

Studying, practicing and teaching God's word

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. Today we are going to be looking at Ezra chapter 7, verse 1 to 10. It has been read already, and our main focus will be on verse 10.

We are going to be looking at the theme, the importance of studying God's Word under the following headings. Studying God's Word, practicing God's Word, and teaching God's Word.

Those three points. We live in a world where our lifestyle is busy and doesn't allow us to have much time, if no time at all, to read and study God's Word as individuals.

But even if we are so busy or overcommitted people, it is important to find time to read God's Word.

Today we are going to spend some time to think on the importance of studying God's Word. Hopefully by the end of this sermon, we will be challenged to develop a desire and culture of regularly reading God's Word.

[1 : 1 2] Maybe from the reading that was made before, we might wonder who Ezra was. Verses 1 to 5 tells us that Ezra came from a priestly line, which can be traced back to Aaron.

Aaron was Moses' brother. And verse 6 tells us that he lived among the exiles in Babylon, and he was a skilled scribe. As a scribe, he was equipped to serve as a priest, and he would have gained a deep and profound knowledge of God's Word.

In those days, God's Word, or the law and statutes, referred to the Pentateuch. That is the five books of Moses. Again, Ezra was highly favored by the then king at Exerchus.

In verses 7 to 9, we also learned that Ezra received a special permission to return from Babylon to Jerusalem to establish or to beautify the temple.

And he was granted that permission by King Artaxerxes. This tells us that Ezra was qualified to lead, and he used his gifts for the Lord.

[2 : 3 0] What stands out most to me here is that he was someone who was devoted to study the Word of God. When we read Nehemiah chapter 8, we hear that he was a man who had a mind and heart that longed for God's Word.

He could read God's Word from early in the morning to midday. We might not have much time to be reading the Word of God more than eight hours a day like him, but we can find some time to read God's Word for minutes or so.

This takes us to verse 10, where we are going to spend much of our time. It reads, Three things that we learn from this verse.

Number one, studying God's Word. Ezra was a student of God's Word. Ezra was a student of God's Word.

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[4 : 20] His love for God's Word was even noticed by King. If we look at verse 11, we didn't read verse 11, but if we look at verse 11, it shows us that the king noticed how much Ezra knew the Word of God, how much Ezra devoted his heart to study the law.

The word heart here refers to the whole of one's being. It is where every thought and action originates from. Therefore, Ezra concentrated his whole life on the study of God's law.

He was totally devoted to studying it. Reading the Bible all the time is not something that comes easy, but it is a culture that we can develop.

Like Ezra, we are called to make time to read and study God's Word. This means spending time reading the Bible all the time, not necessarily in an academic way, as it was referred to by Allison earlier on, but in a devotional way.

This helps us to nurture our relationship with Christ. This is important because God's Word is all about Christ. It points us to Jesus, and it tells us something about him.

[5 : 49] If we look at John 5, verse 39, we're not going to open our Bibles to that. Jesus said, you read scriptures thinking that they give you eternal life.

These scriptures testify about me. And in Matthew 21, verse 42, he challenged the chief priests and the elders, saying, haven't you read?

This shows the reading of God's Word is important because it gives us an understanding of what God is saying to us.

The more we commit ourselves to reading God's Word regularly, the more we gain insight, which results in us praising God.

Because it is a noble thing to personally study it. A certain scholar gave what I think are practical ways that might help us to read the Bible.

[6 : 48] He said, one should start with a shorter or easy to read books of the Bible, like Amos in the Old Testament or Philippians in the New Testament.

Then we make our way to other books. He also said, also working at one book at a time is very important.

Some of the books are difficult to understand. At times we need to use commentaries to understand the message of that book. But commentaries shouldn't take the place of the Bible.

We read the Bible first, then the commentaries afterwards. One might also take notes. As you read, you take notes. This also helps us to understand what we are reading in the Bible.

Or find courses which are helpful to biblical colleges like GWC. And enroll for the courses there, as we have been told.

[7 : 52] The explore course, enroll in the children ministry track or the pastoral track. The advantage of this is that you sit under someone who has spent a considerable time studying the Bible.

