

Prayer List

Sierra
Gene
Veda
Judy
The Williams' Family
Ophelia

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

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This Week's Question:

What Assyrian king brought about the fall of Samaria and the deportation of the Israelites to other countries?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Neco - 2 Kings 23:29

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"Do you understand what you are reading?"

By Jon W. Quinn

28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." 30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. (Acts 8:28-31)

Well, the treasurer was riding in his chariot investigating the words written by the prophet Isaiah some seven hundred years before. He was a nobleman and so probably had his own driver, so we won't talk of the dangers of text messaging while driving just now and press on toward other points.

There was no New Testament at this very early time in the church's history. Those messages would be written down as the Holy Spirit directed in the next several decades and then compiled into the book we know as the New Testament. With what we know from these writings, we can fairly easily see that it is Jesus of whom Isaiah had prophesied in the passage the treasurer was reading (Isaiah 53:7-8). Specifically, Isaiah spoke in detail about the atoning death that Jesus would one day die to secure our salvation from sins. That day had come and passed, but without the writings of the New Testament the treasurer had no way of knowing this unless and until someone told him.

You and I do not have that problem. The writings of the covenant of Jesus Christ have now been written so we have access to information that the Ethiopian treasurer did not have. But we still need to seriously investigate the written message to know the things God means for us to know. The New Testament, along with the Old, tell us of the beginning; of man and his nature, of history and future, of salvation and hope for those who live by faith in Christ. It tells us of our eternal destiny-everlasting life or everlasting nightmare, and how we may have the former instead of the latter. We need to know this book!

Investigating Materials

The Bible The first item in our investigator's briefcase is the Bible itself. It is first in every way. It must not be left out, or even treated as something less than the single most important and necessary item out of all the tools we may employ.

Realize that God is communicating with you and me through this Book. Carefully read the text itself. People say all kinds of things about the Bible based on hearsay and tradition that are totally inaccurate, and not just "relatively unimportant" misstatements such as the claim that the Bible says Eve ate the apple or that there were three wisemen or that money is the root of all evil. The Bible says none of these things, and there is plenty more where these came from.

Probably the simplest approach would be to ask three questions about the text that you have personally read yourself:

1. What does God say? (the text).
2. What does this mean? (God's meaning).
3. How is it suppose to affect me? (application).

Correct Attitude Right up there in second place in importance is our attitude toward the message itself.

We need to recognize and humbly accept the authority of God as expressed in His holy word. Though there are several, a good passage to consider in this is the writings of John who made the following observation concerning the words of the apostles and prophets, selected and sent forth by Jesus Himself and inspired by the Holy Spirit: "We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." (1 John 4:6).

This reverent attitude toward the Scriptures needs to be partnered with openhearted receptiveness, will and commitment, a desire for exactness and a dissatisfaction with guesswork and

assumptions. And finally, a willingness to work at it. "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15).

Writing Tools - Whether scratch paper to write down thoughts and notes or better quality paper upon which to make permanent notes, every student knows that the things he or she writes down is easier recollected in the future. Writing some of the things learned down for future reference just makes good sense. Over a lifetime, one will accumulate lots of personal notes and insights due to such efforts, and it will be easier to build on this foundation in future studies. For example, if one studies the second coming today, and then does so again five years from now, why start all over? Good notes from the previous study will help immensely to go further and deeper the second time around.

Outside helps This would be good reference materials. Some of these are more helpful than others, and probably a good concordance would be the most helpful of all. Other reference books such as word studies, Greek-English dictionaries and a good Bible encyclopedia and/or handbook would also be very helpful. Commentaries and the notes of others might also be helpful, depending on how accurate the comments are.

Other Suggestions

Certainly one should take a hands on positive approach to investigating the Word of God. Prove what is right and then apply it (Romans 12:1,2).

Consider the context. This is the only way to ensure that a proper understanding will be reached.

Consider all the passages on a subject to establish the complete truth about it.

Pray with faith and without any doubting to the Divine Author of Scripture for wisdom and guidance. He will hear you (James 1:5-8). God bless all who seek to better know and serve God through His word!