

Why Study the Bible?

by Ronald L. Dart

Bible study is fascinating. You may doubt that, if your past approach has been to start with Genesis and read straight through. Chances are you made it to Leviticus and gave up. The Bible is not always easy reading. It requires attention and effort, and it may even require a little help. When Philip encountered an Ethiopian who was reading the Scriptures, he asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The Ethiopian looked up from the Book of Isaiah and answered, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” (Acts 8:31).

The Bible is not one book, but many. And they are ancient books, written in strange tongues, with the truth expressed in complex ways. The Bible has a surface simplicity that reaches out to the mind of a child with remarkable clarity and purity. Yet it also has a depth and subtlety that have baffled philosophers through the ages.

The books of the Bible seem unrelated in many ways, and yet a pattern is deliberately interwoven—sometimes hidden, sometimes obvious. Solomon wrote: “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings to search out a matter” (Proverbs 25:2). For his own reasons, God has not laid out the truth in stark clarity for all men to see. The truth will come, but it may come slowly. It may come with considerable effort. Sometimes you need a guide, yet the individual must search out the answers himself.

Bible Study is a Long Term Project

Years ago, I learned that big projects should be divided into manageable chunks. I was working on my master’s thesis at the time, and it was a daunting prospect, to say the least. So I decided to commit one hour a day to working on that thesis. If I felt like writing, I wrote. If I sat down to write and nothing

flowed, I went to the library and searched through anything I could find related to my topic. If I dozed off while I was reading, at least I wasn’t spending the time on something else. I counted it.

With the passage of time, something curious happened. I found myself giving the project more and more time, and the thesis began to “take over.” I have tried the same thing with each of the first three books I have now written, and it happened every time. I’d give it an hour a day for weeks on end, but finally, the book would take over. When I woke up in the morning, the book would get me out of bed.

Only you can decide how to tackle your Bible study, but it is a lifetime project, and you can make it work for you only with a long term commitment. You have to decide how much of every day will belong to the Bible. And you have to be, pardon the expression, *religious* about it.

Naturally, before you start, you need to give some consideration to the book you are going to devote so many hours to. The choices of Bibles out there can be bewildering.

Your Bible

People often ask for recommendations on Bibles and Bible study aids. While this is largely a matter of personal preference and needs, here are some general observations.

Obviously, your most important acquisition for Bible study is the Bible itself. If you already own a Bible, your initial decision may be made for you. Chances are that your Bible is a King James Version, but many people find it hard to read. They want to know which translation is best, easiest to read, most accurate, or most literal. Unfortunately, no single translation fits all these descriptions.

If you are going to buy a Bible, be it your first, second, or third, what do you look for? An excellent article appeared in *Christianity Today* (April 22, 1983) entitled, “Bible Translations: A Guide Through the

Forest,” by Leslie Keylock. The author included a thorough summary of several popular translations. You may wish to check the Internet or stop by your local library and read this issue of the magazine before you invest in another translation, but here are a few observations.

▪ **King James Version (1611, KJV)**

Most biblical quotations you read in our publications are from the KJV. Many of us have used the King James Bible for so long and are so familiar with it, we just hate to change. The main argument for keeping it is that some of the most useful concordances are based on the KJV. Unfortunately, the language has changed so much since 1611 that the old Bible simply does not mean what it used to mean.

Keylock suggests that one reason we keep using the old KJV is that we love its style. According to the King James Bible, Jesus told his disciples, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” In the Good News Bible he tells the disciples, “Do not be worried and upset” (John 14:1). The KJV has a beauty of style that is rarely matched.

Speaking for myself, when I started reading the Bible, the King James was the only Bible in common use. So, I got used to it, but to this day when I want to find a Scripture, I have to use a concordance of the KJV or use the computer search on that version. The reason is, that it is the words of the King James that I recall. I broadcast and speak using the King James Bible, but because of the difficulties it presents, I have long since learned to paraphrase it for the ear. Fortunately, the King James Bible is now in public domain, so I can read it as I wish.

