

Foundations 25

Four Steps for God's Illumination

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Introduction: In 1998, Michael Crichton, author of the best-seller *Jurassic Park*, wrote a book entitled *State of Fear*, a fictional look at a global disaster caused by eco-terrorists. To prepare for the writing of the book, Crichton researched global disasters. He was particularly intrigued with what happened in Chernobyl, one of the worst man-made disasters in history. He was surprised to find, though, that Chernobyl wasn't quite what it had been made out to be. In a speech Crichton gave in 2005, he shared a little about what he discovered. His research shows just how powerful false information can be:

Chernobyl was a tragic event, but nothing remotely close to the global catastrophe I imagined. About 50 people had died in Chernobyl, roughly the number of Americans that die every day in traffic accidents. I don't mean to be gruesome, but it was a setback for me. You can't write a novel about a global disaster in which only 50 people die. ...What I had been led to believe about Chernobyl was not merely wrong—it was astonishingly wrong. The initial reports in 1986 claimed 2,000 dead and an unknown number of future deaths and deformities occurring in a wide swath extending from Sweden to the Black Sea. As the years passed, the size of the disaster increased: by 2000, the BBC and *New York Times* estimated 15,000–30,000 dead, and so on. ...Now, to report that 15,000–30,000 people have died, when the actual number is 56, represents a big error.

But, of course, you think, *We're talking about radiation: what about long-term consequences?* Unfortunately here the media reports are even less accurate. [There were] estimates as high as 3.5 million, or 500,000 deaths, when the actual number of delayed deaths is less than 4,000. That's the number of Americans who die of adverse drug reactions every six weeks. Again, a huge error.

But most troubling of all, according to the U.N. report in 2005, is that "the largest public health problem created by the accident" is the "damaging psychological impact [due] to a lack of accurate information...[manifesting] as negative self-assessments of health, belief in a shortened life expectancy, lack of initiative, and dependency on assistance from the state."

In other words, the greatest damage to the people of Chernobyl was caused by bad information. These people weren't blighted by radiation so much as by terrifying but false information. We ought to ponder, for a minute, exactly what that implies. We demand strict controls on radiation because it is such a health hazard. But Chernobyl suggests that false information

can be a health hazard as damaging as radiation. I am not saying radiation is not a threat. I am not saying Chernobyl was not a genuinely serious event. But thousands of Ukrainians who didn't die were made invalids out of fear. They were told to be afraid.

They were told they were going to die when they weren't. They were told their children would be deformed when they weren't. They were told they couldn't have children when they could. They were authoritatively promised a future of cancer, deformities, pain, and decay. It's no wonder

they responded as they did. *Kevin Miller, executive vice president, Christianity Today International; source: Michael Crichton, in a speech entitled "Complexity Theory and Environmental Management" (the full speech, given at the*

There are over 30,000 Christian Denominations. The majority of teens with a faith base will lose that base or practice in College. Think how many you know over your lifetime that have either left the faith or acted un-Christ like because of either False ideas or False doctrine, and you will begin to see the problem is not the Bible-but the false information man

claims is in the Bible.

The only cure for the cancer of false biblical information is a concept called Illumination in the believers life. Illumination is the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit, which enables all who believe in Christ to understand the scriptures. Picture it this way: with his revelation and by his inspiration, God sent the light of his word into our world. Through illumination, the blinders are taken off our eyes so we can see the light of God's word that is already there. There are four steps to ready ourselves for God's illumination.

Love God's Word Deeply.

Let's look at 3 Verses to understand how deeply we should love God's word. If you have your bibles out circle some words in these verses.

Psalms 119:97, circle all day long." *How I love your teachings!*

I think about them all day long. Now circle Finest Gold in Psalms 119:127.

. . Truly, I love your commands more than gold, even the finest gold. In Proverbs 2:3-6 circle or underline Silver and Hidden Treasure. *. . if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.*

Notice the value placed on God's word here. Illumination starts with God; he is the only one who can turn the light on. But I am never going to see that light if I don't value the Bible enough to pick it up and read it, to search out it's truth.

I love to pan for God and read books on hidden treasure. They often have pictures of gold and treasure, they always remind me how valuable God's world is in my life. But, you don't just find gold, silver or treasure lying around, you have to dig for it, pan for it, or search for it. I have found anything valuable requires you and I to search it out and dig it up.

