



WOODROW KROLL MINISTRIES

“Seven Ways to Help You Stamp Out Bible Illiteracy”

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In the previous three white papers I have investigated the crisis of Bible illiteracy in America, the extent of that illiteracy and its impact on American Christianity. This impact is not just being felt in America, but in Canada, South America, Europe, Africa and Asia. The question now is what do we do to stop this creeping plague in churches everywhere and among Christians everywhere?

There is no silver bullet or easy answer here, but there are some things I have discovered that have helped me and others to address this most deadly form of cancer on the Christian. I share them with you here.

1. Stamp Out Bible Illiteracy One Person at a Time

Bible illiteracy stems from too many people owning a Bible, but too few reading it. David said, “The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yes than much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9-10). Do you really believe what David said? Are the words of God’s Word more desired by you than much fine gold? How many hours a week do you spend pursuing today’s gold? How many hours a week do you spend pursuing an understanding of God and His Word? Don’t make excuses; be honest with yourself and with God. We don’t have any difficulty pursuing gold, even if we have to work for it. But pursuing God, that’s a different story. The responsibility for your Bible literacy does not fall to your pastor, your parents, or anyone else. It’s your responsibility. To stamp out Bible illiteracy one person at a time, you must take charge of the person you are and take care of yourself. Remember the words of D. L. Moody: “I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something; and what I should do and can do, by the grace of God, I will do.” The key to stamping out Bible illiteracy in your own life is you. Are you willing to take the challenge?

2. Tithe Your Free Time to God Every Day

Most of us are familiar with the concept of the tithe—giving 10 percent off the top to God as an expression of gratitude. But when the word “tithe” is used, most of us think about money. But if you want to grow spiritually, you ought to consider tithing your time. Did you know that everyone has exactly the same amount of time each day? Think about it. Why do some people get more done than others? Each has the same amount of time. Those who get more things done prioritize what is important to them and never allow things of lesser importance trump things of greater importance. So, if getting to know God and His Word is truly important to you, prioritize your day so God gets His time every day. Tithe your time so God gets His 10 percent.

Consider this. If every day has 24 hours, that means every day has 1440 minutes. Subtract 8 hours daily for sleeping and 8 hours daily for work. That’s fair and leaves you with approximately 8 free hours each day, or 480 minutes. So if you tithed just your free time and not even the whole day, 10 percent of your free time would be 48 minutes daily. That’s less time than one reality program on TV and much more profitable for you. So skip the 2-minute devotional and get serious about stamping out Bible illiteracy in your life.

3. Seriously Chart Your Spiritual Growth – Keep A Personal Journal, Commentary Or Interesting Fact List When You Read

Let me begin with an admission. I am not a journaler. I understand the importance of journaling for many people, but keeping a diary or a journal was just not for me. But if you are a journaler, each day after you've read your Bible, write down your spiritual insights, what you learned from reading and any actions required or follow-up plans needed to work out in your life what you've learned from God's Word. Another way to chart your spiritual growth is to write your own commentary. That's right. What is the best commentary on any book of the Bible? The one you write. It reflects the insights you had on this book. You don't write it to impress others, you write it to solidify what you've learned from your Bible reading. You don't even need to show it to anyone, just write it for your own benefit. And one last thing. One year as I read through the Bible I kept a book of interesting facts, things that caught my eye like ideas expressed in a verse that I remember reading somewhere else in the Bible or linking together Bible themes that are threaded throughout the pages of God's Word. It was so helpful I began doing it every year. I chart my spiritual growth by comparing my insights from one year to the next. The deeper they become the more progress I am making on the road to spiritual maturity.

Keeping a journal of spiritual insights, writing your own commentary based on what you discovered in your reading, and making a fact list or theme list that you find recurring in the Bible, all these can help you grow in your spiritual walk with God. But here's another way to stamp out Bible illiteracy in your own life.

4. Count Spiritual Calories – in This Case, More Is Better

We've all been on a diet at one time or another. And we all know that one of the keys to losing weight is reducing our calorie intake. But calories are important for growth and when it comes to spiritual growth, the more calories we can take in the better. That gives us choices, but we must be wise in making those choices. There are many options on the spiritual menu today, but some of those options are much better for our spiritual growth than others. There are seminars, weekend retreats, books, DVDs, life coaches, video conferences and much more available to Christians to aid in his or her spiritual development. But what you choose has a great impact on how well or how fast you grow. If you go for the best-marketed, most-talked about, friend-recommended, most attractive or the feature items on the menu, you may be choosing the least beneficial. There are plenty of "Gummi Bear" choices for you on the spiritual menu and we often go for them without a thought. After all, Gummi Bears are soft, colorful, chewy and tasty; who wouldn't love them. But do they provide the most nutritious option for you? While Gummi Bears may scream "Choose me, choose me," green beans are a much more nutritious choice. But they're not as tasty as Gummi Bears so many people opt for taste over substance. That often happens in spiritual things too. But you can't build a life on Gummi Bears. You can't grow physically on Gummi Bears and you can't grow spiritually on spiritual Gummi Bears. The Bible presents more of a green bean diet than a Gummi Bear diet and admittedly, that diet is not a spectacular, as attractive or as tempting. But if you choose all the spiritual Gummi Bears available to you today and neglect reading God's Word, you have only yourself to blame for your Bible illiteracy. Don't settle for Gummy Bears when God offers you green beans.

