

## Secrets of the Abundant Life (6)

### The Secret of Knowing God is Reading God's Book

### John 10:10

#### Introduction:

I. We come to the final lesson in this series concerning "*Secrets of the Abundant Life*" (John 10:10) that Jesus offers.

II. 📖 In previous lessons we have examined five of these "secrets":

1. The secret of living is bearing fruit (John 15:8)
2. The secret of bearing fruit is abiding (John 15:5)
3. The secret of abiding is obeying (John 15:10)
4. The secret of obeying is loving (John 14:15)
5. The secret of loving God is knowing God (John 16:12, 13)

III. Of course, that leads us to the question we discussed in our last lesson: 📖 "What is the secret of loving?" The story is an old one but its point is clearly applicable to our final lesson in this series. A couple went out on a date and began spending more and more time together. On the first date they were enjoying a meal at the woman's house and as she was preparing the meal the man looked through her bookcases at the volumes stacked there. He spied a book that he had authored and without disclosing the identity of the author he asked the woman her opinion of the book. "Well I never really go into that book. It seems it never held my interest." To her chagrin he turned to the back of the dust jacket and showed her his picture as the author. Some months later the man once again was at the woman's house and scanned the book shelf to discover the book had all appearances of being well-worn. He took it and looked at it and sure enough all the unmistakable marks of well-use were evident. He took it and asked the woman what had happened to the book. She replied, "Once I knew the author the entire content became interesting." Knowing the author is possible by reading the author's writings. So we now look at the final point.

IV. 📖 True knowledge of God is the only thing that will result in our enjoying the full and abundant life (John 8:32). This full knowledge of God 📖 is only possible when we read and study the Bible. We will 📖 only read and study the Bible to the degree that we love the Author of Word of God (Psalm 119:97).

1. The beauty and order of the creation reveal some aspects about God.
  - a. We see the glory of God through His handiwork (Psalm 19:1).
  - b. We see evidence of His power and deity (Romans 1:20). Perhaps we are moved to agree with the song, "How Great Thou Art!"
2. 📖 While the creation reveals much about God, it tells us nothing about...
  - a. God's great gift of love and mercy
  - b. God's great people that He wants us to become

- c. To learn of specific things pertaining to God we must look elsewhere other than the splendor of Nature.
- 3. God has chosen to reveal the specifics about Himself through His book, the Bible...
  - a. Is this book equal to the task?
  - b. You would expect a great God to give us a great book; has He? Indeed He has! By His Holy Spirit, He inspired a book capable of accomplishing great things and only through the Inspired Book are we able to experience the full and abundant life that brings wonderful blessings into our lives (2 Peter 1:19-21).

### Body:

I. The secret of knowing God 📖 is reading God's Book, but there is 📖 a general failure to do this. 📖 The Bible is known as the Book that everyone loves but no one reads!

A. **The neglect brings 📖 a great tragedy** in many lives today—God's Book is never read!

1. A disturbing trend seen too often in many churches is the apparent apathy of many Christians regarding the spiritual matters.
  - a. They may attend services, but it appears that they are only "going through the motions"
  - b. Their singing, their praying, their Bible Study, their zeal, seems listless.
  - c. To rephrase Thoreau: "The mass of [Christians] lead lives of quiet desperation." Certainly God desires more for his children! (Romans 15:13)
2. I suspect the problem is one akin to an athlete or a sports team that is "in a slump."
  - a. Such a person or team "goes through the motions," but they are not performing up to their true potential
  - b. 📖 The solution in sports: Work on "the fundamentals." The same correction is what will help resolve the current problems in the Church today (📖 1 Timothy 4:13). We desperately need to return to the fundamental of reading, studying, and following the Bible in all we do.

B. **The neglect is 📖 a common trend** in many congregations today—God's Book is never studied!

The reading of the Bible is the most critical point in possession of the abundant life (This is the problem at the very heart of the matter). Here is where many fail to continue in steadfast devotion and consequently lose their blessings of the abundant life. It sounds incredible but it is true that many Christians do not know the God of the Bible. They claim to "know" God but they really are ignorant of God because they do not know the Bible. They 📖 claim to worship God but they do not worship the God of the Bible. Why? It is because they are a

part of the growing problem of "Biblical illiteracy." People are amazingly ignorant about what the Bible teaches.

