

"And Enoch walked with God . . ." (Gen.5:22).

"And Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations,  
and Noah walked with God" (Gen.6:9).

"I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen.17:1).

# What Do You Mean, “Walk with God”?

If you desire to WALK WITH GOD in your life, then how should you go about it? What is the Key to walking with God? What do you mean, “Walk with God?”

**William F. Dankenbring**

It has been said that in the hands of men, "Power corrupts; and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Sadly, this ancient axiom is all too true. Why is this so? The prophet Jeremiah gave us a clear insight into the answer: “The heart is deceitful above all things,” he wrote, “and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer.17:9).

The apostle Paul also showed a prime reason why there is so little spiritual, godly POWER on earth today. He wrote, “Because the carnal mind is ENMITY AGAINST GOD: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom.8:7).

Mankind's wicked heart and carnal mind -- these two things separate us from contact with God, and therefore also separate mankind from the ability to USE the awesome power of God for healing, for miracles, for incredible answers to fervent prayer!

Yet, despite this fundamental reality, Jesus Christ prophesied, when instructing His disciples, “Verily, verily (or, most assuredly), I say unto you, He that BELIEVETH ON ME, the works that I do (including performing miracles, and great healings!) SHALL HE DO ALSO; and GREATER WORKS THAN THESE shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask IN MY NAME (there is awesome POWER in the name of Jesus Christ, when used rightly), that will I DO, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:12-13).

## *The Faith of the Early Church*

Jesus said, “If ye shall ask ANYTHING in my name, I will DO IT!” (verse 14).

In the tumultuous days of the early Church, the power of God was evident in the lives of the apostles. “And by the hands of the apostles were many SIGNS AND WONDERS WROUGHT among the people . . . Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the SHADOW OF PETER passing by might overshadow some of them.

“There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: AND THEY WERE HEALED EVERY ONE” (Acts 5:12-16).

There was awesome spiritual POWER present in the early Church of God! But why has the Church lost that power? What happened to it after the days of the apostles? Why is it missing today?

There is a CAUSE for every EFFECT!

Of the early apostles, we read, “And with GREAT POWER gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and GREAT GRACE was upon them all” (Acts 4:33).

But today the Church of God is powerless – insipid, lacking in spiritual POWER! Why is this? What is the CAUSE?

### *Walking with God*

What does Jesus Christ say, first, to these end-time Christians who have lost their first love, their earnest zeal, and much spiritual truth?

He tells them to BE ZEALOUS, and to REPENT! These two prerequisites are the key elements that we all need in order to recapture the POWER of God's Holy Spirit which was poured out upon the New Testament Church of God, and the apostles of olden times!

To have our prayers answered, WITH POWER, with dynamic and direct intervention of Almighty God, we must *rekindle* the Spirit of God and become renewed in WHITE-HOT SIZZLING ZEAL AND SPIRITUAL ENERGY of God!

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith, “Therefore I remind you to STIR UP THE GIFT OF GOD which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of POWER and of LOVE and of a SOUND MIND” (II Timothy 1:6-7, NKJV).

The prophet Joel wrote, “Now, therefore, says the LORD, Turn to Me with *all your heart*, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. So REND YOUR HEART, and not your garments; RETURN TO THE LORD YOUR GOD, for He is gracious and

merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness” (Joel 2:12-13).

### *The KEY of Obedience*

Many people are not ZEALOUS to obey God’s commandments. Many are disobeying God’s commands, and don’t even realize it. Isaiah the prophet thundered: “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But YOUR INIQUITIES have *separated you from your God*; and your SINS have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:1-2).

Is there unrepented of “SIN” in your life? Sin creates a blockage in the pipeline that connects us to God. It stops the flow of God’s Spirit to us. It jams us up spiritually, so that we are useless and powerless.

God declares, “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his PRAYER shall be ABOMINATION” (Prov.28:9). Those who forsake the laws of God, and turn away from faith in God, and pervert the truth of God, even their prayers are utter abomination and filth in the sight of God.

Jesus Christ declared in powerful words, “Christ Himself declared on this matter, to a young nobleman, “If you want to enter into life, *keep the commandments*” (Matt.19:17). He went on to show which “Law” of commandments He was talking about – the Ten Commandments and the Torah – the Law of God (verses 18-21).

Christ also declared, plainly, in the Sermon on the Mount, “Do not think that I have come to do away with or undo the Law or the Prophets . . . . For truly I tell you, until the sky and earth pass away and perish, not one smallest letter nor one little hook [identifying certain Hebrew letters] will pass from the Law until all things . . . are accomplished” (Matt.5:17-18).

One cannot truly have faith God will answer prayers if he is living in disobedience to the laws of God! The apostle John wrote plainly: “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, **BECAUSE WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS**, and do those things that are *pleasing* in his sight” (I John 3:22).

“Sin,” by definition, is disobedience to God’s Law. The apostle John wrote also, “Whoever commits sin commits lawlessness, and **SIN IS LAWLESSNESS**” (I John 3:4).

It is time we took a new look at what God said in Isaiah. Read it again: “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear deaf, that it cannot hear: But YOUR INIQUITIES have separated between you and your God, and YOUR SINS have hid his face from you, that he WILL NOT hear” (Isa.59:1-2, KJV).

