

Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 8-5-18

To Adult Teachers:

August 5 we will study John 5:31-47. Discussion questions are:

1. How would you describe your Bible study life:
 - a. Regular
 - b. Occasionally
 - c. Hardly ever
2. What is your greatest need for help in studying the Bible?
 - a. Learning Bible study techniques?
 - b. Self-discipline to form regular study habits?
 - c. Someone to study with?
 - d. Other _____
3. Agree/disagree: *“Unless we have a God who can speak to us we do not have a God who can meet our deepest needs.”*
4. Praying is man talking to God. Bible study is God talking to man.
 - a. What direction would a person’s spiritual life take if they pray a lot but study the scriptures seldom?
5. Compare Matthew 19:4-5 with Genesis 2:24.
 - a. When you look at the way Jesus uses Genesis 2:24 what does it suggest Jesus believed about scripture being the very word of God?
6. The psalmist wrote Psalm 2:1.
 - a. To whom does Peter attribute Psalm 2:1 in Acts 4:25?
 - b. What does that tell you about Peter believing the scriptures to be the very word of God?
7. What is the difference in searching the scriptures and reading the scriptures devotionally?
8. How does a person go about letting the scriptures search them?
 - a. What is the value of letting the scriptures search you?
9. What is the difference in learning about God and knowing God?
 - a. What has to happen in Bible study for a person to move from learning about God to knowing God?

Sermon: JESUS’ VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

John 5:31-47

The subject of this passage is scripture. It’s about a book that is absolutely, totally true from the first page to the last. Lots of folks, indeed most folks in this world, don’t believe there is one single book about God and it is flawlessly true from cover to cover. Most people believe truth is like the story of the blind men attempting to describe an elephant. One of the blind men grabbed the elephant’s leg and said an elephant looks like a tree. Another grabbed the elephant’s ear and said it looks like a huge fan. Another grabbed the trunk and said it looks like a huge snake. Another grabbed the tail and said it

looks like a rope. The point of the story is that each of the blind men understood part of the elephant. So people conclude religion is like that. No one religion has all the truth. Each religion has a part of the truth. Islam has a part of the truth. Hinduism has a part of the truth. Buddhism has a part of the truth. Judaism has a part of the truth. Christianity has a part of the truth. No religion should claim to have supreme truth. You know what's wrong with that story about the elephant? Whoever tells the story to say nobody sees the entire truth, assumes that he, the teller, can see the entire elephant and he is critical of those others who only see part of the elephant. The person using that story assumes that he is not himself blind. So when a person says that truth is relative he is saying, "I am the only one who can see the whole truth."

The fact is we all think we see the entire elephant. So, the question is, who should we believe about the nature of the elephant? You, me or Jesus, the only founder of a major religion who claimed to be God? What Jesus said was we do not have a bunch of blind people walking around trying to describe an elephant. We have a God who can speak! Unless we have a God who can speak to us we do not have a God who can meet our deepest needs. In the very beginning God walked in the garden with men and talked to them. Jesus says God still speaks and the only way you can hear Him is through the scripture. So let's listen to what Jesus says about the scripture.

First, he says that the scriptures are of divine origin. Listen to vs. 37-39, "*And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me....*" What is Jesus saying about the scriptures? He is saying they are the words of God himself. In vs. 37 he says that God testifies about Jesus. In vs. 39 he says that testimony comes through the scriptures. Therefore the scriptures are the very words of God himself.

There are only 2 basic views of the Bible. Either it is a human book written by men seeking God or it is a divine book written by God seeking man. So which is it? Is it written by us or written by Him? Jesus says the scriptures are from God. In vs. 46 Jesus acknowledges that humans had a role in writing scripture when he references Moses. In Matthew 19 Jesus says, God said... "A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife." - Matthew 19:4-5 If you go back to Genesis 2 and read that original quote you will see it was not God who said it but the author of Genesis said it. So, you see, in Jesus' view anything in the Bible is ultimately from God. The same thing happens in Acts 4 when Peter quotes Psalm 2 in a unique way. He says, "The Lord God, who by the mouth of his servant David, inspired by the Holy Spirit said...." (Acts 4:25) Peter can quote anything David wrote as if God wrote it. Jesus can quote anything Moses wrote as if God wrote it. That doesn't mean that the writers of scripture were mere stenographers writing down words they hear. Peter sheds light on this when it tells us, "Holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit so that no scripture is of anyone's private interpretation." - II Peter 1:18 That means that God controlled what those men wrote so that their humanness, their personalities, their prejudices didn't interfere with what God

