

Can Anyone Really Know the Bible?

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I grew up in church. For as long as I can remember, I have been going to church on Sundays. I have fond memories that go back to when I was four of hearing Bible stories and singing songs at Sunday school. I am so thankful for the wonderful people that took the time to teach us lessons of Jesus' love, which still ring in my ears today. When I entered Jr. High, I left the precious Nazarene Church family that had benefited me so much to join a small Baptist church where I would be blessed for more than six years. It was at one of the Baptist youth camps that I met my future wife. In college I was part of a non-denominational church near my home where I was part of the college-career group. I went to Christian school for most of my education and Bible was a regular part of the curriculum. Needless to say, I had heard a lot of preaching during my growing up years. I am telling you this, not because I feel there is something worth bragging about here but because there is something essential that I must confess. After all of this, I really did not know that much about the Bible. Worse, I didn't think that the Bible could really be known. I knew the Bible to be a big book with many diverse teachings, concepts, and ideas. I felt as though nobody could know the Bible well enough to say that any one concept was "not in the Bible". With so many pages, I reasoned, who could really know it. So my understanding was limited to a patchwork of Bible stories and events, teachings and principles, that didn't necessarily fit together well but was however "true" because it was "in the Bible". The problem is that I was weak: weak in my knowledge of the scriptures, weak in wisdom, weak in my faith, weak in my ability to discern right from wrong, and weak in my ability to effectively help others. Don't get me wrong. I didn't say I had no knowledge, or wisdom, or faith, or discernment, and that I never helped others, just that I was weak in them. I meet many people that are just like I was, in church for years but understanding very little. I want to bare open my heart and share another irony with you. I thought I knew more than I do now. One of the most important lessons I have learned is that the more I learn about God, the more I realize how little I know. God is so great, so huge, so amazing, and so vast; the Bible teaches that He is far beyond us and our ability to comprehend. And although God Himself in all of His glory might be beyond our ability to grasp, I believe He has revealed a lot about Himself to His people

through the Bible. While I can't know everything about God, I can know all that He wants me to know. I can understand the Bible.

As a pastor today, I feel called to teach the Bible. Although my personal stories, anecdotes and opinions may sometimes be helpful, I believe it is God's message in the Bible that carries the weight of authority for people's lives. Many lives have been changed because of the teaching of the Bible. But I have found many people to struggle when attempting to understand the Bible. By God's grace, there are certain tools and study methods that can open up new avenues of understanding. When I was young, I used the Bible roulette method of Bible study. That is where you pray that God would lead you to a verse and then open up the Bible to a page and verse and begin reading. God is gracious sometimes to us and answers even these prayers but this is hardly "studying to show ourselves approved, a workman that does not need to be ashamed". Thank God I have learned better by now. I would like to share what I have learned with whomever desires to learn themselves. I will be teaching a six week class called "How To Study The Bible" on Thursday evenings, Oct 21, 28, Nov 4, 11, 18, and Dec 2. I would like to personally invite you. Whether you participate in the class or not, join me in the pursuit of one of the biggest adventures you will ever be asked to endeavor. Worship God in the name of His Son Jesus, and diligently study and learn His written Word, the Bible.

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 2004. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



Sunday Worship:
9:00 & 10:30am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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Mid-Week Study:
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