

Enjoying Your Bible

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There are many passages in the Bible which express the author's satisfaction with God's revelation.

- *"I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches" (Psalm 119:14).*
- *"I shall delight in Thy statutes" (119:16).*
- *"Thy testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors" (119:24).*
- *"Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments, for I delight in it" (119:35).*
- *"And I shall delight in Thy commandments, which I love" (119:47).*
- *"For Thy law is my delight" (119:77).*
- *"Trouble and anguish have come upon me; yet Thy commandments are my delight" (119:143).*

Even with all these statements being written, why is it that so many of us struggle to enjoy Bible study? Why is it that our Bibles seem to collect dust, but we cannot seem to get enough of a favorite novel, coverage of a sports team, or the newspaper? Also, why is it so hard to convince some people to attend our weekly Bible classes, while a weekly television program is given priority status? Perhaps this stems from a superficial understanding of what it means to "enjoy" our Bibles.

"What is enjoyment? Essentially, it is a by-product: a contented, fulfilled state which comes from concentrating on something other than enjoying yourself. If enjoyment, as such, is your aim, you can expect to miss it, for you are disregarding the conditions of it. Pleasure-seeking, as we learn by experience is a barren business; happiness is never found till we have the grace to stop looking for it, and to give our attention to persons and matters external to ourselves (Philippians 2:3-4). In this case, Bible study will only give enjoyment if conforming to our Creator in belief and behavior, through trust and obedience, is its goal. Bible study for our own pleasure rather than for God ends up giving pleasure neither to Him nor to us" (God Has Spoken, J.I. Packer, p. 9).

Healthy Bible study is exemplified in the Bereans (Acts 17:11), who enjoyed it not because of amusement, mere mental stimulation, or diversion, but because they desired to find the truth. Their Bible study was not obligatory or forced, but willing. Solomon also corroborates this truth when he writes, *"Be warned, my son: the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body. The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person" (Ecclesiastes 12:12-13).* Without the right motives, studying is just a dead end – we must have a desire to serve and fear God if the devotion to books is to mean anything!

The pleasure of certainty

Paul notes that many people are tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). The Bible helps combat that condition, even though it is often self-inflicted. People may prefer to be tossed around because they feel that it removes responsibility to ever settle on anything for sure. But is not uncertainty a hollow kind of

joy? Living off of questions and doubts leads to spiritual emptiness. Would you rather not have certainty, and assurance? While some may resent the Bible for laying down absolute truths, I find the following advantages to embracing God's written wisdom:

- I am free from following human opinion (Psalm 119:24), which fluctuates;
- If the Bible is the truth, then every person is equally subject to it;
- I do not have to live by trial and error;
- I can give my kids final and absolute answers when they are discouraged;
- The truth of the Bible keeps me from following false dreams (Psalm 119:37);
- Only the truth offers meaningful freedom (Psalm 119:45);
- I discover a new kind of respect that people have for me when I answer them with a Bible verse all the time. They may not like the truth it dictates, but they will respect me for being consistent and honest about my beliefs.