If we desire to pray with power, and to have our prayers answered, then regardless of our station in life, we must **ROOT OUT SIN**, uproot it, and cast it out of our lives! Isaiah wrote, again, “Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; **BE YE CLEAN, THAT BEAR THE VESSELS OF THE**

LORD” (Isa. 52: 11).

Unless one is “clean,” spiritually, and not hiding sin in his life; unless one is truly striving to obey God, and not compromising with sin; unless one is keeping God’s commandments, and NOT LIVING IN ADULTERY – his prayers are useless, futile, and vain – an outright unclean thing in themselves – an *abomination!*

But even if we obey God, and if we pray fervently, and perseveringly, continuously, that is still not enough to have power with God, and to have prayers answered. Even if we wrestle with God, tenaciously, in prayer, as Jacob wrestled with the One who became Christ all night (Gen.32:26-28), there is still one thing needed before God will hear us.

### *Seeking God*

David wrote in the Psalms, “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I SEEK after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle [*sukkah*] shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock” (Psalm 27:4-5).

Jesus Christ also told us: “*Seek ye first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” Matt.6:33).

Are you *diligently seeking God*, and His truth, and HIS WAYS, as if seeking for precious treasure, gold, or tremendously valuable precious gems -- like emeralds, rubies, or diamonds?

You follow up by “*knocking*” at the door! And KEEP ON KNOCKING until you receive the answer!

Christ declared, in another parable, about the value of persistence. Luke records, “And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that *men ought ALWAYS TO PRAY, AND NOT TO FAINT.*” The whole purpose of this parable-lesson was to teach us the value of persisting in our prayers, and never giving up!

Yeshua the Messiah said: “There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; *yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her CONTINUAL COMING she weary me.*

“And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And *shall not God avenge his own elect, which CRY DAY AND NIGHT unto him, though he bear long with them?*” (Luke 18:1-7).

### *Study, Grow, and PROVE All Things*

Don't give up! Don't allow yourself to be intimidated! Don't quit because of the opinions of ne'er-do-wells and bigoted men and malcontents. Keep at it! Have faith in God, keep on studying and learning and never give up. God's Word challenges skeptic and layman and minister alike: "*PROVE ALL THINGS, hold fast that which is good*" (I Thess.5:21).

The *Living Bible* in modern English says: "Do not smother the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at those who prophesy, *but test everything that is said to be sure it is true*, and if it is, then accept it."

Paul commands: "*STUDY* to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). Study God's Word -- study the Bible itself, the inspired Scriptures. Don't neglect it. Paul admonished and exhorted Timothy, and us as well: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be [or, become] perfect [fully mature in Christ, fully *grown*], thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (I Tim. 3:16-17).

Once we begin the Christian life, we must continue to GROW. Beginning with faith is not enough. Peter admonishes us further: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue [power]; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance [self-control]; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall NEVER FALL: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet.1:5-11).

The *Living Bible* has this passage: "But to obtain these gifts, you need more than faith; you must also work hard to be good, and even that is not enough. For then you must *learn to know* God better and discover what He wants you to do. Next, learn to put aside your own desires so that you will become patient and godly, gladly letting God have his way with you. This will make possible the next step, which is for you to enjoy other people and to like them, and finally you will *grow* to love them deeply. The more you go on in this way, the more you will *grow spiritually* and become fruitful and useful to our Lord Jesus Christ. But anyone who fails to go after these additions to faith is blind indeed, or at least very shortsighted, and has forgotten that God delivered him from the old life of sin so that now he can live a strong, good life for the Lord.

"So dear brothers, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has

called and chosen, and then you will never stumble or fall away" (11 Pet. 1:5-10).

### *The Key to Power with God*

Lack of Bible study is a major reason so many people – even true converted Christians – lack real power, wisdom, and understanding of God. One of the true keys to spiritual power and prevailing with God is simply studying the Word of God, the Bible, daily – *and to do so on our knees!*

How many of God's people, even ministers, faithfully do this?

God says each one of us should tremble before His Word. We read in Isaiah the prophet, "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and TREMBLETH AT MY WORD" (Isa.66:2).

Isaiah writes: "but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isa.40:8). Jesus says we are to live by "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4, Luke 4:4). The apostle Paul declared: "All scriptures is given by inspiration of God [literally, God-breathed], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect [that is, become perfect, wholly mature spiritually], throughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim.3:16-17).

Do we regard the Word of God with such reverence that we study it and pray over it upon our knees? As you spend time praying to God daily, do you open the Word of God and allow it to wash over you, cleansing you from evil thoughts, vanity, pride and the cares of this life?

David wrote: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to *thy Word*" (Psa. 119:9). He added, in verse 11: "*Thy Word* have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee!"

Have you memorized many portions of God's Word, literally writing it and hiding it deep within your heart? Do you pray over it daily, as you study it, and drink deeply of its message? Do you let God speak to you often, through His Word, while you humbly read it and study it, as you are in His Presence? Do you even study it before Him while you are literally on your knees?

