

Series: Characteristics of a Devout Christian
Title: The Discipline of Study
Text: 2 Timothy 2:15

Introduction

"We are drowning in information but starved for knowledge." – John Naisbitt, Megatrends

The Information Age has brought with it many advances which have become part of everyday life, including the Web and mobile phones, not to mention e-mail, text, and instant messaging, and social networks. While there are many benefits to having these tools and modes of communication, they also bring with them a costly side effect: the problem of information overload.

Simply put, the tools and technologies we now take for granted allow us to create content faster than ever before and permit us to share it with an unlimited number of people, many of whom may be unknown to us. Almost every generation has had access to more information than the one preceding it. Today we create more content in a day than the entire population of the planet could possibly consume in a month. – John B. Spira, Huffington Report 09/11/2009

The Information Age has created a problem that is making our world a fascinating yet dangerous place. A person can manipulate information to say whatever they want you to hear: expertly! Newscasters no longer report facts and information without comment. Now the media manipulates facts and information, hoping to influence how you think and interpret the facts. We call that managed news.

Evaluating a person's character becomes more crucial than ever before to get to the truth! How we interpret facts is critical to how we understand the situations and events of our lives.

In his second letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul gives his young protégé some great advice. In Chapter 2, he writes, *And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*" (2Ti 2:2 NKJV)

In verse 15 he writes, *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*

(2Ti 2:15 NKJV)

The King James Versions says, *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.*

In our world dominated by relative truth, there has never been a time when absolute truth has been so essential. Pilate was the ultimate skeptic and humanist. He asks Jesus, "What is truth?" Sadly, his world view clouded his vision. He didn't even recognize that truth was standing in front of him. That is still true for so

many people today. They are drowning in information yet unable to discern the truth.

The God of truth and absolute authority continues to invite us to develop a meaningful relationship with him. Every triumph, trial or tragedy is an opportunity for us to connect with God and experience His love and grace! When your life revolves around your relationship with God, it gives meaning to every moment of your life. You begin to see a link between the ordinary activities of your day and the vision God has placed in your heart. Instead of sabotaging yourself, you begin to trust the Lord to direct and guide you to make the best decisions for your life!

The vision of your life flows out of what you believe! Devout Christians base their relationship with Christ on truth and reality. A devout Christian chooses a discipline of study that deepens their knowledge and understanding of God and strengthens their relationship with Christ. They know a healthy spiritual relationship will impact their family, marriage, neighbors, co-workers, friends, and even strangers. It affects their attitude towards their health, finances, entertainment; in short, how they view everything in life!

Devout Christians help others grow in holiness and their relationship with Jesus Christ. They see that as a primary vision God has for all people! Sadly, our culture has no vision for the people!

America has no vision that includes you! Our culture is driven by consumption! America does not have a vision that will help your marriage, your finances, or your family! We live in a consumer society, but we are no longer the consumers; we are being consumed! Devout believers know the difference between where our culture is leading us and where God is calling us! They live their lives on a deeper level. Devout Christians are committed to finding and knowing God's truth and wisdom. They have developed a daily routine and habit that helps them discern the difference between the world's ways and God's ways.

The ways of the world lead to confusion and chaos; God's way always leads to clarity and order. The ways of the world lead to meaninglessness and despair; God's way leads to purpose and hope and joy! Where are your priorities leading you? Is your life out of balance and chaotic? Or is your life one of order and peace? Do you know the difference between the ways of the world and God's ways? And if so, are you developing the spiritual disciplines that keep you focused on God's ways?

One of the significant problems in our society today is relativism. Relativism says you cannot impose your morality on others or legislate your personal beliefs. We call it political correctness. Their mantra is tolerance. But let me ask you this, "If you saw someone beating a child or a defenseless person, wouldn't you try to stop that person?" But if you did, wouldn't you be imposing your morality upon that person? But wouldn't it still be the right thing to do?

Isn't it true that some things are right and some things are just wrong? There is no moral way to sympathize with immoral actions. And it is necessary to be intolerant of some things. For America to survive, moral relativism (political correctness) must come to an end! The only way to remove this insidious philosophy from our world is to root it out of our own lives. And that can only be one person at a time, starting with you and me! Moral relativism is a diabolical plan to make God's wisdom and truth irrelevant.

A Christian leader writes, "The splendor of truth shines forth in all the works of the Creator and, in a special way, in man, who is created in the image and likeness of God." Truth enlightens a person's intelligence and shapes their freedom, leading them to know and love the Lord." That's a far cry from one of the leading humanists of our day, Edward Wilson who writes, "The toxic mix of religion and tribalism has become so dangerous as to justify taking seriously the alternative view, that humanism based on science is the effective antidote, the light and the way at last placed before us."

If truth does shape our freedom, then there is only slavery! I wonder how many slaves need to be emancipated from the tyranny of Satan's hold on our society and upon our personal lives! The devout Christian studies the Bible because it is the truth of scripture that gives clarity to their lives. We live in a time of moral and ethical confusion. We live in a time plagued by a crisis of purposelessness. Many people don't study or think at all today! There is no guiding light or dynamic truth that challenges them to rise above the chaos of their lives.

It's true; people do have legitimate questions about life and faith and God that deserve honest answers! The average Christian today hopes no one will ask them any questions about their faith because they have no idea what the answers are! But devout Christians can't wait for someone to ask them questions about their faith! In fact, many times, they don't wait! They may not know all the answers, but they'll accept the challenge and dig in and find the answers.

