

# STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD

Recovering the Lost Discipline of Intentional Christian Growth

*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* (II Timothy 2:15)

Many Christians quote, admire, and even preach certain biblical commands, yet quietly overlook them in their own lives. One of those commands is *Study*. The admonition in II Timothy 2:15 is not *suggested*, not *recommended*, and not just considered *ideal for the serious Christian*. Study is commanded. Paul did not tell Timothy, “Try to fit Bible learning into your schedule,” or “Grow if you feel led.” He said, with apostolic urgency: Make every effort. Apply yourself. Give diligence. Be intentional.

Today, Christians consume endless media, scrolling through hours of entertainment, sermon clips, and commentary. Ironically, we have become a culture starving for actual *study*. We have information abundance but spiritual malnutrition. We have access to truth but little application of truth. We have opinions about everything except our own spiritual condition. It is time to recover the discipline God commanded.

## THE FIRST THING CHRISTIANS MUST STUDY IS THE BIBLE

Before we take courses, study books, commentaries, and journals, or research any other resource, we must begin with the Word of God itself. Paul said, *...rightly dividing the word of truth*. We cannot rightly divide what we have not diligently read. The Bible is not one of many subjects to study. It is the primary subject to study. It is the curriculum for Christian growth, and it is the textbook for the Christian life—meaning it is the foundation for every doctrine, decision, and discipline.

Every other tool—books, journals, classes, intensives—exists for one reason: to help us study the Bible more faithfully, more deeply, and more consistently. These tools do not replace personal Bible reading. There is no substitute for Scripture meditation. Nothing compares to the authority and sufficiency of the Word of God. If the Christian does not study the Bible, he is not studying at all.

## THE COMMAND TO STUDY IS NOT OPTIONAL

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul chose the word *study* because it means: “Be diligent. Give full effort. Apply with intensity. Pursue growth with intention.” This command rebukes casual Christianity. It demolishes the notion that spiritual growth *just happens* over time. It confronts the comfortable believer who assumes sermons alone are enough. It calls out the pastor who prepares sermons but does not develop himself. It confronts the church member who wants spiritual strength without spiritual discipline.

Growth requires investment. Study is how spiritual muscles are developed. God Himself is the One whose approval we are commanded to seek—not the trends of the day, not the preferences of other Christians, not the applause of social media, and not the pressure of critics. “Approved unto God” is the highest standard.

## **WHY CHRISTIANS MUST STUDY**

1. The Christian life demands skill.

Paul used the word *workman*. A workman is someone who takes his craft seriously. A carpenter invests in tools. A mechanic invests in training. A surgeon invests in study. Why? Because excellence requires preparation. A Christian who never studies will never be a strong workman.

2. Christians are commanded to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

Right doctrine requires right study. Spiritual discernment is not automatic; it is trained. Ignorance always produces error. Study produces clarity and that study must begin with Scripture itself.

3. A Christian’s neglect will lead to spiritual weakness.

No one drifts toward holiness. No Christian casually grows. No believer becomes mature by accident. Where there is no study, there will be:

- inconsistency
- instability
- susceptibility to false doctrine
- poor decision-making
- weak homes
- shallow ministries

Study is the God-ordained antidote to spiritual frailty.

## **THE MODERN CHURCH HAS A STUDY PROBLEM**

Christians have plenty of content but little commitment. We have sermons but lack structured growth. We have resources but few believers who use them, and perhaps most tragically, we rely on supplemental tools without first mastering Scripture.

We applaud those who:

- study for degrees
- study to build businesses
- study to acquire skills

- study for hobbies

However, we tolerate the idea of Christians who never study the very Scriptures that shape eternity. A Christian who invests more in earthly development than spiritual development has reversed his priorities and minimized God's command.

## **THE BIBLE FIRST—TOOLS SECOND**

Tools are not replacements for Scripture; they are reinforcements. Just as a craftsman invests in tools to maximize his effectiveness, Christians must invest in tools that support the first priority—Bible study.

- Books—illuminate Scripture and deepen understanding.
- Journals—*Bible Journals Monthly* anchors people in daily Scripture reading and writing, which increases retention and meditation.
- Courses and Intensives—  
Bible training through iBaptist College and upcoming NFBC Monday night classes equip believers to understand doctrine, history, theology, and practical Christian living—all rooted in Scripture.
- Workbooks and Training Manuals—*Twelve Stones of Freedom* addiction and recovery plan, *God's Plan for Your Money* curriculum and the *Fishers of Men* soulwinning course help Christians apply biblical principles to real life and ministry.
- Sermon Series and Study Plans—provide structure for learning by helping believers rightly divide the Word.
- Reading Programs—Reading ten pages a day of a spiritual book strengthens Bible comprehension and application.

Every resource exists to enhance the primary resource—the Bible.

## **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHURCH TAKES STUDY SERIOUSLY**

A church that obeys II Timothy 2:15 becomes:

- strong in doctrine
- bold in conviction
- stable in trials
- faithful in service
- resilient in culture
- prepared for spiritual warfare
- fruitful in soulwinning

- consistent in discipleship
- deep in spiritual character

When believers take the command to study seriously:

- Homes become stronger.
- Men become leaders.
- Women become grounded.
- Teens become anchored.
- New Christians become discipled.
- Backsliders become restored.
- Teachers become skilled.
- Pastors become focused.

Study builds the kind of Christians God can trust with influence.

## **THE CALL FOR TODAY'S GENERATION**

We do not need more spiritually entertained Christians. What we need are more spiritually equipped Christians. We do not need people who merely attend church. We need people who grow in church. We do not need believers who are content with milk. We need believers who hunger for meat. We do not need members who coast on yesterday's sermons. We need disciples who develop daily. The world is not weakening, false doctrine is not retreating, and Satan is not decreasing his momentum. Neither can we.

## **A CHURCH-WIDE COMMITMENT TO STUDY**

Imagine a church where every believer:

- reads the Bible daily
- journals Scripture
- completes spiritual books
- takes discipleship courses
- studies with intention
- grows with purpose
- invests in their spiritual future

That kind of church would be unstoppable:

Not because of talent, but because of discipline.  
Not because of charisma, but because of commitment.

Not because of programs, but because of obedience.

Study is how Christians become strong. Study is how families become stable. Study is how churches become fruitful. Study is how leaders are formed. Study is how ministries reproduce themselves. It all begins with one command: *Study to shew thyself approved unto God,...*