

It was October 31, 1517 when the now infamous priest and university professor, Martin Luther, posted his "95 Theses" outside a church door in Germany calling for changes in the way things are done in the local church. It was a cry for reform that would ultimately bring Bibles to the common person in their own language. Until that time, a regular person like you and I would not have had access nor ever read a copy of the Holy Scriptures. It was with much controversy, even bloodshed, that verses began to be translated into German, and ultimately into English. It was then when average people began again to read the Bible for themselves and discover truths that changed their lives. A spiritual renewal took place that would change our culture forever. Fast-forward five centuries and you find the Bible translated into well over one hundred languages and has grown to become the number one "best selling book" of all time. Today, almost every household in America has a Bible, most have multiple copies, in various translations.

With all of these Bibles floating around, one might assume that we, as a culture, are the most Biblically literate people in history. But we're not. When having access to a Bible was still new and valued and appreciated, people poured their lives into it. Out of this inspiration came movements that can still be found today among the churches. But the fact is that America today is extremely illiterate concerning the contents of the scriptures that are somewhere in our closets or on our coffee tables.

Researchers George Gallup and Jim Castelli put the problem squarely: "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."

The research has shown that fewer than half of all adults can name the four gospels. Many Christians cannot identify more than two or three of the disciples. According to data from the Barna Research Group, 60 percent of Americans can't name even five of the Ten Commandments. "No wonder people break the Ten Commandments all the time. They don't know what they are," said George Barna, president of the firm. Multiple surveys reveal the problem in stark terms. According to 82 percent of Americans, "God helps those who help themselves," is a Bible verse.

A Barna poll indicated that at least 12 percent of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife. Another survey of graduating

high school seniors revealed that over 50 percent thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife. A considerable number of respondents to one poll indicated that the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Billy Graham.

So what does this mean? Most people have no clue what is in the Bible beyond mere "basics" which are often misquoted, misunderstood, misapplied, and misrepresented. We know that having access to a Bible is no longer a barrier for people. It is a genuine desire to know what is contained in scripture that is lacking. Many people honestly don't care or don't perceive the relevance to their daily lives.

I want to challenge you. How will you invest your time this week? Why not crack open the Book that so many have prized as being a source of divine wisdom and a gift from God to humanity; and read it? Read it everyday! You may just find the answers you need there. You might discover that your life changes too.

Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. This article was published in 2005. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



P.O. Box 1443  
Ojai, CA 93024  
**(805) 640-9498**  
[www.calvaryojai.org](http://www.calvaryojai.org)

**Sunday Worship:**

**9:00 & 10:30am**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave, Oak View

**Mid-Week Study:**

**7:00pm Thursday**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View