

Know Your Bible

by
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(Peter said), "but God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power: For David says concerning him, 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken.'" (from Acts 2:22-36)

The Holy Spirit has just swooped into that upper room in Jerusalem and shaken everybody up. They all look at one another and ask, "What does this mean?" Some have an answer ready: everybody's drunk. Peter stands up and sets them straight by quoting scripture. If God busted into your house would you know enough scripture to tell the people around you what it means? If God came into your life and worked a miracle of healing, or service, or generosity, or peace, would you know enough scripture to tell yourself what it means? Part of the Christian life is being able to recognize God at work in the world, and to do that, you need to know the writings the ancestors left for you. If your church doesn't have a Bible study to sign up for, offer to start one. There are plenty of good resources out there that don't require experts to lead them. Whenever God enters the world, there is always someone right there ready with the prosaic "They're drunk" explanation. And most people will believe them---unless there's someone around who knows enough to stand and tell them the truth.

Prayer. God, make your scriptures to sink so deep into me that I cannot see the world except through them. Amen.

(God is Still Speaking, 365 Daily Devotional Days).

In our faith tradition, individual and congregation Bible study is an essential ingredient for understanding how to follow in Jesus' footsteps. But because of an appalling incident that happened to me about fifteen years ago, I'd like to mention something else that is very important when it comes to study of the Bible and internalizing it as God's Holy Word. When my mother first came to live with Don and me in Houston, Texas, I signed Mom and me for an art class. It was a great class and I enjoyed our teacher immensely . . . until the day she burst into the classroom and began talking about what she had just learned in her Bible class. "My pastor," she said, "taught us that homosexuality is a sin and showed us places in scripture to prove it! He's so right that it's a choice and that if those people don't repent and change their lifestyle they are going to hell!" Outraged, I stood up and said to her, "My mother and I will no longer be attending your class! We do not come here to be poisoned by your ignorance, prejudice, and hatred." I learned an important lesson that day. When it comes to church Bible study it makes a world of difference how the teacher interprets Biblical scripture, as well as the student's ability to challenge what is taught as gospel truth.