

(Guidelines) Begin With Prayer

by J. Vernon McGee

The Bible is a unique book that requires prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to understand its true meaning.

Duration: 8:22

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Deuteronomy 8:3, Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew 4:4, John 14:26, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Revelation 22:18-19

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Prayer Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the unique nature of the Bible as a closed book, authored by the Holy Spirit. He highlights the need for the Spirit of God to teach and make the Bible real to believers. The speaker shares a story about Sir Walter Scott, who, when on his deathbed, requested the Bible as the only book that mattered in that moment. The sermon also touches on the importance of humility and prayer when approaching the Bible, as well as the speaker's personal experience of realizing his own ignorance during his college years.

Transcript

Now, the first one, and we come back to it, is begin with prayer. Bible is different from all other books. That is the thing we've attempted to emphasize when we've been talking, in the past few studies we've had together when we've talked about the book.

This book is different, and you cannot come to it and bring to it just mental acumen. You have to bring to it humility that will permit the Spirit of God to be your teacher. And so it's necessary to begin with prayer.

We always felt in college, and a college student gets the impression that he knows everything, and I think it's because he knows so little that he feels like he knows everything. He doesn't realize there are so many areas and vast fields that he's totally ignorant of. And I felt like when I was in college that I could learn anything that any man had ever written.

I didn't care what it was and what field it was. If he wrote it, then I could understand it. And I'm of the opinion that several of us in college at that time had that viewpoint, and that's the way we approached every book and everything.

Well, that's very fine, I suppose, for a college student, but when you get as old as I am now, you ought to have more sense and to know that there are many things you don't understand. Now, I do believe that

whatever any man has written, another man can understand it. But that's not true of the Bible.

The Bible is different. The Bible is a closed book. As we've said, since the Holy Spirit is the author, only the Spirit of God can teach us and make it real to us.

And that's the reason when we begin in the book of Genesis, we always begin with prayer. We don't have it at the end of the program, we have it at the beginning of the program, because we recognize that we need the Spirit of God to be our teacher. And the Bible, therefore, is different from all other books.

When Sir Walter Scott was dying, he said to his servant and his secretary, bring me the book. And the secretary looked just a little puzzled, and he looked at the shelf of books that Walter Scott had written, and he wondered which one he intended for him to bring. And he asked, which book? And Walter Scott is said to have replied, the Bible.

There's only one book for a man when he's dying. And I believe that is true. But it's the book for any man who's dying, but it's also the book for any man who's living.

I'm afraid a great many folk do not get interested in the Bible until they get to the end of their lives or until they get in a great deal of difficulty. And it's wonderful to have a book you can pull down at a time like that and find comfort in it. But it's a book for you to live in the full vigor of life.

It's a book to face life with today. And it's the book which furnishes the only sure route through this world and on into the next world. It's the only book that can enable us to meet the emergencies and to cushion the shocks that come to us in life.

The Bible is different, and it's different from any other book. Now, you will notice that it is called Holy Bible. Actually, the word Bible simply means book.

There's a little town in ruins north of Beirut in Lebanon which is called Byblos. We spent several hours there, and the reason that I did, I wanted to get pictures of that place. It's a famous place called Byblos.

That is the book. That's where books were first made. And we're told that it is the place where the Bible got its name.

You see, they called it in that day the book. All other books were just books, but the Bible was the book. And then someone on down the line put on it the Holy Bible, or Holy Bible.

And I personally believe that it is inspired from the first word in Genesis to the last word in Revelation. And you know, I sometimes feel that that name on the outside, Holy Bible, is inspired also. May I say that's what it is.

Now, this is a book, therefore, that differs from all other books. It's different in this sense. The Holy Spirit alone can open our minds to understand it.

Now, you can take up a book on philosophy, and if a man wrote it and he did, then a man can understand it. You can read a book on higher mathematics, and since a man wrote it, a man can understand it. There's not a book that ever has been written by any man that another man cannot understand.

But again, I keep repeating it, the Bible's different. The Bible cannot be understood unless the Holy Spirit is the instructor and he wants to teach us. The fact of the matter is, our Lord told us, He'll guide you into all

truth.

And we write over the guidelines for the Scripture, Open thou mine eyes, that's a prayer, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy word. Now, when the Apostle Paul was praying for the Ephesians, as we've already seen, he did not pray for their health. Although I'm of the opinion he may have done that at another time.

And certainly he did pray for that. And he did not pray that they might get wealthy. I don't know whether he ever did that or not.

I know that in my ministry, I've made the mistake of praying for certain men that they would be successful in business and make money. And I've seen some of them do it. And frankly, I'm very sorry to have to report in nine cases out of ten, wealth turned them from being zealous for God.

I had a man in Cleburne, Texas, and he had a ranch and they began to drill oil. And he came and he said to me, Preacher, you pray that we find oil. If we do, I'm going to give one half of the revenue that comes in from oil to the work of the Lord.

Oh, my gracious. You can imagine how this poor preacher, and it was during the Depression, how I really got down to business to pray. And then one day it occurred to me that it might be well to see if this man was given a half of what he had in time to the Lord.

And I'm very sorry to have to report, friends. He didn't even give the Lord a tenth, and I don't think we're under the tithe at all. But it certainly could be made a norm for giving.

And that man could have given a great deal more, and he didn't give it and didn't give even a fraction. And yet this man was going to give the Lord a half. I came to the conclusion he wasn't going to do it.

So I just quit praying that he'd find oil. And he didn't find oil, by the way. I don't know that my refusal to pray had anything to do with it or not.

But I do know this, I'm really glad that he didn't find oil. I'm of the opinion, knowing the man, that he would have been turned from God.

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