

Immanuel Baptist Church

Study to Shew Thyself Approved unto God

The Command to Study

Lesson 1

Text: II Timothy 2:15 – *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

Theme: Spiritual growth is commanded, intentional, and necessary for every believer.

Introduction: One of the great misconceptions in modern Christianity is the idea that spiritual growth happens automatically. Many believers assume that spiritual maturity develops naturally in the Christian life through faithful church attendance, listening regularly to preaching, and avoidance of committing major sins. Scripture, however, teaches something very different. Growth does not happen by accident. Growth happens by obedience. In II Timothy 2:15, the Apostle Paul gave Timothy a direct command that exposes this truth clearly: *Study to shew thyself approved unto God,...* These words were not written only to preachers, scholars, or teachers. Paul wrote to believers who desired to be useful, faithful, and pleasing to God. Paul's instruction *...to study* is far more than an academic suggestion; it is a spiritual mandate with clear expectations, motivations, responsibilities, and consequences. It is a basic command for every Christian who wants God's approval on his life.

I. The word *study* reveals God's expectation.

Paul began his teaching with the word *study*, which immediately confronts casual Christianity. The idea behind the word is diligence—making every effort, applying oneself intentionally, and pursuing growth with seriousness. God does not expect His people to drift spiritually and somehow arrive at maturity. He expects effort. He expects discipline. He expects intentional growth. Christianity is not passive. Salvation is free; however, spiritual maturity costs time and energy to be cultivated. When Paul told Timothy to study, he was commanding him to give deliberate attention to his spiritual development. This command alone refutes the notion that sermons alone are sufficient for Christian growth. Preaching is essential; however, personal study is expected.

II. Study is directed toward God, not man.

Paul did not write, "Study to be impressive," "Study to gain influence," or "Study to gain recognition." His instruction was, *Study to shew thyself approved unto God,...* This teaching reveals the motivation behind a Christian's study. The goal is not to receive applause, or earn credentials; nor is it to make comparison. The goal of study is God's approval. A Christian may be admired by others and still be unapproved by God. God sees diligence, faithfulness, and effort that no one else sees. When we study, we are not performing for people—we are preparing ourselves before God, correcting pride and discouragement at the same time. Pride is removed because the audience is God. Discouragement is removed because God sees effort, not perfection.

III. God expects Christians to be workmen.

Paul refers to the believer as *...a workman...* That word carries weight. A workman is someone with responsibility. A workman is someone who has a task to perform. A workman is someone who must be prepared. No one would trust an untrained laborer with important work, and neither

does God. Christianity is not a faith for spectators; it is a faith for active participants. Every believer is called to labor in some capacity—raising a godly family, teaching a class, serving in the church, witnessing to the lost, or standing firm in a wicked culture. A workman who refuses preparation will eventually experience shame. Paul warns against that outcome by calling believers to study.

IV. A lack of study leads to shame.

Paul's phrase *...needeth not to be ashamed,...* implies that shame is the natural result of neglect. When Christians do not study the Word of God, it is easy to get confused, to be shaken, and to be led astray. It becomes a struggle to answer questions, discern truth from error, and make Biblical decisions. Shame is not always public embarrassment; often it is quiet insecurity. It is the believer who knows he is unprepared. God desires His people to live confidently, grounded in truth, not fearful and uncertain. Study is God's remedy for spiritual instability.

V. Study is necessary to divide the word of truth rightly.

Paul connected study directly to handling Scripture correctly. We cannot rightly divide what we do not regularly engage. Many doctrinal errors and spiritual confusions are not the result of malice, but of neglect. When believers fail to study the Bible, we rely on fragments of truth rather than the whole counsel of God. Rightly dividing the Word requires time, repetition, context, and reflection, making study essential. God's Word deserves careful handling. Casual reading produces shallow understanding; diligent study produces clarity and conviction.

VI. Study is not reserved for the "serious Christian."

One of the great lies of our day is that study is for pastors, teachers, or "advanced" believers. Scripture knows nothing of such categories. Every believer is commanded to grow. Every believer is expected to mature. Every believer is accountable for what he knows and what he neglects. A Christian who refuses to study is not remaining neutral; he is disobeying. God does not excuse ignorance when He has clearly commanded diligence.

Each believer must honestly examine his own habits. Do I approach my Christian life casually or intentionally? Do I depend solely on church services for growth, or do I obey God's command to study personally? Is my Bible reading structured, consistent, and purposeful, or sporadic and neglected? God is not asking for brilliance. He is asking for faithfulness. He is not asking for perfection. He is asking for effort. Today is an opportunity to realign priorities and begin obeying the command to study.

Conclusion: No one boards a plane hoping the pilot feels confident today. A person expects the one flying the plane to have had training and is certified. He does not want a pilot who has not studied or prepared. Confidence without preparation is dangerous. Christianity is no different. God entrusts eternal truth to believers and commands us to study so that we will not harm ourselves or others spiritually. Spiritual growth does not happen by accident. It happens when a believer decides to obey God. The command to study is clear, direct, and unavoidable. God desires Christians who are prepared, grounded, and useful. The challenge is for us to build intentional habits that lead to spiritual maturity. The question is not whether study is necessary. Scripture has answered that question already. The only question left is whether we will obey.

Memory Verse: II Timothy 2:15 – *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*