1. Biblical illiteracy is observed not just by those in the world. True the world's understanding of what the Bible teaches is sometimes comical. But in today's era we are witnessing a never-before-seen biblical ignorance in the Lord's Church that is appalling.
  2. 📖 *"Americans revere the Bible—but, by and large, they don't read it. And because they don't read it, they have become a nation of biblical illiterates"* (George Gallup and Jim Castelli).
  3. How bad is the ignorance of the Scriptures in congregations today? I am afraid that it is much worse than many ever suspected. Evidence is overwhelming that 📖 many are following their feelings rather than God. Evidence of biblical ignorance is found in the 📖 chaos that is characteristic in the Church today—people are not remaining faithful to the "Old Paths" because they are ignorant. And their ignorance will cost them the abundant life (📖 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8). Consider these results from various surveys...
    - a. Fewer than half of all adults can name the four gospels
    - b. Many professing Christians cannot identify more than two or three of the disciples
    - c. 60% of Americans cannot name even five of the Ten Commandments
    - d. 82% of Americans believe "God helps those who help themselves" is a Bible verse
    - e. 12% of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife
    - f. A survey of graduating high school seniors revealed that over 50% thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife.
    - g. A considerable number of respondents to one poll indicated that the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Billy Graham—"Increasingly, America is biblically illiterate" (George Barna).
  4. "Biblical Illiteracy" is like a poison, wreaking havoc in the lives of individuals, undermining the stability in our congregations, and fueling anger and criminal actions in our communities. When it comes to the Lord's Church 📖 biblical ignorance is inexcusable (Isaiah 1:2-4).
  5. The failure of Christians to enjoy abundant living in the present is the result of biblical ignorance. The incredible point of this fact means that those who claim to honor and follow God really do not know God.
- C. **The 📖 neglect has a profound impact** upon all—the entire civilization (religious and secular) will suffer because of this lax attitude (Hosea 4:1-6).
1. Its effect on individuals and nations is significant.
    - a. God's people have always been destroyed by lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:1, 6).

- b. Where there is lack of God's Word, the people faint (Amos 8:11-13).
    - 1) In ignorance they make the wrong choices
    - 2) When they stumble, they do not know where to turn
  - c. Without knowledge of God's Word a nation will fall into depravity, lawlessness, and anarchy. Eventually that nation will be destroyed. A nation that reads the Bible and follows its teachings will be blessed (Psalm 33:12).
  - 2. Without 📖 knowledge of God's Word, a person or nation has...
    - a. 📖 No real direction or guidance in life (Psalm 119:105).
    - b. 📖 No true joy or peace in life (Psalm 119:111, 165).
  - 3. How many lives are being destroyed, how many people are stumbling through life, because they do not have the light of God's Word guiding them? Let us 📖 understand the great danger that is subtly corrupting our minds today when we are urged to give the Bible's teaching a nod but then proceed to do what we want.
- II. The secret of knowing God is reading God's Book and there is a way to 📖 fix the failure so we can enjoy the full and abundant life promised by God.

In order for us to gain the blessings of living the abundant life we need to read and study the Bible with the attitude of the "blessed man" (Psalm 1:1-3). This is not a difficult chore. Here are some practical ways you can do this.

- A. 📖 Daily devotional Bible reading in private...
  - 1. The truly blessed person feeds upon the Word of God daily (Psalm 1:1-3; 119:97, 98).
  - 2. A systematic practice of prayerful Bible reading as part of a daily devotional...
    - a. Will bring a person closer to God.
    - b. Will gradually increase one's understanding of the Word of God.
    - c. Will offer strength, comfort and hope that only the Scriptures provide.
  - 3. Are you willing to do your part, everyday, in stamping out "biblical illiteracy"?
- B. 📖 Frequent in-depth Bible study alone or with others...
  - 1. The faithful Christian realizes the value of mutual edification (Hebrews 3:12-14; 10:24, 25).
  - 2. Churches often provide the opportunity for Christians to study together.
    - a. In their Bible classes on the Lord's Day, during the week, and in their homes.
    - b. Where they can benefit from the knowledge of other Bible students.
  - 3. Are you willing to participate in such activities to stamp out "biblical illiteracy"?
- C. 📖 Parents accepting their God-given responsibility...

