

## **HOW TO GROW STRAIGHT, NOT CROOKED, IN OUR STUDY OF GOD’S WORD?**

### **Introduction:**

**Alistair Begg:** A good church is a Bible-centered church. Nothing is as important as this—not a large congregation, a witty pastor, or tangible experiences of the Holy Spirit.

In EEF, as we emphasize on being a Bible-centered church, we must be careful how we study God’s Word.

**Note:** It is possible to diligently study God’s Word and grow crooked rather than straight.

- ❖ **John 5:39**, “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”

The Pharisees diligently studied the Word of God, but they have become more self-righteous, arrogant, and disobedient rather than humble and obedient. What are the qualities of a man who grows rightly, not crookedly, in his study of God’s Word?

### **QUALITIES OF A MAN WHO APPROPRIATELY GROWS WELL IN THE WORD OF GOD**

#### **I. He longs for God’s Word and takes delight in it**

- ❖ **Psalm 119:20**, “My soul is consumed (crushed) with longing for your rules at all times.”
- ❖ **Psalm 119:14**, “In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.”
- ❖ **Psalm 119:103**, “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”

#### **Comment:**

- He doesn’t study God’s Word as a duty, but longs for it. He doesn’t find it boring, but delightful. He doesn’t study it to tell others but for his own satisfaction and delight.
- The primary reason why we don’t study the Word of God is not because of lack of time but because of lack of passion.

### **Woodrow Wilson:**

- I am sorry for men who do not read the Bible every day. I wonder why they deprive themselves of the strength and the pleasure.

### **2. He seeks God to teach him and help him understand His Word.**

- ❖ **Psalm 119:12**, “Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!”
- ❖ **Psalm 119:73**, “Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.”

**Comment:** It is good to learn the principles of interpretation, but they are not enough. We need the Author of the book to teach us His divine truths and insights which we naturally cannot grasp.

**Martin Luther (1483-1546)** wisely advises that when we approach the Word of God for nourishment and spiritual wisdom:

- You should completely despair of your own sense and reason, for by these you will not attain the goal...Rather kneel down in your private little room and with sincere humility and earnestness pray God through His dear Son, graciously to grant you His Holy Spirit to enlighten and guide you and give you understanding.

**George Whitefield (1714-1770):** I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees, laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word. This proved meat indeed and drink indeed to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light and power from above.”

### **3. He meditates on God’s Word.**

- ❖ **Psalm 119:97**, “Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.”
- ❖ **Psalm 119:15**, “I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.”

### **George Müller (1805-1898):**

- I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God, and to meditation on it.... What is the food of the inner man? Not prayer, but the Word of God; and....not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts.

### **Thomas Brooks (1608-1680):**

- Remember that it is not hasty reading, but serious meditation on holy and heavenly truths, that makes them prove sweet and profitable to the soul. It is not the mere touching of the flower by the bee that gathers honey, but her abiding for a time on the flower that draws out the sweet. It is not he that reads most, but he that meditates most, that will prove to be the choicest, sweetest, wisest, and strongest Christian.

### **4. He draws closer to the God of the Word through the Word of God.**

- ❖ **Psalm 119:2**, “Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart.”
- ❖ **Psalm 119:55**, “I remember your name in the night, O LORD, and keep your law.”

**Comment:** The purpose of the Word of God is to draw us closer to the God of the Word.

- It is terribly possible to become familiar with God’s Word and not with God Himself.
  - i. Think about a person who claims himself to be a great lover. He longs to read the love letters of his girlfriend. But he is not interested to meet her, to talk to her, and to know her.
  - ii. We have become much like the social media generation that delights being online with a person and ignores him in person.
- It is terribly possible to study the Word of God to meet your own needs rather than to know the heart of God. (the Bible is not about ourselves; it is about God)
- It is terribly possible to study the Holy Scripture for my own glory rather than for God’s Word.
  - i. When everyone is studying the Bible, and if I don’t study, I feel guilty and think about my image (what others would think about me).
  - ii. people ask me questions, people call me for preaching, people see me as a man of knowledge of God’s Word...so these may lead me to study the Scripture.

**James Merritt:** “The primary purpose of reading the Bible is not to know the Bible but to know God.”

**A. W. Tozer (1897-1963):** “The sacred page is not meant to be the end, but only the means toward the end, which is knowing God himself.”

## 5. He worships God when he learns God's Word.

- ❖ **Psalm 119:7**, "I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules."
- ❖ **Psalm 119:171**, "My lips will pour forth praise, for you teach me your statutes."
- ❖ **Psalm 119:62**, "At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous rules."

**Comment:** Many of us study the Scripture but do not worship God after studying the Scripture. A true student of the Bible would be thrilled to worship God when he studies the Word of God.

**(Note:** Worship need not be in a song; just fall on your knees and speak words of adoration of who God is)

**Martin Luther (1483-1546):** Scripture is the manger in which the Christ lies. As a mother goes to a cradle to find her baby so the Christian goes to the Bible to find Jesus. Don't let us inspect the cradle and forget to worship the baby.

**A. W. Tozer (1897-1963):** I can safely say, on the authority of all that is revealed in the Word of God, that any man or woman on this earth who is bored and turned off by worship is not ready for heaven.