▪ **Revised Standard Version (1952, RSV)**

The Revised Standard Version retains much of the beauty of the King James Version while getting rid of many archaic expressions. Unfortunately, the Revised Standard Version has now had more than 50 years to become archaic itself. The RSV was especially noted for its scholarship, but we have discovered so much about the Bible since 1952 that even the RSV is out of date. So, the Revised Standard Version Bible committee released a New Revised Standard Version (1989, NRSV). Naturally, this reflects the progress of scholarship in the intervening years. Unfortunately, it is a gender neutral Bible, which is occasionally frustrating.

▪ **New American Standard Bible (1963, NASB)**

According to Keylock, “The most literal, word-for-word translation on the market today. . . is the New American Standard Bible.” Some authorities consider the NASB choppy and hard to read. But for those who have no background in biblical languages, it serves as an interesting counterbalance to some of the more modern free translations or paraphrases (as the Living Bible). However, even this literal translation slips up in places. In Mark 7:19, for example, the words “Thus He declared” are gratuitously added. They are in no ancient Greek manuscript. The latest version of this classic is dated 1988.

▪ **The Jerusalem Bible (1966, JB)**

The Jerusalem Bible and the New American Bible have replaced all earlier Bible translations among Catholic readers. Many scholars consider them good translations, except for some Catholic idiosyncracies and some rather opinionated notes.

▪ **New English Bible (1970, NEB)**

The New English Bible, the first British Bible to break completely with the King James tradition is remarkable in that it is intended to be both accurate and literary. It is one of the few modern translations which has attempted to maintain the literary standards of the King James and Revised Standard Versions.

Some scholars charge that the NEB translators did too much rearranging of the text. Nevertheless, it makes good reading.

▪ **Living Bible (1971, LB)**

As Keylock points out, the Living Bible is not really a translation, but a paraphrase. It was an attempt made by one man to put the Bible in a language his children could understand. It is easily the most readable contemporary interpretation of the Bible. The reader should not approach the Living Bible expecting to find scholarship, however, as its author knows neither Hebrew nor Greek. Others have suggested that it is no more readable than the New International Version and that the author’s doctrinal views are visible in both the translations and the footnotes.

In spite of all this, it does read well and is extremely powerful—particularly in the Old Testament prophets. But one does need a counterbalance—perhaps the New American Standard Bible.

▪ **Good News Bible (1976, GNB)**

Newsweek magazine said the Good News Bible was

“useful for new readers, but short on poetry and majesty.” It was translated by Southern Baptist Robert Bratcher and is what Keylock calls a “dynamic equivalence” translation. By that he means that the translators did not attempt to make a literal translation. First they asked what the biblical text really means, and then they tried to find the equivalent meaning in contemporary English. One has to wonder, however, whether “Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires” is any better than “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

▪ **New International Version (1979, NIV)**

Keylock concludes that the New International Version is “rapidly developing into the closest thing to a standard Bible among evangelical Bible-reading people in America.” Many scholars feel that the NIV is a balanced translation. It stays close to the Hebrew and Greek text without becoming stilted, as the NASB. Still, the NIV is another dynamic equivalence translation, and much depends on what the translator thought the author *meant*. This creates some theological problems, especially in the translator’s interpretation of Paul. That said, I use it a great deal in preparing broadcasts and sermons.

▪ **New King James Version (1982, NKJV)**

As its title suggests, the NKJV stays very close to the King James Bible, simply replacing archaic words and phrases with more contemporary expressions. The purpose of the NKJV is to “maintain that lyrical quality which is so highly regarded in the Authorized Version.” Scholars generally agree that they accomplished that, but wonder if the translation went far enough in making necessary revisions. I don’t use this one very much when writing because the copyright holders are rather strict in their requirements.

▪ **Reader’s Digest Bible (1982, RDV)**

The Reader’s Digest Bible is simply a condensation of the Revised Standard Version by about 40 percent. Keylock points out that the strongest criticism has been of the introductions to some of the books, which adopt critical views of the Bible. It is really not a useful translation, even for an amateur who is settling in for a serious study of the Bible.

Which One is For You?

As you can see, you have a variety of choices

when you purchase a new Bible. If you do not own one at all, and you are only going to buy one Bible, your choice should probably be between the New International Version, the New American Standard Bible, or the New King James Version. After that it depends on what you are looking for. If you want easy readability, the Living Bible is hard to beat. If you want a more literal translation, perhaps the New American Standard Bible is for you.

Whatever you choose, keep in mind that the truth of God can even survive bad translation. But you still should not carelessly accept only one version of a controversial Scripture.

