landscape. And with that brief view of the landscape of the book, we're able to begin to put a few pieces together. That's exactly what I'm going to invite you to do now.

- Spend the next couple of days reviewing your notes from your study last week. Take a look at the progression in the book of Amos. See if you can identify how the people of Israel got from there to here.
- What did God first judge them for?
- How did they respond to His judgment?
- What did they originally do to offend God?
- What did they do to further push Him away from them?
- On the basis of all that you have learned this week, why do you think God chose to send a famine "of hearing the words of the Lord" upon the nation of Israel?
- What do you think the people of Israel could have done to avoid experiencing this famine "of hearing the words of the Lord"?



Ponder the following questions over the next few days:

- How deep is the famine "of hearing the words of the Lord" in my community and in my church?
- How deep is the famine "of hearing the words of the Lord" in my own life? [Do I regularly hear the thoughts and words that God is whispering into my spirit and into my soul, or is this very question itself confusing to me simply because I've never had that kind of experience.]

To put this last question another way, Jesus once said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Do you truly know the voice of the Lord? I'm not talking about a literal audible voice. Some have experienced this, but most do not. Those who refer to "hearing the voice of the Lord" are most often referring to thoughts and words that spring up into their minds, their hearts and their spirits. Those who refer to "hearing the voice of the Lord" have learned (or are learning) how to differentiate their own thoughts from the words and thoughts that the Lord places in their minds, hearts and spirits and from the words and thoughts that the enemy of their souls places in their minds, hearts and spirits. Have you had this kind of experience of hearing the Lord whisper a thought into your mind, your heart, soul, your spirit?



- What do you need to do in order to position yourself to hear God's whispers more clearly?
- What do you need to do in order to receive the written Word of God more deeply into your life?
- Does your attitude about the Bible need to change? Explain.
- Talk to God about these things.



17-Sep-16 — 18-Sep-16

Weekend Review

It all begins with repentance.



Why do you think I begin this study of what the Bible says about the Bible with a quick overview of the book of Amos?

In a nutshell, I believe that the greatest contributor to the famine “of hearing the words of the Lord” is our attitude toward His Word. As I understand it, the Bible is the most popular book in the world if you go by sales alone. And it’s probably the least popular if you go by readership. Most would have to dust off their Bibles in order to read them ... if they could even find them.

Obviously, you’re not in that category. You’re reading this, and you’re already studying the Bible, so clearly you’re interested.

But I wonder how much the prevailing attitudes about the Bible in our culture impact our attitude toward the Bible. Do we give it the prominent place in our hearts that we ought to give it. Do we approach it with trust in its authority as the Word of God, or are we somewhat skeptical about what we read in it. Do we pick out the portions of scripture that we think make sense and focus on them, or do we take the entire Bible as being equally authoritative in our lives?

What is our attitude toward the Bible? Are we, perhaps, experiencing a famine “of hearing the words of the Lord” simply because we aren’t accepting it as the absolutely authoritative Word of God. Are we, perhaps, experiencing a famine “of hearing the words of the Lord” simply because we haven’t truly honoured it as the Word of God. Have we treated it more like a book of tales told by people who died thousands of years ago who weren’t as scientifically literate or as wise as we are today. And as a result of those attitudes, have we dismissed both it and the very God who inspired these words more than perhaps we’re prepared to admit. [That previous sentence could be read two different ways, depending on what you connect the last phrase to. I fully intend it to be interpreted in both possible ways.]

We can study the Bible and learn about the Bible as much as we want, but unless and until we adjust our attitudes toward it, the learning we do will only be head knowledge. Deep repentance will most likely be needed before this particular Bible Study on “what the Bible says about the Bible” will really be able to change and impact your life.



- I encourage you, then, to take some time this weekend to assess your attitude toward the Bible in light of everything that you’ve been reading and studying since you began working on this Bible Study. Repent of any attitudes that are obstructing your ability to grow in your appreciation of what the Bible really is.
- And as always, talk to God about these things.

Notes



19-Sep-16

Psalm 1:1-6

If the prophet Amos exposed the attitudes and behaviours guaranteed to shut down our ability to hear God's Word, Psalm 1 gives us clear insight into the kind of person whose life is totally rooted and grounded in the Word of God.