Even treasure maps are usually encrypted, or takes some study to understand it's clues. And if you have ever seen or read treasure Island you know x marks the spot. God gives us his word and says to us x marks the spot. Here is the place where you can find hope you need, the power to love, and a deeper faith than you imagined. But you have pick up your bible, open it up and actually read and practice what it says. If you don't love what God's word can do in your life, you won't open this book-and you certainly won't take the time to dig into it!

Understand God's Word Through the Spirit.

Once you've began to value, read and study God's word, you will need to understand God's word Through the spirit and spiritually, not just

intellectually. Here is a truths for every believer in Christ: 1. The Holy Spirit makes me Able to understand the Bible. Open your bible to 1 Corinthians 2:12-15 *And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.*

¹³ *When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths.*¹⁴ *But people who aren't spiritual^g can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means.* ¹⁵ *Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others. 1 corinthians 2:12-15*

Have you ever read a book and wished the author was there to explain what you just read? The author of the Bible is always available! His spirit has been put into the lives of believer-into our lives. God didn't go to the trouble of sending his spirit into your life only to have you leave your bible on the shelf.

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. John 16:13

I like the word guide. Sometimes we think understanding just washes over us all at once. Some of you believe if you sit in a pew long enough you will come to know the truth through osmosis. It does not work that way.

According to John understanding is a hard journey where you depend on and follow the Holy Spirit.

If you and went to a jungle and hired a guide to get us through, he is going to do it step by step. If he tried to tell us everything at once-we would forget much of what was said. And we would not understand because he may be talking about places we have not yet seen. God guides us the same way, step by step into a deeper understanding of his word. You take a step of obedience or faith and he shows you more truth.

Handle God's Word Accurately.

Be diligent to ^(AK)present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling ^(AL)the word of truth. 2

Timothy 2:15 NASB

It's amazing how people will try to twist the Bible to say anything they want, often even throwing out the rules of common sense. You can't just ignore all the rules for understanding a language or a book when you pick up the bible. As we get to know the word, it's vital that we understand a few simple guidelines for Bible Study. By knowing them, you will be able to spot anyone is twisting the truth of the word. We are going to tackle that next week-But let me give you one example of what I am talking about. Consider Romans 13:8

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for ^(D)he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. Romans 13:8 NASB

Let's say you read Romans 13:8 and think, Man alive, I owe thousands on my credit cards. I need to do something about that. The application for you is to pay off your debt and cut up your credit cards. That a good, God-honoring application.

But then suppose that from your experience you say to others, "The Bible teaches here in Romans 13:8 that every Christian must cut up their credit cards. No it does not! The word credit card does not appear in the original greek. It might be that other believers can handle have a credit card without going into debt, paying off their balance off each month. The bible is the truth. Your application of the bible is a way of living out of that truth.

You could accurately say, "This verse helped me to make a tough decision and cut up my credit cards. But it is not handling God's word accurately to say, the Bible in Romans 13:8 that you can't have credit cards." This is where we often get legalistic. When we take our personal application and force it on others.

Study God's Word Diligently.

Let's read out loud together I Timothy 4:15, 16; ***Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. ¹⁶Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because***

if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

It takes diligence to study God's word because the payoff does not always happen instantly. Howard Hendricks talks about the different stages we go through in studying the bible when he writes: Psalms 19:10 says that scripture says that scripture is sweeter than honey, but you'd never know that by judging some believers. You see, there are three basic kinds of bible students. There are the castor oil types. To them the word is bitter-Yech! But it's good for what ails them. Then there is the Shredded wheat kind. To them scripture is nourishing but dry. It's like eating a bale of hay.

But the third type is what I call the strawberries and cream folks. They just can't get enough of the stuff. How did they acquire the taste? By feasting on the word. They have cultivated. . .an insatiable appetite for God's word. They have cultivated. . .a hunger for truth.

Our commitment to reading God's word is always rewarded, but diligence comes first. Now, I do not know about you, but I find it much easier to talk about diligence than to actually be diligent. How do we bridge the gap between our desire to study and our decision to dedicate the time and effort to dig out the truths in the bible?

Conclusion: Let's read together again I Timothy 4:15,16 together out loud:
Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. ¹⁶Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

We must be on constant guard against falling into the toxic waste of lies like Chernobyl. Toxic waste over time will kill us as a church. As Paul warns us here we must watch over how we live and what we believe to keep away from destruction. Praise band come up front. . .wrong beliefs and lifestyle will lead us into sin and heresy. But there is only one who can do that and it is Jesus. So we find the truth by clinging to Jesus, this morning if it is your desire reject sin, say yes to Jesus, confess that believe be immersed for the forgiveness of sin come up front as we sing the song of decision.