wanted to be written What scripture says, God says. What Moses says, God says. What David says, God says. That's what Jesus believed.

To change that position is not to be just a little bit wrong. We can't say, "You have your view of scripture and I have mine but the most important thing is that you know Jesus." If you change Jesus' view of the Bible, which is the historic Christian view of the Bible and you say, "I can't accept that. I have a different view of the scripture.", you begin to unravel Christianity. You are unraveling the fabric of Christianity at its heart. If you want a personal relationship with somebody there has to be real truth from that person you are trying to relate to. If you want to have a personal relationship with me we have to talk. We have to get to know each other by exchanging lots of information. You could ask people about me. You could read what someone might write about me. But you can never have a personal relationship with me until we talk. The Bible is not the biography of God. It is the word of God. The Bible is not a book written by human beings telling us about God. It is the revelation of the heart and mind of God.

The essence of the Christian life is not living a high moral and ethical life. The essence of the Christian life is not attaining a mystical relationship with God. The essence of the Christian life is a personal relationship based on real communication from God. If you decide the Bible is not an authoritative message from God himself but it is a great book about God you have radically changed the heart of Christianity. If it's **about** God you can admire God. You can respect God. You can yearn for God. You can feel you know God. Just like when you read a biography of a famous person you can sense a oneness with God but you can't know Him!

There are only 2 ways to understand the Bible. If it's divine and authoritative it's **from** God. If it's full of errors and contradictions then it's **about** God. If the Bible is merely **about** God then we can never know Him. What does this passage say? vs. 39-40 - "These are the scriptures that testify of me yet you refuse to come to me to have life." The whole purpose of the Bible is to get you to know Him. If you say, "There are a lot of things in the scripture I find difficult. I think there are contradictions. There are things I just can't accept." If that is your position you need to know the ramifications of that. You have made one of two decisions. You either have decided there is a standard of truth that is higher than the scripture by which you can judge the scripture or you have decided the scripture is the highest standard of truth and it must judge everything else. Either your reason and experience is the infallible judge of scripture or the scripture is the infallible judge of your reason and experience. Does it really make sense for you to trust your own reason and experience? To trust your own reason and experience to that level is to say, "I am the authority over scripture, not the scripture over me!" If any of this is troubling you, understand this - your quarrel is not with me, it is with Jesus. All I am doing this morning is stating clearly for you Jesus' view of scripture.

That's what Jesus believed about the Bible. In this same passage, Jesus teaches us how to use the Bible. He gives us 3 practical directions about how to use the Bible.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

It's in vs. 39 - "You search the scriptures." Walking along a path is not searching. Getting down on your hands and knees and trying to see what kind of animal tracks are going down the path ahead of you and which of those tracks are fresh, is searching. Which of those 2 pictures best describes how you deal with the scriptures? Do you just have a sweet little hike down the Bible path from time to time looking for a little inspiration or do you dig into the word and search out its meaning?

Searching assumes that it will be easy to overlook the valuable things. You can take a devotional approach toward the Bible and get a little food for thought but you will never develop a relationship with God that way. Search!

Searching assumes time. Let me give you a challenge. Take one verse from the Bible - any verse. Read it and for the next 30 minutes make a list of 30 things the passage says I'll tell you what the experience will be like. After about 10 minutes you will lay your pen down and say to yourself, "I got it. I got all there is in that verse. There are only 10 things in it." At that point, go back to the verse and put in the other 20 minutes. When you do, if you are really searching, you will have an extraordinary experience. You will come away with an awareness that that verse is alive! It's alive and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. Searching takes time.

