

# Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

## Lesson 52 – Search The Scriptures And Come To Christ

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We begin this spiritual growth lesson by examining the words Jesus spoke to the Jewish leaders, the Pharisees, concerning their scripture study habits. Though they spent a lot of time studying the scriptures, and felt confident in their own understanding; Jesus let them know up front that they were studying the scriptures with wrong motives. What were they doing wrong? They were not studying the scriptures to search for God, to know Him, but to come across arguments to support their own positions. They had become so studious in the letter of the scriptures, they allowed themselves to be lifted up in pride, admiring and overvaluing themselves. Jesus' words of correction may have sounded harsh, but His words reflected His yearning to bring salvation to them.

*John 5:35-40 (NIV) – “John [the Baptist] was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”*

In essence He was telling the Jewish leaders; study of scriptures does not lead to eternal life, **unless** it leads to Jesus! The point is they were studying the scriptures with their minds closed. It was as if a veil was over their minds and they could not see Jesus as the Promised One, the righteous Son of God who came to fulfill the Old Testament sacrificial law. Paul described their situation.

*II Corinthians 3:14-16 (NIV) – But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*

The Jews of Paul's day failed to understand that the Old Covenant was not the final word of God's revelation. Rather, it was a preliminary message, the groundwork that was necessary for the ushering in of the New Covenant. So, even though the cloth that veiled Moses' glory and the Old Covenant was gone, Paul said a spiritual veil remained. That veil of unbelief that covered their hearts could be taken away, but *only* in Christ (**2 Cor. 3:14**). Here is where the good news comes in; whenever *anyone* turns in faith to Christ, the spiritual veil is removed. The dullness of mind is gone!

Jesus plainly spoke what had kept the Jewish leaders from moving forward spiritually. He boldly stated to them,

*John 5:37b-38 (NIV) – “... You have never heard His voice, nor seen His form, nor does His word dwell in you, for you do not believe the One He sent.”*

### **Jesus' words cut to the heart of the matter.**

The Pharisees had become so accustomed to worshipping the written word, that they failed to recognize the *living* Word (Jesus) when He was standing in front of them! The problem is, many people today read the Word without seeing, nor experiencing, the living Jesus. They have come to think of the written word (Bible study), as an end in itself. Some believe that as long as they *attempt* to read the Word regularly, God is pleased with them. “I'm *trying* to stay in the Word”, is a common response. A response, which often comes across as a duty they feel they

must comply with in order to stay in God’s good graces. Others spend so much time studying the Word, pumping the Word in as fast as they can, they leave no room for God’s Spirit to break in to speak fresh new revelation to them. They give Him no space, no trust, to bring the personal transformation that is long neglected, but much needed in their lives.

**Thank God, Jesus does not give up on us.**

We are grateful for the witness of the Holy Spirit, who continually points us to Jesus (the *living* Word), who confronts us with the real issue, and poses life-changing questions for us to consider. Could it be that our minds, too, have been veiled to the *living* Word? Has the Book we carry in our hands become an end in itself? Are we studying the scriptures from every angle, nit picking over words, because we want to prove *our* point?

Could it be that the words Jesus spoke to the Jewish leaders apply to us? In essence, He said, “*You study the Scriptures, yes, but are you coming to me to have life? Have you heard my voice? Is my Word dwelling in you?*”

**Freedom from the mechanics of study.**

If the veil has been removed, we will hear the truth Jesus is conveying; diligent study of scripture bears fruit, only if it leads us to *personal* faith in Jesus Christ. We can diligently study the scriptures as the Pharisees did, but miss entirely the personal relationship Jesus wants us to have with Him. The Jewish leaders, the Pharisees, thought they possessed eternal life because of their meticulous study of the scriptures. But Jesus clarified the true meaning of *eternal* life in His prayer to His Heavenly Father (and ours),

*John 17:3 (KJV) – “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”*

Getting to know Jesus Christ and the Father – that is the purpose of our Bible study and the real source of our joy! This can only be

accomplished by studying the scriptures with the veil removed from our minds. Only then will we experience the incredible freedom of moving beyond the mechanical study of scripture, to actually partake of the eternal Spirit of the Lord through our scripture study.

*II Corinthians 3:16-18 (NIV) – But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

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**Questions for Personal or Group Study**

*(Please do not mail to CA for grading):*

1. Jesus confronted the Jewish leaders concerning their scripture study habits. What were they doing wrong?
2. Jesus’ words of correction may have sounded harsh. What meaning did His words reflect?
3. What did the Jewish leaders hope to gain from their diligent scripture study? **John 5:39**
4. What kept the Jewish leaders from moving forward spiritually? **John 5:37b-38**
5. The Old Covenant was not the final word of God. What necessary role did it play to usher in the New Covenant?
6. How can Bible study go beyond being an end in itself? **John 5:39b-40**
7. Paul described the Jewish leaders as having a dullness of mind. What caused this dullness? **II Corinthians 3:14**
8. What is the only way this dullness can be removed? **II Corinthians 3:16**
9. What are the benefits of moving beyond the mechanical study of scripture?
10. What is the true meaning of eternal life? **John 17:3**