Failure to do this is one of the primary reasons so many are far from God and seemingly out of focus spiritually -- and are on a wasted mission in life, going about trying to work out their own righteousness and not submitting to the will and word of God. Failure to commune daily with God by studying His Word is a major reason hundreds, even thousands, fall away from God's truth and succumb to the wiles of the Devil and the siren songs of Satan. Reading articles written by men or ministers is not enough. Reading books written by men is not enough. Nothing can replace careful, considerate, cautious BIBLE STUDY in the privacy of your own home!

Jesus Christ is the "Word of God" (John 1:1-3, 14). The words of the Bible are "His flesh" which we are to eat for our spiritual nourishment (John 6:48-58). Jesus said to His disciples: It is the spirit that quickeneth [gives life]; the flesh profiteth nothing: *the words* that I speak unto you, **THEY ARE SPIRIT, and they are life**" (John 6:63).

Every strong man of God down through history has spent much time studying the Bible for long periods of time. Every truly strong woman, strong in faith, has also spent much time *habitually* reading, studying and praying over God's Word!

Have you formed this very important habit in your personal life? Or is regular Bible study still a haphazard thing in your daily routine? And is Bible study *on your knees* something you seldom, if ever, do? Examine yourself – your heart and attitude. *What better* way is there to study the Word of God than *humbly*, asking Him to guide and correct us by His Word?

### *A Powerful Example*

George Mueller, a powerful servant of God during the nineteenth century and widely known as "the apostle of faith," wrote in his *Autobiography* about his own beginnings in the Word of God: "That the Word of God alone is our standard of judgment in spiritual things, that it can be explained only by the Holy Spirit; and that in our day, as well as in former times, He is the teacher of His people. The result of this was, that the first evening that I shut myself into my room, to give myself to prayer and meditation over the Scriptures, *I learned more in a few hours than I had done during a period of several months previously*. But the particular difference was, that I received real strength for my soul in doing so. I now began to try by the test of the Scriptures the things which I had learned and seen, and found that only those principles which stood the test were really of value" (*George Mueller's Autobiography*, p. 33).

Does reading the Bible sometimes seem tedious, boring, tiresome, to you? Would you rather partake of the world, television, movies, or various forms of entertainment? But they cannot give you eternal life! Nothing can compare with precious time spent with the Word of God!

George Mueller, a man used mightily of God to preach the gospel to many nations in the nineteenth century, bears witness to the power of faithful Bible study. God used him to raise up five magnificent orphanages to care for the daily needs of over 2,000 orphans, solely depending on God to send the money necessary to take care of them. Here was a man who *never* asked another human being for money to carry on this great work, but who simply fell upon his knees and asked God daily for all the tremendous financial necessities needed. Here was a man who really learned to walk with God, and to whom God sent, in terms of today's dollar value, something in the neighborhood of \$300,000,000 during his ministry of 64 years, from 1834 to 1898.

George Mueller was truly a mighty man of God whose whole life was a testimony of the power of faith and believing, expecting prayer. The truly astonishing thing about

his ministry is that *never once* did he ask others for money to support God's Work in his time. Rather, he went to God alone for the needs of the work and the orphans. And without fail God answered his earnest, believing prayers for *sixty four years*, and blessed the work under his hands.

Regarding Bible study, George Mueller wrote: "If the reader understands very little of the Word of God, *he ought to read it very much*, for the Spirit explains the Word by the Word. And if he enjoys the reading of the Word little, *that is just the reason why he should read it much*; for the *frequent reading of the Scriptures creates a delight in them*, so that the more we read them, the more we desire to do so" (p. 21).

Mueller understood much about the value of Bible study. His life of service to God, and the powerful way in which God used him to carry on His Work, proves it. Therefore, let me give you the basic principles of Bible study which George Mueller shares in his *Autobiography*. Mueller writes:

"It is of immense importance for the understanding of the Word of God, to read it in course, so that we may read every day a portion of the Old and a portion of the New Testament, going on where we previously left off. This is important -- (1) Because it throws light upon the connection; and a different course, according to which one *habitually* selects particular chapters, will make it utterly impossible ever to understand much of the Scriptures. (2) Whilst we are in the body, we need a change even in spiritual things; and this change the Lord has graciously provided in the great variety which is to be found in His Word. (3) It tends to the glory of God; for the leaving out some chapters here and there, is practically saying, that certain portions are better than others; or, that there are certain parts of revealed truth unprofitable, or unnecessary. (4) It may keep us, by the blessing of God, from erroneous views, as in reading thus regularly through the Scriptures we are led to see the meaning of the whole, and also kept from laying too much stress upon certain favorite views. (5) The Scriptures contain the whole revealed will of God, and therefore we ought to seek to read from time to time through the whole of that revealed will. There are many believers, I fear, in our day, who have not read even once through the whole of the Scriptures; and yet in a few months, by reading only a few chapters every day, they might accomplish it."

Have *you* ever read the Bible all the way through? What about your children? How much progress are they making?

### ***Family Bible Study***

In our home, when our children were younger, we used to have a family Bible study every day, usually in the morning at breakfast time. We would try to read at least one chapter in the Bible every day, sometimes two or three. On the Sabbath we usually read even more. Often I would read, and expound the Scriptures as we went along, bringing in lessons and making comments. At other times, I would have the children each read a portion and explain what they have read.

