

Know The Word You Claim to Love

By: David Burruss

I have been thinking about something lately that honestly unsettles me a little. It seems like there are more skeptics who have read the Bible cover to cover looking for contradictions than there are believers who have read it cover to cover looking for Christ. If that is true, even partly true, it should stop us in our tracks. Because something has gone sideways when the people who reject the book know it better than the people who claim to live by it.

I think about the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, sitting in his chariot reading from Isaiah, and how Philip did not have to convince him the scriptures mattered. He was already searching. He wanted to understand what he was reading, and when Philip explained it to him, that man went down into the water rejoicing, just as Acts 8:26-39 describes. That is what happens when someone actually engages with the Word instead of just carrying it around. But I wonder how many of us carry a Bible to church on Sunday and never really open it the rest of the week, while somewhere out there a person who does not even believe in God is combing through it verse by verse trying to find a reason to dismiss it.

In 1 Peter 3:15, Peter told the early Christians to always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asked them about the hope they had, and to do it with gentleness and respect. But you cannot give an answer you have never prepared for. You cannot defend ground you have never walked on yourself. So when a genuine question comes, whether it is about the flood, or about how the Gospels fit together, or about something Paul wrote that sounds strange out of context, too many of us freeze up or get defensive instead of just knowing the text well enough to talk it through calmly.

In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul told Timothy to study and present himself as one approved, someone who did not need to be ashamed, someone who handled the word of truth accurately. That word study is not a suggestion for scholars only. It was written to a young preacher, yes, but it echoes into every Christian who has ever opened a Bible and skimmed past the hard parts because they were uncomfortable or confusing. I know I have done that. I have read past a passage because I did not want to wrestle with it, and I have to be honest that this is exactly the kind of shortcut that leaves us unprepared later.

Here is what troubles me most about this trend. It is not that people are reading the Bible critically. Honestly, I would rather someone read it with a critical eye than never read it at all. The trouble is what it says about us when we are outpaced in our own book. The Bereans in Acts 17:11 were commended because they searched the scriptures daily to see whether what they were being taught was true. They were not passive. They were not content to simply hear something and nod along. That kind of hunger for the text should belong to us more than to anyone, because we are the ones who claim it holds the words of life.

So I do not think the answer is to feel embarrassed or to get combative online with every skeptic who raises a hard question. I think the answer is much quieter and much harder than that. It is to actually go back to the book. To read the parts we skip. To ask the questions we have been avoiding and actually look for the answers instead of hoping they never come up. To love the Word enough to know it, not just enough to display it on a shelf.

In John 8:32, Jesus said that we would know the truth, and the truth would set us free. But truth has to be known first. It cannot be assumed or inherited secondhand from a sermon we half remember. If someone who does not even believe this book is willing to study it that closely just to tear it down, then surely we can love it enough to study it that closely in order to stand on it. That is not a burden. That is what it looks like to actually be a disciple, someone who sits at the feet of the Word instead of just standing near it.

I want to be someone who knows this book so well that when the hard question comes, I do not flinch. Not because I have all the answers memorized like a script, but because I have actually spent time in the scriptures long enough to trust them, wrestle with them, and love them more with every year that passes. That is the trend I would like to see reversed. Not louder Christians. Not more defensive Christians. Just Christians who have opened the book as often and as honestly as the people trying to close it.