

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY

Series: A Mans Guide to the Bible

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Open your Bible to Acts 17

Good Morning, Men!

Let's give our morning shout out to the men of Marlton United Methodist Church in Marlton, NJ; eight or more men that have been meeting for the last 13 years. Thank you very much for tuning in guys. Join me in giving a shout out and warm welcome this morning.

Somebody sent this to me this week; they are kind of like ironic things:

- why is it you can get a pizza delivered to your house faster than you can get an ambulance?
- why is it they make sick people walk to the back of the pharmacy, while healthy people can come to the front counter to buy cigarettes?
- why is it we have answering machines to screen our phone calls and then get call waiting to make sure we don't miss a call from someone we didn't want to talk to in the first place?

Charles Spurgeon once lamented that for every 10 men that are willing to die for the Bible only one is actually willing to read it. Why is it that men are willing to die, or vigorously defend, a book they won't read?

We want to talk about the Bible reading part of this series this morning. This is today's message: How to read study and internalize the Bible for yourself. The first thing that happens is I become somewhat guilty. I try to read the Bible, sometime it is just confusing and I end up bailing out.

When you come to something that is not working well you either want a hug or a kick in the pants. It varies from time to time. I had a guy walk by me one day and I could see he was down so I said how are you doing? He said aaruggg. He walked back and I said you don't look like you are doing to well, would you like to talk about it? Or would you like to be left alone? Sometimes you just want to be left alone to work things out. For those of us who are feeling beleaguered by our Bible reading and would like to be engaged- tune in because that is what we are going to hit.

Here is this week's perspective: the Bible is the weapon of choice for the man who wants to be a warrior for God. With no disrespect to the Afghan army, give me a Marine. It is about the training; it is about the skill and the will to win the battle. Children drink milk, give me the meat!

Let's look at some scripture; the first one is Acts 17:11

11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Last time I gave you a guide for how to interpret scripture and the three parts are

1. to figure out what the author meant
2. to figure out what the timeless message is
3. to figure out how to personally apply the message to me

Let's use that guide to go over that verse.

What is the meaning for this verse? The Bereans were praised above others for wanting to know the truth.

What is the timeless message? A Christian should be eager to examine the scriptures every day.

How does this apply personally? You have to figure that out for yourself.

I will study the scriptures everyday. That is my personal application.

Turn now to Ephesians 6:17, this is the passage in which Paul describes the Armor of God.

17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

What is the meaning? The Bible is that part of a Christian's armor that protects his salvations and activates the Spirit.

What is the timeless message? It is a didactic message so it means the same now as it did then.

How does this apply? I will read my Bible to protect my salvation and activate the Holy Spirit in my life.

Go to Hebrews 4:12. So do you see how this interpretation of the Bible works? You read the text and try to figure what it is talking about, then you try to figure what it is saying about what it is talking about, and then you ask three questions. What was the author saying? What is the timeless message? How does it personally apply?

12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

What is the meaning? The Bible exposes everything in my heart.

What is the timeless message? Again it is a didactic teaching. So it means the same now as it did then.

How does this apply? I am going to listen for what the Bible will show me about me.

Go to Hebrews 5:11

11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn.

12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

What is the meaning? He is talking to the Hebrews. By constant use the Bible trains mature men to distinguish good from evil.

What is the timeless message? He is talking to all that are slow to learn. Train yourself with the Bible to distinguish good from evil.

How does this apply? For me, as a mature believer, I will constantly train myself in the word of God.

Here is the big idea today: the Bible is the weapon of choice for the man who would dare to be a warrior for God!

Let's talk about the skill to be a warrior. I am going to give you seven questions –with regard to reading the Bible- you can ask and I will answer them, from my perspective.