Colossians 2:6-7 says, "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught." Every night before you go to bed, get on an imaginary scales to see if you've gained any spiritual muscle that day. If you haven't, check your diet. You may be relying too heavily on Gummi Bears.

5. Two Are Better Than One – Grow With A Partner

This advice is given for all kinds of pursuits today. Run with another person; one runner pushes the other. Go on a diet with your spouse; keep each other accountable. Read the same book a friend is reading; you can discuss it together. The concept of “two are better than one” is as old as Adam and Eve. In fact, isn’t that why God created Eve? God created the animals in pairs, but He created Adam alone. In Genesis 2:18 God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” Two are better than one. In the Book of Ecclesiastes, chapter four, the wise Solomon dedicates four verses to this concept. In verses 9-12 he writes, “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone?”

Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

This universal principle is also important for your daily spiritual growth and for stamping out Bible illiteracy one person at a time. You will grow in your faith as you help another grow in his or her faith. Grow together. Let them help you, and you help them. Read the Bible with a partner, just like you would in a book club. Discuss what you’ve read with your fellow reader. Exchange ideas and discoveries. This concept of “two are better than one” when building up each other is found repeatedly in the New Testament. “Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being” (1 Corinthians 10:24). “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4). “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another” (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Did you catch that? Comfort each other and edify one another. That means we must help each other stamp out personal Bible illiteracy and we do that effectively when we assist each other in growing to full spiritual maturity. Time in the Word is essential for personal growth, but choose to grow with another person, maybe your spouse. Make each other accountable. Check up on each other and encourage one another.

6. Hold Your Bible Study Groups to a Higher Standard

The concept of small groups took the church by storm some 3 decades ago. They are a great way to fellowship, interact and grow in community. Especially if you attend a megachurch, you need the benefit of a small group. In the church of which I am a member, we have 81 individual small groups going on each week. But as beneficial as small groups are, they can also be highly ineffective.

About a dozen years ago I was enjoying lunch in the home of a couple in the South. Sometime during our conversation the topic of small groups came up and the lady of the house mentioned that she taught a small group Bible study to women right there in her living room. Always one to learn more I asked her to describe what they did in their small group. She explained that they drew chairs from all over the house, brought them to the living room and placed them in a circle. She said, “I read a verse from the Bible and then we go around the circle each one telling what that verse means to them.” I smiled but inside my mouth I bit my tongue. You see, I wouldn’t call that a Bible study; I’d call that “pooled ignorance.”

A Bible study group needs a qualified, prepared and passionate teacher both to teach and to guide the discussion. If it weren’t for personal Bible illiteracy, we’d have more qualified, prepared and passionate

Bible study teachers, but we don't. Certainly the teacher needs to display the spiritual gift of teaching and have the skills to lead the group, but many with that gift and those skills do not step forward because they lack the knowledge. That's the scourge of Bible illiteracy. Bible study groups are a place to fellowship, but the effectiveness of a Bible study group is not in the quantity of fellowship you have had but in the quality of learning experience you have had. You should always ask: "What did I learn today I didn't know before and how will it change my life?" We need to hold Bible study groups to a higher standard than food, fun and fellowship. You can find that anywhere, but where do you find a genuine opportunity to stamp out Bible illiteracy in your life?

7. Encourage Your Pastor when There's Substance to His Sermon

Pastors have a tough job today. They have to be executives, managers, marketers, entertainers and often peace-keepers, not to mention pastors, preachers and theologians. It's not easy being a pastor. Often the appreciation level of your people comes nowhere near the time and energy you put into being their spiritual shepherd. Sometimes with demands high and appreciation low, pastors are tempted to cave. They put so much time into the other hats they wear that they spend far too little time on the sermon. The result is Bible illiteracy in the church. Often they cave to the wishes of the congregation for more stories and less Scripture, more entertainment and less Bible, more heat and less light. But think about it. If the pastor tells a story and the audience cheers, shakes his hand after the service and comments on how great that story was, your pastor is apt to raise the stakes next week and tell an even better story. But when he puts meat and potatoes on your table, there is no one in sight waiting to shake his hand or thank him. The 7th century B.C. prophet Hosea was right when he quoted God as saying, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). The 21st century A.D. prophet could say the same about the church today. So when your pastor spreads the table before you on Sunday and it is filled with nutritious meat and potatoes or fish and rice, take some time to encourage him. Go to him after the service, shake his hand, and instead of saying "Good job, pastor," say, "Thanks for feeding me today, pastor." It will mean the world to him as he tries to stamp out Bible illiteracy in the individuals of his church.

As I said at the beginning, there is no magical silver bullet to stamping out the plague of Bible illiteracy within the church or within members of the church. But there are things we all can do to slow the progress of Bible illiteracy and even wipe it out. These seven suggestions are things I've observed people doing to address this problem. You may have other ideas, but whatever you do, do something. Bible illiteracy is not A problem in the church; Bible illiteracy is THE problem in the church.

"In our churches there is little emphasis on the importance of getting to know your Bible. Whatever else people do in between church services, they don't 'soak' themselves in the Bible in order to get to know it well. I think it gets worse year by year; that is people are reading the Bible less and less as each year passes."

– J. I. Packer