There is one other point if you are buying a new Bible. The version you will use the most, carry to church, read in bed, make notes in, etc., should be of good enough quality to last a lifetime. Look for one with wide margins so you can make notes in it. After a few years, a personally marked and annotated Bible will be one of your most cherished possessions.

Bible Study Aids

Frequently, we receive letters asking where a given Scripture, sentence, or phrase is to be found in the Bible. “I know it is in there somewhere,” they complain. “I just cannot find it.” Well, they could if they had a *concordance*.

A complete or exhaustive concordance simply lists every place in the Bible a given word is mentioned and the phrase in which it is found. If you have heard, for example, that the phrase “Every tub will sit on its own bottom” is in the Bible, all you have to do is look in your concordance under “tub” and learn that it is not there after all.

When you buy a concordance, you will quickly find why so many continue to use the King James Version. Most concordances are compiled from the King James Version of the Bible.

The two most popular concordances are *Cruden’s Complete Concordance* and *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*. *Cruden’s* is smaller, cheaper, and handier to use. *Strong’s Concordance* is a huge volume that also includes a cross-reference to the Greek and Hebrew words used in the Bible.

If you would rather have a subject index instead of the key word index, *Nave’s Topical Bible* should fill the bill nicely.

At least as important as a concordance is a Bible

handbook. The beginning student can easily get lost. A Bible handbook gives you valuable background information plus the story flow of each book of the Bible. One of the most economical and easy to use is *Halley's Bible Handbook*, although others may serve just as well.

People also ask about commentaries, but I must caution that they are expensive and of marginal value for most students. For years I got by nicely with the *Critical & Experimental Commentary* and *Clarke's Commentary of the Bible*. If I could only keep one of them, I would keep the *Critical & Experimental Commentary*. If you can find a secondhand copy of it at a good price, it is not a bad investment. But you should realize that both these commentaries are sadly out of date. You will find the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* published by Zondervan Press more useful. It is much more up-to-date, easy to use, and contains much valuable information—but it is expensive.

I cannot speak for everyone, but I do not consult my commentaries as often as I do my *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. After the fundamentals of two or three versions of the Bible, a concordance and a Bible handbook, I have no Bible study aid more helpful than my Bible encyclopedia. Shop carefully. You might find an old set at a bargain. There is a new version on the market which has replaced the old one and knocked its price down. Nevertheless, the old one is still of *considerable* value.

Far down the list of useful books would be an atlas of the Bible and a dictionary of the Bible. I have both but consult them less often.

Marking Your Bible

Systematic marking of your Bible can be effective in three major ways:

1. It focuses attention on the Scripture at the time of marking.
2. It brings your eye back to the Scripture easily and quickly in future study.
3. It makes key Scriptures easier to find later.

Some are reluctant to mark books (especially the Bible), but underlined Scriptures, good marginal notes, and chain-referenced Scriptures may be useful for years to come.

We recommend a Bible with good paper, a wide margin if you can find it, a couple of colored pencils for underlining and a fine-point pen for marginal

notes. Beyond these suggested items, all you need is time and a quiet place to get acquainted with the Word of God.

It is not our purpose to give you all the answers or to dogmatize the teachings of the Bible. It is our purpose to serve as a guide in helping you discover for yourself the beauty of God's Word, and to help you discover meanings that you otherwise might never see. It is not our job to give you all the answers. Instead, we will try to help you ask some of the right questions.

Before you begin, be aware of one thing. If you enter a careful, reverent, and persevering study of the Bible, your life will never be the same. You will come to a knowledge of truth you will be unable to ignore. If you take a few minutes before and after your study to pray about the things you are learning, you will make a start in building a deeper relationship with your God and Savior.

Sometimes, you will prefer to read a book straight through. Other times you will want to follow a topic. Here is a modest example of some guided Bible Study. The way to do this is to read the Scriptures listed and then write out *your own answer* to the question.

The Bible Can Change Your Life

1. By what standard is a man to live his life? (Deuteronomy 8:1-3; Matthew 4:1-4).
2. If a person's life has gone bad, and he wants to turn it around, what can he do? (Psalm 119:9-16).
3. What did King David see as his primary source of understanding, his source of light? (Psalm 119:97-130).
4. What is the source of our freedom? (John 8:32).
5. What is truth? (John 17:14-17).