We enjoyed this family custom, and it helped bring us all together for the

priceless privilege of sharing the Word of God. We didn't bother with "tracts," or so-called "daily Bible verses" put together by men, with some "thought for the day." Instead we would drink in of the Fountain of Life, the holy Scriptures themselves. I believe our children benefited much from this precious time, although they were grievously hurt by the scandals in the Church that exploded around us, and the problems and trials we endured because of the sins in the ministry and in the headquarters church during those years.

Abraham was the father of the faithful and God mightily blessed him. What was one of the reasons, one of the *good* things God found in Abraham? We read in the book of Genesis, that God said to Abraham: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do [God was about to bring punishment upon the wicked worldly cities of Sodom and Gomorrah -- which stand as *types* of our wicked nations, today!]. . . . For I know him, that *he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment*" (Gen. 18:17-19).

Children who are left to themselves, even ministers' children, far too often grow up haughty, proud, arrogant, filled with self-will, vanity, lust, and perverseness. Children of high level ministers in God's Church whom I have known, were womanizers, fornicators, drug-abusers, and guilty of every foul vice one could imagine! And these were the children of the *top* ministers! Why? Because their parents *totally neglected true Bible study*, and spent precious little time with their own children going over the Word of God in a humble, godly manner!

### ***The Key of Meditation***

Another vital area of Bible study is daily meditation -- pondering, musing, thinking deeply -- about what we read in the Word of God. George Mueller wrote, "It is also of the greatest importance to meditate on what we read, so that perhaps a small portion of that which we have read, or if we have time, the whole may be meditated upon, in the course of the day."

Isaac, the son of Abraham, set us an excellent example of meditation. We read in Genesis, "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide . . ." (Gen.24:63).

David meditated on God's Word all the time. He wrote in the Psalms, "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97). He said: "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation" (v. 99). David also wrote: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly [margin, "wicked"], nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But *his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he MEDITATE DAY AND NIGHT*" (Psalm 1:1-2).

How important is meditation upon the word of God -- spending time reflecting upon it, musing upon it, considering its meaning and lessons, and applying them to ourselves?

David went on, explaining his approach toward God's Word: "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word" (Psa.119:15-16). "Princes [even so-called "leaders" amongst God's people] did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did *meditate in thy statutes*. Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors" (vs.23-24). "My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will *meditate* in thy statutes" (v.48). "Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will *meditate in thy precepts*" (v.78). "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might MEDITATE IN THY WORD" (v.148).

*Meditation upon the Word of God is a powerful KEY to spiritual SUCCESS!*

God commanded Joshua, "This book of the law [the law of God, encompassed in the first five books of the Bible in Joshua's day] shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt MEDITATE therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have *good success*" (Josh. 1:8).

Paul told Timothy, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all" (I Tim. 4:15).

When you spend time in the study of God's Word, do you also spend time meditating upon the lessons contained therein? Do you give thoughtful consideration and contemplation upon what you are reading? Do you compare Scripture with Scripture, in order to come to a fuller and more complete understanding?

### ***Bible Study Aids***

Sometimes you may want to use various Bible study *aids* in study of God's Word. Very helpful to thousands, in helping to look up passages where you only remember one word, or in studying all the passages where a particular word, such as "love," "faith," "mercy," etc., may be found in the Bible, is a Bible Concordance. The two best are *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, and *Young's Analytical Concordance*. Both of these also have a Hebrew and Greek dictionary in the back, where you can look up the original Hebrew and Greek words for each of the words listed in the main concordance section. This, also, is a very valuable study in itself.

What about Bible commentaries? These also may help out at times, but should not be trusted too much, as they are often the opinions of *men* about various passages and sometimes are in error. Often, however, they add insight and can be useful. *Adam Clarke's Commentary*, and the *Jamieson Faucett and Brown Critical-Experimental Commentary* are two of the most useful whole Bible commentaries on the market.

Nevertheless, nothing can replace the pure study of God's Word itself! I have found George Mueller's comments strike right on target. He said: "Learned

commentaries I have found to store the *head* with many notions, and often also with the truth of God; but when the Spirit teaches, through the instrumentality of prayer and meditation, the *heart* is affected. The former kind of knowledge generally puffs up, and is often renounced when another commentary gives a different opinion, and often also is found good for nothing, when it is carried out into practice. The latter kind of knowledge generally humbles, gives joy, leads us nearer to God, and is not easily reasoned away; and having been obtained from God, and thus having entered into the heart, and become our own, is also generally carried out. If the inquirer after truth does not understand the Hebrew and Greek languages, so as to be able to compare the common translation with the original, he may, concerning several passages, get light by an improved rendering, provided he can be sure that the translator was a truly spiritual person" (pp. 22-23).

What Bible translation is the best? Generally, for family and personal Bible study, I use the King James Version. Although translated into English during the reign of King James of England in 1611, it is still overall the best and most accurate English translation. The New King James Version is also an excellent modern translation.

Other useful translations one might consider are the *Moffatt*, *Revised Standard Version*, *New Revised Standard Version*, *Amplified Bible*, *New International Version*, and a host of others. However, for accuracy none compare with the King James Version, as it is based on the best original texts and was not subjected to the false reasoning of modern criticism which assumes that the more "ancient" a text the better it is -- despite enormous evidence to the contrary! The King James Version (also the NKJV) employs the Greek texts of the New Testament faithfully copied and reproduced through the centuries by the Greek Church. Modern translations, on the other hand, tend to give too much credence to old manuscripts which are known to be shot through with error -- such as the Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, and Siniaticus.