- Read Psalm 1:1-6 several times through.
- If you were to divide this Psalm into Acts and Scenes (like a play is divided into Acts and Scenes), where would the curtain fall to mark the transition from Act 1 to Act 2? Why?

From my perspective, Psalm 1 could be divided into two Acts with an epilogue as follows:

Act 1: Psalm 1:1-3

Scene 1: Psalm 1:1

Scene 2: Psalm 1:2

Scene 3: Psalm 1:3

Act 2: Psalm 1:4

Epilogue: Psalm 1:5-6

Let's study this one scene at a time.

Act 1, Scene 1: Psalm 1:1

- Act 1 focuses on the blessed man (or woman). Scene 1 describes three things that this blessed person chooses not to do. What are those three things? (Psalm 1:1)



Notice the progression here. If this were a play, there would be one prominent chair or bench right in the middle of the stage. And all the action of the one who is not blessed would centre around that chair. But the spotlight is on the man who is blessed who stands off to one side very deliberately and very obviously choosing not to engage in any of these behaviours.

The first word describes movement: "Blessed is the man (or woman) who walks not in the counsel of the wicked." According to Spiros Zhodiatas (The Complete Word Study Bible Hebrew Lexicon), "This common word carries with it the basic idea of movement: the flowing of a river; the descending of floods; the crawling of beasts; the slithering of snakes; the blowing of the wind; the tossing of the sea. Since it is usually a person who is moving, it is frequently translated 'walk'. ... (It) is also used ... to speak of the pathways of one's life."

Act 1, Scene 1, then, shows the ungodly man or woman moving about the stage with one or more wicked individuals whispering in his ear, or shouting from the sidelines, or gesturing to show him where to go next. Would this individual be walking toward that chair in the middle of the stage? This Psalm doesn't give a clear answer to that question. All we know for certain is that the ungodly individual is moving according to the advice given to him or her by the wicked (or ungodly in some translations).

But the blessed man or woman refuses to participate. He or she is quietly standing to one side, refusing to join those who are moving according to the counsel (the advice) of the wicked.

Part way into the scene, another person appears on stage. This individual “stands in the path of sinners”. He’s not walking. He’s standing. There is no movement in this word, but there may be some submission. Again, according to Spiros Zhodiatas (The Complete Word Study Bible Hebrew Lexicon), this word means, “to stand on one’s feet, not sit; to remain motionless or stay behind.” And it also “has the sense of serving before someone, as Joseph served, stood before Pharaoh.”

So Act 1, Scene 1 also shows someone standing in the way of sinners, and possibly even serving the “way of sinners”. This individual has submitted his or her life to sin. He or she has willingly chosen to serve sin itself.

But again, the blessed man or woman refuses to serve sin. He or she refuses to join with the one who “stands in the way of sinners” and who willingly submits his or her life to serve sin itself.

Toward the end of this same scene, we see a man or woman taking a seat in the chair or bench that has been centre stage throughout the entire scene. He “sits in the seat of scoffers”. Again, according to Spiros Zhodiatas, this word means “to sit, to dwell, to inhabit, to endure, to stay. ... The word may signify ‘to dwell,’ either temporarily or in a permanent dwelling.”

And according to Zhodiatas, the “scoffer” is the one who “deride(s) ... or boasts(s) so as to express utter contempt.”

So Act 1, Scene 1 ends with an ungodly man or woman choosing to dwell with those who show utter contempt for others.

But the blessed man or woman refuses to do so. He or she refuses to join with those who boastfully and contemptuously mock and deride others.



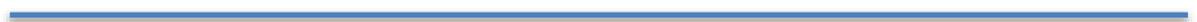
- Spend a few moments meditating on this scene that has unfolded before your mind’s eye.

- What has God been showing you as you’ve studied His Word today?



- What difference will this make for you?

- Talk to God about what you have been discovering as you’ve studied His Word today.



20-Sep-16

Psalm 1:2

Act 1, Scene 2: Psalm 1:2



In Act 1, Scene 1, we saw what the blessed man or woman refuses to do.

In Scene 2 of the same Act we see what they choose to do instead:

“but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.”



To fully appreciate what the psalmist is saying here, we need to understand two Hebrew words: “delight” and “meditate”.