## 6. He grows in the fear of God through the Word of God.

- ❖ **Psalm 119:120**, "My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments."
- ❖ **Psalm 119:161**, "Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words."

**Jerry Bridges:** "It is impossible to practice godliness without a constant, consistent and balanced intake of the Word of God in our lives."

- But it is also possible to study the Word of God regularly and cultivate no fear of God.
- It is written that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.
- The Bible is not only a book of promises and comforts, but also speaks about serious issues:
  - Life is short
  - Death is uncertain
  - We leave naked
  - We give an account to God of our life

- Those who deny Christ will perish in hell
- God disciplines us in sin
- Our judgment will be greater if we know much and do not practice much
- God is holy, righteous, and awesome
  - All these things should drive us to fear God and stand in awe of His Words.

## **7. His faith in God is not shaken in afflictions.**

- ❖ **Psalm 119:81**, “My soul longs for your salvation; I hope in your word.”
- ❖ **Psalm 119:92**, “If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.”
- ❖ **Psalm 119:28**, “My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word!”

**Comment:** Many study the Word but their maturity in the Word is shown in afflictions:

- Do you worry much rather than seek God’s face?
- Do you live in depression rather than strengthening your soul in God’s Word?
- Do you cling to God’s Word, His promises, His comfort, His encouragement, in your afflictions?

**About John Bunyan:** Bunyan was born in England in 1628 at a time of great political and religious unrest. In 1644, at just fifteen years old, both his mother and sister died within a month of each other. Later that year, “when Bunyan had turned sixteen, he was drafted into the Parliamentary Army and for about two years was taken from his home for military service.” He married in 1648, at about the age of twenty, but his wife died just ten years later, leaving him with four children, the oldest of whom was blind. He married again the following year, in 1659, but incredibly, just one year after this, “Bunyan was arrested and put in prison.” His wife, who was pregnant at the time, suffered a miscarriage, probably because of the added stress which this ordeal created. She was then left to care for Bunyan’s four children while he spent the next twelve years in jail. As you can see, Bunyan was no stranger to suffering.

### **John Bunyan (1628-1688):**

- In times of affliction we commonly meet with the sweetest experience of the love of God.
- I never knew all there was in the Bible until I spent those years in jail. I was constantly finding new treasures.

### **Charles Haddon Spurgeon:**

- He had studied our Authorized Version . . . till his whole being was saturated with Scripture; and though his writings are . . . full of poetry, yet he cannot give us his Pilgrim's Progress—that sweetest of all prose poems—without continually making us feel and say, “Why, this man is a living Bible!” Prick him anywhere; and you will find that his blood is Bibline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him.

### **8. His hatred towards sin grows stronger through the Word of God.**

- ❖ **Psalm 119:128**, “Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way.”
- ❖ **Psalm 119:133**, “Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me.”

**Comment:** He who says he loves the Word of God but does not hate sin actually loves sin and not God's Word.

- We cannot study the Word of God in a right way and end up not hating sin, particularly in himself.
- He hates both unrighteousness (anger, sexual immorality, greed) and self-righteousness (pride, hypocrisy, slander)
- **Richard Sibbes (1577-1635):** “All sin is against the pure word of God, and considering it is so, therefore I must hate all sin.”

### **9. He makes God's Word His counselor when making every decision of his life.**

- ❖ **Psalm 119:24**, “Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.”
- ❖ **Psalm 119:105**, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

The Word of God is his counselor in:

- Whom to marry
- How to build a family life
- How to be a godly husband, a godly wife, a godly parent
- How to spend money
- How to love and serve people
- How to conduct myself in the workplace

- How to be a part of a local church
- How to speak and what to speak
- How to behave with offensive people
- How to share the gospel of Christ...and so on.

**François Fénelon:** “Listen less to your own thoughts and more to God’s thoughts.”

**Anonymous:** One who uses the Bible as his guide never loses his sense of direction.

### **10. He studies God’s Word to obey His Word, not merely to gain information.**

- ❖ **Psalm 119:33-34,** “Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.”
- ❖ **Psalm 119:101,** “I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word.”
- ❖ **Psalm 119:11,** “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”

**Howard Hendricks (1924-2013):** The Bible was not written to satisfy your curiosity, but to make you conform to Christ’s image. Not to make you a smarter sinner, but to make you like the Savior. Not to fill your head with a collection of biblical facts, but to transform your life.

**R.A. Torrey (1856-1928):** Do not study the Bible for the mere gratification of intellectual curiosity, but to find out how to live and please God. Whatever duty you find commanded in the Bible, do it at once. Whatever good you see in any Bible character, imitate it immediately. Whatever mistake you note in the actions of Bible men and women, scrutinize your own life to see if you are making the same mistake, and if you find you are, correct it immediately. James compares the Bible to a mirror (James 1:23, 24). The chief good of a mirror is to show you if there is anything out of order about you; if you find there is, you can set it right. Use the Bible in that way. Obeying the truth you already see will solve the mysteries in the verses you do not yet understand. Disobeying the truth you see darkens the whole world of truth. This is the secret of much of the skepticism and error of the day. Men see the truth, but do not follow it--then it is gone.

**Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948):** You Christians look after a document containing enough dynamite to blow all civilisation to pieces, turn the world upside down and bring peace to a battle-torn planet. But you treat it as though it is nothing more than a piece of literature.