

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Bible Literate

By Sean Sullivan

Introduction:

The definition of “literate” includes the ability to read and understand words—it is a basic need in education. According to a 2021 Pew Research Poll, about 1 in 5 people say they haven’t read a book [in any form] in the past year.¹ According to U.S. Department of Education NCES 2019-179 July 2019, only 79% of Americans are competent enough readers to “complete tasks that require comparing and contrasting information, paraphrasing, or making low-level inferences.”² These statistics are important, especially when we realize the hope of eternal salvation is tied to words in a book. Our Creator God has chosen to reveal His will for our lives in written words (1 Cor. 2:1-16; Heb. 1:1-2).

Do you recall anyone in your life, perhaps a grandparent, or parent, who had a Bible verse for every situation? Their constant quoting demonstrates their Bible Literacy at work—there is a verse for every situation and decision of life (2 Pet. 1:3). We need to be reading the Bible, but more than reading the words we need to become Bible Literate. Being Bible Literate is not only knowing that the Bible is the word of God, it is knowing the word of God. Let’s consider our ability to become “Bible Literate.”

Seeing the Bible

The Bible is not “some book,” and it never has been. The Bible must be seen for what it is—a divine gift (James 1:17). No other direction will be given (Heb. 1:1-2; Jude 3). We have this one life to find it, learn it, and live it (John 12:48; Heb. 9:27). The Bible must be seen for what it is—the source of true enlightenment—by it we know who God is and who we are (Acts 17:24-27). To truly understand the “big questions of life” we need the eyes of our understanding to be enlightened by the word of God (Eph. 1:15-23). To gain spiritual understanding, we need the word of God (Col. 1:9). The Bible must be seen for what it is—the revealed details of God’s grace (Eph. 2:1-10). By grace, we gain the hope of eternal life (Rom. 6:23). The plan of God, for you and I to join Him in eternity (1 Pet. 1:10-12). The Bible must be seen for what it is—the only way you, or I, will ever be in Heaven (John 14:1-6). The word of God is our “instruction” to gain all the hope of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The sooner we see the Bible for what it truly is, the sooner we will embrace its benefits (Psa/ 103:2 ***“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits...”***). This life, and its busyness, all too often distract us from reading and studying God’s word. Jesus, in the Parable of the Sower, called this ***“the cares of the world”*** (Matt. 13:7 and 22). The thorns are the pursuit of the world’s goals that will ***“choke out the word.”*** We must see the Bible for what it is and cherish its instructions for what they promise. We need to become “Bible Literate”.

Esteeming Its Value

There is nothing in this world more important than knowing and doing the will of God (Matt. 7:21). In our day, we will not receive the will of God by visions or intuitions (1 Cor. 13:8b-10). We will not know the will of God if we do not value the word of God enough to invest our time in learning what it says (1 Tim. 4:13, 15).

Until we esteem the Bible as THE MOST IMPORTANT point of reference in our life, we are not going to

read it, study it, and know it as we should (Col. 4:16; 2 Tim. 2:15; James 1:22-25). This world must not be our reason for neglecting our education in God's word (Matt. 16:26). We are not going to see the benefits of God's direction, over our own (Matt/ 7:21-23; 16:24). Many desire to be "self-directed" or "self-made"; that thought prohibits the proper doing of God's will (Prov. 14:12; Rom. 10:1-3). Our life will not reflect, **"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control"** (Gal. 5:22-23). All too often we fail ourselves by refusing, ignoring, or not knowing, God's advice (Psa. 1:1-5; James 1:17-25).

We must esteem the Bible for its true value as the most important information ever. So, we will read it, study it, and become "Bible Literate".

Accept Its Protection

We need to become Bible Literate, so we are able to **"stand against the wiles of the devil"** (Eph. 6:10-11). The word of God offers the protection of **"the whole armor of God"** (Eph. 6:13-18). Girding our waist with the truth—the foundation garment of our life is to be a knowledge of the truth of God (John 17:17; 8:31-32). Putting on the breastplate of righteousness—protection of things most vital to life; the instructions of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Covering our **"feet"** with the gospel—the walk of life now redirected through gospel obedience, to follow the footsteps of Jesus (Matt. 16:24; John 14:1-6; 2 Pet. 1:20-23). Taking up the shield of faith—the great wall of defense for both body and soul, the conduct of faith (Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:6-9). Continuing always, to wear the helmet of salvation—taking hold of the word of God, to direct our heart to the doing of God's will—our hope of salvation (Matt. 7:21).

When we grow our knowledge to the point of having a scriptural answer for the situations we face, we will be Bible Literate. We will know the word of God and it will be our anchor point, on which we are rooted and grounded (Col. 2:6-7). We ought to be able to evaluate all situations properly (Heb. 5:14c). We ought not be moved by the men's doctrine or philosophies (Eph. 4:11-14; Col. 2:8). We ought not give up or ever go back to the corruptions of sin (Heb. 10:35-39).

When we become Bible Literate we will have the protections of God's word, knowing that we are standing against sin that desires our destruction. We must desire to be even more "Bible Literate."

Conclusion:

What it takes to become Bible Literate is desire, effort, and time. God has given us His directions in the most reliable and learnable form, the written word. We can apply ourselves to reading, studying, and knowing the word of God—so, we will know how to discern properly (Heb. 5:14).

The greatest reason to be Bible Literate is to make certain you are actually saved. What a disaster it would be to have desired Heaven all your life, but to be turned away because you have not followed the will of God (Matt. 7:21-23). The truth of God's gospel plan is easy to know if you apply yourself to know it. Once you know it, you must begin to follow it. So, why not begin right now? ■

Footnotes:

1. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/09/21/who-doesnt-read-books-in-america/ft_2021-09-21_nonbookreaders_01/
2. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019179/index.asp>

"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:11-13 KJV).

Service Times — Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM — Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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