Delight

According to Spiros Zhodiatas (The Complete Word Study Bible Hebrew Lexicon), the Hebrew word “chepets” which almost every translation of the Bible renders as “delight” has the root idea of inclining toward something. From that root understanding comes the meaning “delight, pleasure, desire, matter”. (In Ecclesiastes 3:1, 17 the word is used to refer to a matter without respect to its delightfulness.) [Note that the ‘ch’ in “chepets” is pronounced similarly to the ‘ch’ in the Scottish word, “loch”.]

So this godly man or woman is inclined toward the Law of God. He or she takes pleasure in it, desires it and delights in it.

As I read it, there is some ambiguity in Psalm 1:2 as to whether this godly man or woman delights in studying the Law, or in living according to the Law. The New English Translation of the Bible clearly adapts the second interpretation: “Instead he finds pleasure in obeying the Lord’s commands.”

A footnote in the New English Translation reads as follows:

“In light of the following line, which focuses on studying the Lord’s law, one might translate, ‘he finds pleasure in studying the Lord’s commands.’ However, even if one translates the line this way, it is important to recognize that mere study and intellectual awareness are not ultimately what bring divine favor. Study of the law is metonymic (a symbol) here for the correct attitudes and behavior that should result from an awareness of and commitment to God’s moral will; thus ‘obeying’ has been used in the translation rather than ‘studying.’”

I am inclined (pun intended) to lean toward the NET’s interpretation of this verse. This blessed man or woman is constantly inclined toward, leans into, delights in and takes pleasure in everything that has to do with God’s Law—both in the study of God’s Law, and in the application of God’s Law in his or her life.

Meditate

The Hebrew word for “meditate” is hagah. It’s an onomatopoeic word. Onomatopoeia is a big term used to describe a word that sounds like the very thing it’s describing. “Slam” is an onomatopoeic word. So is “crash”, and “bang”. And so is the word “hagah”.

Stop for a moment, and say this word slowly and carefully: “Hagah”. Can you hear the sighing of the word?

That’s literally what “hagah” means: According to Spiros Zhodiates, hagah is “a verb meaning to growl, to groan, to sigh, to mutter, to speak; used figuratively: to meditate, to ponder.”

So the blessed man or woman takes pleasure in studying and obeying the Law of the Lord. He or she is continually inclined toward it. He or she leans into it and takes great delight in it. And throughout the day and through the night he or she is continually breathing it in and out as he or she meditates on it “day and night.”



- Take some time to “hagah” (to meditate) on Psalm 1:2.

- What is God showing you as you meditate on this verse?



- What conviction is growing in your own heart as you meditate on this verse?

- Talk to God about these things.

21-Sep-16

Psalm 1:3

Act 1, Scene 3: Psalm 1:3



In Act 1, Scene 1, we saw what the blessed man or woman refuses to do.

In Act 1, Scene 2, we saw the blessed man or woman delighting in the Law of the Lord, breathing it in and out day and night.

In Act 1, Scene 3, we see the effect of such a love for the Law of the Lord:

“He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers.”



Meditate on that image for a while. Breathe it in and breathe it out. Sit with it. Let it stir your imagination. In fact, try to picture this tree planted by streams of water yielding its fruit in its season with unwithering leaves.

One way to meditate on a verse is to repeat the verse with the emphasis on each word.

“HE is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.”

“He IS like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.”

“He is LIKE a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.”

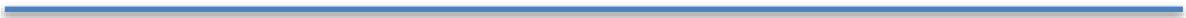
... and so on.

- What have you discovered as you’ve meditated on this image of the tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither?



- Talk to God about what He has been showing you today.

Notes



22-Sep-16

Psalm 1:4-6

Act 2, Scene 1: Psalm 1:4

 In Act 2, our attention shifts to wicked men and women. In this Act, there is only one scene. It paints a word picture corresponding to the word picture of the blessed man or woman that was painted in Act 1, Scene 3.

“The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.”

-  • Take some time now to meditate on this image. Use the same method of meditation that you used with verse 3.
- Make a note of everything that you discover as you meditate on this verse.

Epilogue: Psalm 1:5-6

 In the Epilogue we hear the voice of the narrator commenting on what we’ve just seen:

“Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.”