And he will assign you helpful ways of studying the Bible effectively. And disciplining oneself to times of reading the Bible.

When? How long should I read the Bible? This takes us to our second point. Practicing God's Word. Ezra practiced what he studied.

Studying and practicing brings about good results. The best lawyers and doctors or any expert who are ascribed as best is because they practice what they have studied.

Likewise, Ezra did not only study God's Word, but he also practiced it. Hence, the first half of verse 10 reads, Ezra said, Scripture builds character.

[9 : 28] The good thing about practicing what we learn is that we will always remember it. Most of the time, I am impressed with pharmacists.

Many times, I visit one of them in the place where I am coming from. I am amazed. There might be six or whatever number of patients with different ailments.

Some with prescriptions from the doctors and some without. They just tell him their problem. He asks few questions and tells them the correct prescription.

At times, he may say, The doctor made a mistake by prescribing you the wrong prescription. He knows numerous ailments and their possible prescriptions.

This is a result of learning and practicing it. Likewise, when we read God's Word, we learn what God is saying to us.

[10 : 32] This gives us an opportunity to practice it. This is precisely the goal of Bible studies and Sunday service preaching.

That scripture may change our lives into conformity with Jesus Christ. This takes us to our third point. Teaching God's Word.

Remember, our first point was studying God's Word. And our second point was practicing God's Word. And now our third and final point is teaching God's Word.

The second half of verse 10 reads, And to teach his statutes and rules in Israel. This means Ezra was a teacher of God's Word.

The rules and statutes here, as we have mentioned earlier on, are referring to the entire Pentateuch. This translates into God's Word. Now, in order for one to be a good teacher, studying is the way to go.

[11 : 39] If one wants to be a good Bible study group leader, reading the Bible is the way to go. If you want to be a brilliant Sunday school teacher, reading the Bible is the way to go.

Even if you are not a Bible study group leader, or a Sunday school teacher, still reading the Bible is the way to go. For it opens our minds to be able to witness to friends, to family, to colleagues.

Remember, teaching is a skill that requires effort. When we teach, we are passing knowledge to other people. And Paul, in 2 Timothy 2, verse 15, he asked Timothy to study, to be a student of God's Word, in order for him to be able to rightly handle the Word of God.

As we have pointed out earlier on, scripture points to Jesus, who is God, the greatest teacher of all time. We can't simply afford to miss what he says, and what is said about him.

So it is important to read our Bibles and find it for ourselves, so that when we teach, we do not run out of ideas of what the Bible is saying about Jesus Christ.

[13 : 08] As we come to the conclusion, one might wonder what the secret is behind Ezra's spiritual success. The Bible has made it plain that it was the hand of God that was upon him, as we saw in verse 6 and verse 9.

Jesus, our perfect example, demonstrated this in his earthly life, how he knew scripture, how he lived it out, and how he taught it.

My friends, it is Jesus who guides us into reading his Word. It is him who helps us to see the wisdom, the comfort, and the salvation plan in his Word.

The issue of studying the Bible is for everyone. Even though we may have demands placed on us, be it at home, at work, or at school, let us remember that God wants us, wants to speak to us every day.

Please do not miss such an opportunity. Create time in that busy schedule to read his Word. Friends, when we have God's Word, we are able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

[14 : 31] For example, when Jesus was tempted by the devil in Matthew chapter 4, he quoted scripture. When we have the Word of God, we are ready in season and out of season.

When a friend faces challenges in life, we are able to comfort him or her using God's Word. We cannot give what we don't have.

When we pray, we can also cite God's Word. We also use God's Word to teach, we use it to rebuke, and we use it to correct erroneous thinking.

The recipe is committing ourselves to it, desiring to learn, and to pray for the grace to live out what scripture says.

Amen. Let us pray. Lord, thank you for your Word this morning. We pray for a heart that is committed to studying your Word and living it out. We know we cannot do this with our own wisdom.

[15 : 40] Please, Jesus, help us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. All who pray, amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.