

STUDY THE WORD OF GOD

2Timothy 2:15 *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

The apostle Paul admonished the young Timothy to study to show himself approved unto God. According to tradition, Timothy was just 16 years of age when he became a Christian through Paul's ministry. Notice that Paul wrote, 'show thyself approved unto God', not unto men. Let us use this as the point of departure for this study. Let there be doubt: the Christian who desires to be used by the Lord Jesus Christ must be a diligent student of the Word of God. Why does God put such a high premium on study? To begin with, study demonstrates humility. To study is to acknowledge the need for direction and wisdom from God. It is to recognize that one is inadequate, and must become a student of great men and women who know God. This attitude is encapsulated in the scripture below:

1Kings 3:7 *And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in.*

1Kings 3:8 *And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.*

1Kings 3:9 *Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?*

Solomon was 20 years old when he became king. It is not uncommon for youth at this age to have an unwarranted sense of optimism and confidence in their abilities. Not so for Solomon! He was acutely aware of his shortcomings and lack of experience. The Book of eternal knowledge and wisdom will open its secrets to those who first clothe themselves with humility. How often do adults look back with a mixture of shame and pity on their youth and wistfully think, ‘If only I knew what I know now, I would have saved myself much heartache!’

The blessings of study are manifold! Few think of this, but studying is an antidote to trouble; it is impossible to get into trouble while deeply immersed in study. This is why the apostle Paul commanded the following to members of the church of Thessalonica who fell into the habit of gossip and slothfulness:

1Thess 4:11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

Studying develops discipline. The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines discipline as ‘training that makes people more willing to obey or more able to control themselves, often in the form of rules, and punishments if these are broken, or the behavior produced by this training’. Hence, developing a habit of studying the Bible will help the young obey God and control themselves – two immensely valuable spiritual virtues. We now understand through advances in neurology that the prefrontal cortex of adolescents – the part that

affects self-control and decision-making – undergoes major changes explaining to some degree why teenagers can be impulsive and get into trouble. According to one study:

The development and maturation of the prefrontal cortex occurs primarily during adolescence and is fully accomplished at the age of 25 years. The development of the prefrontal cortex is very important for complex behavioral performance, as this region of the brain helps accomplish executive brain functions¹

Given the above, what better way to discipline the restless nature of children than the study of the Word of God? No wonder David says, ‘Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word’ (Psalm 119: 9). A child who develops the habit of studying the Word of God will reap enormous benefits.

Psalm 119:99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

Psalm 119:130 The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Psalm 119:165 Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

To summarize, studying the Word of God has enormous benefits for the young. It speaks of a humble heart that acknowledges its need for wisdom, as did Solomon. In addition, it is an effective

¹ Arain, M., Haque, M., Johal, L., Mathur, P., Nel, W., Rais, A., ... & Sharma, S. (2013). Maturation of the adolescent brain. *Neuropsychiatric disease and treatment*, 9, 449.

tool that develops discipline, understanding and makes one wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15).