-  • Take some time to meditate on this verse.
 - Make notes of everything that you discover as you do so.
 - What is the most significant truth that God has been impressing on your heart as you’ve studied His Word today?
 -  • What impact will today’s study have on the way you relate to God, and the way that you approach the study of His Word?
 - What help do you need from Him?
 - Tell Him.
-

23-Sep-16

Proverbs 2:1-22



- Read Proverbs 2:1-22 several times.

Take your time doing this.

Let the words sink deeply into your soul and into your spirit.

Pause to ponder their meaning whenever the Spirit of God draws something to your attention.

Make notes of what God shows you as you read.



- If you were going to divide this passage into different sections, where would you draw the lines to mark out those sections? Why?
- Are there key words that mark the transition from one thought to the next? What are those key words?



- What has God been showing you as you've read and studied this passage today?



- Talk to Him about what He has been showing you.



24-Sep-16 — 25-Sep-16

Psalm 1:1-6

Pause and breathe. (Hagah.)



- This weekend, let the words of Psalm 1:1-6 filter through your heart, mind and spirit as you go about your daily business. Breathe those words in and breathe them out again.
- Make notes of everything that God shows you along the way, and declare your absolute commitment to follow Him wherever He leads you.
- ... And above all, enjoy the fellowship and communion that you share with Him. He loves you. Celebrate His love for you, and rest in it.



26-Sep-16 — 27-Sep-16

Proverbs 2:1-4



As I read this passage, I noticed several key words that mark the flow of the author's thoughts through this passage. For me, those words were, "if", "then", "for", "deliver" (or "save" in the NIV), and "so" (or "thus" in the NIV).

You may have noticed a different way of dividing up this passage, and I am confident that your particular analysis of the passage is quite reasonable—particularly if your analysis was done under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit; but for now, perhaps you'll humour me and follow the divisions that I noticed.

Let's begin by looking at verses 1-4.

This entire chapter is a classic example of Hebrew poetry.

English poetry typically rhymes words. Hebrew poetry rhymes thoughts. In other words, two lines are paired up—one immediately after the other—with both lines saying the same thing in slightly different ways. By reading the parallel lines together, we gain a much deeper understanding of what the author was attempting to say.

If you're familiar with Hebrew poetry, you'll likely connect fairly quickly with what I've just described. If these observations about Hebrew poetry are new to you, you may be scratching your head wondering what on earth I'm talking about. And there's a very serious risk that you could start trying to work all of this out with your head. But God intends His Word to speak to and transform your heart.

So let's take this to a heart level ... and gain a deeper understanding of Hebrew poetry as we go.

From my perspective, "if" is the key word for these first four verses of Proverbs 2.



- What is the key "if" expressed in the first line of verse 1?
- How does the second line of verse 1 restate this particular "if"?
- What is the key thought expressed in the first line of verse 2?
- How does the second line in verse 2 restate this particular thought?
- What is the key "if" expressed in the first line of verse 3?
- How does the second line of verse 3 restate this particular "if"?
- What is the key "if" expressed in the first line of verse 4?
- How does the second line in verse 4 restate this particular "if"?



When it comes to poetry, small words and subtle nuances can speak volumes. But these subtle nuances do not always survive the translation process.

- There is an important, but subtle nuance in Proverbs 2:1-4 that is not adequately captured by some editions of the NIV (1984 for example), the New Living Translation, and several other of the more modern translations of the Bible. The ESV (amongst others), however, does capture this small detail.

I've printed the ESV translation of Proverbs 2:1-4 below. What common, ordinary word do you notice in these verses that might suggest a natural boundary between two slightly different thoughts?

My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,
making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
yes, if you call out for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,
if you seek it like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasures,

I was thinking of the first word in verse three—the word, “yes”. In Hebrew, this is a very small word—“ki” (pronounced “kee”). The word “ki” can have many different meanings, depending on the context. In this particular case, “indeed”, “yes”, “surely” or “truly” probably render it most accurately. But I suggest that in some ways it is a bit of a throw-away word. The sentence would be totally fine without it, as the NIV, NLT and other translations demonstrate. So why did the author use this particular word, and why did he put it in this particular place in the text—at the very beginning of the third verse?