A useful modern paraphrase of the Bible is the *Living Bible*. Its author and translator, Henry Taylor, has a tremendous gift with words and phrases, and many of the renditions in the *Living Bible* are powerful modern statements that strike to the heart. However, in some areas he is far too free and loose in his assumptions, and certain technical matters should not be trusted to him.

Have you formed the *habit* of reading the Bible? George Mueller wrote, regarding himself in his early years:

"I never had been at any time in my life in the habit of reading the Holy Scriptures. When under fifteen years of age, I occasionally read a little of them at school; afterwards God's precious book was entirely laid aside, so that I never read one single chapter of it, as far as I remember, till it pleased God to begin a work of grace in my heart. Now the Scriptural way of reasoning would have been: God Himself has condescended to become an author, and I am ignorant about that precious book, with His Holy Spirit has caused to be written through the instrumentality of His servants, and it contains that which I ought to know, and the knowledge of which will lead me to true happiness; therefore I ought to read again and again this most precious book, this book of books, most earnestly, most prayerfully, and with much meditation; and

in this practice I ought to continue all the days of my life. For I was aware, though I read it but little, that I knew scarce, anything of it. But instead of acting thus, and being led by my ignorance of the Word of God to study it more, my difficulty in understanding it, and the little enjoyment I had in it, made me careless of reading it (for much prayerful reading of the Word, gives not merely more knowledge, but increases the delight we have in reading it); and thus, like many believers, I practically preferred, for the first four years of my divine life, the works of uninspired men to the Oracles of the living God. The consequence was that I remained a babe, both in knowledge and grace. In knowledge I say; for all *true* knowledge must be derived, by the Spirit, from the Word. And as I neglected the Word, I was for nearly four years so ignorant, that I did not *clearly* know even the *fundamental* points of our holy faith. And this lack of knowledge most sadly kept me back from walking steadily in the ways of God. For it is the truth that makes us free (John 8:31, 32), by delivering us from the slavery of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The Word proves it; the experience of the saints proves it; and also my own experience most decidedly proves it. For when it pleased the Lord in August, 1829, to bring me really to the Scriptures, my life and walk became very different. And though even since then I have fallen very short of what I might, and ought to have been, yet, by the grace of God, I have been enabled to live much nearer to Him than before" (pp. 20-21).

Often it seems once we begin to study the Bible, Satan comes along to distract us and to tempt us to do something else. He doesn't want us to feast on the living Word of God! He doesn't want us to be spiritually well nourished. George Mueller found this out. He wrote:

"I am aware that it is a common temptation of Satan to make us give up the reading of the Word and prayer when our enjoyment is gone; as if it were of no use to read the Scriptures when we do not enjoy them, and as if it were of no use to pray when we have no spirit of prayer; whilst the truth is, in order to enjoy the Word, we ought to continue to read it, and the way to obtain a spirit of prayer, is, to continue praying; for the less we read the Word of God, the less we desire to read it, and the less we pray, the less we desire to pray" (p. 38).

George Mueller was a man of faith and prayer. His life showed what can be accomplished when a man trusts *God alone* for everything he needs in life, including clothing, food, shelter, healing, direction, guidance in work and inspiration. He often read the Bible on his knees.

But Mueller knew that merely reading the Word of God was not enough. We must also *obey* it! He wrote: "We have to carry out that which we receive from the Holy Scriptures; we must practice the truth we know. Erring and failing we may be; but we must be honest, upright in not living in sin, in not going on in a course we know to be contrary to the mind of God. Should the latter be the case, we cannot enjoy fellowship with God, nor shall we be able practically to trust Him as our friend, and this will be the greatest hindrance to having our prayers answered, according to that word: "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me*" (see Psa. 66:18; quoted from page 357 of Mueller's *Autobiography*).

As we read God's Word, we must begin to obey it. As it points out errors and wrong-doing in our life, we must be willing to admit our errors and to correct them. We must be willing to change, to alter what is wrong, and to walk uprightly, living by every word of God. We must be willing to repent, when proven that we are wrong! If you ever stop doing this, and become UNWILLING TO REPENT, and change, when you are proved WRONG, then you will cease to walk with God from that point onward. Or, to turn it around, when you stop growing in truth and admitting error, then God will cease to walk with *you!*

### *When to Study*

What is the best time to study the Scriptures?

Many people have the habit of putting Bible study off to last and consequently never seem to get around to it. Or, when evening comes, they feel too tired and need to relax, so they skip the study of God's Word. This is a great evil.

We should give to God the *best* part of our time. We should put Him *FIRST*, before all else! We should especially seek His guidance *in the beginning of our day -- that is, BEFORE* everything else! This way we will have His presence with us much more completely and fully during the course of the day, and we will be stronger and more enabled to call upon Him when cast down, or tempted, or in making decisions regarding our work.

The best part of our time, when we are fresh, is in the beginning of the day. This means, since God begins each day at sunset (Lev.23:32), the early evening is a good time for Bible study. Also, early in the morning, after one awakens, and freshens up, would be a good time to devote to the study of God's Word.

