

One of the things I have come to really believe is that knowing about something doesn't make me a master or even an apprentice of the subject. I have to use the knowledge. Knowing the Biblical Truths is not worth much unless I find places where that knowledge is applicable to life, both here and now and in my future.

Bible study is the first and most important of the studies, but it is by no means the only thing we need to study. In order to put the principles into our everyday lives we need to know about what is going on around us. What is going on in the world, our country, and our communities? What the social issues our world is dealing with. Why do people get angry and upset with each other? These and more are the things that are important to our understanding of how God is working in this world we live in and the principals He expects us to use to address these problems.

To that end I would like to mention just a few ways I learn some of the answers to those kinds of questions.

Every morning while I eat breakfast at my computer I watch a TED Talks. Admittedly there are a lot of fluff pieces but as I look around with a critical eye there are pieces that have good understanding. I like these because they tell me how someone is handling a particular situation. It may be a good approach or not so good, but they all give me insight to the addressed problem. I then have to answer the question of "Is this God's Way of handling this".

Some current examples are:

- Turning adversaries into allies
- What it takes to make change
- Several talks on causes of depression
- Climate Change – problems and solutions
- Sleep science and what lack of it causes

As those of you that have been following these Bible Studies have seen, another source I have found very eye opening are books on seeing the Bible through Middle Eastern eyes. The way we Westerners think is very different than the Middle Eastern way of thinking. Since Jewish people originally wrote the Bible it is a necessity that we read what they wrote from their cultural understanding.

Some of the books I have found very useful are:

- Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes by Kenneth Bailey

I find that reading the scriptures from a Jewish culture allows a fuller understanding of what the author was trying to convey. It is surprising that the understanding of a single word can open up a whole range of connection between what seems to be unrelated scriptures.

Even today, as well as in the Biblical times, the people of the Middle East, are guided by Honor/Shame culture; where we Westerners are largely guided by a profit/loss culture. Understanding this not only helps us understand the Biblical teachings better, but also helps us understand the conflicts we have as a nation with the Middle Eastern cultures. The more we learn to walk in Middle Eastern sandals, the more we can understand why we in the US have shamed them into being our enemies.

One last source I will mention is online Bible Studies. These can be a little tricky because what is out there on the Internet is not all good. That being said, if one's faith is strong and their understanding of the Bible principles is strong, it is not always a bad thing to be challenged by a different point of view. It requires one to evaluate the speaker's thesis and measure it up against Biblical teachings. With the help of the Holy Spirit one can be discerning.

A couple of the ones I have found useful:

<https://www.torahclass.com/start-here> - This is like a college class and they are very long but they cover a lot of ground.

<https://onlinestudy.lifeway.com/> - This one is geared for women but I think the information is good for either gender. The studies are only up for a few weeks and then another study is available.

God created an entire universe with many different parts for us to understand. I believe that the Bible primarily teaches us that we need to know and practice how to deal with people first and then all of the other goodies He has for us. The Bible has story after story of how people and cultures excelled or failed in one way or another. If we are to be a part of God's Kingdom we need to not only know the right way to live but we have to have practiced it before we are able to teach others how to live.

Knowledge First – Practice Next – Teaching Next

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