I suggest that perhaps the author wanted us to recognize a subtle change in thought. He wanted us to connect the first two verses together, and to couple the third and fourth verses as well.

If I'm right, that leaves two very obvious questions:

What is the connection between verses 1 and 2?

What is the connection between verses 3 and 4?

- Sometimes a small word is just a small word. There may not be any great significance to the placement of this word. So take a moment to check any conclusions you've reached about this. Reread verses 1-4 asking yourself if there really is a genuine distinction that can be made between verses 1-2 and verses 3-4. If so, what is that difference?
- Now let's take a look at the big picture once more. Take a few moments to review all that you've studied today. Let the author's words sink deeply into your heart. In a nutshell, what is this author suggesting that we should do?
-  What is it that this author wants his “son” to receive? (Proverbs 2:1)
-  Do you believe that the author of Proverbs 2 wrote these things specifically for his son, or do you think he was using the word “son” to address anyone who was listening to his teaching? Explain.
-  What did this author want his “son” to treasure up?



- Clearly, the author was referring directly to the words that he was speaking to his son. But I wonder if there is broader application. I wonder if the principles of Proverbs 2 could be applied to the Bible as a whole. What do you think? Why?

- Is your heart beginning to appreciate the rhyming of thoughts that is the basis of Hebrew poetry? Explain.



- What is the deepest truth that your heart has grasped (or is beginning to grasp) as you've been studying these verses during the past few days?



- What is God calling you to do with this truth that your heart has grasped?

- How will you answer Him?

28-Sep-16

Proverbs 2:5-9

So far, we've been zeroing in on the word "if". Today we're going to begin looking at two other words: "then" and "for".



- What does the author of this poem say will happen if we do all that he has challenged us to do in verses 1-4? (Proverbs 2:5,9)



- Remember that Hebrew poetry rhymes thoughts—not words. The second line in almost every verse in this poem is a restating of the first line in the verse. With this in mind, what do you learn about the fear of the Lord in verse 5?

To understand this verse, we have to understand what "the fear of the Lord" really is.

The word "fear" in this verse is the Hebrew word, "yir'ah".

According to Spiros Zhodiatas (The Complete Word Study Bible Hebrew Lexicon), the word "yir'ah ... usually refers to the fear of God and is viewed as a positive quality. This fear acknowledges God's good intentions (Ex. 20:20). It will motivate and delight even the Messiah (Isa. 11:2, 3). This fear is produced by God's Word (Ps. 119:38; Prov. 2:5) and makes a person receptive to wisdom and knowledge (Prov. 1:7; 9:10)."

- What difference does this definition of the word "fear" make to your understanding of this verse?

Verse 5 tells us,

"then you will understand the fear of the Lord,
and find the knowledge of God."

- Take a few moments to ponder the connection between "the fear of the Lord" and the "knowledge of God". Make a note of any thoughts or observations that come to mind as you process this.

You'll notice that in these verses that the verse that begins with the word "then" is immediately followed by a verse that begins with the word "for". "For" gives the reason for the "then".



- According to the writer of Proverbs, why will we understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God by applying verses 1-4? (Proverbs 2:6-8)
- According to the English Standard Version of the Bible,
 "(The Lord) stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
 he is a shield to those who walk in integrity." (verse 7)



- Remembering that Hebrew poetry is based on rhyming ideas rather than words, how does the second part of verse 7 expand on the first part of the same verse? What's the connection? What is implied?

Last week, I wrote, "Clearly, the poet was referring directly to the words that he was speaking to his son. But I wonder if there is broader application. I wonder if the principles of Proverbs 2 could be applied to the Bible as a whole."

- Do verses 6-8 offer any clues that would help you answer that question? Explain.



- What is the most significant truth that you have learned about the Word of God as you've studied His Word today?



- What difference will this make in the way you approach Bible study?

- Talk to God about this.



29-Sep-16

Proverbs 2:9-11



- What do you learn about righteousness and justice from verse 9?



- Take a few moments to ponder the connection between “righteousness and justice” and “equity, every good path”. Make a note of any thoughts or observations that come to mind as you process this.



- According to Proverbs 2:10-11, why will we “understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path”?



To properly understand verse 10, we need to know what the Hebrew terms for “heart” and “soul” really mean. Spiros Zhodiatas (The Complete Word Study Bible Hebrew Lexicon) is particularly helpful in this regard.

According to Zhodiatas, the Hebrew word for heart (“leb”) is

“a ... noun ... whose range of meaning is extensive. It can denote the heart as a human physical organ; or an animal. However, it usually refers to some aspect of the immaterial inner self or being since the heart is considered to be the seat of one’s inner nature as well as one of its components. It can be used in a general sense; or it can be used of a specific aspect of personality: the mind; the will; the emotions. In addition, the word can also allude to the inside or middle.”

Again, according to Zhodiatas, the Hebrew word for soul is

“a ... noun meaning breath, the inner being with its thoughts and emotions. It ... has a broad range of meanings. Most of its uses fall into these categories: breath, literally or figuratively; the inner being with its thoughts and emotions; and by extension, the whole person. Moreover, the term can cover the animating force [the thing that causes them to move and to act] of a person or his or her dead body ... When this word is applied to a person, it doesn’t refer to a specific part of a human being. The Scriptures view a person as a composite whole, fully relating to God and not divided in any way.”

- How do these definitions of the words “heart” and “soul” change your understanding of Proverbs 2:10?



- Ponder what it means to have wisdom come into your heart? What does this mean? How is this different from knowledge as most people understand it? What impact would this have on you?

- Ponder the phrase, “knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.” (ESV) What does this really mean? How would knowledge become pleasant to your soul? Have you experienced this? If so, when? What was it like to experience it?

- How would your application of verses 1-4 naturally lead to verse 10?



- What is the connection between this entrance of wisdom into your heart, this pleasant experience of knowledge in your soul (your life, your entire being) and your understanding of righteousness and justice and equity, every good path?



- What role does discretion and understanding play in your life? (Proverbs 2:11)



- Why would this be true?

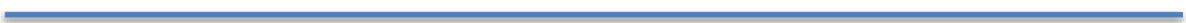
- How would your application of verses 1-4 naturally lead to verse 11?
- What is the connection between verse 11 and verse 9? How does verse 11 lead to verse 9?



- What new discoveries have you made today about God's Word?



- What impact is this having on you? What will change for you as a result of your study of God's Word today?
- Talk to God about this.



30-Sep-16

Proverbs 2:11-22



According to Proverbs 2:11, when we apply verses 1-4 to our lives,

“discretion will watch over you,
understanding will guard you.”

- How will this happen? (Proverbs 2:12, 16)
- What do the “men of perverted speech” do? (Proverbs 2:13-14)
- How else are these “men of perverted speech” described? (Proverbs 2:15)



• Ponder: how does discretion and understanding deliver (or save) you from these men?



• How is the “forbidden woman” described in Proverbs 2:16?

- What does she do? (Proverbs 2:17)
- What happens to her house? (Proverbs 2:18)



• What does this mean?



• Where do her paths lead? (Proverbs 2:18)



• What does this mean?



• What happens to those who go to her? (Proverbs 2:19)



• What does this mean?



• Ponder: have you witnessed this kind of consequence in your own life, or in a friend’s life? How could wisdom and understanding have protected you (or your friend) from this?



• What other consequence flows from Proverbs 2:11? (Proverbs 2:20-22)



• In your experience do verses 21-22 always apply? Explain.

- From the perspective of eternity, do verses 21-22 always apply? Explain. [In the light of eternity, this earthly lifetime is just a blip on the radar screen of our lives.]
- What is the deepest truth that you have learned from your study of Proverbs 2:11-22 today?



• Take a few moments to quietly listen for the whisper of the Holy Spirit speaking to your spirit. What is God calling you to do about all that you have studied today?

• What will you do about this?

Notes



1-Oct-16 — 02-Oct-16

Proverbs 2:1-22



- Reread Proverbs 2:1-22.

Let these words sink deeply into your heart.

To turn them over and over again and again in your mind and in your spirit this weekend.

As you do so, ask the Lord to show you how well you are doing when it comes to putting Proverbs 2:1-22 into practice.



Ask the Lord to show you what steps you can take in order to bring Proverbs 2:1-22 alive in the way you live your life from day to day.

- What commitment would you like to make to Him now?

... Stay tuned for Part 2 in this study.