Searching assumes value. You don't search for a penny but you do search for a hundred dollar bill. You should study the scripture the way a gold miner mines for gold. He leaves no stone unturned because he knows that at any moment he could find something that will change his life forever. You should never study the scripture or even come where it is being taught without that same sense of value. How do you treat a letter from someone who loves you? Do you treat it like you do junk mail - toss it on the counter and think, "Maybe I'll read that sometime when I have nothing better to do." No, you open it carefully and hang on every word. You look at every word and ask, "I wonder that they mean by that?"

You may be thinking, "That's easy for you preacher. You are trained in Bible Study techniques and you have time to read." Nearly every one of you read some pretty technical stuff. Some of you read those manuals about how to operate a computer or some electrical gadget. Some of you read the instructions on how to put together your child's new toy. Some of you even read the manual on how to use all the features on your smart phone. Some of you read technical stuff at work every day. Some of you can read an automotive manual and figure out how to fix your car. Don't tell me you don't know how to search. Some of you have read every Louis Lamour novel ever written. Some of you pour over the sports page like your life depended on knowing that information. One of these days all those things you've read about concerning your hobbies and your job will rise up and say to you, "You broke your back for us and now we are rust and dust. Did you spend any time reading things that are eternal?"

The first step is search the scriptures. The second step is...

LET THE SCRIPTURES SEARCH YOU

Jesus said, "*You diligently search the scriptures....*" He is saying they do it. They search the scriptures. I know we are critical of those Pharisee guys but let me throw out a shocker to you. They did search the scriptures and most of us in this room haven't even gotten up to the Pharisee's level yet. So why are we critical of them? But Jesus says just searching the scriptures is not enough because "*...these are the scriptures that testify about me yet you refuse to come to me that you might have life. If you believed Moses you would have believed me.*" (39-40). He's saying it's evident you don't believe Moses because you don't do what he says. If you don't let the Bible argue with you, cause you to make mid-course directions, you don't believe the Bible! If you search it but you don't let it search you, you aren't giving the Bible any authority in your life. Let the Bible argue with you. What did Jesus say about how you overcome anxiety? He said you "*consider.*" You let the truth rearrange your understanding of the situation. Imagine how much more valuable you are than lilies of the field. You think. You let the Bible argue with you about your anxieties. Paul said he *considered* the sufferings he was enduring were not worthy to be compared to the glory that awaited him. How do you deal with suffering? Do you read the Psalms and get this soothing feeling? Or do you let the scripture argue with you? Paul is saying, "When you are suffering tell yourself about the glory." A bunch of troops are just exhausted and ready to give up. Suddenly a messenger comes and says, "Help will be here in one hour. You must hold this line for just one more hour." What happens? Suddenly there is new energy, new strength. You know what happened? The truth rearranged their understanding of their situation.

Do you have a God who only comforts and soothes you? He never comes to you and says, "*This relationship is wrong. This attitude is wrong.*" If you don't have a God who argues with you, you don't have a real God. Who wants to be married to someone who, no matter what you say to them always says, "Yes, dear." A lot of us think we have a God like that. I'll tell you something. Right now, this very moment, the word of God is arguing with you, challenging you.

Jesus says, "Search the scriptures. Let the scriptures search you." And then he says...

LET THE SCRIPTURES LEAD YOU TO ME

Jesus said, "Moses wrote about me. Let the scriptures lead you to me." Obedience to the Bible is not enough. You must come to Christ. Moses wrote about the Temple and sacrifice and priests. But Jesus is the Temple. Jesus is the sacrifice. Jesus is the great High Priest. If the Pharisees are to use the scriptures correctly they must see them leading to Jesus.

Jesus lived on the Bible. When he was betrayed he quoted scripture. When he was dying he quoted scripture. When he was in the deepest agony he quoted scripture. He lived and breathed scripture. Do you understand that the power of Jesus' life came in great part from the time he spent reading the scripture?

I want to leave you with a haunting question this morning. Who would need to have spent the greatest amount of time searching the scriptures – you or Jesus?