

Biblical Literacy

Intro: Are we Biblically literate?

As a society we are not!

A 2000 Gallup indicated that the percentage of people with a college education has more than tripled since 1935 "but the level of biblical knowledge appears to have hardly budged."

One Gallup survey, for example, shows that fewer than half of Americans can name the first book of the Bible (Genesis), only one-third know who delivered the Sermon on the Mount (many named Billy Graham, not Jesus) and that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife! Over a thousand young people were polled in a Biblical literacy survey to determine how well teens knew basic Bible information as a basis for understanding English literature. One in ten thought Moses was one of the twelve apostles and the same number did not know who Adam and Eve were..

The reasons

The Gallup organization has put it: "We revere the Bible, but we don't read it." The 2000 poll showed the number of people who read the Bible at least occasionally has dropped twelve percent since the 80's (73 percent in the 1980s to 59 percent in 2000).

Why?

People are not taking the time to read their Bibles. 64% indicate that they don't read the Bible because they are too busy.

People are intimidated by the Bible's size and density of the language. Over 80% indicated that they don't read the Bible because it is too confusing.

But if we are Christians we must be Biblical literate! To be a true follower of Jesus we should seek to know the Scriptures as He knew them!

Jesus knew & used the Scriptures.

Numerous times in his ministry the gospel writers tell us that he pointed people to specific references in the word of God to clarify the truth about a matter. In most cases he did not appear to have a copy of the OT in His possession; yet His mastery of the text was evident in His ability to quote the Scripture to others and show its relevance to the topic under discussion.

Jesus used the scriptures

Support His claims to be the Christ. He knew that every OT prophecy of the Christ would find its fulfillment in Him.

And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, (Lk 4:17)

And He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written

through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. (Lk 18:31)

“The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.” (Mt 26:24)

*Then Jesus *said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.’ (Mt 26:31)*

“For I tell you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, ‘And He was numbered with transgressors’; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment.” (Lk 22:37)

“But they have done this in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’ (Jn 15:25)

Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” (Lk 24:44)

Overcome the temptations of Satan

But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’” (Mt 4:4)

Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” (Mt 4:7)

*Then Jesus *said to him, “Begone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’” (Mt 4:10)*

Correct wrong behavior

And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. (Mk 7:6)

*And He *said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a robbers’ den.” (Mt 21:13)*

Confound false teachers

But He looked at them and said, “What then is this that is written, ‘The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner stone’? (Lk 20:17)

Jesus answered them, “Has it not been written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? (Jn 10:34)

Answer false charges

But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions; ... “Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent? (Matthew 12:3,5)

“Even in your law it has been written, that the testimony of two men is true. (Jn 8:17)

Give insight into God’s plan

“This is the one about whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.’ (Mt 11:10)

“But I say to you, that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him.” (Mk 9:13)

“... because these are days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled. (Lk 21:22)

Teach spiritual principles

“But go and learn what this means, ‘I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Matthew 9:13)

“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught of God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. (Jn 6:45)

Jesus expected God’s people to “read” and “understand” the scriptures in order to know God’s truth!

And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” (Lk 10:26)

“But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” (Matthew 22:31-32)

Conclusion: Our calling as followers of Jesus includes the need to be serious and comprehensive students of the written word!

"A Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to a person that isn't."

I hope today that you will accept the challenge of reading the Scriptures repeatedly until its truths are so fixed in your memory that you will no longer need a Bible to tell others what it says.