As George Mueller wrote: "Any one need but make the experiment of spending one, two, or three hours in prayer and meditation *before breakfast*, either in his room, or with his Bible in his hand in the fields, and he will soon find out the beneficial effect which early rising has upon the outward and inward man. I beseech all my brethren and sisters into whose hands this may fall, and who are not in the habit of rising early, to make the trial, and they will praise the Lord for having done so" (p. 126).

George Mueller learned the importance of *both* Bible study and prayer before breakfast. He said, in his *Autobiography*,

"Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer, after having dressed in the morning. Now I saw, that the *most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God and to meditation on it*, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved, instructed; and that thus, whilst meditating, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord. . . . The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that

though I did not, as it were, give myself to *prayer*, but to *meditation*, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer" (p. 153).

### ***Bible Study Strengthens Faith***

Many of God's people wish they had more faith in life. They complain about their lack of faith. They seem to think faith is some supernatural gift only given to a few, and that they cannot expect to have very much.

What was George Mueller's secret of faith? The *foundation* key, he tells us himself, is "*the careful reading of the Word of God, combined with meditation on it.*"

Mueller added:

"Through reading of the Word of God, and especially through meditation on the Word of God, the believer becomes more and more acquainted with the nature and character of God, and thus sees more and more, besides His holiness and justice, what a kind, loving, gracious, merciful, mighty, wise, and faithful Being He is, and, therefore, in poverty, affliction of body, bereavement in his family, difficulty in his service, want of a situation or employment, he will repose upon the *ability* of God to help him, because he has not only learned from His Word that He is of almighty power and infinite wisdom, but he has also seen instance upon instance in the Holy Scriptures in which His almighty power and infinite wisdom have been actually exercised in helping and delivering His people; and he will repose upon the willingness of God to help him, because he has not only learned from the Scriptures what a kind, good, merciful, gracious, and faithful Being God is, but because he has also seen in the Word of God, how in a great variety of instances He has proved Himself to be so. And the consideration of this, *if God has become known to us through prayer and meditation on His own Word*, will lead us, in general at least, with a measure of confidence to rely upon Him; and thus meditation on the Word of God, will be one special means to strengthen our faith" (p. 175).

Truly, as the apostle Paul wrote: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10: 17).

Whether you personally are new to the Bible and its study, or whether you have been a devoted disciple of Jesus and a habitual reader of the Word of God, let us all commit ourselves to putting the Word of God *first* in our lives, and study it *daily* and be sure to guide our family and children in the study and love of the Word of God!

The Word of God is spirit, and it is Life!

Do you want to be a man of faith, a man of prayer -- a real "man of God"?

### ***Principles of Bible Study***

Isador Zwirn, a Jewish rabbi who after personal and careful Bible study became a Messianic Christian Jew, was taught from an early age that each sentence of God's Word

-- the Torah -- was important and to be studied!

Shockingly, many so-called "Christians" have never even read the entire Word of God -- the Bible. How can you *know* that which you have never read or studied? Many are IGNORANT of God's Word -- and would be hard-pressed to "prove" the simplest doctrine, such as the "Sabbath," "holy days," "salvation," "keeping the commandments," "born again," the "kingdom of God," the "resurrection," "the second coming of Christ," "grace," and so forth. Many would not even know where to begin to prove where the "lost ten tribes" migrated in history, and what the Bible says about identifying their whereabouts today!

There is only ONE WAY to get to know the Word of God -- the TRUTH which Jesus said will "make us free." That is to READ and STUDY it! Jesus said on another occasion, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt.4:4). He knew the Word of God. He actually quoted this from the Old Testament, or Torah. We read there, "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that *man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live*" (Deut.8:3).

Jesus also declared, to the Pharisees of His time, "SEARCH the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

Isador Zwirn, in the Jewish *bet hamidrash*, or "house of research," learned definite principles of Bible study, principles which stood him in good stead throughout his lifetime. I consider these principles extremely important, so I am going to share them with you.

### **Principle #1 -- Respect the Viewpoints of Others.**

The first principle is *respect for the viewpoints of others*. Unless we begin with respect for divergent views, how can we possibly be "open minded" enough to see it and admit it if such a view happens to be right? As Oliver Cromwell once said, "I beseech you, brethren, think it possible that you might be mistaken!" Unfortunately, his words, as so often happens, fell on deaf ears.

Says Zwirn, "**Even if the teacher or a student disagreed with another's viewpoint or opinion, he must show respect, both for that opinion and for the proponent of that opinion. This is not always easy to do.**" When different viewpoints are discussed, it is not necessarily agreement that is sought, but at least *understanding* of precisely what each one's opinion or position is. Some ministers are so heated in their presentation of their views, as dogmatic truth, that they never really stop to *carefully listen* so they can understand what the other person's viewpoint is. Some people have the attitude: "My mind is made up; don't confuse me with more facts!" Or, as I used to say, some people's minds are like concrete: all mixed up, and permanently set!

**Principle #2 -- Record All Viewpoints -- and Every Student Investigate Each One and Follow His Own Conscience After Being Enlightened with All Available Evidence, Without Compromising the Principle of Truth.**

The second principle of the *bet hamidrash*, according to Isador Zwirn, is: **"If several of you disagree on a matter of exegesis or biblical interpretation, we will record them all. Then every student will investigate each one of them."** Each person then should select the one that seems to best fit the facts, as they see them, and not compromise with principle or truth. That is, each should then follow their own conscience, after being enlightened with ALL the pertinent facts that pertain to the subject under evaluation. As Paul wrote, "Has thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: *FOR WHATSOEVER IS NOT OF FAITH IS SIN*" (Romans 14:22-23).

The New International Version has the latter part of this passage as follows: "Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. . . . everything that does not come from faith is sin." To come to a conclusion, but then to deny your conscience -- the evidence before your very eyes -- and to follow what your conscience tells you is false and error, would be to deny faith, and would constitute SIN.

Paul wrote, "Now the end [purpose, goal] of the commandment is charity [unfeigned, genuine love] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling" (I Tim.1:5-6). He went on, "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck" (I Tim.1:19). Paul exhorts us to be true to ourselves, and the truth, "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (I Tim.3:9). Once we begin to study into a subject carefully, we should never defile our conscience, or go against the truth that God reveals to us. To do so would be to make "shipwreck" of the faith and the truth, and to jeopardize our spiritual lives and salvation!

**Principle #3 -- When Two Major Views Contradict, Set Them Aside Temporarily and Hope a Third View Will Be Found To Harmonize the Two.**

The third principle of Scriptural study, learned and taught in the *bet hamidrash* or "house of research" was this guideline: **"Whenever two major views seem to contradict each other, you must temporarily set them aside, and hope that a third view will eventually be found that will harmonize the two."** That is, when there is conflict and controversy -- and surely we live in a time of dangerous spiritual currents and subtle false teaching -- and we are not sure from the available evidence which view is right, or even if either one of the two views presented is right, then we should put the matter on the shelf -- set it aside -- put it in limbo for the time being -- and then seek more information, more knowledge, more factual data, so that we can *learn* the truth!

Obviously, this would require that we possess an open mind -- a humble mind -- and be willing to be taught, and to be willing to UNLEARN any error which we may have unthinkingly or unknowingly ingested!

This does not mean, however, that you should go along with every "change" presented to you. The change itself might be a new "error" even worse than the first! Paul warned Timothy that in the "last days" there would be "perilous times" in which deceivers are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Tim.3:1, 7). He warned, further, "But evil men and SEDUCERS (Greek *goes*, meaning "a wizard," as muttering spells; "an impostor, seducer") shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (II Tim.3:13). Peter wrote of such, "the *latter end is worse* with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to TURN FROM the holy commandment delivered unto them" (II Pet.2:20-21).

When doctrinal "change" is staring us in the face, then, a prudent student of the Bible will gather all the related evidence -- search the Scriptures -- pull out various translations of the Bible -- get out his Concordance, such as Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, and look into what various authorities have to say about it, such as the Bible Dictionaries (available in Christian bookstores, or religious libraries), and not neglect Jewish sources and interpretations, either. In the search for *truth*, no stone or rock should be left unturned! We must not be negligent, or lazy, or self-confident. We must be willing to SEARCH for the truth, as for hidden treasures -- HUNT for wisdom and understanding, as for precious pearls, diamonds, or gold!

God says of wisdom and understanding -- that is, the knowledge of God, the Torah -- "For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She [the Torah, the knowledge of God, true wisdom] is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleastantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a TREE OF LIFE to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her" (Proverbs 3:14-18).

It is the "Torah," Law, Teaching, or Revelation of God, which is the true "Tree of Life," symbolized by the "tree of life" in the Garden of Eden. Herbert Armstrong thought the "tree of life" was the Holy Spirit, but that was his own interpretation and idea. The Scriptures define the TORAH or LAW or TEACHINGS of God's Word as the true Biblical "TREE OF LIFE"! Therefore, we should value the Word of God very highly -- for it is the true "way of salvation" and the way to "eternal life"!

**Principle #4 -- "Lo sakir paunim" -- "Do not recognize the face."**

Finally, when we are studying to reach a conclusion about a major Biblical doctrine, and when some highly respected individual or some church "authority" or "leader" is trying to teach us their viewpoint, we must remember the basic principle

taught by Moses in evaluating any new doctrine or "new truth." Moses warned us: "*Lo sakir paunim.*" This Hebrew expression means, "**Do not recognize the face**" (Deut.1:17). The King James Version has this: "**Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's.**" The New International Bible has this: "**Do not show *partiality* in judging; *hear both small and great alike.* Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God.**" How many people, when faced with a doctrinal change, are AFRAID of the local minister, AFRAID of being thrown out of the church congregation, AFRAID of losing their long-time friends, and AFRAID of being cut off from family members in the church?

God says, ***do NOT be afraid!*** Do not FEAR *any man*, whether he claim to be an "apostle," "evangelist," "pastor," or whatever! Those who fear MEN more than the Word of God, and Almighty God, are *doomed*, even as they breathe. Jeremiah the prophet wrote, "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD" (Jer.17:5, NIV). Solomon was inspired to write, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline" (Prov.1:7, NIV). Solomon wrote, "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and shun evil" (Prov.3:7). He added, "The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death" (Prov.14:27).

On the other hand, Solomon warned, "Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whosoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe" (Prov.29:25). Says the Moffatt translation, "The fear of man is *dangerous*; but he who trusts in the Eternal shall be safe."

