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# EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

“...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE...” ~ EPHESIANS 4:12



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## “WHY DO YOU NEED SO MANY BOOKS?”

By Andrew Dow

I love books. More specifically, I love books that try to lead readers to know God and His Word. As I look around my office I see a wealth of information at my disposal—commentaries, dictionaries, encyclopedias, lexicons, grammars, concordances, bulletins, bible class books, personal notes, and topical books. God has blessed me. From time to time, however, some have asked, “why do you need so many books?”

The Scriptures teach that you must **“be diligent to present yourself approved to God ... accurately handling the word of truth”** (2 Tim 2:15). It is our responsibility to know God’s Word. In fact, knowledge of God’s word demonstrates that we are a part of His New Covenant (Jer 31:31–34). This is, in part, why I enjoy books that seek to explain aspects of God’s Word. But there is more to this issue to be described.

### The Danger of Books

Solomon wrote, **“my son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearisome to the body”** (Eccl 12:12). This nugget of wisdom seems to have become more pertinent with age. In our post-Gutenberg, post-internet era there is truly no end to the number of writings being produced. God’s people need to be careful in this environment.

In addition to their being an over-abundance of books, we must acknowledge that these are the words of men. Peter gave this direction, **“whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God”** (1 Pet 4:11a). This may be the intent of many authors, but as readers we must know that men may fail (cf. Prov 14:12; Jer 20:23). The writings of men, therefore, are not authoritative. Rather, they are supplementary and secondary.

Because books are the works of men, they may contain things that are utterly false. Paul reminded the Galatians that **“even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed”** (Gal 1:8). Never presume that a man is speaking (or writing) the truth. Just because something is bound in a book, published on a page, or written online does not make it true. Be careful to weigh all things against the standard: God and His Word.

### **The Value of Books**

Despite the dangers associated with them, books can be extraordinarily valuable. Many books contain historical value. Jeremiah told Israel to **“stand by the ways, and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls”** (Jer 6:16). Israel had left the ancient path, and followed after something new and different. By observing the writings of men over time, we can see how and where some have departed from the ancient path, and how others have held to that ancient way.

Books can also help us understand the other side of an argument. We are charged to **“preach the word”** to the lost world (2 Tim 4:2). One of the most common excuses for

not teaching the lost is that someone may raise an issue or a question that we may not know how to answer. How can we prepare ourselves to answer these questions? There is value in reading the thoughts and arguments of an opposing viewpoint. Additionally, if we only ever read material written by people that agree with us, we will never be challenged to think beyond our own point of view.

Finally, books often represent years or even lifetimes of study and devotion to God's Word. As such, wisdom and knowledge of past and present generations can be found within their pages. Solomon wisely wrote, "**A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel**" (Prov 1:5). Oftentimes, books are nothing more than lengthy sermons or articles that can be taken in and considered over time. If used properly, books can be extremely valuable to the student of God's Word.

### The Greatest Book

I have a number of books in my office, but one book stands out above the rest. The most valuable books in my office is the Bible. The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word "Biblos" which simply means "Book." But most Bible covers indicate that this is a "Holy Bible"—a unique and separate book.

Paul describes God's Word as "**the depths of God,**" and "**the mind of Christ**" (1 Cor 2:10, 16). When comparing this to the work of men, Paul says, "**If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God**" (1 Cor 3:18-19). Many of the books that fill our libraries are full of the

wisdom of men, and we would do well to consider their value. However, never forget that in God’s eyes, man’s wisdom looks foolish. Books written by men can be valuable, but their value cannot compare to the riches found in God’s Word. For this reason, no library is adequate unless the Bible sits in the foremost position.

Upwards of 50 bibles occupy on my shelves. Without the Bible, my library would be incomplete. God’s Word must be the standard by which we measure every other book in our libraries. The writings of men must match what is said in Scripture, not the other way around!

**Conclusion**

**“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God ... accurately handling the word of truth”** (2 Tim 2:15). I would encourage you to build a library to help you study God’s Word. Be aware of the dangers that come with man-made books, but don’t ignore their value! Above all, recognize that knowing God’s Word is the goal. Everything else must take a back seat as God’s Word guides our lives.

**NOTES:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**AM LESSON:**  
When Jesus Was  
Powerless (Mark 6:1–6)

**PM LESSON:**  
Encourage One  
Another

**“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”**  
**(MATTHEW 28:19-20)**