

“Be *diligent* to present yourself *approved* to God as a *workman* who does *not* need to be ashamed, *accurately* handling the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

A Diligent Pursuit

I have been a teacher since 1994, primarily in the subjects of history, government, and Bible. I’ve worked very hard to hone my craft. I get to practice every day. I’ve diligently poured into my subjects. I’ve spent countless hours in research and study. I’ve written curriculum for several classes. In the process, I’ve become a Master Teacher, at least by the standards set by my school. I’ve improved my skills and my courses, all to the benefit of the school, the students, and future teachers.

Why would I spend so much time in this pursuit? Yes, it is my job. That’s true. However, there is an incredible burden that bears down upon a teacher, a hidden weight that I sense every time I stand in front of students. **The burden is this – is what I’m saying true?** Is it accurate? That burden is intimidating at times and can even make me fearful.

There is so much bad history and misinformation being given in the academic world that I want to make sure that what I teach is solid and supported. I want to be accurate in what I teach, handling history and government with great care and excellence. I don’t want to be guilty of teaching something that is wrong, especially by God’s standards. I don’t want to be

ashamed by being ignorant in my subject area. This burden and expectation drives my diligent pursuit of excellence. However, a question that haunts me more than that is this — am I as diligent in my spiritual life as I am in my professional life? Do I work as hard in developing my “quiet time” as I do with my job?

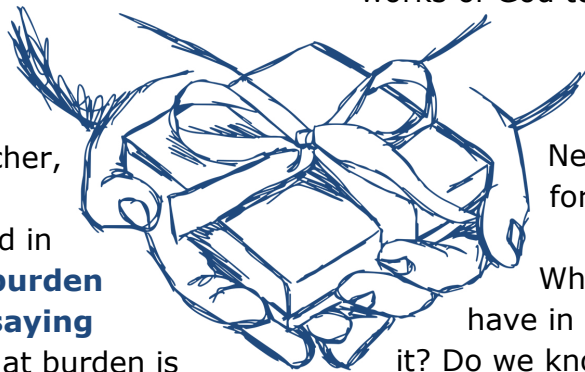
A Holy Treasure

More important than any course that I’ve written or class that I’ve taught is my personal relationship with the Lord and my study and understanding of His Word. The Lord has given us the Bible, the truth. What a blessing! What a gift!

We have the wisdom of the ages at our fingertips. We have the character and nature of God described for us. We have the works of God to reflect upon. We have the life and ministry of Jesus as our model for godliness. We have the Old and New Testaments as our guides for life and living.

What a precious package we have in the Bible, but do we read it? Do we know it? Can we share it with someone else? Can we explain it or teach it? Do we know where to find things, how to answer questions, and how to handle the Bible accurately? Do we make time for it each day and do we live by its words?

What about you? Are you as diligent in your personal time with the Lord as you are in your profession? Is your pursuit of God’s Word as passionate as your free time activities? What have you done with this wonderful treasure of the Bible?



To Whom Much Is Given

Several years ago I ran across a statistic that stunned me. Only 5% of Christians have read the Bible in its entirety. When I read that stat, I was mad at first; then, I was concerned. Only 5 out of 100 have read the entire Bible? Wow! Why is that I wondered? Perhaps it's because the Bible is long and difficult to understand.

Still, I find this number a bit hypocritical. How can we say that we live by a book that we have not read? Is this good stewardship of God's treasure? We have been given much in God's Word, and to whom much is given much is required. If all Scripture is God-given and useful, should we not endeavor to read it, study it, and know it?

An Approved Workman

How are we, as followers of Christ, supposed to handle the word of truth? Paul instructed Timothy (*2 Tim. 2:15*) to handle it accurately. To be accurate here literally means to "cut it straight." The King James Version uses the phrase "to divide it rightly." We are not to misapply what the Bible says. We are not to entertain false doctrine but rather we are to be discerning. But, how can we handle the Word rightly if we do not know it? And, how can we know it, if we do not read it?

Also, Paul told Timothy to "present himself approved to God." To be approved does not mean that we read the Bible to gain God's favor. Because of Christ, we already have God's favor. To be approved means to honor the Lord in our stewardship of His Word. It is not the kind of gift that we put on a shelf to look at; rather it is a tool that

we have been given to live the Christian life. With it He communicates His wisdom, His instructions, His standards, His desires, and His will. We use that tool as a workman would, through labor and hard work. We make good use of it. We are not negligent; we do not leave it idle. We open it, read it, wrestle with it, mark it up, reason through it, and apply it.

Finally, Paul told Timothy not to be ashamed when he shared God's word with others. In that we have been workmen, approved to God, and in that we handle accurately His Word of truth, we will have a confidence in what we know and believe, that what we say is right and true. If we do not read it, we will not know it. If we do not know it, we will not have confidence to live it, much less share it.

5%

All of these things require diligence. Diligence is "steady or constant effort." It requires hard work. Hard work requires us to "set our hearts" as Ezra the high priest did (*Ezra 7:10*). Before he taught, he practiced or applied God's words to his life. Still, before he practiced God's Word, he had to study and know it. Even then, to study it, he had to "set his heart" to do it.

What about you? Are you a good steward of God's Word? Are you an approved workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth? My prayer is that you will not be part of the 95%, who claims to live by a book that he has not read. I trust that the Lord will use this study guide to encourage you in your journey through the Bible. God bless your diligence.