Spreading the Word (Acts 8:1-40)

6. Why did God allow persecution to come upon the early church?
7. Was the "preaching of the Word" limited to the Apostles only?
8. Does the physical act of baptism necessarily show conversion?
9. Why did God deliberately send Philip to this area to reach only one man?
10. Is it sometimes necessary to have a guide in the study of the Bible?

11. What was the focus of Philip's "Bible study" with the Ethiopian eunuch?

12. What indications do you find of the requirements for and the mode of baptism?

Perhaps the most important instruction Christ left his disciples is the Great Commission: "Go you therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Unfortunately, long after Christ's ascension, and long after the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the church had essentially not "gone" anywhere. Three thousand people had been baptized in one day because of Peter's first inspired sermon. As the success of the church in Jerusalem continued, it may not have occurred to the Apostles and elders that there was any urgency about going to the rest of the world.

This may point out the danger of allowing one's religion to become only a *personal pleasure*, leading to the neglect of one's responsibility to other people. It is worth asking why the church had made so little progress in going to the world by the time of the eighth chapter of Acts. It may be that God used persecution to move the people out into the world.

Then each could become a light in various nations and communities, so that still more people might come to know the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:1-4). On the other hand, the fledgling church used those years to thoroughly master the Gospel. They would not have a written Gospel for many years, so memorization of the story was important.

It is also interesting that, when the persecution arose, everyone was scattered from Jerusalem *except the Apostles* (Acts 8:1). Luke then said that those *whom they scattered* were the ones that went everywhere *preaching* the word (v. 4). Any suggestion that only the Apostles could have been preaching the Gospel is false, according to this Scripture. Indeed, we find in verse five that Philip, who had previously been ordained as deacon, was preaching the Gospel throughout Samaria.

The section about Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24) is particularly interesting, as we find this infamous sorcerer *believed* the truth and was baptized (v. 13). Yet

later Peter said to him, "You have neither part nor lot in this matter: for your heart is not right in the sight of God" (v. 21). Note well that mere belief and the act of baptism do not necessarily guarantee that a person is a converted Christian.

The eighth chapter of Acts is included here primarily because of the narrative concerning Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. It was rare for an angel to appear to an evangelist, and of additional interest because Philip was sent, apparently on foot, a distance of at least 50 miles to intercept one man en route from Jerusalem to Africa. Why would God have done this? If we see this as an effort to reach one man who could have been influential in carrying the Gospel to others in Northern Africa, then the incident makes sense. If only those who are ordained can preach the Gospel to others, then it seems strange that this trip would have been made merely to reach one man.

Note that a man may not necessarily come to a complete understanding of God's will without some kind of guidance or help from others who understand and know the Scriptures (Acts 8:30-31). In this case, this man lacked the knowledge of Jesus Christ to combine with the knowledge of the Prophet Isaiah to come to an understanding of the truth. Notice also that the focus of Philip's message is Jesus. "Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture and *preached unto him Jesus*" (v. 35). The only thing Philip mentions here regarding requirements for baptism is a total wholehearted belief (v. 37). It will become evident from other Scriptures, however, that encompassed in the *belief* is the idea of *repentance of sins* and an acknowledgment of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Preparation (1 Peter 3:15)

13. Does it seem that God intends his people to be witnesses?

14. Is preparation necessary?

15. If so, why?

It is important to understand that it is God's intent that *all* Christians be involved in the promulgation of the Gospel. Diligent preparation and study are necessary to be able to give "an answer to him that asketh thee a reason of the hope that is within you in meekness and fear."

Special Message to Timothy (2 Timothy 2-3)

16. Do you see any indication of the extent of involvement Paul expected of men in the church?
17. Are there any pitfalls to be avoided in the study and discussion of Scripture?
18. Why does Paul equate “study” with being a workman?
19. What is the first line of defense against the perilous “last days” of which Paul wrote?
20. Who were Jannes and Jambres, and how do they fit into this account? (Exodus 7:11).
21. Are we likely to have less trouble with those who would attempt to disrupt the church as we approach the end time?
22. What would Timothy have considered the “Holy Scriptures” when he was a child?
23. What does Paul mean by “all Scripture”?
24. What is the role of the Scriptures in the life of the man of God?