Says Isador Zwirn, "In other words, whether truth comes from a male or female, Jew or Gentile, black or white, or even from the mouth of babes we are to accept it" (see *The Rabbi from Burbank*, p.36-37). He goes on:

"All of these principles have for their basis the Hebrew key word, *doresh*, 'to study, to research.' As a young child I learned that once this concept became firmly fixed in my mind, I was then readily able to recognize and obey the scriptural commands that applied to my life.

"I have since learned that this same principle applies to any sincere student of the Bible. By learning the importance of God's *words* that are recorded within *God's Word*, then learning the principle of unquestioning obedience, every child of God will be able to live a life of peace, power, and daily victory.

"These are unequivocal biblical principles: research (*doresh*) with integrity equals knowledge and insight. Knowledge and insight, plus obedience, equals God's rich rewards. When I learn to know what God is saying to me in his Word, I must obey what he says. Then he is honor-bound to answer the promises in his Word" (p.37-38).

### ***God's Command -- RESEARCH the Truth***

Far too many of God's people, I believe, do not seem to feel themselves qualified to do "Biblical research." So they conveniently or foolishly leave it to others – the

ministers. And they risk their salvation by foolishly trusting in men -- human beings -- rather than studying the Word of God which is a shield and protector against false teaching, heresy, and insidious, subtle, clever false doctrines which masquerade as "truth."

Notice God's command: "**Seek [*doresh*, research] the LORD and his strength, seek [*doresh*, research] his face continually**" (I Chron.16:11). "**SEEK [*DORESH*, RESEARCH] ye the LORD while he may be found**, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him RETURN unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6-7).

"And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek [*doresh*, research] thee" (Psalm 9:10).

"I sought [*doresh*, researched] the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that FEAR him, and delivereth them" (Psalm 34:4-7).

The Hebrew word *doresh* or *darash* literally means, "**to tread or frequent; usually to follow (for pursuit or search); by implication, to seek or ask; specifically, to worship**" (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, Hebrew dictionary, word #1875). It is variously translated, "inquire, make inquisition, require, search, seek for, seek out." *Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon* defines the word: "**To rub, to beat, to tread, to trample, to tread, or beat a path; to rub, to thresh. . . figuratively, TO LEARN, TO STUDY. Kindred to this are the roots mentioned . . . all having the signification of treading**" (p.209). It means, "**to tread a place under the feet; hence, to go to a place, to frequent it . . . Farther, the signification of 'going to' is applied to that of seeking, inquiring, demanding; also, of caring for. Hence -- to seek . . . to search after . . . to seek from anyone, to inquire . . . to apply oneself to any thing, to STUDY, to follow, to practice any thing.**"

"They that seek [*doresh*, research] the LORD shall not want any good thing" (Psalm 34:10). "The humble will hear this and be glad: and your heart shall live that SEEK [*doresh*, research] God" (Psalm 69:32). Obviously, God wants each one of us to seek -- search after Him -- with all our being and might and ability. If we seek Him with all our powers, we have His promise that we will find Him and get to know Him. And when we find Him and get to know Him, the connotation is that we will offer ourselves to Him in total obedience.

### ***Walking With GOD***

Do you want to walk with God? Then you must begin studying the Word of God and praying to God as never before in your life. We draw close to God in this way. As

we study His Word and let Him speak to us, we must do what He says. We must daily put sin and sinful thoughts, out of our lives and never compromise.

The apostle James put it so clearly: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.* Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up*" (Jas. 4:7-10).

Millions of people have the wrong idea about God. They don't know where to find Him, where to look for Him. They think He is so far off, and so high above us, that He would never condescend to speak with us. But God is not proud and lofty. It is humans themselves who become proud, lifted up and lofty. God is humble. To walk with God, therefore, we must also humble ourselves and walk where He walks.

I have found, personally, that a big help to me, in walking with God, is to spend time in a garden -- to plant, maintain, and do all the work connected with a garden. People forget that God Himself is the original Gardener. He planted a garden in Eden (Genesis 2:8). He personally planted the trees, shrubs, flowers and vegetables. One of the first commands He gave man was to "dress" the garden and to "keep" or maintain it (verse 15).

When I humble myself to get my hands dirty and my fingernails caked with dirt by planting seeds in a garden, and when I get down on my knees to pull the weeds and cultivate the soil around the individual plants, to encourage their growth, my attitude becomes more loving, more childlike, more appreciative, more like that of God Himself.

An old proverb among gardeners is: "The best fertilizer of all is the footprints of the gardener." Any garden left to itself will soon become overpowered with weeds, grass and choked with obnoxious plants. Maintaining a garden teaches us a great deal about the principles of God's Word. Jesus used the parable of the sower which teaches lessons from the gardening experience. In this parable, each of us is like a delicate plant in the sight of God; and in order to grow spiritually, we must keep ourselves away from the weeds of the world, the thorns and choking, entangling thistles. We must be "watered" deeply of the Word and the Spirit of God. We must spend much time in communion with God.

King David, a man after God's own heart, wrote: "*One thing* have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to *inquire* in his temple" (Psa. 27:4). He said: "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek" (v. 8). With humble faith and boldness David went so far as to say: "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up" (v. 10).

What about you? Do you really want to walk with God?