I. Commitment to Continuous Learning

Devout Christians are committed to learning God's ways. They have struggled with the questions of life in very personal ways and identified a path that provides meaning and purpose to their struggle.

Devout Christians spend time studying the Bible! It's just that simple! They see themselves as students of Jesus! They count themselves as faithful disciples. They are more than just followers of Christ. They are devoted to the way of Christ and Christian living. They study His words and make a conscious effort to allow Christ's teachings to guide and form them. How often do you read the Bible? There are so many options available today. The Bible is on CDs, Smartphone apps, good old fashioned books (many translations available), devotionals, etc.

An opportunity that works for you is certainly available! All you need is to develop the discipline of study! I'm not talking about reading for two hours a day or even

joining a bible study class. You can certainly do that if you want to, but my goal for you is a simple 5 minutes a day!

If you would read a psalm, a proverb, and a few verses out another book of the Bible, I would be ecstatic! Even if you started with a devotional, like Our Daily Bread, and did it religiously every day for 30 days, it would revolutionize your life! The only difference between the devout Christian and the average Christian is that devout Christians actually do it!

And yet it is so simple that every Christian could do it if they decided to. The idea is simple, but activating it in your life requires real effort! It's like knowing that exercise will make you a healthier person vs. actually exercising and becoming a healthier person. How many days of your life pass by without even a thought of consulting God's Word for guidance? How many times have you made decisions without even consulting God?

A Devout Christian is committed to reading and learning God's ways. They are aware of God's abiding presence each day of their lives. They ask God to guide them and give them wisdom each day, and they believe that He does!

In Romans 12:2, the apostle Paul offers this advice, " And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom 12:2 NKJV)

Devout Christians study and apply God's Word to their circumstances. It is the daily commitment that leads to the renewing of your mind! The Bible is a living book, no matter how many times you read a passage of scripture, it can still impact and challenge you in new ways. The goal is not just to learn the words of scripture but to apply the learning wisely to the situations of your life. That is what causes you to live with passion and purpose. Your spiritual life becomes vibrant.

Learning just a little bit more each day fuels your spiritual development and helps you discover how vital God's plan for your life really is! You aren't required to study theology, but all of us are called to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. A Routine for Continuous Learning

Secondly, the thing that sets devout Christians apart from average ones in this area of study is that dynamic Christians have a basic routine of study. Like prayer, they don't wait until they can find the time to do it; they plan to study every day!

They have a place where they study. They have a particular time of the day when they study. They have a plan they follow. They may read for a few minutes with their morning coffee before they pray and head off into their day. They may read a few minutes at lunchtime or before they go to bed at night. Some listen to CD's or Bible apps while they exercise or go for a walk. Some have a bible study guide

they follow. Others attend Bible study classes at church or are part of a study group.

Devout Christians are hungry to grow spiritually. They want to know the truth about God. Devout Christians have faith questions too, but they rigorously explore them until they find satisfactory answers. They aren't looking for quick fixes or cliché answers; they are committed to probing for answers.

Devout Christians study the Bible. They have a daily routine of study, and they stick to it! Do you have a daily routine of Bible reading? If not, would you consider adding 5 minutes of Bible reading to your daily routines for the next 30 days? Just 5 minutes of scripture a day would revolutionize your spiritual life!

The more you learn about your faith, the more likely you are to take your spiritual life seriously. Knowing how Jesus felt about every person influences the activities and lifestyle of the devout Christian. The study of God's Word also fuels our prayer life, our spirit of generosity, and our willingness to reach out in faith to others. The more you cultivate these characteristics, the more you discover how connected they are in powerful and practical ways.

The seeds of spiritual renewal are always found in prayer, study, generosity, and outreach. Devout Christians are committed to read and study the Bible, and they have a daily routine that emphasizes that commitment.

III. A Thirst for Continuous Learning

Devout Christians have a thirst for truth. Sometimes it's tough to see the truth, especially if you're involved in the situation. It isn't easy to step back from a situation when you are emotionally involved in it. We generally obtain objectivity by being able to view a situation from a distance.

God always has our best interest at heart. Through his Word, we gain perspective and insight needed to face even difficult and challenging situations. It's easier to find the truth than it is to face it and follow it. Our capacity to see, find, and adopt God's truth for our life is in direct proportion to our ability to humble ourselves before God.

Devout Christians do not believe they know everything or even enough about a situation. They don't rush to conclusions, and they don't pass judgment on appearances. Dynamic Christians thirst for truth. They want to make sure they explore things thoroughly and understand God's view and goals for their lives. They take Christ's words seriously to "hunger and thirst for righteousness." They would rather be right with God than have the praises of men.

To overcome obstacles and develop a living and active faith, we must be willing to apply ourselves to learning God's ways. The discipline of study requires us to commit to read and learn the scriptures through a daily routine of Bible reading.

Five minutes a day of Bible reading can change your life. But it can only happen if you decide to do it!

Conclusion

Remember, you don't become a spiritual giant overnight! Continuous improvement is achieved through small, incremental changes over time. As you begin to develop a habit of study and scripture reading, be patient with yourself.

Don't expect dynamic results immediately. Give yourself plenty of time to grow into it. If you fail – don't give up! Keep trying. You can do it! Start with five minutes a day! Do it regularly and faithfully.

The hardest part of doing anything is getting started. They say a space shuttle uses 96 percent of its fuel during takeoff. Just getting started is difficult! That's why we need commitment and routines and plans to follow.

Devout Christians have a discipline of prayer and study forged out of commitment, daily routine, and consistent planning. Be a continuous learner! Study to show yourself approved unto God a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth!