

What Does the Bible Teach About Voting?

David Halbrook

Our country's founders decided that American citizens would have the right to vote, but government approval never guarantees God's approval. What has God said about voting?

The Bible was not originally written to people who had the option to vote, so the word *vote* is absent. The apostle Paul had no right to vote but used other rights offered to Roman citizens, showing that God permits Christians to use freedoms a civil government offers as long as the freedom does not violate God's law (Acts 16:37; 25:11; 5:29). Like circumcision and eating meats, Christians who seek to please God by choosing to vote or not vote do not sin (1 Cor. 8:8; Gal. 5:6). Any who forbid or command voting create their own doctrine (Matt. 15:9). For example, *WatchTower* stated "In no country do Jehovah's witnesses take part in politics... they do not take part in voting at elections" (5-15-64, p308).

Righteousness exalts nations but sin brings reproach (Prov. 14:34), so people who choose to vote ought to use God's word in those decisions. For example, *wine is a mocker*, so will more alcohol produce more righteousness or sin (Prov. 20:1)?

Editor's Note: Our society says to avoid the subjects of politics and religion, but sometimes they overlap and provide an opportunity for us to show men how practical the Bible is. With November 4 being "Election Day," maybe the timing of our article in *Arkansas Weekly* will interest someone in considering God's word. Will you do your part to help that happen?

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, our brethren who are travelling, and new Christians among us.

Noleka Hopper is back in Batesville, living at Wildewood Independent Living (2860 Neeley St), room #112. Her phone number has not changed.

Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and Wednesday at 7PM.

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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God and the Google Effect

Jeff Smith

Scholars, researchers, and academics have identified a troubling consequence of the Internet's massive growth and insinuation into every facet of our lives – the Google Effect.

Despite the obvious benefits of the Information Age, in which seemingly every bit of current knowledge is but a few trackpad clicks away, the so-called "Google Effect" sometimes brings with it a remarkable shallowness of investigation and dubiousness of results.

In the not-so-distant past, when a college student, for instance, was assigned a research paper, its successful completion would require hours in the campus library. After methodically dissecting a card catalog – on actual paper cards, no less – the novice researcher would then begin scavenging the stacks, seeking the books and journals that would form the basis of the bibliography.

Even high school students were quickly introduced to the limited wonders of their campus libraries, and counted themselves very fortunate if their parents had splurged on a full set of encyclopedias, saving them precious moments on a waiting list with the rabble at school.

Those were the days when research was done in the wild, often in competition with others for the same materials, and great skill was required to drill ever deeper into a subject to find more of its extant research. Results were described on typewriters, mistakes were eradicated by applying a layer of intoxicating correction fluid, and second drafts were completely retyped, not edited according to comments on computer files.

The Google Effect indicates a generational shift out of the stacks and onto the web. For most student researchers, step one is to key the subject matter into an internet

search engine – “googling” it according to modern parlance. Sometimes millions of hits instantly appear, but they are seldom of a very scholarly perspective. Often, the first result belongs to Wikipedia, an entirely online resource on just about everything, edited by people with some level of concern for the subject, but not always with expert understanding of it or objectivity about it. Most instructors continue to reject Wikipedia as a valid resource for this reason.

The Google Effect, then, is a complaint that, while modern research has become more immediate and prolific in the Internet age, its results are frequently shallow and even suspect. It would seem there is likewise a Google Effect upon Bible study and research as well.

Start with something very basic, something many struggled to learn even when they were very young – the sixty-six books of the Bible in canonical order. In the days when Bible reading was entirely confined to a leather-bound stack of papers, being able to bypass the table of contents was essential to quick reference. The growing trend, today, however, is toward electronic copies of the Bible, on computers at home and on mobile devices like smart phones and tablets in public settings where sermons are preached and classes are conducted. Passages are located by clicking on the title of the Bible book, rather than by leafing through nonexistent pages; the value of knowing the books in order is minimized even more if the reference list can be alphabetized.

Bible passage memorization also takes a step backward. Once, memorization was essential for those moments when no copy of the text was nearby for consultation, but now most anyone can whip out a smartphone and perform a fruitful search on a few relevant keywords – not as quickly as memorization, but fast enough for most people (Deuteronomy 6:8-9).

The Google Effect on Bible study makes available to anybody resources that were once cost-prohibitive to those whose primary line of work was outside full-time ministry. Commentary sets, lexicons, concordances, journal subscriptions, variant translations, and many other resources are now available, often in exchange for as little as a few seconds’ exposure to advertising, to everyone.

Along with such published scholarship, the Internet has democratized the proclamation of viewpoints. Even without a book deal, anybody with a few dollars, an idea, and a computer can send his theories – no matter how cooky – around the world in a matter of seconds. Critical thinking is essential in the Google Age when so many ideas are competing for attention and acceptance on the web (First John 4:1-6, Acts 17:11).

It is stunning how far society has come in the centuries since Gutenberg made the printed word available to the masses. Where copies of Scripture were once described as so rare and expensive that they, and their knowledge, were chained to the pulpits, today the Bible and its attendant catalog of literature is digitized and served to billions in the blink of an eye. Perhaps this ubiquity, however, has cost us some of the sensory connections we once enjoyed with our Bibles. The smell and feel of a new leather cover, the glistening of fresh gilding on the pages, the pious graffiti of highlighting and note-taking, the sound of rustling paper as each reference is announced from the pulpit (Second Timothy 4:13).

Strangely, the rise of the Internet Age has not necessarily produced a marked increase in Bible knowledge or interest among the masses. It is as if Gutenberg unshackled the Good Book from the pulpit, only for people to discover they preferred it remain there. The popularism of the Reformation is undone by the believer’s apathy and a renewed reliance upon human authorities to interpret and enforce Scripture (Second Peter 1:21).

The Google Effect on Bible study is both positive and negative, enhancing opportunity and accessibility of resources that are both objective and original. Without seeming to be too Luddite, there is another caution about the irrepressible surge of the Google Bible Effect. People tend not to value much that which comes too easily. The Internet is a presentation of information and knowledge, but its personal acquisition is still a matter of diligent quest and intellectual consumption (First Timothy 4:13, Second Timothy 2:15).

<http://electronicgospel.squarespace.com/articles/2012/2/21/god-and-the-google-effect.html>

How are you spending your time?

- * It takes 70 hours, 40 minutes to read the Bible at pulpit rate.
- * It takes 52 hours, 20 minutes to read the Old Testament.
- * It takes 18 hours, 20 minutes to read the New Testament.
- * It takes 4 hours, 28 minutes to read the longest section in the Old Testament, Psalms.
- * It takes 2 hours, 43 minutes to read the longest book in the New Testament, Luke.
- * It takes 2 months and 10 days to read the entire Bible at the rate of 1 hour a day.
- * It takes 1 year to read the Bible 5 times and be one-third of the way through the 6th time.

--- What better way to spend your time?

(The Observer, Lafayette Heights [IN] church of Christ, June 7, 2009)