

## Women of the Word: Chapter 2 The Case for Bible Literacy

*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Rom. 15:4*

### What is Bible literacy?

Bible literacy occurs when a person has access to a Bible in a language she understands and is steadily **moving** toward knowledge and understanding of the text.

### Are we growing in Bible literacy?

*If Bible literacy is to be our goal, we must evaluate what we are currently doing to achieve it. We may have an earnest desire to build Bible literacy, but left untrained, we may develop habits of engaging the text that at best do nothing to increase literacy and at worst, actually work against it.*

We must learn to study in such a way that we are not just **absorbing** the insights of another but are actually being **equipped** to interpret and apply scripture on our own.

### Why Bible Literacy Matters

- Bible literacy matters because it is through the Bible that we learn and **grow** in our personal walk with God.
- Bible literacy matters because it **protects** us from falling into error.
- When women grow lax in their pursuit of Bible literacy, **everyone** in their circle of influence is affected.
- A woman who loses interest in her Bible is evidence that she has not been **equipped** to love God as she should.

### What can we do to know our Bibles better?

- Sound Bible study transforms the **heart** by training the **mind**
- Sound Bible study places **God** at the center of the story
- Sound Bible study increases **Bible literacy**

### Common Unhelpful Habits

**The Xanax Approach:** *The Bible exists to make me feel better.*

- ✗ Makes the Bible about *me* and guarantees that sections of the Bible will not be read because they fail to deliver an immediate dose of emotional satisfaction.
- ✓ We must navigate all areas of the Bible, even those that make us uncomfortable or those that are difficult to understand.

**The Pinball Approach: *I read whatever verse I happened to turn to.***

- ✖ Gives no thought to the cultural, historical, and textual background or the original intent of the passage.
- ✓ We must consider how any given passage fits into the bigger picture of what the Bible has to say, honoring context, authorship, style and more.

**The Magic 8 Ball Approach: *I expect to get an answer to a question by randomly selecting a verse or passage.***

- ✖ Misconstrues the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the Word, demanding that the Bible tell us *what to do* rather than *who to be*.
- ✓ We must recognize that the Bible is always more concerned with the decision maker than the decision itself. The aim is to change our hearts so that we desire what God desires rather than spoon-feeding us answers to every decision in life.

**The Personal Shopper Approach (aka Topical Bible Study): *I let a Bible teacher gather the verses about a particular topic for me***

- ✖ Ricochet from passage to passage gaining fragmentary knowledge of the Bible but mastery of none. This is valuable as a supplement to – but not a substitute for – studying the Bible in its most basic sense.
- ✓ We must learn to address a topic as it arises in Scripture rather than attaching Scripture to a topic.

**The Telephone Game Approach: *Reading books about the Bible instead of reading the Bible itself***

- ✖ Spends more time reading a text several times removed from Scripture than reading Scripture itself. We are called to love the Lord our God with all of *our* minds, not with someone else's mind.
- ✓ We must recognize that books about the Bible are a supplement to personal study not a substitute for it. The more we grow in Bible literacy, the more helpful supplements, commentaries, and sermons become.

**The "Picky Eater" Approach: *I only read what I am comfortable with.***

- ✖ Ignores the fact that *all* Scripture is God-breathed and profitable – historical narrative, poetry, wisdom literature, law, prophecy, and parables – all showing us the character of God from different angles.
- ✓ We must learn to see the gospel from Genesis to Revelation as we study the full counsel of God's Word. This helps build a collective understanding of how the Bible as a whole speaks of God.

## Women of the Word: Chapter 3 Study with Purpose

*"There are great stories in the Bible... but it is possible to know Bible stories, yet miss the Bible story... the Bible has a storyline... If we forget the story line, we cut the heart out of the Bible." Ed Clowney*

*~ The 5 P's of Bible Study: Purpose, Perspective, Patience, Process, Prayer ~*

### The Bible is written in many different genres:

- Historical narrative
- Poetry
- Wisdom Literature
- Law
- Prophecy
- Parables
- Epistles

The Bible from beginning to end is telling us the **Big Story**, the story of the rule and reign of God, the story of **creation**, **fall**, **redemption** and **restoration**. Studying the Bible with **purpose** means always keeping its overarching message – the Big Story – in view.

Metanarrative = the idea of a **bigger** story explaining **smaller** stories; the comprehensive explanation or guiding **theme** that illuminates all other themes in a text. The Bible purposes to tell us this Big Story in a thousand smaller stories from its first page to its last.

- Law: helps us understand our need for *redemption* through Christ
- Poetry: emphasizes parts the metanarrative (*creation, fall, redemption, restoration*)
- Wisdom Literature: points to need for *redemption* and *restoration*.
- Prophecy: God always does what He says He will do. *Redemption* has been accomplished, *restoration* is certain.

Without the big picture, we can gain only a **partial** appreciation of what any individual snapshot is trying to tell us.

- When we forget about the Big Story, we may have difficulty finding continuity between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament.
- We may **misinterpret** the purpose or emphasis of a smaller story because we have considered it apart from the Big Story.

## **Chapters 2 and 3: Questions for Reflection**

1. When was the last time you felt uncomfortably aware of your lack of biblical knowledge? Did these feelings lead you to take any action, and if so, what?
2. What is the hardest bad habit you've ever had to break? How did you break it? How long did it take you?
3. Of the six less-than-ideal approaches to studying the Bible (Xanax, Pinball, Magic 8 Ball, Personal Shopper, Telephone, and Picky Eater), which have you practiced personally? What one new insight about these approaches stands out to you?
4. Which of these six approaches is potentially the most dangerous? Which could be used in ways that are beneficial?
5. Which genre of the Bible (Narrative, Law, Poetry, Wisdom Literature, or Prophecy) have you found especially difficult to study in the past? How might the concept of metanarrative help you study this genre in the future?
6. Which genre of the Bible (Narrative, Law, Poetry, Wisdom Literature, or Prophecy) have you found easily accessible? How might the concept of metanarrative change or deepen the way you study this genre in the future?