

I wonder how often conversations about Bible things are started between people but are soon ended because one or both parties to the conversation are not sure about what the Bible really says. I was talking to a friend the other day and he brought up a chapter in Matthew that I was, I thought, a little familiar with. He began giving me his take on the teachings of the parables found in that chapter, and I found myself unable to properly defend the truth. I knew he was way off base in his understanding and teaching about the Lord's parables, but I could only reply something like, "I have never gotten that teaching from those parables". I searched my mind for something more substantial (and intelligent) to say, but it just wasn't there. When I got home later, I opened up my Bible and began to study that chapter in Matthew. The context of the parables, just as I thought, does not agree with his teaching of them.

A number of things bothered me about this encounter with my friend. First, he seemed to be perfectly confident in his understanding and teaching of the scriptures, even though he was mistaken about their meaning. Second, I couldn't give him any positive and correct perspective on the parables to help him better understand them. Third, we both left that conversation no better off than we were when we met that day. Fourth, how many other people misunderstand these parables because of his teaching?

The point is that it really doesn't matter what my friend thinks or what I think about what the Bible teaches or doesn't teach. The only thing that really matters is what the Bible actually does teach. I've seen bumper stickers that read, "God said it, I believe it, and that's it!" Take out the center part of that statement and you have the truth, "God said it, and that's it!" Men have and will come up with all manner of teachings on the scriptures. That is evident considering the variety of denominational doctrines out there. But that doesn't make them right. As a matter of logic, multiple teachings on a particular topic can only mean one of two things. Either all of them are wrong, or only one of them is right.

So how can you and I prevent this kind of conversation where nobody wins? First of all we need to study God's word daily. Now I know that even then we can't remember everything we read. So the next best thing is to always carry a copy of the Bible with you. Get yourselves a pocket size or small edition of the Bible and put it in your car, jacket, purse, pocket, or wherever necessary so that it is with you always. When someone wants to talk about Bible things, pull out the Word and get with it.

Had I had my pocket Bible with me the other day, I could have turned to that chapter in Matthew and carried on a competent conversation with my friend. I might have been able to help him with his understanding of those parables or at least given him some "food for thought". I know one thing that would have definitely been different. God's Word would have been read and discussed more intelligently on my part.

I wasn't able to defend the truth because I wasn't prepared. That's the truth of it all. Just relying on what I thought I knew about the Bible wasn't enough to help my friend properly discern the Word. To quote the poet, "Never more!"

Bible reading is important to all of us. Won't you come and join us each Thursday at 7 pm as we read God's word together. You can come and just listen as someone reads aloud or bring your Bible and follow along. Either way, you will be more familiar with what the Bible actually says. How can His word be a "lamp unto our feet" and a "light unto our path" if we don't know what it says?