1. God gave the responsibility of spiritual training to the parents (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7; Ephesians 6:4).
  2. Church may provide assistance with their children's classes, and yet...
    - a. Parents should not abdicate their responsibility to the church.
    - b. Parents should be very much involved in the teaching programs of any church.
  3. Are you willing to accept your parental duties to stamp out "biblical illiteracy"...?
- D. 📖 Preachers fulfilling their duty to the word...
1. Preachers are to give heed to the Word, and to preach the Word (1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5).
  2. We should expect preachers to be "men of the Book."
    - a. Preaching and teaching the Word of God, providing exposition of the Scriptures.
    - b. Not entertaining us with "pop theology" and "pop psychology."
  3. Are you willing to require that preachers proclaim the Word and when they stand firm for the Truth of God give them support and encouragement so together you will help to stamp out "biblical illiteracy"...?
- E. 📖 Elders conducting themselves properly to feed the flock and to stop the mouths of the gainsayers (Titus 1:9; Acts 20:28, 29).
1. The elders must beware and not be caught up in the foolishness that has ruined many congregations by failing to stress the biblical patterns and follow the biblical commands.
  2. Elders are to know the Bible and use that knowledge to guard, secure, and save the souls of the congregation. They are to use that knowledge to confront error and hold steadfastly to the Bible's way.
  3. Are you willing to cooperate and follow the eldership's lead in this congregation and by so-doing help stamp out "biblical illiteracy"?

### Conclusion:

- I. An article by Albert Mohler offers some sobering thoughts in connection with this final lesson. (*The Scandal of Biblical Illiteracy: It's Our Problem*—this article originally appeared on September 8, 2003 but was posted once again. The entire article may be read by logging on to Mohler's web site at: [http://www.albertmohler.com/commentary\\_read.php?cdate=2005-10-14](http://www.albertmohler.com/commentary_read.php?cdate=2005-10-14) )

📖 "Churches must recover the centrality and urgency of biblical teaching and preaching, and refuse to sideline the teaching ministry of the preacher. Pastors and churches too busy—or too distracted—to make biblical knowledge a central aim of ministry 📖 will produce believers who simply do not know enough to be faithful

disciples."

"We will not believe more than we know, and we will not live higher than our beliefs. The many fronts of Christian compromise in this generation can be directly traced to biblical illiteracy in the pews and the absence of biblical preaching and teaching in our homes and churches."

"This generation must get deadly serious about the problem of biblical illiteracy or a frighteningly large number of Americans—Christians included—will go on thinking that Sodom and Gomorrah lived happily ever after."

- II. 📖 Are we willing to get "deadly serious about the problem of biblical illiteracy" so that we can enjoy the full and abundant life promised by God? (James 1:21).
- III. Please notice again that 📖 "the abundant life" is a self-perpetuating cycle!
1. By 📖 reading God's Word we are able to know God.
  2. 📖 When we know God we love God.
  3. 📖 By loving Him, we obey Him.
  4. 📖 By obeying Him, we abide in Him.
  5. 📖 By abiding in Him, we will bear fruit and by bearing fruit, we experience the joys of abundant living!
- IV. 📖 The abundant life will only be lived by those who begin by reading the Bible and allowing its power to transform their living habits (Romans 12:1, 2).
1. Reading the Bible without applying it to your life can be downright dangerous. On August 3, 1996, Melvin Hitchens sat on his front porch and read the Bible. After his Bible-reading, this sixty-six-year-old New Orleans resident went in his house and retrieved a .45 caliber handgun. He then went back outside and shot his neighbors. He killed Donna Jett as she swept her sidewalk, and injured Darryl Jett while he was mowing. Family members and neighborhood residents testified that Hitchens and the Jetts had a running feud over the care of their yards and the cleanliness of the gutters. Positive transformation requires the application of God's Word (*Houston Chronicle*, Aug. 5, 1996, p. 7A).
  2. In the spring of 1998, David Fleigelman had to be treated for a stab wound. The forty-year-old resident of New York was stabbed at the Sephardic Center synagogue in Brooklyn. According to police reports, Fleigelman and another man were arguing about which one knew more about the Torah. It's unclear who won the argument, but Fleigelman obviously lost the ensuing fight. 📖 Knowledge of Scripture is useless if we don't allow it to transform our lives (*Examiner*, May 7, 1998, p. 26).

III. I hope you understand the urgency of reading God's Book if you are seeking the full and abundant life promised by God.

"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:32)

Let "God's Great Book" build you up, that you may receive that wonderful "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." (1 Peter 1:4)

V. 📖 Why not expose yourself to "the abundant life" that Jesus offers?

1. 📖 Give yourself a chance to know God by reading His Word

2. 📖 The most important thing you can do in life is study the Scriptures so you will truly "know" God (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

a. 📖 For to know God is to love Him

b. To love God is to obey Him

c. To obey Him is to abide in Him

d. To abide in Him is to bear fruit for Him

e. To bear fruit is to experience "the abundant life" the Vine offers to His branches

3. If you already know of His love for you, but have not yet obeyed His gospel (Mark 16:15-16; Hebrews 5:9), why not do so today?