

When in doubt, check it out! Scientists use this principle, so do doctors, law enforcement personnel, and investigative news reporters. Since our earliest of school days we have been taught to explore, discover, and learn new things. As we got older, we were introduced to research papers. Yikes! Enter bibliographies, footnotes, and lots and lots of reading. Business people invest tremendous resources into product development, manufacturing processes, and marketing research. Sports coaches scout, study, and even annotate performance statistics of players in order to maximize their competitive edge. Even musicians and artists often develop their craft through the examination and analysis of the achievement of others, employing subsequent practice, trial, experimentation and creativity of their own. In other words; applied research.

I find it interesting that while just about every facet of life, both professionally and recreationally, is approached through diligence and examination, Christians tend to take a much more dulled down approach to their faith. What they say is the most important thing, in reality, tends to take backseat to just about everything else. Don't believe me? Challenge yourself. If you know more John Lennon lyrics than memorized scripture, why is that? Chances are, you can recite full bios on 12 Hollywood celebrities, but not even the names of the 12 apostles. You might know sports scores and batting averages on teams and players that you don't even like, but have no idea how many books there are in the Bible. You probably can recount 10 media or business scandals from the past year, but could you narrate the Ten Commandments if your life depended upon it? I think you get the idea.

While there are exceptions, to be sure, an honest look at the big picture of where professing Christians put their priorities becomes bleak at best, some would say tragic. Is it any wonder why so many are struggling in their own lives, why we are discovering that there are bad guys hiding from police among the ranks of church leadership. I believe there is a direct tie-in between our lack of spiritual priorities and our inability to discern right from wrong, truth from error, or even the spiritual depravity of someone in leadership that is actually living a double and diametrically opposing lifestyle to the faith. Jesus told us if we seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first in our lives, the rest would be added (Matthew 6:33). That is a promise. Yet, more often than not, we do not seek him first and just hope for the best to work out.

It seems that therein resides the basis for the most common complaint against Christians, that they are hypocrites. Hypocrisy is when our actions do not line up with our profession. Let's face it, this can be true of many. However, when we always remember and proclaim that we are just sinners saved by the grace of God, accusations of hypocrisy cannot really stick because I have not allowed foolish pride to puff me up.

But how have we gotten ourselves so far off course that a TV guide is more comfortable to read than Scripture? I think we have neglected some of the most important tenets of Christianity for too long. One of those forgotten pillars is basic Bible study. Don't get upset with me for saying that, I was there too. When I was growing up, I was in a

church culture that didn't expect too much from us. They were true Christians and I thank God for them, but years of church going didn't provide a lot of spiritual fruit in my life nor in anyone else I am aware of. Don't get me wrong; there was some fruit, but not a lot. The result in my life was spiritual hunger.

When Shelley and I got married in 1989, we had long been out of the habit of bringing Bibles to church, because you barely needed one and they provided them anyways. We really didn't even know what we were missing. You know, there are children in this world who have never tasted ice cream. The statistics are accurate; none of those children ever crave ice cream. But me, I've tasted it, and I like it, and I want more of it. I think the same is true of coming into contact with the things of God. We experience him, we like it, we want more. But how can we truly experience him the way he desires for us and avoid the Bible so Audaciously?

The Bible says, "All scripture and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"(2 Timothy 3:16). There is a group of people called the Bereans that were commended for their diligence because they didn't just listen to preaching, they searched the scriptures to see if the things that were taught were true (Acts 17:11).

Would you like to see more spiritual fruit in your own life and bless your pastor at the same time? Read your Bible diligently, bring it to church, look up every reference that is made, follow up, check things out, and seek to apply it. You will benefit double from your pastor's message and you might find that this was the beginning of something exciting in your life.

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9:00 & 10:30am
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Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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