1. What is my purpose? Why do I want to sit down and read the Bible? For me I have two reasons: communion and discipleship. I read it for communion with God. When I read the Bible I am with the living God. My second purpose for reading the Bible is for discipleship, so that I can grow and figure out what is true (Acts 17:11). I want to be mature and distinguish good from evil. I want to activate the Spirit in me.
2. What is my time? For me my time is early in the morning. I get up get the coffee going then do 30 minutes of stretching while the coffee brews, then I get a cup of coffee and go at the word of God. In my case I don't have a set amount of time. If I was getting up later, close to my work time, I would probably have a set time; but if I get up early I don't have a set time. When do you do your best work? That might be a good time to read your Bible.
3. What is my place? Comfort foods, why are they called that? When you go eat them you are comforted. I think it is a good idea to have a comfortable place. I used to do my devotions at my desk. Now I have a chair in the living room that I use. I don't own this Bible, this Bible owns me.
4. What is my prayer? How do I get started? This is how I pray before I read the Bible; for me it pertains to my purpose: communion and discipleship. I start by saying Father I come to meet with you, please meet with me; you much loved son. How great is you love Father that you have lavished on me that I might be called a child of God. Thank you that you have poured your love into my heart by the Holy Spirit. Thank you that you love me and gave you son for my sins. Because you first loved me, I love you with all my heart, soul and strength right now. Now to Jesus: I surrender my life today to live under your Lordship. Jesus I love you so much that I don't want to be set free; I want to be a slave to righteousness. And to the Holy Spirit: Holy Counselor, sacred breath of God I come to meet with you and I pray that you would meet with me your much loved vessel. You occupy my body, and you testify to my spirit that I am you much loved vessel. Much loved son. Much loved servant. Much loved vessel. I love you with all my heart and now I am going to read the word and I invite you to tutor my heart, show me what is inside, and speak to me. Why do I do that? So that I have properly considered the sacred act and the reality of what I am about to do. I want to hear him speak to me and disciple me into the truth.
5. What is my plan? How many of you find the Bible daunting? It is daunting. Did you know that there are roughly 770,000 words in the Bible? That would be in a normal book about 2,500 pages. In the Bible they make the letters small so they get it down to half that. If you wanted to read the Bible thru in a year you would have to ready 7 normal pages everyday, 50 pages a week or roughly 1 normal sized book every month for 12 month. Yeah it's daunting. Not only that but some of the verses are so compressed that you could spend a day researching it. Because it is a big task I think it is good to have a plan. My plan is - I want liberty and freedom when I read – that I am going to read the Bible in a year, but I don't have to read it everyday. Today I am only on June 20th. Some

of you have tried this one year Bible and on January 15th you are already a month behind. When I do read it I am going to mark it up like crazy. I have all kinds of thing in my Bible, but for some they consider it too reverent to mark up. The idea is to have a plan. I find that writing things down helps me comprehend it. I mentioned earlier in the year, every time I see a verse with some mystery I put a check mark at the bottom of the page. Guess what percentage of the pages so far thru June 19th has a check mark? All of them. I also use memorization. That might not be your plan.

I figured out that I am in consistently consistent. I get done what I need to, but on a day to day basis I am not consistent. I don't want to be; I want to have some flexibility.

6. What do I do when my mind wanders? My mind wanders all the time. And to be honest I like it when my mind wanders. There are four possibilities when my mind wanders: the will, the flesh, the devil or the spirit. You have to figure out which one it is. If it is the will, the flesh or the devil that gets your mind to wander then you want to reel it back in. If I read a text and my mind goes racing to some relationship or I am being convicted or prompted to some good then that is the spirit and I let that happen. What if you are exhausted? I try to read out loud. I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that is the salvation of everyone that believes. Jeremiah 20:9. So read out loud or read something familiar; go back to prayer or do some spiritual warfare.
7. What keeps me in the deal? My commitment is that I have decided not to stop having time with God until I have what I call a moment of humility. There needs to be a moment. For me it is a moment of humility, where I feel the power and presence of God sweeping over me. That is what keeps me in the deal.

Those are the things that give you the skill to be a warrior when it comes to the word of God. Big idea: The Bible is the weapon of choice for the man who would dare be a warrior for God!

Finally, the will to be a warrior; you got the hug now this is the kick in the pants. A friend of mine, John Smith asked a question: what do you think would happen if I told you I would give you \$10 million, if over the next year you would read the Bible cover to cover? You would get it done.

If you want to be a good marine, doctor, musician, cabinet maker or athlete then you must understand that it will cost you something in terms of time, commitment, dedication, and training. Sometimes you have to substitute discipline for a lack of natural interest.

If you want to be a warrior for God then sometimes you need to use the main weapon that he has given you. The Bible is the weapon of choice for the man who would dare to be a warrior for God.

Let's Pray:

Our dearest father we come to you humbly today. I pray that each of us would have satisfying answers to these 7 questions. That we would take up the helmet of salvation, sword of the spirit and let it do its work to expose and show us what is inside us. That we would examine the scriptures everyday to find what is truth. Lord, that you would make these things realities in our lives. Lord use this message today to build in the motivation that comes not from wanting something a lot but knowing what is true; in Jesus name, AMEN.