

Growing God's People

the journal for teachers and other learners

Filling the Mind with the Divine

The sure way to gain a deeper understanding of God's self-revelation is through intentional study of things divine. For the Christian, study fills the mind with the truths of revelation and creates a safe place in our hearts for reflection and meditation.

Theological study requires that you go against the grain of modern society and culture. In our homes, the best rooms for study are usually set up for entertainment. Home libraries are almost non-existent, and are visited more often by dust mites than by friends or members of our family.

Filling the mind with the divine requires a commitment to growth in understanding—to seeking the timeless wisdom of God against the frantic voices of the world, coming awake to the work

of God in creation and culture, and submitting to the fact that we are only here today because of the saints who have gone before us in centuries past.

Students of culture, science, religion, history, and the social sciences become students of theology when they realize that this is their Father's world, and that all activity and all creation together speak to the will of God in, through, and beyond this world.

Our hope is that the articles, exercises and poetry of this issue of *GGP*, will aid you in pursuing the things of God, and encourage you as you walk by faith, seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

The Discipline of Study

When we practice the spiritual disciplines, we stand against the basic principles of this world. Through participation in these "disciplines of grace" we come to know more deeply the intimate love of God and the sufficiency of His grace.

By Robert Hodge

When Christians study, they come to an ever-deepening understanding of a God who reveals Himself in love. The discipline of study ensures that Christians are continually brought to at least three streams of study—biblical, historical, and theological—to anchor the soul in the goodness of God.

The discipline of study is only possible because God has chosen to reveal Himself, and it affords us a high privilege of turning our minds and hearts toward the things of God in such a way that our lives are transformed by the truth.

Biblical study requires immersion in the Holy Scriptures. In the Bible, we learn what we are to believe, what we are to do, and what the life of faith has looked like through centuries of God's faithfulness to His covenant people.

Paul writes to Timothy that "all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness," as only through the

study of the Scriptures do we gain competency and fullest equipping for the good works to which we have been called.

In Biblical studies, modern Christians embrace Paul's command to Timothy, that he "make every effort to present himself approved...rightly handling the word of truth," and pursue a sound understanding of the whole counsel of Scripture.

Historical study requires immersion in the history of God with His people—in the stories of faith, both corporate and private.

This generation of Christians was born—if you will bear with the analogy—as the elevator arrested its climb to the 20th floor of a wide and varied building. Beneath and before us lie 2000 years of Christian history—of heresies, crises, counsels, martyrs, missionary movements, and periods of both drought and prosperity.

Students of Christian history profit from the past. The heresies of today are nothing more than the hell-inspired false teachings of centuries past. In the study of history we discover the "saving questions" of the saints, used when the Church was preserved by the power of the Holy Spirit and the heresies silenced and removed.

Theological study requires us to

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Discipline of Study, continued.

look at all aspects of life and creation—guided by the Scriptures and with Jesus Christ at the center of all our study—to reflect upon the realities of a self-revealing God.

In addition to Biblical and historical studies, students of theology proper take note of the ways in which God reveals Himself in creation, in the great questions of purpose and providence (to which our theologies attempt to speak), in the spiritual life of the Spirit-filled saint, and in the practices of walking with Christ.

PRACTICING THE DISCIPLINE

First, establish some personal goals with measurable outcomes and deadlines. Do you want to read through the Bible this year? Do you want to attend classes through the Center for Christian Studies, through correspondence work, or through personal mentoring? In short, ensure that you have goals.

Second, begin building a library of good Christian books, that

includes some basic reference books: an exhaustive concordance, a Bible dictionary, several dictionaries of theology, introductory textbooks for both the Old and New Testaments, multiple English translations of the Bible, some history books, and a growing collection of commentaries.

Third, involve yourself in the life and ministry of the church. It's only in the context of the greater Body that our faith takes its proper form, that our disciplined study is balanced by the needs of the growing Body, and that our story is enfolded into the greater story of holy history.

Recommended resources: Dictionary of Evangelical Theology, published by IVP; New Testament Introduction, by Donald Guthrie; Old Testament Survey, by LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush; A Theology of the New Testament, by G. E. Ladd; and Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, published by IVP.



Teaching and Learning God's Way

Faith and Learning

By T.M. Moore

It would be difficult to overestimate the role of faith in learning. People learn – their understandings, aspirations, hopes, and lives change – as a function of belief, of *what* they believe and *how earnestly* they believe it. Consider Abram (Gen. 12:1-3).

Undoubtedly it had never occurred to Abram to give up his comfortable way of life in Ur of the Chaldees and to trek hundreds of miles across unfamiliar terrain to an unknown destiny, just to see what might happen if he did. That, of course, was before God appeared to him and set before him the promises of His covenant. God promised to bless Abram – to bring him into favor with Himself; to make his name great and his descendants numerous; to provide for him against every foe; and to bless all the families of the earth through him. It's not clear just how God persuaded Abram that this was true, but somehow He did (as only God can do). Abram left everything that was familiar and comfortable and headed off to who-knows-where because he was utterly persuaded that what God was promising was better than anything he might expect to realize in Ur of the Chaldees.

This is part of the task of a Christian educator, whether teacher or parent: to persuade our learners that what God offers in His covenant is far greater and more to be desired than anything this tired world might hold out. We will not see changes of heart or life in our learners until we have managed to fill their minds with a vision of God's promises brought down to their own lives – of them blessed of God, called into His service, and made great in order to be a blessing to others. Our task is to make that vision so clear

and compelling, so *desirable*, that nothing can keep our learners from giving their all to achieve it. Until our learners *believe* the promises of God's covenant to be more thrilling, more challenging, and more satisfying than anything else they might cling to in this life, we will not see much in the way of real and lasting learning.

