

The Bible: Great and Strange - Hos. 8:12

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- I. Introduction
 - a. God's people had a problem
 - i. They were wandering far from Him
 - ii. They were acting unfaithful to Him
 - iii. They were headed for ultimate destruction
 - b. Hosea was sent to warn them
 - c. Hos. 8:12 – to Ephraim, God's people
- II. KEY THOUGHTS – Our world, our churches and our families are in spiritual decline because they do not know the author of the Bible, the importance of the Bible, or the content of the Bible
- III. Its Author: God wrote it
 - a. "I [God] have written..."
 - i. What condescension!
 - ii. What is man that you are mindful of Him?
 - b. Every word
 - i. There are more references to God as the source of the Bible than there are pages in the Bible
 - ii. 2 Tim. 3:16-17
 - c. What Condescension!
 - i. God is mindful of man
 - ii. Communicates His will to man
- IV. Its Importance: It contains great things
 - a. All things are great
 - i. We should not minimize or ignore any of its teachings
 - ii. Act as though they do not matter
 - b. Because God is the author
 - i. It is true – Heb. 6:17-18
 - ii. It is indestructible – 1 Pet. 1:23
 - iii. It is vital – Matt. 4:4
 - iv. Description of the Bible: "THIS BOOK contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveller's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's charter. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand object, our good is its design and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of

wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened in the judgement, and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labour, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.” — Anonymous

- V. Its Contents: For many it is strange
- a. Causes of the Bible being a stranger
 - i. Because they have never read it
 1. It is too long
 2. Shorter than the Harry Potter books
 3. Can be read in 90 days reading 12-13 pages a day, for many people that is less than 30 minutes of reading
 4. Or listen to it – less than an hour a day
 5. Read the Bible in a year
 6. Expose yourself intentionally to God’s word, in a systematic way
 - ii. Because they listen to what is said about it more than reading it for themselves
 1. If our knowledge of God is based solely on hearsay, how can we say we know God
 2. He invented our mind, and He wrote to Bible to communicate to the human mind
 3. There are things we need that God desires to communicate personally to us through his own words – the Bible
 - iii. Because they have stopped reading it
 1. Some used to be involved in the Bible
 2. But have neglected it
 - a. Things have gotten busy
 - b. Past habits of reading or study have been neglected or set aside
 - c. Week by week, the Bible is become less and less familiar to them
 - d. Eventually, it will be strange to them
 - iv. They way in which they read it prevents familiarity
 1. Reading at random
 2. Only read isolated verses out of the context of the paragraph, chapter, book and Bible of which it is a part
 3. Lack the big picture
 4. Reading with the wrong purpose
 - a. To fill in a question for a Bible class
 - b. To collect verses for a doctrinal debate
 - c. Good reasons – there are much worse reasons
 - d. The best reason to read the Bible is to know and have fellowship with the Author of the Bible

- i. Our most fruitful reading of Scripture will be when we approach the Bible with that purpose
 - ii. It is this type of reading that I fear is most neglected by Christians
 - v. The Bible will be strange to us until we love God
 - 1. Elizabeth Gaskell – Wives and Daughters
 - a. Molly & Cynthia
 - b. Roger Hamley
 - i. Falls in love with Cynthia
 - ii. Molly is in love with him
 - iii. Proposes and then goes off on an expedition to Africa
 - iv. She accepts, but her affections are in doubt when she asks that the alliance be kept secret
 - v. Roger writes of all his travels, discoveries, sickness, and especially of his love for her
 - vi. Molly is appalled of Cynthia’s disregard of Roger’s letters
 - 1. Molly is more interested in Roger’s doings than his fiancée is
 - 2. Molly is vitally interested in Roger, but has to get all her news of him through her sister
 - a. Long letters
 - b. Lots of names and places that no one has ever heard of
 - c. Even Roger’s deathly illness does not spark her sympathy or interest
 - d. Molly on the other hand, is offering fervent prayers for his safe return.
 - 3. Cynthia starts letting Molly read all the letters
 - a. She is poring over them
 - b. Tracking each step of his journeys on a map
 - c. Treasuring the momentos that he sent for Cynthia, but which she disregards
 - d. Rejoicing in his discoveries
- b. The Biblical illiteracy of our society
 - i. We possess Bibles – 92% of homes

- ii. But we do not read them
- iii. And it shows
 1. Only half of adults interviewed nationwide could name any of the four Gospels of the New Testament.
 2. Just 37% of those interviewed could name all four Gospels.
 3. Only 42% of adults were able to name as many as five of the Ten Commandments correctly.
 4. Seven in ten (70%) were able to name the town where Jesus was born, but just 42% could identify him as the person who delivered the Sermon on the Mount.
 5. 38% of Americans believe the entire Bible was written several decades after Jesus' death and resurrection
 6. 12% of adults believe that Noah's wife was Joan of Arc.
 7. 49% believe that the Bible teaches that money is the root of all evil.
 8. 75% believe that the Bible teaches that God helps those who help themselves.
 9. SOURCE: Americans and the Bible: Bible Ownership, Reading, Study and Knowledge in the United States
by Michael J. Vlach

- c. Effects of Bible Illiteracy
 - i. Error – Matt. 22:29
 - ii. Deception – 2 Th. 2:9-12
 - iii. Destruction –
 1. Hos. 4:6
 2. 2 Th. 1:8-9

- VI. Conclusion
 - a. Know its author
 - b. Understand its value
 - c. Do NOT let its contents become strange or remain strange to you
 - d. So we can live out the will of God in our lives
 - e. INVITATION