When Timothy was a child, not one word of the New Testament had been written—that is easy to forget. When we speak of the Scriptures, or “Holy Writ,” we mean the whole Bible, but not so with Paul and Timothy. For them, the “Holy Scriptures” were strictly the Old Testament. Far from having no use for the Old Testament, Paul and other New Testament writers appealed to it as their fundamental authority. Philip preached Christ from it, and Paul told Timothy that it could make a man “wise unto salvation.”

Why Parables? (Matthew 13:1-23)

25. Why *did* Jesus speak to the multitudes in parables?
26. Is the truth always easy to see and understand?
27. Whose fault was it that the multitudes did not understand?
28. Will all men understand the Gospel to the same degree?
29. Will some not understand the Gospel at all?
30. Did Old Testament prophets fully understand all that God was revealing to them?

It is sobering to read Jesus’ response to his disciples’ question, “Why speak you unto them in parables?” (v. 11). It is one thing to acknowledge that the things concerning the Kingdom of God are “mysteries.” It is another thing altogether to face the fact that these

mysteries are revealed to one man and concealed from another. True, Jesus went on to explain that, “This people’s heart is waxed gross . . .” making it clear that they had closed their own eyes. But his parables did not reach them. Even his disciples had to have explanations of them from time to time, and they were the ones to whom the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven *were* revealed.

It is also sobering to realize that many prophets and righteous men had desired to know things that Christ was revealing, but had never been privileged to know them (v. 17). It should be especially sobering to anyone who feels that he is somehow more righteous than others because he somehow understands the plan of God. The truth is, there are times when God chooses to reveal different truths to different people, and sometimes the sinner responds to the revelation of God, while the “righteous” feels he does not need it.

Understanding and Spiritual Maturity (Isaiah 28:1-13)

31. What is the possible symbolism of an excess of wine or strong drink in this chapter? (Isaiah 29:9-10, Revelation 14:8).
32. Is there any indication of a progression of understanding?
33. Will it be necessary to search out related ideas and put them together to get a complete picture?
34. Does it appear that God has deliberately obscured the truth where some men are concerned?
35. Why would he do so? (Compare Romans 11:32-36.)

The symbolism of drunkenness in this context goes well beyond the literal meaning involving alcoholic spirits and the errors of man because of a stupefied brain. It includes the idea of a “spirit of error” that had infected most of Israel. The passage also implies that only a few were liberated from that spirit of error, as the prophet cried: “Whom shall He teach knowledge?” He went on to show that some spiritual maturity is necessary to progress in the understanding of God (v. 9). All truth is not found in a simple statement in one place in the Bible. It is necessary to lay one precept upon another to gain a complete understanding.

One of the most remarkable truths revealed to man is that God Almighty in heaven has blinded some of mankind so that he need not hold them

guilty for what they have done (Romans 11:32-36).

False Prophets (Deuteronomy 13:1-5)

36. Is it possible to be misled by a prophet?
37. Are miracles and signs of any value in determining the validity of a prophet's message?
38. Why would God allow a deceiver to perform a sign or wonder?
39. What is the false prophet's goal or purpose?

It is quite disturbing to face the idea of "false prophet," perhaps because it implies a *responsibility* for the servant of God to observe, discern, and decide.

It is tempting to look for simple formulas to do that for us, but they do not exist.

Perhaps the most important idea in this passage is that man, *any* man, *may lead us astray*. The next most important idea is that miracles and signs are *not* the criteria for determining who is a servant of God.

Who Are the Servants of God? (Isaiah 8:19-20)

40. What is a criterion for determining who is a servant of God?

The one dependable standard of comparison—for prophet, dreamer, minister, or apostle—is simply the Law of God and the Testimony. A study of the word "testimony" will lead to the fact that the "Testimony" of God is the Ten Commandments.

Some hold as a doctrine that God does not reveal everything at once, but progressively reveals more and more truth through the ages. This is, of course, true. But how do you know if a given "revelation" is from God or if it is only the wanderings of some human mind? Part of the answer is simple enough.

Subsequent revelation cannot negate previous revelation. If a so-called "new truth" disagrees with thoroughly substantiated and absolutely proven old truths, we cannot accept this "new truth." Any self-styled prophet must agree with the Scriptures or be rejected, as the following section illustrates.