This presents a twofold challenge to us: first, we need to make sure that the instruction we present is based squarely on the clear teaching of God's Word. We need to explain God's promises in detail, illustrate them in as many ways as we can, and invite our learners to consider what the implications of these exceeding great and precious promises might be for them. This is how we help to nurture faith in our learners, the kind of faith that enlarges understanding, shapes affections, and directs actions in the way of obedient service to God. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God – clearly, personally, and often.

But, second, we need to bring our learners into the presence of God, who alone is able to convince them that His promises are true and reliable. We need to pray with and for our learners; lead them to search the Scriptures for themselves; insist that they come to grips with the meaning of Scripture for their own lives; and help them articulate a personal vision of the promises of God coming to fulfillment in their own experience. Only God can increase faith in His people; all we can do is lead our learners into His presence through faithful teaching, diligent prayer, and exemplary living. God has to do the rest.

Abram's faith grew as he kept his eyes on God's promises and listened to His instructions and rebukes. As his faith grew he learned more about what it meant to know the Lord, to believe in Him, and to walk in His way. Ultimately Abram – Abraham – became known as the "friend of God."

What higher mark of true learning could any of us want for our learners than this?

True Knowledge

Bishop Richard Mant was educated at Oxford, and as an Anglican priest served as chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1813.

He later served as a bishop to the Irish sees, and published a history of the church in Ireland, and other books, including several of poetry.

What is true knowledge?—Is it with keen eye
Of lucre's sons to thread the mazy way?
Is it of civic rights, and royal sway,
And wealth political, the depths to try?
Is it to delve the earth, or soar the sky;
To marshal nature's tribes in just array;
To mix, and analyze, and mete, and weigh
Her elements, and all her powers descry?
These things, who will may know them, if to know
Breed not vain-glory: but o'er all to scan
God, in his works and word shown forth below;
Creation's wonders; and Redemption's plan;
Whence came we; what to do; and whither go:
This is true knowledge, and "the whole of man."

—Bishop Richard Mant (1776–1848)

Featured Book

Reviewed by Lee Scruggs

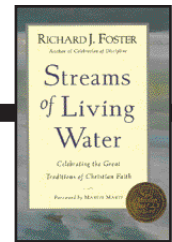
"Billy Graham, Mother Teresa and Bennie Hinn walked into a bar . . ." It is difficult to imagine this unlikely trio together without giving way to a joke of some type. Our theology begs for it.

While not as likely to happen in the Christian Ghetto we refer to as "West Knoxville," it will surely happen. Most certainly at the arrival of the Kingdom of God in its fullness. We will meet someone that we really like. Someone winsome, passionate, and undeniably in love with Christ. Then they mention that they are Episcopalian (we inwardly wince) or perhaps Charismatic (we look at our shoes); Mennonite (we look at their shoes), Orthodox (raise our eyebrows) or maybe even Catholic (hard to hide our surprise).

We believe that our evangelical tradition (or lack of it) should be required as the "correct" or at least "most biblical" when in fact our tradition is merely one of the several great traditions or "streams" that constitute a rich heritage of Christian Belief and Practice.

In his book *Streams of Living Water*, Richard Foster, best known for his classic *Celebration of Discipline*, proposes that there are six great traditions that make up our heritage. These include: the "Contemplative Tradition," focused on "a life of loving attention to God;" the "Holiness Tradition" through which we are able "to live whole, functional lives in a dysfunctional world;" the "Charismatic Tradition," focused on "a life immersed in, empowered by, and under the direction of the Spirit of God;" the "Social Justice Tradition," calling us to a "life committed to compassion and justice;" the "Incarnational Tradition," which calls us to a life that "makes present and visible the realm of the

TITLE: *Streams of Living Water*
AUTHOR: *Richard Foster*



invisible spirit;" and finally our "Evangelical Tradition" which mandates "a life founded upon the living Word of God." These "streams of the faith" offer paths to spiritual renewal. Each has its strengths and weaknesses.

All the streams are ultimately judged by the extent to which they encourage believers to love God and neighbor.

The historical support, both biographical and anecdotal, for these streams educate and inspire. You will certainly grow in your understanding of the Kingdom of Christ and see that there is room for all who proclaim Him as Lord and order their lives around becoming more Christ like.

Billy Graham, Mother Teresa and Bennie Hinn will one day share a drink together. It will be at the Banquet Table that awaits us in the Kingdom that is to come.

NEED A GOOD BOOK?

Visit the church library. It's loaded with reference books, commentaries, children's books, and more!

If you're a parent, a teacher, a small-group leader, take advantage of these resources. Stop by today.

**Library Hours: Sunday A.M., 8:45-12:45
Wednesday, 6:00-8:30**

Preparing to Teach

Biblical Interpretation



1 Timothy 1:5

“But the goal of our instruction is love, which flows from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.”



WORD STUDY

Look up each of the following passages, and see how each passage can add to your understanding of the three elements, out of which flows love: the pure heart, the good conscience, and the sincere faith.

pure heart

Psalm 24:4
2 Timothy 2:22
1 Peter 1:22

good conscience

Acts 23:1
1 Timothy 1:19
1 Peter 3:16-21

sincere faith

Romans 12:9
2 Timothy 1:5
James 3:17
1 Peter 1:22

1

The goal of your instruction...

In practical terms, how would you describe the goal of your instruction? Or if you rarely teach, how would you describe the goal of your time spent in study?



2

spiritual formation

Read 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, and write down the location of passages devoted to the spiritual formation of either Titus and Timothy, or of the believers whom they served.



What do you learn from these passages about Paul's ministry with regard to the spiritual formation of Christians?

3

“unhypocritical faith”

What does Paul write regarding one's attitude toward money, when writing about the selection of elders and deacons?



4



text



word study



commentaries



meditation



outline



presentation