Who Gets the Gospel? (Acts 15:1-41)

41. What is the primary issue in this controversy?
42. Was there automatic agreement among the leaders of the church?
43. How would you describe the method for arriving at an understanding in this case?

44. Briefly describe the role of each of the Apostles in this discussion.
45. Who makes the "decision" in this dispute?
46. Was it necessary to appeal to Scripture for a ratification of the acts and events described?
47. Was it necessary that the decisions "please" anyone other than James?
48. Just how serious could a disagreement among the Apostles become?
49. Was any punitive action taken as a result of disagreement?
50. Were there any "prophets" present at this meeting?

By comparing this chapter with the first two chapters of Galatians, we can conclude that the primary question was whether the Gospel could continue to be preached to Gentiles (Galatians 2:5) or whether it could go only to the circumcised. Paul, Peter, and others appealed to *events*. They pointed out what God had *done* through them, respectively. But James recognized an important truth: the *Scriptures* had to agree (Acts 15:15). Otherwise, they had only circumstantial and inconclusive evidence. James aptly pointed out that the Pharisees' exclusive approach was untenable in the light of Scripture. God had said that the *Gentiles* (by definition, uncircumcised) might receive the Gospel in the latter days.

In summary, *the Scriptures must test any minister, apostle, or prophet*.

It is also worth noting, in v. 19, the Greek word for "sentence" in the King James Version is translated "judgment" in the Revised Standard Version. The latter translation is probably more accurate.

Regarding the above questions, reviewing Matthew 20:20-29 would be instructive at this point.

51. Did some of the disciples have a traditional "authoritarian" view of church structure?
52. How would you describe Christ's reaction to the Gentile idea of dominance and rule of one man over another?
53. Was any Apostle to "exercise dominion" over the others?

Search the Scriptures (Acts 17:1-11)

54. What was Paul's source material for his presentation?
55. What was the central thrust of his message?

56. What technique did the Bereans use to test Paul's message?

57. What did the writers mean by "the Scriptures"?

58. Is there ever a time when the servant of God is justified in ceasing to search the Scriptures to test a preacher and his message? (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Merely because we have found a preacher to be right on many occasions does *not* mean he will *stay* right. No man is infallible, and constant vigilance is a continual responsibility for Christians. This is not to infer that *suspicion* is called for, but we need to keep men in proper perspective. Only God is infallible.

Whole Armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18)

59. Who is the real enemy? Is it another human being?

60. How many items of the armor of God relate to the study of the Bible?

Jesus spoke of a time when false christs and false prophets would arise and show such great signs and wonders that "if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24). Of course, the person who is deceived does not realize that he is deceived. As the wise man wrote, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes." Therefore, our own conviction that we are right proves absolutely nothing. It can be a little scary, but there is a strong defense available to every Christian.

Be aware from the start that the enemy in this battle is not another human being, but the spiritual powers of darkness—i.e., Satan the devil. Perhaps the most powerful weapon at our disposal in this battle is the Word of God. Four items included in the armor of God have to do directly with the study of the prayer for his disciples, "Sanctify them through your

truth: *your Word is truth*" (John 17:17). Next he mentioned the preparation of the Gospel of peace, which involves careful study of the Gospel so that any Christian can explain it to a seeker after God. He then mentioned the shield of faith, and Paul told us: "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the *Word of God*" (Romans 10:17). Finally the Scripture tells us to pick up as our chief weapon "the sword of the spirit, which is *the Word of God*" (Ephesians 6:17).

A man who is determined to do as the Bereans, searching the Scriptures daily, comparing what he is told with what God says, will be a hard man to deceive. "The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

A Final Word

We hope that you will come to love the Holy Scriptures as we do. Christian Educational Ministries offers a systematic way for you continue to study the Bible through the Christian Origins ongoing Bible study series. It begins with the birthday of the church when it was imbued with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. These ten-lesson, full-color books will take you through Paul's Epistles and the General Epistles in an in-depth study. They are designed to be used at church, individually, or in a community Bible study. An easy to follow companion Leader's Guide is available for adding greater understanding. We also offer the Living Waters Bible study described below. For more information, call 1-888-BIBLE-44 or go to www.borntowin.net. May God bless you in your meditation, your study, and your prayer.

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